



AMC STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH BLACK LIVES MATTER

John D. Judge, President

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I believe every American in a position of leadership has a duty to speak out about the crisis of racism and White violence gripping our country. I made a **statement** last week that reflects my point of view as a fundamentally optimistic person. Today my optimism remains unchanged, but I'm angrier. It's the right time to say more. And since nothing in my life has prepared me to address the particular cruelty of the moment that this country finds itself in, I'll start by sharing what I see, because it's critical to name it.

White hatred is stealing one Black life after another. Now the next generation of protest has arrived, and at first, we felt a sense of relief—a long awaited exhalation. But then came more White hatred, more rage, more people hurt. In hundreds of cities across the country, a question washes through the crowd on every wave of tear gas: Who's really looking out for any of us? We're certain only that we have each other.

That's what's in front of my eyes today. But I can close them, too, and just as easily roll the tape of Los Angeles police officers brutalizing Rodney King—as vivid in my

mind as the day it happened. Keep them closed, and King morphs across the years into a 12-year-old boy, Tamir Rice, shot on sight by a Cleveland patrolman. The footage is grainier even though it's newer, but watch closely and Cleveland becomes New York, then Baltimore, then Minneapolis. Tamir swells and collapses into Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, George Floyd. I see them too. And I recall their names here as one way of recognizing what a privilege it is—a truly perverse gift of American exceptionalism to White men like me—to be able to recall such brutality instead of having to live it.

My daughter Caroline, who is only four, seems already to understand that privilege. She and I went with my wife Molly to a vigil for George Floyd earlier this week. She asked me on the way over, "Why would they kill that man?" Of course there is no good answer. And of course there is nothing to debate: Black lives matter.

I've lived my own safe life largely outdoors, free from fear no matter how deep into the woods I might venture. I recognize how that's seldom the case for people of color, especially children. They are not free to share and experience this earth with the same privilege I've enjoyed. This lack of freedom is a crime against humanity, a crime dating back to the earliest days of this country, and a crime that has been occurring every day since.

And while America's racist violence is in no way exclusive to the outdoors, as the murder of **Breonna Taylor** in her own home reminds us so devastatingly, it's the area where AMC can help to advance justice. Our mission on behalf of the outdoors, like so much else, is deeply

intertwined with systemic oppression and the violence it underwrites. So I want to be clear: we are failing in that mission when Black people, Indigenous people, and all people of color are not safe in the outdoors.

I'm proud of the work we've done to improve diversity within the AMC realm since I signed on as president and CEO eight years ago. Expanding our footprint beyond our primarily New England-based tradition and investing heavily in Harriman State Park, a quick ride from New York City, was one piece of that. More recently and directly, we've hired a full-time staff manager of culture and inclusion with a broad mandate to improve the way AMC reflects the world around it. And this year we're proud to have our Board of Directors led by four female officers. These are important advancements for an organization approaching its 150th year of service. Still, against the backdrop of structural and bodily violence that is America in 2020, I'm keenly aware that it's not enough.

Today I'm committing to pushing our recruitment efforts even further, to ensure more underrepresented identities are able to join the organization at every rank. I'm committing to increase training for our staff and volunteers on ways to take action against prejudice in the workplace and in the outdoors. I'm committing to share more public information about the progress of our diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives—warts and all—and commissioning an inaugural DEI annual report due early next year. And I'm committing to elevate the many voices of our community to help in advancing equity.

The strength of the Appalachian Mountain Club has always come from the collective voice of the people who bring it to life. I know that you hold us to the highest standard. We're not there yet, but I'm confident that we can improve every day. In the meantime, I invite you to continue this discussion by sharing your own thoughts with me in whatever form you like. As we begin to regain our footing after being isolated for so long, I'll share everything else I can, too.

Stay well,

John Judge

President and CEO