

CHAMPIONING RACIAL EQUITY IN THE WORKPLACE

On May 25th, 2020, Amy Cooper called 911 on Christian Cooper (unrelated), a Black man, during an encounter in which he asked her to leash her dog in an area in Central Park, NY that prohibited unleashed dogs. In video footage of the exchange, she is heard saying over the call, "I'm going to tell them there's an African American man threatening my life," using Christian Cooper's race against him. On the same day, George Floyd, a Black man, was arrested by police officers in Minneapolis, MN after a shop employee called the police to report Floyd was allegedly using counterfeit money to make a purchase. As seen on camera footage from bystanders, Floyd was handcuffed and pinned to the ground as one officer pressed his knee to Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes, eventually killing him. The two occurrences were the catalyst for a renewed call for racial equity, justice, and fairness in America and across the world.

The Floyd incident, in particular, sparked days of intense protests across the U.S. and globally as participants fought for justice. In response to the events, the chief executive officer of one of the nation's leading banks made a public statement saying, "The effects of the past week have created a sense of true urgency that has arisen across our nation, particularly in view of the racial injustices we have seen in the communities where we work and live. We all need to do more." This was followed by a commitment by the bank to pledge \$1 billion to fight racial and economic inequality. While you may not be able to make a billion-dollar contribution to the cause, there are many other actions you can take to "do more" and encourage racial equity in the workplace.



HEAR YOUR EMPLOYEES OUT. Have tough conversations. When racial injustices are prevalent in the news and even when they're not, give your employees (of all races) the opportunity to express themselves about how they feel about this kind of situation. You can do this in person or through emails, town halls, webinars, or surveys. No matter how you do it, actively listen to their feelings, comments, suggestions, and questions, and take action to address their feedback. Show them that you genuinely care about them and what they have to say by showing empathy and making changes that will promote racial equity.

SPEAK OUT AGAINST INEQUITY. As an employer, you can make a difference. It is imperative that the business community collaborate with the government to tackle systemic racism and its effects, as well as come up with viable solutions to address it.¹ Leaders should affirm that discrimination of any kind isn't tolerated in the organization, openly denounce racism, and stand up for equity and justice.² It should be clear to your employees that you are an ally and that you do the right thing in the face of racism. And don't just speak out; remember that action speaks louder than words.





DIVERSIFY YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAMS. Representation matters. If your leadership teams are currently underrepresented, actively work on changing it and make the change a reality. What will your Black and other minority employees have to aspire to in their career if there are no people who look like them in leadership positions? If they don't believe and see that there is room for them at the top, they may abandon ship, leaving you with high retention rates, which reflects negatively on your culture and bottom line.

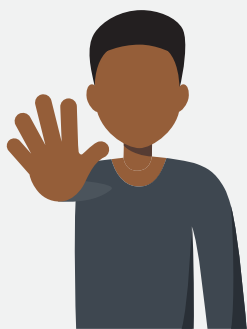
ENFORCE PAY PARITY. Simply put, people who do the same job should receive the same pay, whether they're Black, White, Asian, Latino/a, Native American or any other race. Conduct a pay audit to uncover imbalances across roles, races, and locations, and correct them where necessary; train managers to facilitate performance compensation in a fair and equal manner; and evaluate pay inequities throughout the talent management process from recruitment and hiring, to performance appraisals and promotions.³

BUT FIRST,
Equal pay



ENSURE YOUR HIRING PROCESS IS FAIR AND UNBIASED. Hiring has long been riddled with bias. HR leaders have the power to change this by implementing procedures that limit and even remove bias. Using artificial intelligence in your hiring processes is a good place to start⁴ because it surpasses human biases such as age, race, and gender. Additionally, train your hiring professionals how to recognize and eliminate their own biases to help reduce unfairness in the process.

IMPLEMENT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION TRAINING. Your workforce is made of a variety of people, whether by gender, race, age, or other demographic. Conduct **ongoing** diversity and inclusion training to help your people reduce prejudice and learn how to work together while embracing their differences. All employees, from executives to interns and consultants, should participate in these training programs to help them address issues such as unconscious bias, microaggressions, and cross-cultural communications.⁵ Promote diversity and inclusion to the point that it is engrained into your company culture.



INSTITUTE AN ANTI-HARASSMENT/NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY. Emphasize your organization's commitment to racial equity through an anti-harassment/nondiscrimination policy so that each employee understands that racism will not be tolerated on any level. Reiterate that anyone found guilty of harassment or discrimination based upon race (after thorough investigation) would be subject to termination so employees understand the severity of the issue. The policy should extend beyond the office, because an employee's racist actions in public can negatively affect your company's reputation. This was the case with Amy Cooper and her employer; the company received backlash as a result of her actions, and she was fired because of their zero-tolerance policy for racism.

The strategies above only scratch the surface for encouraging equity for Black people and other minorities in your organization. Here are some [other recommendations](#) to guide your efforts.



Taking a stand against racial inequity in the workplace can lead to impactful changes in the economics for minorities. [Take a look at these statistics from Inequality.org](#) on racial economic inequality to gain a deeper understanding of why support for your minority employees matters on a micro and macro scale.

The median Black family, with just over \$3,500, owns just 2% of the wealth of the nearly \$147,000 the median White family owns. The median Latino family, with just over \$6,500, owns just 4% of the wealth of the median White family.

The proportion of Black families with zero or negative wealth (i.e., the value of their debts exceeds the value of their assets) rose by 8.5% to 37% between 1983 and 2016. The proportion of Latino families with zero or negative net worth declined by 19% over the past 30 years but is still more than twice as high as the rate for Whites.

In 2016, 72% of White families owned their home, compared to just 44% of Black families and 45% of Latino families.

In 2018, Fortune 500 CEOs who earned approximately \$14.5 million on average, included just four Black people and 10 Latinos.

As of the last quarter of 2019, the median White worker made 28% more than the typical Black worker and more than 35% more than the median Latino worker.

In December 2019, the unemployment rate for Blacks was 5.9%, compared to just 3.2% for Whites and 2.5% for Asians.

Black women graduate with the most debt— \$30,400, on average— compared to \$22,000 for White women and \$19,500 for White men.

While the U.S. poverty rate for White men is 7%, it is 20% for Black women, 18% for Latinas, and 22% for Native American women.

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