

### **BWR BLM Statement**

To Our Big West Rotaract Community,

Like many of you, we have been reflecting around the current climate and have been discussing as a Board what the right steps forward are. We recognize we are leaders in our communities. Rotary is an organization we are proud to be a part of and to serve, specifically because of the kind of ethical standards we hold ourselves to; such as the Four Way Test. With that being said, the demonstrations globally have lifted curtains for many of us about how unjust some of our fellow human beings have been, and are being, treated.

As a Board, we had to face the hard truth that we were not following the Four Way Test when it came to anti-racism and, specifically, anti-blackness. This is NOT fair, it DOES NOT build goodwill and better friendships, and it is NOT beneficial to all concerned. And that IS the truth. We have to do better and have to hold ourselves accountable to the principles that we, and so many Rotaractors and Rotarians alike, hold so dearly.

With the Four Way Test as our lens and a sincere goal to put service above ourselves, even when it's uncomfortable and even when it's difficult, we at Big West Rotaract (BWR) make the following statement:

We believe BLACK LIVES MATTER. We are in full support of this movement and that which it stands. We believe in justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, David McAtee, Tony McDade and the countless other lives lost to racial violence. We believe in the need for systemic and organizational change that calls for urgent action with both anti-racism and anti-blackness and how we treat our Black community.

We at BWR acknowledge that the broader Rotary structure in the region we serve is predominantly white and this structure does not always reflect the true diversity of our communities. While we celebrate the diversity and unique voices within our own team, we acknowledge that there is more work we can do to help elevate the Black members of our Rotary family and promote anti-racism.

We recognize we should have done better in the past and want to do better moving forward. As such, we commit to an increased Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) focus within our internal leadership team, in our events, and in service to our member districts and the greater Rotary community. We have to be the change we want to see in the world and want to exemplify what true leadership looks like in this arena. These are the commitments we are making:

- Internal Leadership Team

- In our Director training, we are starting with an anti-racism and inclusion webinar and expanding to quarterly training sessions and DEI training within our onboarding process.
- Transparency into our DEI initiatives with Rotarians, RI and zone leaders, and others in our sphere of influence.
- In Our Events
  - Including DEI training in breakout sessions within our events, which include BWR Institute and Conference.
  - Increasing the diversity of speakers we invite for both our breakout and keynote sessions.
  - Creating time and space to facilitate discussion and share experiences for Black, Indigenous, & People of Color (BIPOC) at Institute and Conference.
- Serving our Member Districts and Rotary Community
  - Provide tools and practices to help our clubs initiate discussions and action steps around DEI.
  - Understand and expose the depth of BIPOC experiences with injustice in our own organization to enact change and promote healthier interactions for Rotaractors of color.
  - Share and highlight the ways Rotaractors have gone about enacting positive, anti-racist change in their clubs and districts.

We know that action needs to be taken now and we would love your participation. Here are some things you can do to help us out:

- Participate in our BWR Open Forum, which will be a Zoom call to discuss recent events surrounding injustice within Black communities. We welcome all voices to share how you are feeling in a safe space. The first will be held this Friday at 5:30 PM and we intend to provide this platform once a month to start.
- We recognize the experience of people of color in the Rotary world is not always positive and can be isolating. We want to create a place where you can safely share your experience and where we can clearly show the systemic racism throughout the districts. If you are a person of color that has been impacted by injustice, microaggressions, or racial inequity in any way, shape or form within the Rotary world, we invite you to share your experiences on [this form](#) (as anonymously as you would like; we are committed to keeping you safe from being penalized for speaking out).

We are working on putting resources together to help our clubs have better conversations and highlight what they can be doing to work toward racial justice. In the meantime, here are some actions you can take:

- Encourage your Rotaract and Rotary clubs to donate to your local Black Lives Matter (BLM) chapter.
- Support your local demonstrations focusing on justice for George Floyd and others.

- Get to know your local representatives and encourage them to publicly support the BLM movement if they do not already do so.
- Encourage an open, non-judgemental conversation within your own club. If you do not feel comfortable facilitating this conversation now, send us an [email](#). We are working on providing resources to help with this as well.
- Remember that it is not the Black community's responsibility (or other people of color) to educate you. If you do not know where to start, we would suggest reading "White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo. You can also check out [this series of posts by the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture \(NMAAHC\)](#).

We are actively looking for other ways to make positive changes. We recognize we do not have all the answers right now. If you see something we could do better, reach out to us at [dobetter@bigwestrotaract.org](mailto:dobetter@bigwestrotaract.org). We are committed to learning and doing better moving forward.

We recognize that this work can be difficult and uncomfortable, but we are encouraged by your willingness to show up. Our Black community has been fighting this fight for generations and it is now our turn to learn, amplify, and act.

To our Black community: We commit to do better, stand beside you, and make Rotary better for you. We recognize that these recent events have had a tremendous impact on your well being. If you need to step away in order to take care of your mental and physical health, your Rotaract community, including BWR, has your back and will continue moving your efforts forward.

We also want to take a moment to acknowledge that we were further inspired and moved by the Interactors in District 5170 who released this [Interact BLM Statement](#). Thank you for showing bold leadership. We are enthused to have and be strong allies committed to building a world that is true, fair, beneficial to all concerned and building goodwill and friendships along the way. May our Rotary future finally include and serve all of us.

Yours In Humble Service,  
Janel Breen, General Secretary (2018-2020)  
Joey Vaesen, Director (2017-2020)  
Portland Highbaugh, Director (2018-2020)  
Marty Kludjian, Director (2018-2020)  
Sydney Schilling, Director (2020-2020)  
Alia Ali, Director (2019-2021)  
Taylor Lee, Director (2019-2021)  
Erika Rodriguez, Director (2019-2021)  
Luna Fagan, Director (2019-2021)  
Dianne Kunkee, Chief of Staff