



## **Cooperative Extension Positions Each of Us to Enact Change**

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As the Chair of the Member Resources Diversity Subcommittee, I feel a responsibility to speak about recent events that have underscored the discrimination members of Black communities and other minority groups face based solely on the color of their skin. I feel inadequate in words, but I hope my message will be received in the spirit of friendship, love and unity in which it is being written.

All of America has the undeniable reality that so many people in society today do not experience full inclusion, equity, liberty and justice for all. Our unique positions as members of Cooperative Extension place upon us the responsibility to enact change within ourselves, in our offices, communities, colleges and universities. Prejudice, hate and discrimination are learned and can be unlearned. We can be the change agents to teach and show by example the value of diversity and inclusion in tearing down the walls of hate and discrimination that subtly—and not so subtly—affect our clients, communities, country, and world. We must stand up and say enough is enough.

We bring knowledge, hope, and even empowerment to others by the education that our programs share in our communities, so why not do more now? We can focus more on demonstrating positive, inclusive values in our programming and equity through the structures of our systems and organizations. We can teach parents and other program participants about diversity and inclusion, kindness and love, and to reject hate of any kind. We can help shape and teach children to love all and find the good in others.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, that "hate cannot drive out hate...only love can do that." It is this love that propels us, and even inspires us, to do the difficult work of building bridges of cooperation rather than walls of alienation. Solutions will come as we work to build genuine bonds of friendship. We have a duty and a place in this bridge building, and indeed, we must say with our voices, and show with our actions, that we reject prejudice, hate and discrimination – enough is enough!