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TO: All Employees, Contractors, Colleagues, Business Partners and our Greater Communities

FROM: CEO

DATE: June 8, 2020

SUBJECT: Racism, Black Lives Matter and Protests

Dear all,

I am not shocked, but I am appalled. I wish that I could say that on behalf of all of us, but if we are honest with ourselves we have watched this series of events happen entirely too many times, and in most of those cases we have chosen to be silent, or to look away, or to flat out ignore them all together.

George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, Botham Jean, Atatiana Jefferson and literally countless others, all dead at the hands of those hired to “protect and serve.” Go ahead, **read that list one more time and say each name out loud as you do**, reminding yourself that this isn’t even a fraction of 1% of the *people* that have suffered this fate. Black Lives Matter was born out of this atrocity, and not only because black lives matter but because for far too long we as a people have allowed them to believe that they don’t.

This changes now. This changes with us. BLACK LIVES UNEQUIVOCALLY MATTER.

What we see today is the result of dozens of generations behaving in a way that went unchecked. Let’s be honest, this country was founded and grown on the backs of slaves. Racism is even enshrined in our constitution; it is as fundamental to the American story as freedom of speech. Because of this *founding principle*, racism and oppression are systemic by their very definition, the fact that this continues to plague us nearly 500 years later is, and should be, unconscionable. Racism impacts all aspects of our society; with disparities from education to housing to healthcare. Until we start the course correction, we may never understand the deeply troubling effects, both physically and mentally, this has had on Black and Brown communities. The privilege afforded to some has not been used to advance the whole and frankly **white people are responsible for this gap in opportunity and access.** It’s uncomfortable. It’s touchy. It strikes a nerve. But nothing good comes from standing on the sidelines, we must introspect and be open to conversation. It’s not enough to be non-racist. Now is the time to be vocally ANTI-racist and stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who continue to be marginalized in our society.

As an organization, Nead Werx is reexamining our actions and recommitting ourselves to call out and dismantle the system of white supremacy and racial divide in America. In demonstration of this commitment and in effort to clean our own yard, we admit that we have not, in the past, closed our office in honor of Martin L. King, Jr. Federal Holiday. We recognize this now as a misstep and have immediately updated our policy to offer and encourage free PTO to any employee who chooses to use that day to forward or uplift our underserved communities. Furthermore, in order to more fully enable our employees to serve these communities, Nead Werx will now reimburse Paid Time Off (PTO) according to the following policy:

1. Book your PTO and get it approved
2. Go to a protest, volunteer with a social justice organization, or any other act of solidarity
3. Submit evidence that you did the thing to HR
4. HR will give you an administrative award to 'refund' that PTO to you
5. Repeat as often as is necessary

These are just two small steps we as a company can take in hopes that others may reflect inward as well.

For one person, or one community, this problem is too big. To rebuild our **foundation** calls upon us all to use our talents in a way that will positively benefit our society and future generations. We encourage our team and broader community to find their individual voice in this movement and be a true agent of change, as silence is no longer an option. Some will protest, some will teach, some will lead, some will preach... whatever your role, we ask that you do it from love, and with love.

Nead Werx, as a company, myself, and the rest of the Senior Leadership Team will continue to broach the difficult conversations. We will continue to examine our hiring and promotion practices. We will continue to support organizations who are committed to the advancement of Black and Brown people. Below you will find some resources that myself and the rest of the executives highly encourage you to read.

- For white people who want to begin the process of self-examination, please start to learn about your captivity to race. The reverend Nibs Stroupe has some excellent writings and you can begin with this one: <https://nibsnotes.blogspot.com/2020/06/no-excuses-no-exceptions.html>
- For white people who consider themselves allies, please be intentional, sensitive and positive in your work to advance the end of racism. This is a good place to start - <https://medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234>
- If you're really serious about your commitment to ending racism, expand your mind with some actual books on the topic. Here's a reading list to get you started: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/03/us/amazon-best-sellers-books-race-trnd/index.html>

If this message resonated with you and you find yourself newly committed or newly refreshed, please know in your heart that we are just getting started. We are going to have to be intentional about this conversation, this work, and our captivity to racism **every day**. It will **not be quick**, it will **not be easy**, it will **not be without pain**, but it will be **worth it** for all of us. I hope you're with me as we go.

Humbly,



Nickolas E. A. Downey

CEO