

To our community members,

Now is not the time to look away.

Especially for those of us who can so easily turn our face from seeing/hearing/feeling the injustice that continues to spread in our communities.

We cannot - should not - look away from the harm and trauma that is wreaked upon our Black communities.

The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery are on a list that is TOO LONG; a list that should not exist.

These were people who desired basic human dignity and were denied this because of the color of their skin. They deserved to feel protected - to feel secure in their home with their loved ones, to feel the exuberant rush of running for joy and not fear, to feel safe that they would be treated with respect and decency.

These overt acts of racism are happening while the COVID-19 pandemic is magnifying the health and economic disparities that Black and other communities of color have been facing for generations. The “social change” that we say we want WILL NOT happen unless we address systemic racism and injustice directly.

Life can feel overwhelming- especially right now when you may be homeschooling your children, taking care of a loved one, stressed about a job lost, and/or afraid of going to the grocery store in a way that is deeply unsettling to you.

Please don't look away.

We all need to look and to listen and to feel this.

We all need to understand this inequity on that deeper level - a level that Black people already innately know to the core of their souls, while other parts of our community are profoundly unaware.

This is not a simple task we can do alone.

The changes we all want to see - the good we all want to do - cannot happen unless we all act to end the visible and invisible racism in our communities. We will not see that bright future we're all striving for if we do not target our efforts to improve the livelihoods of those who are being harmed the most by our unequal systems.

Please don't look away.

Ways to Engage Right Now – Each One Counts

If you're wondering what steps to take, here are some things that can help.

Listen. Learn. Give. Center.

Listen:

Listen to communities of color. Understanding what Black, Brown, or Indigenous people need to thrive is crucial right now.

- Please don't assume.
- **Ask.** Ask them right now what they need from you.
- **Listen.** Listen to what your community members say.
- **Trust.** Trust what they say is what they need right now.

Learn:

If you are struggling with what is said above or what is going on right now in our world, a good step is to visit some resources to support your own learning. **Everyone is learning at their own pace.** Remember to not expect or task your Black colleagues and community members to teach you right now. They do not have the time or energy to lay things out again. If you are feeling challenged and wondering where to start, seek out resources like the ones listed below.

Books: These books are available in print, ebook, and audio.

- [How To Be An Antiracist](#) by Ibram X. Kendi
- [So You Want to Talk about Race](#) by Ijeoma Oluo
- [Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption](#) by Bryan Stevenson

Resources:

- [Anti-Racism Resources](#)
- [75 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice](#)

Follow: There are many excellent organizations leading the field on supporting racial equity. Here are just a few to follow that can support your learning.

- [PolicyLink](#)
- [Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity \(PRE\)](#)
- [Equity in the Center](#)

- [Race Forward](#)

Give:

It's become a pandemic cliché to say "Now more than ever," but it's still true. Now, more than ever, giving is essential. Whether it's giving money, time, or compassion.

- **If you are an institutional funder:** please give. Please don't wait for the perfect time or strategy. Please give to organizations that are led by and for people of color. Give to organizations that are advocating and organizing against anti-Black racism. Fund movement-building infrastructure to advance racial justice
- **If you are an individual donor and are able to give:** even a small donation can support anti-racist work in your community right now
- **Showing up to support local Black-run businesses and organizations** is also a form of giving
- **Donating time** (even virtually as many of us still shelter in place) can also be helpful.

See "Listen" above. If your communities are asking for something to be given, if you can, please give.

Give compassion.

"Now more than ever" is the time to spread your compassion and empathy. So many are feeling pain, exhaustion, fear, and grief. Your compassion and love can be a real gift.

Center:

It's very necessary to **center the stories and experiences of Black lives and other people of color**, and what they are going through. Center their narratives and what they are experiencing. Use those experiences as a light to guide your actions.

Be wary of "easy" narratives that pin blame on communities of color. Like using a stereotype to quickly code someone, narratives are also tools to quickly divide and understand.

Parse your media intake- who is being centered? Whose experiences are “the protagonist”? At this time of heightened racial violence and inequity, if the story “protagonist” is not Black or Brown, use that as an indicator to reassess that media source and what narrative they are trying to give you.

Our own media literacy (including social media) is a key learning area right now. **Following media outlets and sources that are authored by and for Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities is a crucial step** to improve one's own media literacy, especially if you want to unlearn harmful narratives that you may be unknowingly carrying with you.

#BlackLivesMatter

For people of color in the Collective Impact Forum community, we see you. We see your pain and grief. We see the injustices you have and are experiencing. You do not deserve to feel this way. No one should. This burden should not be yours. It should not be anyone's.

For our Forum community - Let us all do what we can to overcome anti-blackness and racism in our systems and communities.

Listen. Learn. Give. Center. And **Support** each other.

Now more than ever. Your actions and convictions are needed.

With deep gratitude,

Robert Albright, Director, Collective Impact Forum

Sheri Brady, Associate Director, Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions

Jennifer Splansky Juster, Executive Director, Collective Impact Forum

Tracy Timmons-Gray, Associate Director, Collective Impact Forum