

— **Educating, Employing, Empowering.** —

July 9th, 2020

Dear DDW Friends and Family,

First and foremost, **Black Lives Matter**. They *absolutely and unequivocally* matter and we stand in solidarity with the Black community.

For over 10 years, DDW has focused its development work on Deaf communities in low and middle income countries - - India, the Philippines, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, and other similar nations. In these countries, we see racism disguise itself as colorism, classism, nativism, etc. We also see how white supremacy culture manifests in international development -- colonizing local languages, robbing people of color of their autonomy and self-determination, all under the guise of “white saviorism”. As women of color executives, we prioritize dismantling these practices and addressing these “isms” in our work.

The Black Lives Matter movement prompted introspection within our organization. The United States has a long history of white supremacy, oppression, and discrimination against Black people which pervades our entire system and continues to this day. We now realize that we can no longer focus our energy abroad while remaining silent to the oppression of the Black Deaf community happening in the country DDW calls “home”. Racism is real, white supremacy, and the culture that accompanies it is real. We would be remiss to overlook our responsibility to create change for Deaf communities regardless of where they reside, including in the United States.

Moving forward, we will be more explicit in identifying and acknowledging where we are complicit in systemic inequality and oppression. We are committed to taking actions beyond letters of solidarity.

The DDW Board and staff have agreed to the following commitments:

- Prioritizing the dismantling of these practices and addressing “isms” in our work and organization.
- We promise to do better and be better. While we don’t have all of the answers right now, we are committed to creating and sustaining this change. This will not be a short-term solution.
- We will look for ways to expand our current programming to do our part in supporting underserved minority communities in the United States.
- Address the lack of representation of Black voices and perspectives represented on our Board of Directors.
- Address the lack of representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color within our program specialists and volunteers.
- Ensure transparency of findings and future action plans with our partners, supporters, funders, and stakeholders.

Please look for updates from us as we continue to provide information about the concrete steps DDW will take. We invite you, our stakeholders and supporters, to join us as we move forward together to advocate for racial, social, and economic equality and justice in DDW and with the communities that we serve.

In Solidarity,



History Estill-Varnar & Sachiko Flores
Co-Executive Directors
Discovering Deaf Worlds