

Black Lives Matter, Social Injustice, Inclusion, Diversity... What does it all have to do with Me? Join me in a journey to understand

By Donna Kennebeck, Iowa AEYC High Performing Inclusive Organization (HPIO) Chair

Driven by our mission, we stand against the actions of exclusion: racism, hatred, and violence. It is within our mission to stand against trauma, and to empower communities to mitigate its effects. We also believe that change occurs through committed collective action. ([Iowa AEYC white paper](#))

Where do we start our committed collective action?

As I refer back to this statement, I remark on the boldness of the words. In our field we are masters of “politically correct” when it comes to using terms like firefighter, letter carrier, or recognizing that all families do not look the same. We have done our homework and we have books like, *Daddy Cooks Spaghetti*. We have different ethnicities of dolls. So have we done our due diligence?

“...we stand against the actions of exclusion: racism, hatred, and violence.”

Let’s look a little deeper and think about inclusion...we do like to talk about what we can do to change behavior (thank you Becky Bailey).

Inclusion

Inclusion is an organizational effort and practices in which different groups or individuals having different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and welcomed, and equally treated. Inclusion is a sense of belonging. Inclusive cultures make people feel respected and valued for who they are as an individual or group. The process of inclusion engages each individual and makes people feel valued as being essential to the success of the organization.

IN SIMPLE TERMS DIVERSITY IS THE MIX, INCLUSION IS GETTING THEM ALL TO WORK TOGETHER (<https://globaldiversitypractice.com>)

Inclusion does not just mean inviting everyone to the party and saying we love everyone.

Take this example: A mother and child are walking down the street. They pass a white individual with a mask. The child asks, "Is she a nurse?" The mother responds, "No, she is masking to keep us safe." Later they meet a black man and the child asks, "Is that a robber?" The mother does not answer and later asks the child's teacher how to answer the question.

Wow, it hits you in the gut. How did we get here? It is not from families sitting around the dinner table saying, "We are racist and we don't like..." It is from our silence. It is from our inaction.

As we stand against exclusion, we need to act for inclusion. It begins with tackling the tough questions both as individuals and as teachers, parents, mentors, employers, and peers.

That child drew conclusions from the subtle and not so subtle experiences that they have had.

It takes feeling uncomfortable. It takes looking at ourselves. The change begins with breaking the silence. It is easier to pretend we did not hear or see injustice than to tackle it.

I am challenging myself, as a member of this organization and of this community of early childhood to break that silence and change the culture. Will you join me in this journey?

I plan on providing regular articles and activities in the *Iowa AEYC Weekly* beginning with an activity that you can do by yourself or with a group ; [Face Test](#).

Feel free to reach out with your reflections following the activity. (dnnsmlyk@aol.com)

Just like child development, it begins from the inside out. We have to understand ourselves to be able to understand and accept others. I will be sharing my experience with *Face Test* in the next installment of Committed Collective Action (*Iowa AEYC Weekly*).