



June 2, 2020

Friends,

The President/CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Pam Iorio, sent out a message to all BBBS agencies that I think was very well said and that I want to share with you because I think it defines our agency's role in this world.

"When your mission is to ignite the power and promise of all youth, it is impossible to stand by when appalling acts threaten that promise.

We live in a country torn by our differences.

Big Brothers Big Sisters seeks to bring people together, to value each person and see differences as strengths that make each of us unique.

We live in a country where race and ethnicity have created systemic obstacles for people of color.

Big Brothers Big Sisters seeks to remove obstacles for all young people by connecting them with a mentor, a caring adult who can be in their corner.

We live in a country where intolerable acts by people in authority undermine our fragile social fabric.

Big Brothers Big Sisters seeks to build bridges of understanding. Our Bigs in Blue program seeks to create meaningful relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Where we see wrong, we must call it out.

Big Brothers Big Sisters will continue to promote love and the value and dignity of every single person.

It is the only way to bring about peaceful, systemic change."

--Pam Iorio, President/CEO, BBBSA

I strongly believe that all people need to see racism for what it is – truly evil. The majority of people would probably say that overt racism such as lynching is wrong. Would we say the same about the stopping of a black mother and her children for a car search motivated solely by the color of her skin? Or a black man who in order to take a walk in his neighborhood takes a small dog and young child so he won't be deemed suspicious? Is this bad or is it somehow justified by irrational fear?

I grew up in a variety of communities where racism was viewed differently in each one. One small city where it was discussed and argued about out in the open. One small town was just as overt in their hatred of “others” – those who were non-white. Open racism was rampant and not discouraged. And then another small town where racism was also rampant but hidden. It came out in quiet discussions about everyday activities. I'll take the first place any day. Yes, there was violence at times but at least the issue was openly on the table. Should there not have been an issue at all? You bet - but there was and there is an issue of racism in all of our lives. You're either an active participant for good or bad or you're just ignoring it, which may be worse.

Locally at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Butler County we are going to start acknowledging racism for what it is – evil - and try to make a difference. The things we have started working on are:

- Take a stand by sending this letter to our entire mailing list and on social media, and by acknowledging to those whose hearts are hurting from so many recent deaths, that we hear them;
- Continue to post on social media messages that seek to eliminate hate;
- Create a library of books and movies that our Matches and Staff can share with their Littles that show strong stories of success and the facing down of racism;
- Create a Diversity Advisory Group to ensure an active voice in our agency for all people who desire to share with us;
- Increase the level of Staff Development in the areas of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

This is just the beginning. To take us back to the letter from Pam – most importantly – we will promote love.

Take care of yourselves and others.

Carolyn Winslow
CEO, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Butler County