



Access, Equity and Belonging Committee

June 4, 2020

The purpose of the Access, Equity and Belonging Committee (AEBC) is to support the 4-H System in keeping our promise to America's Kids. Nationally, 4-H has made a commitment to reflect the population demographics, vulnerable populations, diverse needs and social conditions of the country. This vision has the elements of inclusion, caring adults, and volunteers and staff that also reflect the diversity of the population. The AEBC aims to increase the capacity of 4-H and the Cooperative Extension System to keep this promise and to create a more inclusive organizational culture.

We are deeply saddened by the racial profiling of NYS 4-H alum Christian Cooper, and the killings of Tony McDade, Sean Reed, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and so many before them whose lives were unjustly taken. Their stories have sparked protests all across our country. Racial inequity and injustice are deeply rooted in the fabric of this country, however, the past few weeks have been especially painful. Children, families and communities across this nation are experiencing fear, anger, sadness and disappointment. These feelings ring especially true for many Black and Brown communities who have been marginalized and met with limited access to power, societal resources, and protection.

Injustice shows itself in many ways. In many areas throughout the U.S., your race, gender, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, and income level may affect your access to quality education, health care, clean air to breathe and water to drink, and other rights and protections deserving of every human being. We also live in a country where your zip code may affect your life expectancy and resource allocation. These inequities have only been magnified during a pandemic where children across our nation are without access to technology to continue their education, or meals to sustain their bodies, or healthcare to combat this deadly virus. As Dr. King so eloquently said, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." We must care!

4-H will continue to be a pillar in communities but this must be done with equity. It is our responsibility to be aware of historic inequities that directly impact marginalized youth and families across our country. Beyond awareness, it is our responsibility to acknowledge our implicit bias, and act, so that youth who have historically been left on the margins, are seen, heard, welcomed and safe within our program and in our society. We have great hope in our young people--our true leaders who will make this world a more just society for generations to come! The time is now and the responsibility is all of ours.

Check out these resources to learn more about our role and responsibility towards a more just society: <https://access-equity-belonging.extension.org/resources/social-justice-and-equity-resources/>.

With hope,

The PLWG Access, Equity and Belonging Committee