

Guide

Expressing Support in a Statement
to Employees and Clients:

A Guide For White Leaders in Times of Civil Unrest

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One Way White Leaders Can Lead in Times of Civil Unrest: Expressing Support in a Statement to Employees and Clients

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While it is certainly not the only thing that needs to be done in order for change to occur, one way to demonstrate a commitment to anti-racism is for leaders to share a written statement. Messaging to the world where you stand during these times of unrest reminds us that we are not alone in our fight for social justice and communicates that you are willing to be held accountable to taking action. When conveying to your staff, communities, and our country that you stand with Black people in solidarity, consider including the six key elements below.

1) Acknowledge what you are feeling:

Talk about how you are feeling about what has happened. Model vulnerability and be willing to be authentic. How have you allowed what happened to George Floyd and countless others impact you? Are you weeping? Are you angry? Does your heart feel heavy? Do you feel the need to apologize on behalf of Whites who sow hatred? Are you grieving, afraid, scared for Black and Brown people? What do you feel?

2) Take a stance:

What is your stance on what has happened? This is not a time to try and please everyone, this is a time to speak your truth and take a side. Is the murder of yet another unarmed Black man okay with you? Black people do not need White people to be on the fence, to play it safe, to worry about how others will perceive them. We need you to unapologetically stand with us in solidarity. Do you believe what happened was wrong? Are you against it? Was it unjust, unfair, uncalled for, unnecessary, senseless? What are your core values, your beliefs as an organization as it relates to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)? Does what happened aligned with those beliefs or go against them? What type of culture are you trying to create in your organization and how do these most recent murders of Black people run counter to your mission, and vision?

3) Name it:

Use language that is clear rather than vague or phrases that can be interpreted in multiple ways. Allow your point to come across with strong, truthful, unapologetic language. Don't be afraid to say Black Lives Matter, racism, hatred, murder, killing.

4) Provide Context:

Acknowledge that what is happening is not new. For generations White, Christian, heterosexual males have abused and killed for power and then used that power to

advance themselves while kneeling on the necks of Black, Brown, Indigenous, Asian, LGBTQ+, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, and disabled people. Black people in this country have always been dehumanized and demonized so that Whites can justify their inhumane treatment of them. Speak the truth by putting what has happened into context.

5) Make a Commitment to Change:

How will you allow yourself as a leader to be changed as a result of what happened? What will you commit your organization to doing differently as a result? Now is the time to acknowledge ways your organization can do more and commit to fight for that change. Are you committed to working towards becoming an anti-racist organization? How are you or will you demonstrate your commitment? What will you pledge to your community to do differently? Will you donate funds to the families impacted, or organization like Black Lives Matter, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the NAACP, etc.? Will you speak up again and again when you witness a Black, Indigenous or Person of Color being dehumanized, marginalized, assaulted, murdered? Will you continue learning about racism? Will you continue having courageous conversations? What will you do?

6) Share the Resources that Exist for Staff: Tell staff how you will support them now and in the future. Will you provide people the opportunity to process what they are experiencing? Will you make space in your workplace for Blacks to be in community with other Blacks during this time? Recognize that Black people may not want to speak up in a mixed-race workgroup and that doesn't mean they have nothing to share or process. Will you make space for grief, anger, and confusion? Do you already have affinity groups people can connect with? How can people get involved in promoting anti-racism in your organization in the future?

Read: [US black-white inequality in 6 stark charts](#)

By [Tami Luhby](#), CNN ▪ Updated 9:01 AM ET, Wed June 3, 2020