

June 8, 2020

Students, as your Student Liaison to Council and as a fellow student, I would like to express my deepest sorrow in response to recent events along with those that have historically plagued our Black communities. For our Black student members, their families, friends, neighbors, and all those who have experienced racial prejudice, harassment, discrimination, and hardships, I want you to know that I hear your voices. For all the students that I represent as your Student Liaison, students of all colors and nationalities, students of all sexual and gender orientations, students from all historically marginalized groups, I hear your voices too. I want you to know that I am here to be your ally, and as the Student Liaison and the Chair of the Student Development Working Group, I want to help amplify your voices.

I say I come to you tonight with sadness and anger, but I also come to you with this: pride and hope for a better future without racial discrimination and injustice in the United States. I look around me and in the news footage, and I see the grief and frustration. But then I am reminded of a quote from a hometown hero, Mister Rogers who once said: "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

So, I looked, and you know what I saw? I saw people of all races banding together. I saw men, women and children helping to amplify the voices of our Black friends and neighbors. I saw human beings helping other human beings off the pavement when they were pushed over by police. I saw police officers put down their batons to help make sure the voices of the people in their town were heard and not silenced. Yes, I saw the violence and the hatred happening, but I also saw the lives of people who are directly impacted every day by the injustices they face, and I saw the helpers.

I challenge each of you to be a helper in this rally for social and racial justice. As student members of The Wildlife Society, we have an opportunity to set a unified stance against racial discrimination in inequality in our profession that can aid in transforming our Society toward a more diverse and welcoming community in the future. We all agree when becoming members of The Wildlife Society to uphold the Code of Ethics, in which we promise to "support fair and uniform standards of employment and treatment of those professionally engaged in the practice of wildlife management" and to "studiously avoid discrimination in any form." I encourage you all to remember this agreement and to hold not only yourselves to this level of conduct, but your peers as well. Personally, I do not take this Code lightly.

While we cannot and should not forget the heartbreak and injustice that has happened, I urge us all to support one another and keep a weathered eye on the horizon. If you are unsure how to help or how to become an ally, educate yourself, listen with an open mind, learn how you might be participating in oppressive systems and identify how you can change that.

Students, please remember that we are all partners in wildlife and that when any of our partners are being oppressed, we need to step in and work together toward changing a system

that supports oppression. The Wildlife Society has made progress forward towards inclusion, but we have far to go. So let us, the students, do our part so forward progress can be made. If you see injustice happening within the profession, stand up against it. Let our voices be heard.

Thank you all for taking the time to read this. I take my position as your voice on Council very seriously and read every message sent to me by our student members with care and diligence. Please, let me hear your voices and help me to amplify your messages and concerns! I am listening and I am ready to give this Society the nudge it needs, but I cannot do it alone.

Sincerely,

Laken Ganoë

TWS SDWG Chair and Student Liaison to Council

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