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**FW: Living our Equity Values**

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**Sarah Konradi** <KonradiS@nwf.org>  
To: Dana Coelho <dana@metrodna.org>

Thu, Jun 18, 2020 at 10:16 AM

FYI

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**From:** Anna Brunner  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 03, 2020 12:03 PM  
**To:** Chanté Coleman <ColemanC@nwf.org>; Collin O'Mara <Collin@nwf.org>; ALL\_NWF <ALLNWF1@nwf.org>  
**Subject:** RE: Living our Equity Values

Hello folks,

As one of the co-leads for the Equity and Justice Steering Committee (along with the amazing Heather Davis Miller and Chanté Coleman), and as a white woman, I wanted to follow up on Chanté and Collin's emails with one reflection and a few suggestions, specifically for my white colleagues out there.

**Reflection**

I'm seeing an amazing outpouring of energy and suggested actions from my fellow white colleagues, which I read as recognition that racism and anti-Black violence is a serious epidemic in our country that must actively be dismantled. However, what *I feel* when I'm looped in to many of these discussions is a pervasive sense of urgency and problem solving. We want to act, yes, and moving quickly to solutions can be another way of trying to assert control over a problem. **Quick solutions are not what we need right now.** Anti-Black racism and violence is personal, yes, *and* it is interwoven into the very fabric of our country, our institutions, and the ideologies that we are all internally socialized to. For more than 400 years this has been building, which each successive shift toward liberation leading to a new form of control (i.e. after Reconstruction, Jim Crow. After the 1964 civil rights act attacked Jim Crow, mass incarceration.). Therefore our solutions must come from those most impacted. Our solutions and the reasoning behind them must be felt deeply within each of us. And our actions must build towards these solutions in a deliberative, iterative, and responsive way. For solutions to work they must be counter-cultural and counter-

structural. And we must expect and navigate resistance. So instead of quick responses, I ask for my fellow white colleagues to s-l-o-w down just a bit (but not stop J)—Black liberation must happen with informed, intentional actions.

One concrete example: we to build strategies that inform our justice work and we need time and space for folks of color to contribute to building that strategy out. Having a strategy can help us each know how to act in an informed and intentional way, without simply responding moment to moment. And this will let us move into a solutions space with a plan and intention, working together to dismantle oppression.

## Suggestions

I have been given feedback that asking folks of color and Black folks, in particular, how they are doing can be almost impossibly exhausting, as is simply trying to [maintain professionalism at a time of Black death](#). With input from some of my Black colleagues, here are some alternative ways to show you care:

1. **Send a care package.** Instead of asking how a person of color is doing, what they are thinking, and pressing a conversation, instead ask if you can send them their favorite coffee, tea, treat, gift certificate, or \_\_\_\_\_ to try to help get their mind off things.
2. **Consider *not* checking in on how people are feeling right now—in meetings, one-on-one, via technology\*.** It can be exhausting to relive trauma when we haven't consented to do so, so let's not ask this of folks of color. And furthermore, while it is very important (as a White person or non-Black person of color) to make commitments towards Black liberation, expecting folks of color and Black folks in particular to witness these new insights and commitments is not helpful and can be painful. Look for other ways to open up meetings—breathing exercises or centering yourself through stretching before the meeting begins. For more: [Six Questions to Stop Asking Your Black Friends and Colleagues Right Now](#) \*If you want to make space to process feelings, make that explicit in the agenda and reinforce that attending that part of the meeting is *optional* as it is being offered with the intent of being supportive.
3. **If you are a manager, check in with your staff of color about canceling/shifting/rearranging some meetings.** Our work can take a backseat. Rest and balance are required to thrive. Think of ways to actually slow down and shift work to make space for wellness days to be a reality. Leave that decision in the hands of your staff of color. Other ideas can be found here: [How to Manage When Things Are Not Okay \(And Haven't Been For Centuries\)](#)
4. **If you are a colleague, offer to help out with tasks.** This can look as simple as saying "I know there's a lot going on right now, is there anything I can take off your plate?" Don't presume to exclude folks from conversations relevant to their work, however.
5. **If you do not know where to start, educate yourself.** Systems of anti-Black oppression are intertwined with ideology, institutions, interpersonal dynamics, and internal framing. This requires intentionality and information to take *informed* action. As you do the work, look for support from other white folks or non-Black people of color. It is helpful to have affirmation that you're heading in the right direction and it is NOT the work of Black people to affirm that for you.
6. **Talk to your friends and family.** Undoing oppression against Black folks cannot stop when the workday ends. Talk to your friends and family. These folks will listen to you—even if you don't change their mind on the first try, you have a connection already to take advantage of.
7. **Nerd out on this [Dēmos report](#) about institutional change—we're heading this way.** We aren't there yet, but the report shows where we need to go: equity competencies, job description changes, equitable support specifically for staff of color, which will not be about treating each person the same. We aren't doing all of this yet and you can also use this document to understand where our work may be headed and commit to getting behind this transformation.

