



CEO COLUMN

Dear Colleagues,

I write to you today to reflect upon the many disturbing and concerning challenges facing our nation in 2020. The inhumane images of George Floyd's encounter with the Minneapolis Police Department must not be ignored. The images and conversations that are occurring are the result of national ignorance to the plight of our friends, neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances that are historically discriminated against.

Many of us, including myself, are struggling to put these facts into their proper perspective and to gain a better understanding of what is necessary to end this cycle of unwarranted violence and discrimination in our country and communities.

I was reminded in an email from our Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Myneca Ojo, that some of the tools we need already exist here at the Pennsylvania Turnpike. In our new strategic plan, we recognize that responsibility is a core value. One that serves as the underpinning of how we treat one another. Respect is at the heart of what will be necessary to heal our nation and for our society to find needed and necessary change.

This is a moment for self-reflection that requires listening, hearing, and understanding the pain that bigotry has inflicted upon too many citizens of our nation. We must stop talking over one another, ignoring our unique and valuable differences, and fearing that those differences are somehow a threat to our own well-being. We can no longer treat these issues as if they are not solvable or not our responsibility. We have seen these cycles again and again with similar inaction being the result. All of us must understand that if we follow that same road it will take us to the same location, and that is not acceptable.

Many of us are angry. We are angry at the cycle of discrimination. We are angry at what we see happening before our eyes in our communities. Some of us are fearful today about what is happening in our neighborhoods. Many of us were fearful of what was happening in our neighborhoods for decades. I do not believe any of us can fully understand each other's perspective unless a constructive dialog is established, and positive actions are carried forward.

What we do outside of our Turnpike family may vary, but, hopefully it evolves into a commitment to opening our minds and our hearts, and embracing the idea that liberty and justice for all cannot be achieved while either is denied to any of us. For our part at the Commission, I commit to working each day to live our values and ensure that we lead by example with fairness and respect for our fellow employees, our customers, and our communities. I urge all of us to share in this commitment.

Sincerely,
Mark