

# A Message From Our CEO Regarding Diversity

06.15.20

*"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter."*

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

The recent death of George Floyd has galvanized our nation in a way not seen in many decades. Mr. Floyd is but one recent incident. Our nation has boiled over with anger and frustration at the institutionalized racism and social injustice directed far too long towards minorities. Too often, cries to defeat prejudice are met with silence, apathy, or denial. We must all recognize that racism and social injustice stain our country and our world. While Blacks and other minorities are most affected, racism degrades all of us. An essential step in addressing this issue is acknowledging it exists and talking about it. But we must do more than that. We must look inward as well as outward. Each of us must ask whether we have done our part to understand, speak out, and act. As lawyers, we have a unique duty of care to step forward with action. This week is a good time for all of us to reflect as we celebrate Juneteenth, a day of great significance to the Black community. June 19th is of particular importance to Texans, because it was on this day that news of the Emancipation Proclamation finally reached slaves in Galveston, nearly three years after President Lincoln issued it. It is a day marked with celebrations, reflection, and rejoicing. In recognition of Juneteenth, Winstead is making a \$25,000 contribution to various local chapters of the National Urban League. The Urban League is a nonpartisan civil rights organization that advocates on behalf of economic and social justice and against racial discrimination in the United States. But our commitment to racial equality cannot stop this week and is not satisfied by a mere donation, so let me propose some ideas. First, we cannot defeat racism unless we more deeply understand it. I am calling on our board of directors to work with our diversity committee to arrange a series of discussions focusing on racial discrimination. My hope is that these will be difficult conversations; ones that too often we don't have in our firm.

Second, I challenge each of you to contribute to and engage more with our communities, particularly through pro-bono activities. Many of us already do that and there are many excellent examples across the firm in all offices. Last Friday, we added our name to a full page "Commitment from Dallas Business Leaders" advertisement in the Dallas Morning News sponsored by the Dallas Regional Chamber of Commerce denouncing racism. But that is only a statement of intent; all of us can and need to do a lot more. Recent events have certainly left me looking in the mirror and asking if I have done my part.

Third, diversity efforts must receive more attention from our board. A diversity report and associated discussion should be a regular agenda item at board meetings.

I don't have all of the answers, and this list is not definitive. But it is a start. I ask that each of you share your thoughts about additional steps we can take.

Sincerely,

[David Dawson](#)

Chairman & CEO