

## Girl Scouts' Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Girl Scouts of Orange County FAQ

Updated: August 20, 2020

### 1. What do the terms in DEI mean? What do they mean in the context of Girl Scouting?

**Diversity** is about difference. A group has diversity when the people present (e.g., our organization's girls, volunteers, staff) reflect differences across socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, age, education, religion, political beliefs, and so on. Different groups reflect different forms and degrees of diversity.

**Equity** is about seeking to give everyone access to the same opportunities while acknowledging that we don't all start from the same place. Through equitable practices, people are given the support they need to have an experience (e.g., participate in Girl Scouts). Tackling this part of the work requires that we understand the underlying causes of outcome disparities in society.

When **inclusion** is happening, people who are present feel a sense of belonging (e.g., have a voice, hold leadership positions, feel Girl Scouts is for them). In the words of inclusion strategist, social commentator, and author Vernā Myers, "Diversity is being asked to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance." While a truly inclusive group is necessarily diverse, a diverse group may or may not be inclusive.

### 2. What are some examples of DEI work that GSUSA is taking on to create an inclusive and anti-racist organization?

Although we have long recognized the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and have acted to counter racism throughout our history, we have not consistently prioritized this work across Girl Scouting. We know that to build the anti-racist organization we are committed to building; we have enormous work ahead of us. We are committed to deep and engaged learning for the long haul, which we know is at the foundation. We will observe, educate ourselves, and reflect on the ways that racism shows up in our organization and in our wider institutions, our culture, and ourselves. We will listen to our council partners and to each other. We will engage in challenging discussions, center voices we haven't centered in the past, act with integrity, and show ourselves as willing to make mistakes and grow from our missteps. We commit to all of this so that we can meaningfully address and correct the systems and practices that perpetuate inequities across our organization.

To date, we have:

- Dedicated funds to partner with experts in the areas of race, inclusion, and equity, with a focus on girls and women, to support related work throughout our national organization.
- Kicked off a listening tour with older girls and council leaders to help us understand the specific DEI undertakings we need to prioritize.
- Started forming a board-level diversity, equity, and inclusion taskforce.

- Begun building a DEI/racial justice steering committee made up of national staff and Girl Scout council CEOs to help shape Girl Scouts' commitment to DEI at all operational levels.
- Committed to adopting hiring practices that will help us diversify our staff and reflect the communities we serve.
- Committed to providing professional support and training for Girl Scout staff in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Provided communications support for the work, including an extensive [inclusive writing](#) (internal link for all Girl Scout staff) resource with emphasis on gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, disability, and class/socioeconomic position, with more support coming for Girl Scout staff and volunteers.
- Launched a Movement-wide pledge stating Girl Scouts' early steps toward creating an anti-racist organization and world and asking our members and supporters to sign on (more information below).
- Signed the [CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion](#) pledge, agreeing to cultivate a workplace where a broad range of experiences and perspectives are welcomed and employees feel encouraged and comfortable discussing topics of diversity and inclusion (more information below).

**3. What are some examples of additional DEI work that Girl Scouts of Orange County is taking on to create an inclusive and anti-racist organization?**

Vikki Shepp, CEO of Girl Scouts of Orange County (GSOC), is committed to working with all GSOC staff, volunteers, members, and supporters in creating an anti-racist, inclusive, and diverse council where all girls and volunteers feel welcomed, affirmed, and are able to benefit from Girl Scout Leadership Experiences. She is currently enrolled in "Challenges in Urban Education; Diversity" as USC Rossier School of Education and will apply insights gleaned to the work of the council. Vikki has an open door policy and welcomes input from GSOC staff, Girl Scouts and volunteers, and community leaders as we move forward in this important work.

GSOC has convened a team of staff members across our council to engage in discussions to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion are front and center in all of our decision-making.

GSOC has committed to providing professional support and training for Girl Scout staff in the important area of unconscious bias.

GSOC has committed to providing program opportunities for girls to engage in discussions and exploration of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion). Additional details around new program opportunities in this area will be announced soon.

Each year Girl Scouts of Orange County hosts [Voice for Girls](#) – a vital advocacy event to bring business and community leaders together to discuss important issues impacting the future of our girls.

- This year's topic will focus on *Creating Diverse Workplaces that Fuel Female Ambition* and feature keynote Dean L. Song Richardson, Dean and Chancellor's Professor of Law, UCI School of Law and leading expert on the science of implicit bias. She'll focus on helping organizations expand workplace diversity, so that when the talented and diverse girls we work with are ready to enter the workforce, they are welcomed into inclusive workplaces and equipped with the resources and support to raise their voices and find solutions to the challenges that our nation and our world face.
- Thanks to our sponsors, this year's virtual event on the morning of Friday, September 18th from 9:00-10:00 a.m. is free for all who wish to attend. Register for Voice for Girls [here](#).

#### **4. Why did GSUSA launch a pledge calling for us all to take action to create an anti-racist world?**

GSUSA launched its [pledge to create an anti-racist organization and world](#) and asked its members and supporters to sign it to signify the entire Girl Scout organization's commitment to working for justice and equality—work that is long overdue for Black, Indigenous, Latina, and all girls of color. We recognize this is enormous and ongoing work that is foundational to our promise to serve all girls.