Thanks for reading all of this, continuing to reflect, and to commit to making space for our colleagues of color and our Black colleagues and people in our lives to process this all.

In collaboration,

anna

**From:** Chanté Coleman  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 31, 2020 10:00 PM  
**To:** Collin O'Mara <Collin@nwf.org>; ALL\_NWF <ALLNWF1@nwf.org>  
**Subject:** RE: Living our Equity Values

Hi Everyone,

I want to encourage my fellow black colleagues and other colleagues of color who have been impacted by the recent events to take advantage of what NWF is offering for paid self-care leave. Personally, I will be taking off Monday, Thursday, and Friday this week. Things are really hard right now so please take the time you need to process, reflect, and practice self-care.

Also, If you are looking to start or deepen your anti-racism work, [check out this resource](#).

Black Lives Matter.



**Chanté Coleman**  
**Director of Equity and Justice**

she | her | hers

National Wildlife Federation

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*"I'm no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I'm changing the things I cannot accept." Angela Davis*

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**From:** Collin O'Mara  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 31, 2020 8:46 PM  
**To:** ALL\_NWF <ALLNWF1@nwf.org>  
**Subject:** Living our Equity Values

Team,

We must do more in response to the brutal murders of Black men and women George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, the threats of police violence towards Christian Cooper, and the militaristic response to protests in many cities—which are the latest injustices of a 400 year history of brutalization and dehumanization. I don't know how many people

participated in the many rallies, marches, and protests the past few days, but the collective trauma, sadness, and anger at the protest in Wilmington alone yesterday was the most powerful public demonstration I've ever seen.

We have a responsibility to act. Across our Federation family, we have Black staff and partners experiencing deep trauma and allies who are working to take meaningful action in solidarity—and we also have incredible privilege to create change in the halls of power. Complacency is complicity (Dr King called the silence of the "good people" the ultimate tragedy).

For Black staff at the National Wildlife Federation and staff of color who are feeling impacted, please know that we see you, we see the collective trauma, and we support you. I want to personally express my gratitude to Chanté Coleman, Heather Davis Miller, Keith Ward, and all of the staff of color who are dedicating time, talent, and emotional labor advancing our equity work. The organization will provide all staff who identify as Black, and staff of color feeling impacted, three additional days of paid self-care leave for use this week or whenever work best for you. We will also be providing additional opportunities for trauma counseling.

For white staff and non-Black staff of color, I ask that we think about what more we each can do as allies to support our Black colleagues, as we work to become an anti-racist organization internally and a more powerful advocate for structural change externally. We absolutely must continue to improve our equity competencies and root out racism inside the Federation--and we must do much, much more to support Black staff and staff of color. We must continue to double down on building authentic environmental justice partnerships, which Mustafa Santiago Ali and Simone Lightfoot have been leading, and achieving greater results through our legislative work—and we will be doing much more to lift up the work of partners, such as the NAACP, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, Southern Poverty Law Center, etc., that are working to end structural racism.

If you have questions or ideas, please reach out directly to me, Hilary Falk, Amanda McKnight, Anna Brunner, or Allen Cooper, rather than placing the burden upon staff of color to respond to questions or requests for advice.

If we're going to fulfill our mission, we must live up to our equity and justice values.

-Collin



**Collin O'Mara**

**President & Chief Executive Officer**

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