**#UnifiedGeneration: Be Part of the Conversation**

**On June 2, 2020**[**, Special Olympics International put out a statement of inclusion**](https://www.instagram.com/p/CA8y8isqZSo/) **standing up against systematic racism in the United States. Below is guidance to share with youth leaders within your Special Olympics Program to empower them to use their voice as they see fit. Feel free to pull parts and use this as a foundation of how to approach youth leaders being part of the wider conversation.**

**INTRODUCTION:**

As a member of the #unifiedgeneration, your voice is important. We want to make sure you feel safe, comfortable and empowered to share your thoughts and ideas. This is especially true when it comes to social media. You may be seeing more people commenting on the racial injustice in the United States. You may be wondering how you can have your voice heard or become more informed through listening and learning. Whether you are posting on your personal social channels, as part of your school community or as a voice for your Special Olympics Program, here are some tools to help you be successful. Always remember to consider your audience when posting.

Please remember, if you are not ready to talk or post about a specific issue, that is ok and there are no expectations for you to post. There are ways to get involved and learn about issues you care about that do not involve social media.

**THINK ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL BRAND AND HOW IT CAN BE A POSITIVE FORCE FOR CHANGE:**

Whenever you post on social media, do not be afraid to express qualities that are uniquely you. Here are some good principles to follow:

* Authenticity: Be true to who you are.
* Personality: Do not be afraid to show the world your genuine self.
* Encouragement: Engage with your peers in a positive way, especially when it comes to inclusion!
* Advocacy: Talk about things you care about the most.
* Amplify: Share resources that you think are valuable or use your platform to ask others for good sources of information.

**EXAMPLES:**

Check out these examples of messaging from U.S. Youth Ambassadors that address the racial inequality in the United States:

* [Video from Tajha](https://www.dropbox.com/s/08ofjx5gss0i7ar/YouthVoice-Example1.mp4?dl=0)

Things to note:

* + She used her phone in a vertical position, which is better for Instagram Stories, Snapchat, or TikTok.
	+ She stuck to themes of inclusion and acceptance and focused on positivity.
	+ She used terms like “racism” which are okay as long as you feel comfortable in what that word means to you.
* **Statement from Evie**

*“Recently I have found myself stuck. I am usually a pretty loud person and I use my voice to help make change. Right now, it is my time to listen and learn. We as white allies can do things and use our voices but differently. It is my job to learn more about the experience of black members from my community and around the world. To deepen my knowledge on black history, oppression, how to use my white privilege to serve others, I have turned to social media, podcasts, movies, and books, that I have seen recommended. On and off the field I have always supported my teammates by following the Golden Rule: Treat everyone the way you want to be treated! Skin color... background...disability...difference… DOESN’T MATTER. Be kind! Inclusion is always the answer because everyone is a gift on this planet and we all deserve to feel loved, respected, valued and equal!”*

Things to note:

* + This is a longer statement. Parts can be taken and used on social media while still forming a complete thought.
	+ She was authentic to how she is feeling (“stuck”).
	+ She provided “calls to action” or ways to be involved.
	+ She ended on a positive and inclusive note.

**NOT SURE WHAT TO SAY?**

That’s okay! Read the statement from Special Olympics Chief Inspiration Office Loretta Claiborne and think about the following questions. Then, you will have a starting point of what you want to post.

*“Everybody wants to have a voice, but when you’re always being pushed away, it makes it tough. Special Olympics – a place where everyone is included- helped me learn how powerful my voice, as a black, female, human being could be. Until the world sees that everyone should be included no matter what you look like, how you live or where you come from the nothing will ever change. True change is never comfortable, but you can start it by finding your voice and starting a conversation about inclusion.”*

How do you feel about Loretta’s thoughts? Do you agree?

What does inclusion mean to you?

How are you staying involved with your local Special Olympics Program?

**TOOLS TO AMPLIFY**

Look at these resources to help you make your statement on social media.

* [www.canva.com-](http://www.canva.com-) a free way to create cool graphics using your own words and pictures
* Be sure to follow [@SpecialOlympics](https://www.instagram.com/specialolympics/) and [@SONorthAmerica](https://www.instagram.com/sonorthamerica/) on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for inspiration.