

## We stand against racism

Ngugi wa Thiong'o once wrote:

*Our lives are a battlefield on which is fought a continuous war between the forces that are pledged to confirm our humanity and those determined to dismantle it; those who strive to build a protective wall around it, and those who wish to pull it down; those who seek to mould it and those committed to breaking it up; those who aim to open our eyes, to make us see the light and look to tomorrow and those who wish to lull us into closing our eyes.*

We want CrossBoundary to be a place that confirms our shared humanity. We want to have our eyes open. And we want to be a force that helps the world around us open our eyes.

This requires us to say something about the events of the last week and beyond. It might feel easier to say little or say something generic about solidarity. But that would not be adequate to the situation. We must say something, even knowing we are not perfect and are not going to get it quite right. So, please be patient with us.

It would be tempting to think of these past weeks as a concentrated span of terrible events — murders and racist incidents — as ones that we can move past with time. We could think of it as September 11th or Coronavirus, a sudden evil inflicted by forces outside of us. But that would be a lie. The truth is that these events are built into the power structure of our societies. They are part of a pattern of racism that has always been here. It is just more easily seen (thankfully) today due to cell phone videos and social media. And in this particular moment, it is aggravated by failures of leadership.

There are too many names to list — Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd are *just a few* of the *most recent* innocent victims. The video of the killing of George Floyd, much like the killing of Eric Garner, forces us to watch as police disregard the pleas of a bound victim. The police in all societies have a core responsibility to protect all of us. The manner of George Floyd's killing is such a fundamental betrayal of what stitches America together. It's a betrayal of the social contract that stitches all of our societies together. And that's just one video. There are endless more.

If you are black in America (and in other places where we work), you cannot assume you have the same shared and generally mutually beneficial relationship with power, society, and the police. It is often a viscerally different lived experience. And because of that, people are questioning the legitimacy of the law and its enforcement in our society. The only way to restore and regain that legitimacy is through true justice, through political leadership that recognizes that these are not just one-off incidents but problems to be systematically addressed, and through all of us acknowledging that something is wrong in a fundamental way and acting to change it.

We are doing three things now.

First, we are acknowledging that this situation is affecting people all around us and within our firm, and some far more directly than others. Affecting them in ways that make it tough to sleep, tough to eat, tough to work. Past injustices and bad memories are brought back to life. This is combined with the new pain of friends, family, and our own team members being hurt in the protests and all that surrounds them. They need to know they are not alone. We are with them in this.

Second, for those amongst us who right now feel relatively unaffected, we are asking that they consider asking themselves why. We owe it to our brothers and sisters in our societies to wrestle with this topic. It's not just the murders. It's virtually every aspect of life. We are taking the time to read and educate ourselves, to listen, to have hard conversations, and to do the work. We are committed to doing this together as a firm and encouraging others on the same journey. And in this process, we must remember that the people best equipped to explain what is happening right now are the ones who might feel least inclined to do so. That's the nature of suffering.

Third, we must consciously act to improve the situation. This means both within CrossBoundary and externally. Earlier this week we, as all of us, donated \$10,000 to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the Equal Justice

Initiative. Such gestures might seem token. But we view it as a symbol of our determination to do the work. We understand racism isn't just about the words or acts of today, it's about history, it's about power structures, things that have benefited or shaped our lives and actions in ways that we may not recognize and we must consciously work to repair. This does not happen automatically, nor does it happen by default. We have made mistakes. We regret them. Yet we believe we can move forward with hard work. This work has already begun but must be redoubled. We cannot hope for resolution. But there can be progress. And grace.

We are in the early stages of a reckoning that will not be easy and is not limited to America. The problem might seem too big to change on our own. But that should not stop us. It has not stopped any of us at CrossBoundary before, working in places that people had written off as too fragile for "real" investment, in impactful technologies deemed too nascent to be credible, or with entrepreneurs judged too inexperienced to be taken seriously — all in service of our shared vision of building more inclusive, more equal, and more prosperous societies. We have succeeded in these challenges before, and we must bring that grit to the greater challenges ahead.

Yours in hope,

The CrossBoundary Team