

# Racial Injustice and Social Inequalities Communications Resource

Civil unrest stemming from racial injustice and social inequalities in the U.S. has reached a tipping point. From citizens to corporations, we have to decide where we authentically are in this moment and how we will engage – both individually and collectively – to help advance our country and world.

For organizations, this is not a one-and-done initiative. A pledge to support racial and social justice issues is a commitment for the long haul. Brands will be graded on their immediate actions and unwavering, long-term commitment to serve as a catalyst for change – locally, nationally and globally – to improve outcomes for diverse, multicultural stakeholders.

As communicators, we know any internal and external communications on the subject will be scrutinized and pressure-tested for authenticity and intentionality. While there's a natural inclination to monitor how others respond before joining the conversation, communication around these matters calls for prompt attention and swift action.

This guide will help brands determine and communicate their current state and any actionable plans to operationalize and/or enhance efforts.

## APPROACH

This ongoing and essential work requires a focused effort around **a continuum of acknowledging issues, assessing current state, actively listening, taking action and being accountable for progress**. Companies may enter the continuum at different points depending on the status of their efforts. By taking account of your organization's concerns and progress around racial and social justice issues, you can determine the best entry point to engage in this process. Brands with existing programs may start by actively listening to determine where they need to improve current efforts, while others may need to begin by acknowledging they need to better communicate and demonstrate (internally and/or externally) their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) matters. Regardless, accelerated process and action are imperative.



# Key Questions and Action Steps

Consider the following questions and actions when communicating internally and/or externally about racial and social justice issues. Additional steps and actions are most likely needed, but here are a few thought starters to guide future action.

## ACKNOWLEDGE

### KEY QUESTIONS

- Where is your company in the process? What is the next step?
- If a reporter were to “peek behind the curtain,” would your company’s communication match what the reporter sees?
- Have you supported social justice issues and/or engaged employees and other key stakeholders on the topic in the past? If so, how?
- Have there been discriminatory issues internally in the past?
- How do your employees perceive your organization’s/leadership team’s commitment to DE&I?

### ACTION STEPS

1. Rally leadership to ensure support across the entire organization.
2. Address any known hurdles. Profess failings openly.
3. Convey where you stand.
  - a. Acknowledge it’s personal to you.
  - b. Be heartfelt, empathetic and committed to action.
  - c. Own what’s in your sphere of control.

## ASSESS

### KEY QUESTIONS

- What’s morale like internally?
- How are team members doing?
- What guidance might your executive leadership team, employees, board members and partners share to affect change?
- What can leadership do for team members across the organization, immediately and in the long term?

### ACTION STEPS

1. Communicate internally, without haste, to express genuine concern and support.
2. Determine what employees need right now.
3. Ask for feedback, engagement and input on any steps already in motion.

## ACTIVELY LISTEN

### GUIDELINES FOR ACTIVE LISTENING

- Be present.
- Don’t leave anyone out – communicate across the organization to gather a broad spectrum of feedback.
- Create a safe space for these discussions, where employees can share without fear of retaliation.
- Take note of comments/concerns to inform development or enhancement of action plans.

### ACTION STEPS

1. Collaborate with your DE&I and/or multicultural teams to coordinate efforts.
2. Consider bringing in a third-party group or firm to facilitate discussions with employees or affinity groups.
3. Conduct strategic and targeted outreach to affinity groups (ex: employee/business resource groups) as needed.

## ACT

### KEY QUESTIONS

- How can you be courageous in this moment?
- What can be done now? What needs more planning? What’s your timeline for each phase?
- When is the appropriate time to act? Internal/external audiences may ask you to act before you’ve gone through each phase, so you may need to communicate before following each stage of the process.
- How are you engaging employees in the action?
- What resources (internal and/or external) can you provide to help support, rally and increase awareness among team members?

### ACTION STEPS

1. Don’t stall by aiming for perfection. Imperfect progress is better than no action at all; don’t be silent partners.
2. Focus on systemic issues at play in our society where your brand’s support can affect change quickly and at scale.
3. Outline an approach that offers varying levels of engagement:
  - Leader of Self*
    - a. Be informed via books, films, interpersonal growth, etc.
  - Leader of Others*
    - a. Support unconscious bias training
    - b. Drive DE&I within your organization (HR process, hiring, training, inclusion, etc.)
  - Leader of Community*
    - a. Support hate crime legislation
    - b. Get involved with community organizations
    - c. Vote and encourage others to do the same
    - d. Support not-for-profit organizations with time and/or money

## BE ACCOUNTABLE

### KEY QUESTIONS

- What’s working? What needs to be adjusted?
- How are you measuring impact and efficacy?
- Is there more work to be done inside and outside your walls?
- Can you deepen or broaden what you’re currently doing?
- What large, medium and small nonprofits are supporting under-voiced communities in this area? How can your organization support them through funding, volunteerism or other resources?
- What critical role do you play in the everyday experience of your employees and/or customers?

### ACTION STEPS

1. Set KPIs for yourself, your leadership team, business and community partners.
2. Communicate performance and accountability expectations to community partners.
3. Keep the promises you made. Measure and report progress internally and externally. *Note: Confirm you have taken the appropriate steps to support internal audiences and engagement efforts before communicating externally.*
4. Assess the evolution of your current DE&I strategy or multicultural program. Start the process again when necessary.

## RESOURCES

Standing against racial and social injustices is both a commitment to make and a set of actions to implement. Jackson Spalding can help assess your current progress, enhance future efforts and/or connect you with other key resources. **If you have questions or need more information, reach out to your JS contact or email our Multicultural Communications Team at [mcteam@jacksonspalding.com](mailto:mcteam@jacksonspalding.com).**