With this pledge, Girl Scouts of the USA and its 111 councils officially commit to using our collective power to help dismantle systemic racism and create a Girl Scout organization that works for all girls, including by ensuring that Black, Indigenous, and girls of color proudly feel their place in Girl Scouting. We have invited our girls, families, volunteers, alums, staff, and other supporters to sign the pledge to commit themselves to taking actions that will make the world a fair and equitable place.

#### **5. What is the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion?**

The CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion™ initiative launched on June 12, 2017 and is the largest CEO-driven business commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion in the workplace. To date, more than 900 CEOs have signed on, agreeing to take action to cultivate environments where diverse experiences and perspectives are welcomed and where employees feel encouraged and comfortable discussing diversity and inclusion. Signatories also commit to supporting other companies in doing this crucial work.

#### **6. What is GSUSA's position on the Black Lives Matter organization?**

Girl Scouts believes Black lives matter and recognizes we all have a role to play in dismantling the systems that fuel racial inequities and injustice—and in creating new systems that work for everyone.

Girl Scouts is a nonpolitical, nonpartisan organization, and we may not align with every position taken by another organization, including some aspects of the Black Lives Matter organization and movement. However, there is no question of our commitment to affirming

the value of Black lives and the eradication of systemic racism in our society. Acknowledging that Black lives matter and advocating for Black lives to matter at every level of society, including within Girl Scouting, is about human rights and is not a political issue. We teach our girls to be a sister to every Girl Scout; it is central to our mission.

**7. What about “all lives matter?” Does saying “Black lives matter” mean GSUSA doesn’t think my White girls’ lives matter?**

Girl Scouts is committed to serving ALL girls. To make the world a better place, we must work together to build anti-racist systems that prioritize equity and inclusion at all levels. Crucial to this work is advocating for those who are among the most marginalized by society, including our Black communities. When we say Black lives matter, GSUSA acknowledges the existence of racism in all its forms and our commitment to dismantling it, including by supporting initiatives that aim to protect and empower Black communities. We understand that we need to advocate for Black lives mattering if we are to reach a point where every person is treated by society as though their life matters.

**8. Will GSUSA be donating any funds to the Black Lives Matter organization or related organizations or causes? Can girl members contribute cookie funds to these organizations and causes?**

As 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, Girl Scouts of the USA and Girl Scout councils cannot solicit financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting and cannot contribute to another nonprofit, such as Black Lives Matter. However, if a Girl Scout troop would like to donate cookie proceeds to Black Lives Matter or related organizations/causes, they can do so.

**9. Does this mean Girl Scouts can wear their vests/sashes in Black Lives Matter rallies and marches? If so, why is it okay now when it hasn’t been okay in the past for girls to wear their uniforms at political events?**

Yes. We support girls standing up for the causes they care about. If a Girl Scout wants to participate in a peaceful protest or march in her uniform, she can do so. As before, Girl Scouts cannot wear their uniforms at political events, such as a rally for a specific political candidate or party—this has not changed. However, we invite girls to take part in civic engagement and wear their uniforms to stand up for causes they believe in. Participating in Black Lives Matter protests is not necessarily an endorsement of any political organization; we see it is an issue of human rights.

**10. Does Girl Scouts/Girl Scouts of Orange County still support the law enforcement community?**

Yes. Girl Scouts take action in their communities in a variety of ways, including by supporting local first responders through the Girl Scout Cookie Program. This has not changed. Girl Scouts saying “Black lives matter” reflects the commitment of Girl Scouts of the USA and its 111 Girl Scout councils to never stop working to create the just and equitable world that every girl, and all of us, deserve.

GSUSA is not taking a position on proposals for police reform.

GSUSA understands we all have a role to play, including law enforcement officers and other first responders, in ensuring our communities are safe for everyone.

### 11. What programming is currently available to girls that focuses on taking civic action to fight racism?

Girl Scouts offers the following badges that promote civic engagement: Public Policy, Inside Government, Netiquette, Finding Common Ground, and Girl Scout Way. In addition, we offer many resources through our nonpartisan [G.I.R.L. Agenda](#) initiative that encourage girls to drive positive social change in their communities and world.

### 12. What other resources are available to share with members of my council?

For girls:

- Grades K–5
  - [Step Up, Stand Up, and Get Involved](#) (PDF)
  - [Take a Stand: A Guide for Kids Who Are Ready to Change the World](#) (PDF)
- Middle school
  - [Step Up, Stand Up, and Get Involved](#) (PDF)
  - [Share Your Passion: A Guide for Tweens Who Are Ready to Change the World](#) (PDF)
- High school
  - [Step Up, Stand Up, and Get Involved](#) (PDF)
  - [Join the Movement: A Guide for Teens Who Are Ready to Change the World](#) (PDF)

For adults:

- [Raising Awesome Girls](#)
  - [Why Tolerance Isn't Working](#)
  - [Help Girls Take Action Against Racism](#)

### 13. What does it mean to be an ally? What is allyship?

It depends who you ask. In a lot of what we're reading these days, [allies and people practicing allyship](#) are described as those who are digging in daily, consciously and consistently, making life choices that oppose oppressive behaviors and systems. They are regularly speaking out against and working to change those behaviors and systems, including as they appear in themselves. And because many of us who desire to act in solidarity with people marginalized by society aren't there yet, describing specifically what we're doing to fight racism and other injustices, rather than claiming a title, may be a better choice.