



**Redefining disability.  
At work. At home. At play.**

## **How can we help? Thoughts on the current racial crisis and our duty to act.**

Over the last few weeks, we have continued to see atrocities committed against Black individuals. The pain we feel as a society today is but a fraction of the pain Black Communities have felt for centuries. And for White people there is also confusion in our heavy hearts. We ask ourselves, how do we all stand united together to demand systemic change? What can we as an organization - and each of us as individuals - do in the name of justice for all oppressed communities?

Here are some thoughts on what we **must** to do now, in light of the current crisis.

First, we all need to **be okay with being uncomfortable**. Saying we are colorblind or not racist is disingenuous. We have not done nearly enough to learn about systemic racism to even understand the implications of that statement. Instead we need to educate ourselves, and use our voices of power and influence to guide those around us, toward the voice of someone that is living a marginalized life experience.

We need to **come to a place of awareness**. Expressing shock in the face of discrimination, hatred and violence belittles the centuries of oppression experienced by disenfranchised populations.

To do this we need to **listen more** and talk less. Listen to someone else who is living a different experience than our own. Resist the urge to interrupt or try to explain a different perspective.

**Sit with someone's experience**. We are not expected to fully understand the depth of oppression; don't try to relate by sharing a different version of understanding, it may not be enough and may lead to further silence their voice. Be okay with the discomfort in sitting with what is shared. Work to appreciate the disparity of experiences prevalent in our country.

These conversations can be hard. It is easier to ignore, discount, or diminish the inherent racist policies and beliefs in our country to allow ourselves to feel more comfortable. But these conversations are not about blame or guilt, good or bad, they are about learning and understanding so that we can become better allies in the fight against systemic racism - and the fight for equality of all marginalized communities.

And, we must take responsibility and act.

LEAP's mission is to advance a society of equal opportunity for all persons, regardless of disability. We are an organization whose majority of staff and board members are persons with disabilities to help ensure the effective delivery of our services. We are a center for independent living (CIL) that advocates for full inclusion.

As a center for independent living that serves people with disabilities, **why is this our fight?** Because disability is a part of human diversity. Disability exists in every demographic, every ethnicity, every age group, and among the most marginalized of communities: people of color, immigrants and LGBTQ+. At LEAP we will serve our community with authenticity and deliver our service in communion with those we serve, and from a place of inclusivity and equity. The work we do every day goes largely un-noticed - but it provides income, connection, work, food and shelter, a listening ear or word of comfort.

We are committed to working side-by-side with other marginalized communities to move forward and change systems. As LEAP supporters, we ask you to stand with us in this effort. This is the work of justice, the pursuit of it. Marching with the hurting and oppressed, literally or through systemic advocacy, is a place to begin. **To listen. To sit. To be aware. To learn. To begin to understand. To take responsibility. To be an ally.**

We must re-commit to the work of changing our country's ingrained systems of oppression, forced poverty and injustice.

**We must speak with one voice, united.**

Melanie Hogan  
Executive Director

