

**Date: Thu, May 28, 2020**

**Subject Line: Reinforcing our<sup>2</sup> commitment to our Black community**

I want Upwork to be a refuge from the ills of our society, and I'm committed to making it a place where you and all of our team members feel they are safe, valued and belong.<sup>3</sup>

I couldn't let today go by<sup>4</sup> without acknowledging the breaking news about George Floyd's<sup>5</sup> unnecessary death in police custody in Minnesota. This news is yet another devastating blow to our national identity and something that should unify us in outrage.<sup>6</sup> The violence must stop. The dehumanization must stop. We need to stand together against this inexcusable racist, violent behavior.<sup>7</sup>

I want to emphasize our continued commitment at Upwork to creating a safe environment for honest conversations about race, about these painful acts, and about how we can support each other through these traumatic events and through the persistent racism that many of you experience every day.<sup>8</sup> Our Leadership Team takes this seriously. We have committed to a number of actions in support of allyship and towards building a diverse and inclusive workplace for everyone, including our Black team members. Our commitments include quarterly data deep dives to unpack how we are doing against our diversity goals, active participation in and hosting of intimate conversations with our BIN ERG and Black employees, and setting and holding ourselves accountable to measurable goals around Black leader hiring and Black team member promotion rates.<sup>9</sup> We have real work to do here at Upwork to address high Black employee attrition rates, low representation of Blacks in our workforce, and underrepresentation of Blacks in leadership positions.<sup>10</sup> I want you to know that we are committed to addressing these issues.

We each have a role to play<sup>11</sup> in creating an inclusive workplace and supporting our teammates in ways that are meaningful to them<sup>12</sup>—and we can do this, as we do so many powerful things,<sup>13</sup> working together as One Upwork. Every team and ERG can contribute to creating this network of support—these journeys are meaningful when traveled together.<sup>14</sup>

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1 Our CEO was quick to respond—this is important so employees don't sit feeling unseen.  
2 Clearly presents this as a collective issue, not a Black issue.  
3 Shares a strong vision for our company—and Hayden's personal vision of where we should be.  
4 A sense of urgency is critical.  
5 Says George Floyd's name—this validates his humanity.  
6 This is not a Black people problem.  
7 Unequivocal and action-oriented.  
8 Racism isn't acute or always overt; it is a chronic daily occurrence. And the use of second—instead of third—person brings what might be thought of as an "out there" problem into the company.  
9 Clear commitments, not just words. No turning back.  
10 Transparent about our challenges and the work we need to do at Upwork.  
11 This isn't for the diversity leader, CHRO or leadership team to solve on their own. job. We all have a role and responsibilities.  
12 Allyship is defined by the group you are allying with.  
13 This takes a concerted effort, but is possible.  
14 Solidarity—and alignment—now.

Personally, I am working to be a better ally to our Black colleagues and citizens. The first step, for me, has been embracing my responsibility to actively educate myself and find avenues where I can take real action, small and large—from correcting racist language when I hear it, to ensuring we have minority role models integrally represented in our conversations, games, books, and media for our two little girls, to advocating for change with government officials, to donating to organizations like **Black Lives Matter**, **Communities United Against Police Brutality** (this is in Minnesota; other local organizations are listed [here](#)), **The Loveland Foundation**, and **Trayvon Martin Foundation**, that are working against police brutality and the systemic disadvantages Blacks face in America.<sup>15</sup> I have been learning from Erin L. Thomas, our Head of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging,<sup>16</sup> but I also know that I must do my own work on this.<sup>17</sup>

For tips on how to be a better ally to the Black community, here is a [recent article](#) with some great resources. Google is a powerful tool—there are many, many more resources available out there if you take some time to investigate.<sup>18</sup>

### To our Black team members<sup>19</sup>

I am so sorry that America’s institutionalized<sup>20</sup> violence is being laid bare to you yet again in this next grievous moment, right on the heels of Ahmaud Aubrey’s death, and Christian Cooper’s<sup>21</sup> being accosted in Central Park. I hope that these terrible, visible events can cement our national resolve for change. Internally at Upwork, I hope you can lean on our community to support you in every way, and encourage you to take the time that you may need to mourn, reflect, and process<sup>22</sup> recent events.

### To aspiring<sup>23</sup> allies

Please join our June 19 webinar (invite is on your calendars)<sup>24</sup> to learn more about how overt hate translates into smaller slights that we may not be aware of at work and home—and what we can do about it.<sup>25</sup>

I always love to hear from you. If you want to share comments about this message, please do so on my page.<sup>26</sup>

Let’s stay connected, practice empathy, and actively<sup>27</sup> support each other, now more than ever.

Hayden

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15 Personal and tactical.  
16 Leverage internal experts—particularly if they identify with the most impacted group.  
17 Ally inward and focus on personal growth.  
18 Google it. Ask Siri. Ask Jeeves. Bottom line, start by helping yourself.  
19 Specific attention to the most impacted community.  
20 Speak to systemic issues.  
21 Acknowledge the names of others whose lives were taken or humanity violated.  
22 Space to be human.  
23 Shows that allyship is a journey, not a destination.  
24 Includes a specific call to action to join a candid conversation about “How to be an Anti-Racist” on Juneteenth.  
25 Shows racism isn’t just “out there”.  
26 Invites engagement and dialogue.  
27 There’s no passive way to build a more inclusive culture.