

Black Lives still Matter.

In July 2020, we made a commitment to the Black Lives Matter movement. When we shared our statement of solidarity, we knew that the road ahead would be neither clear nor easy. Our work over the past year required introspection, work, and ultimately organizational changes. To view our original statement, please visit: <https://www.deafworlds.org/blm/>

As part of our accountability, we committed to transparency with our stakeholders on our findings and action plans. Since then, DDW has made the following progress on our commitments:

“Prioritizing the dismantling of oppressive practices and addressing “isms” in our work and organization.”

- In September and October of 2020, DDW hired a consultant to lead a series of guided discussions and working groups on anti-racism. Through this activity we learned that DDW’s board and staff did not have a shared understanding of anti-racism, white privilege, and systemic oppression.

In this space, we were confronted with the fact that our ignorance inevitably meant that we were complicit and we now, at minimum, have a shared baseline of these terms and how they may manifest within our work. Anti-racism is much more than solely increasing diversity -- it’s true and authentic organizational and personal change.

These conversations aren’t over and we’ll continue working this goal into our organization’s strategic plan. We will begin the development of this plan during our upcoming board retreat in October 2021.

“We will look for ways to expand our current programming to do our part in supporting underserved minority communities in the United States.”

Our first step in expanding our current programming was evaluating our Name, Mission, Vision and Values. While this has been discussed internally for some time now, we are following through with our commitment. We have made the following changes that will be shared later this fall:

- **Name change:** There is a lot in a name, and *Discovering* Deaf Worlds is one that communicates colonialism and “discovering” Deaf communities that have long existed prior to DDW’s programmatic involvement. While this was never the intention of our organization, we would be remiss to overlook the impact. As such, we have officially changed our name and will announce the change this fall.
- **Mission/Vision/Values (MVV):** For years, our mission has been concentrated on Deaf communities in developing countries. The terms developing/developed are antiquated and imply that the goal is to achieve the static state of “developed”. This also implied that only developing countries needed our support. We know this to be untrue as many “developed” countries still see immense disparities for

those that are part of marginalized populations, particularly within Deaf communities.

Our new MVV, which will also be released this Fall, will reflect where we strive to be and to allow us to be a truly global (US included) serving organization.

“Address the lack of representation of Black voices and perspectives represented on our Board of Directors.”

- This is a goal to be approached with great care to avoid the tokenization of Black voices. While we still do not have any black representation on our board, we will continue to make intentional organizational changes to develop meaningful relationships and create a space that is safe for both Black and other POC and marginalized groups.
- As a part of organizational accountability, we will be collecting demographic information on our board members to be reported on an annual basis. In May 2021, our racial demographics were as follows:
 - 8 board members (7 respondents):
 - White/Caucasian/European - 42%
 - Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx - 14%
 - Asian/Asian-American - 28%
 - Other - 14%

“Address the lack of representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color within our program specialists and volunteers.”

- Previously our program specialists have been overwhelmingly white westerners which was partly due to the lack of intentional recruitment. Since naming this issue, we've been more deliberate in our recruitment and have contracted with 80% BIPOC program specialists with 40% of them being from low-to-middle-income (LMIC) countries.

Our work is far from over, but we will continue the conversation and take the necessary actions to create change. We are committed to ongoing transparency and will share updates on our progress. If you have questions, comments, or feedback, please feel free to let us know at ddwteam@deafworlds.org.

Sincerely,



History Estill-Varner and Sachiko Flores
Co-Executive Directors