



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Washington, DC 20240

Dear Department of Interior Family,

Over the past several months, we have all struggled with a new normal caused by the pandemic known as COVID-19. While we have all worked to determine better ways to service our customers as we operate in telework status, we also determined new ways to engage each other in a virtual work environment while facing home lives that required self-isolation. Just as we seemed to better navigate both the new normal in our professional and personal lives, we again were awakened to learn of a senseless and violent death of another African-American citizen. The deaths in the last several years of Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, John Crawford III, Philando Castile, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and countless others, have led to an explosion of frustration, sadness, outrage and activism over the racial inequities that still plagues us as Americans. As Department of the Interior employees, who are dedicated to our mission, our conservation and our various connections to our diverse communities, the impact of these atrocities has undoubtedly affected many of you in unimaginable ways. The DOI EEO Community feels your frustration and anger. Like so many of you, we are saddened by the recent and continued incidents of discrimination and injustice that have resulted in unconscionable acts of violence against other Americans, especially against people of color. We stand with our employees, and people in our local communities as we grieve these tragic deaths and support all those targeted by racism and bigotry.

The primary mission of the Office of Civil Rights and every bureau EEO office is to ensure discrimination-free and harassment-free work environments throughout the Department of the Interior. This mission is supported by educational awareness and by providing, to both managers and non-managers alike, the tools to understand the meaning of equity and diversity in the workplace, which supports the development of better inclusive partners in the fulfillment of the DOI mission. At the very heart of this mission is the belief that every person wants equity, dignity and respect, and every single person deserves them. As conservers and gatekeepers of the Departments' equity, diversity and inclusion resources and cultural heritages, we have a unique and powerful responsibility to help create an organization where all people have full access to

selection, opportunity and development in an inclusive environment. For the DOI EEO Community, this means we will stay focused on our mission to ensure discrimination-free and harassment-free work environments through education and awareness, while doing our part to foster social justice by providing our employees, both managers and non-managers alike, with the support they need during this difficult time. This also includes doing more in the communities where we all live and work to bring unity, support, guidance, and direction.

Although this is just the beginning of a continued commitment, we want to share with you some of the steps we have already taken in partnership with organizational leaders in each of the Bureaus and the Office of the Secretary to support our employees and contractors through this difficult time in our Nation:

1. We have secured trained professionals skilled in facilitating crucial conversations around the topics of race, relationships, and restoring broken and or disjointed trust. While we encourage you to have spontaneous discussions to hear the concerns of your colleagues, the DOI EEO Community is creating training and facilitation spaces to support positive outcomes of understanding and levels of respect that result in restoration and conscious decisions to accept and include people who are different.

To continue the Department's progression to a model work environment, which is free from discrimination and harassment, we must create opportunities to learn and listen with greater understanding, commitments to one another, appreciation of another's differences, and a firm belief that the values, knowledge, skills, and life experiences that each employee possesses is valuable and necessary to the success of this Nation and the DOI mission.

2. We will continue to uphold the tenets of Civil Rights laws and provide all individuals with the tools needed to become competent and effective in working in a diverse workplace, build great teams, and to help the Department of the Interior succeed in business, all while valuing differences. Therefore, while our Nation is at the forefront of addressing and mitigating issues around inequality, the mission of the DOI EEO Community remains the same. Dr. Martin Luther King said it best when he said, "the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

In the meantime, please know that the DOI EEO Community values and supports each of you. If you are feeling distraught, wondering how to help, or worried you might accidentally say the wrong thing, the DOI EEO Community has information and resources, as EEO and Diversity subject matter experts, to aid you in increasing understanding and minimizing bias. Additionally,

trained professionals within the [Employee Assistance Program](#) are available to address any confidential concerns and or significant challenges you may face during this challenging time. Whatever option you choose, your health and safety are important to us. Therefore, please remember that we are your partners for successfully navigating current events.


Be safe and stay healthy. Finally, above all else, please do not negate the necessity of treating your colleagues with kindness, empathy, dignity, and respect as each of us uniquely processes the challenges we currently face. Together, we will continue to foster a diverse and inclusive environment where no forms of discrimination or harassment are tolerated.

<https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-issues-resolution-mourning-deaths-george-floyd-breonna-taylor-and-ahmaud-arbery>

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