



Inclusion Call to Action

June 24, 2020

Over the past several weeks, the world has taken a deep dive into looking at social injustice, equity, and inclusion issues impacting communities of color. While the tragic and appalling deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor ignited change, there are countless other unnamed victims of exclusion, racial discrimination, and excessive police force. The spotlight is shining brightly on pervasive, systematic institutional discrimination and racism that hinders just opportunities and equal access for communities of color. The wave of individual and organizational self-reflection, education, and action has been set in motion and has resulted in much-needed progress towards change.

The case of Christian Cooper, the Central Park birdwatcher, was just one example of a white person threatening a black person with a racist action. It reflected a fundamental breakdown in the social contract between park patrons, in which they can help each other maintain social order and mutual respect, so all may enjoy our public spaces. How do we help people understand that our spaces are for everyone and must be shared in mutual trust?

PRPS champions inclusiveness, fairness, and social equity, and urges its members to enter into self-reflection, education, and action. One goal of parks and recreation is making playgrounds, parks and green spaces accessible to all: There is no place for racism, intolerance, or divisiveness.

It has never been more important for our industry to be a leading voice for social equity and inclusion. With the phased re-opening of our centers and open spaces, communities will be visiting our public spaces in record numbers to access the physical and mental health benefits that parks and recreation uniquely provide. We are in the business of building community, creating joy, and supporting health and well-being. Let's ensure that we continue to do just that!

PRPS and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) released the *Leadership 2025* proceedings and recommendations from the 2018 Pennsylvania Recreation and Conservation Leadership Summit. Part of that document outlined "Top Priority Statewide Strategies" for diversity, education, and inclusion. Let's continue the thoughtful work of our collective experiences.

Call to Action!

- **Review Recommendations.** Review the recommendations of the [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion paper](#); its statewide, regional, local and personal strategies; and additional resources.
- **Policy and Procedures Review.** Conduct a strategic review of your policies and, most importantly, your procedures around the recruitment, hiring and retention of underrepresented, underserved, and marginalized communities.

- **Welcoming Culture.** Assess and improve your efforts to foster a Welcoming Culture. Do all of your stakeholders, regardless of representative size, see themselves in your promotions and marketing?
- **Education.** Provide the necessary diversity, equity, and inclusion education/training to all levels of staff to facilitate continued awareness, knowledge, and skill development. Consistent, unified messaging is an essential key to success.

Let's work together!

- **Listening Tour.** We recognize these are tough conversations and some may be at a loss as to what to do. PRPS will conduct a "Listening Hour Tour," a series of active conversations with the community and colleagues to gather information, insights, context, and new ideas on how we can be more understanding and more appropriately responsive to issues that concern people of color. This will provide an opportunity for park and recreation leaders within your particular communities. If you would be interested in hosting/participating in one of the facilitated conversations, please notify [Dan Hendey](#).
- **Share your success.** Join the conversation among park and recreation leaders around the state to share how you have successfully provided specific programming, events or services for your underrepresented, underserved and marginalized communities. Sessions will start in August. If you are interested, please notify [Dan Hendey](#).
- **Implicit Bias Training.** PRPS will be organizing professional development training on Implicit Bias in Fall 2020; stay tuned for updates.