

To Our Friends & Colleagues,

As you know, in June of 2020, a group of destination leaders from the Black/African American community raised their collective voices in a widely circulated letter that challenged all of us to do better – to be better – in **taking action to create a more inclusive travel & tourism industry.**

Two years later, we must ask ourselves **what we have learned** and honestly assess **whether we have put those lessons into meaningful actions** – not just for the Black/African American community, but for all groups and individuals who continue to be disproportionately impacted by the systemic, institutionalized racism, discrimination, and intolerance that have marginalized so many over the past 400 years.

There has been much discussion around these issues over the past year – and it is critically important to actively listen and to continue those conversations. But words must be backed up with action, and we know that the time for systemic change is long overdue. We must objectively assess whether we have transitioned from intent to actual impact. **For “allyship” is not a noun, but a verb – a call to action and a lifelong commitment.**

Simply defined, **“allyship” represents efforts by members of a historically privileged group to advocate for and advance the interests of historically marginalized groups.** We recognize that there are many individuals and organizations in our industry who have embraced this vital work and we applaud the efforts of Destinations International as our trade association, as well as the holistic approach of Tourism Diversity Matters on behalf of our broader travel & tourism community. **But we have only begun to scratch the surface of these complex issues and must continually evaluate our ongoing efforts to create meaningful impact.**

We must intentionally revisit the questions posed by our colleagues in their letter of June 2020.

- Have we engaged our organizations, team members, and stakeholders to foster an environment that advances the cause of those who are marginalized?
- Have we made meaningful progress in ensuring that our boards, committees, and staff represent the full spectrum of our communities – including in leadership positions?
- Have we evolved our purchasing habits to consistently include minority-owned businesses across all aspects of our programming and operations?
- Have we created a truly inclusive environment that welcomes all visitors to our destinations?

We acknowledge that other highly relevant questions and topics will arise as a result of our commitment to this essential work, and **we will be prepared to respond and take action in a thoughtful manner** – for we know that we will all continue to learn and grow together as allies, colleagues, and friends.

Beyond that, **those of us signing this letter recognize that we are the direct beneficiaries of White privilege.** We believe that any conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) must start with this foundational truth – and that **we must learn how to actively use that privilege** to drive sustainable, systemic change in our industry.

We know that the playing field is far from level – that our society has institutionalized power structures that have systematically oppressed Native American/Indigenous, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and LGBTQ+ communities, and created significant, endemic issues of equity, accessibility, and inclusion around gender and physical/mental ability as well.

We hear you. We see you. We stand with you.

We also understand that you have heard this before – that there has been an outpouring of outrage, sympathy, and a stated commitment to change at countless moments in history, only to have those same voices fall silent over time. As Dr. King said, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

We can never again allow our voices to fall silent. **We commit today to being not just your allies, but your advocates, and true agents of change.** To raising our individual and collective voices whenever we see inequities and exclusion in our travel and tourism family.

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We also believe that **“allyship” extends to every member of our global tourism community**, recognizing that the dimensions of DEI include race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, education, physical and mental ability, and more. That we must all nurture, support and elevate each other so that no one is left behind.

To that end, we formally commit that substantive, relevant, and measurable goals around DEI will be **included in our organizations’ annual business plans for 2022, and in perpetuity moving forward**. And to ensure that there is both transparency and accountability regarding these commitments, we will be **reporting these goals and the corresponding results to Destinations International**, as our industry trade association.

This information will be incorporated into a **DEI Assessment Tool that is already under development by Destinations International**, which will enable us to actively track our collective progress over time. In addition, since we are all at different stages of our journey around DEI, Destinations International will be developing a comprehensive summary of **major categories of DEI programming and best practices** to assist us in establishing appropriate goals for our respective organizations.

We recognize that there is no “finish line” to this work – that the journey will be ongoing. And while the road ahead will be long, **we must be incredibly impatient about those things that we can change today, and stubbornly steadfast in our commitment to those things that will take time**. In the words of Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Yours in allyship,

Benny Anderson
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