



Saint Vincent's SERVICES

Expand the Dialog

Friends of Saint Vincent's;

As we all deal with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in our lives and, for provider agencies like Saint Vincent's Services, the impact on the clients and families we serve, it is critical that we also acknowledge and take a stand, relative to the tragic death of George Floyd and the threat of racism, which is another endemic sickness which threatens all of us.

Racism rears its head when Black lives are devalued, threatened or put in harm's way. While the recent responses to the taking of the life of a Black man have begun as peaceful protests by most, many have resulted in violent, destructive and hateful actions which is not only disappointing but frightening and quite sad.

Saint Vincent's Services serves many minority children, youth and families from the Southcoast area in our programs and we have an obligation to come to a meaningful understanding of what it means for those clients to live in the dark shadow of racial bigotry and injustice. Racial inequality is not just an issue for any minority community or group which experiences lack of acceptance or understanding. Social justice must be held as a value by all of us to ensure that no one is treated inequitably based on their color, beliefs or culture.

We all need to act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical ability (National Association of Social Workers, 2017, p. 36). As a Faith-based organization and a ministry of the Diocese of Fall River, we reflect on our Christian values and remember that, before his death, Jesus expressed the desire "That they all may be one" (John 17:21). He also reminded us to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). Racism, bigotry, discrimination and exclusion of any kind clearly go against the Commandment of Love.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "No one is free until we are all free".

We all share the obligation to identify, challenge and alleviate racism when we encounter it in our experience- whether in individual encounters or systemically. Living and working within a predominantly white community, we would have liked to believe that we have made progress over the last fifty years in the battle for social justice and equality for all; however, incidents such as the death of George Floyd and others before him serve to bring us up short and remind

us that our own racial and ethnic heritage are a huge part of who we are as individuals, and they influence how we view the world around us and our place within it.

Acknowledging and addressing our own assumptions, attitudes, biases or experiences is important to better understanding, which can make a difference in overcoming those biases and lead to new forms of communication, connection and caring. While talking about our differences may be difficult, such dialogue is important to bridging those differences in meaningful ways. We cannot know our clients'- or anyone's- experiences of bias, bigotry and exclusion without such dialogue. And that dialogue must lead to action!

It is time for all of us to stand up to racial bias, hatred and exclusion, whether in subtle or systemic forms, and help to change the systems which tolerate and sustain a *status quo* which is founded on implicit biases and, through explicit action(s), we must move toward a culture and outcomes which are based on acceptance, respect, reconciliation and equality for all. We stand in solidarity with those who will work to end systemic racism and injustice, understanding that we all play a role in making meaningful changes to those systems in the interest of ensuring justice for the underprivileged and unheard whom we serve.

“The time is always right to do what is right” Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sincerely,

John T. Weldon
Executive Director / CEO