



Community Connections

To our families, friends and supporters;

This newsletter is unlike any publication JCL has ever produced. Then again, 2020 has been unlike any other year since I arrived here in 1993. It is not full of fun pictures and entertaining stories about the men and women we support at JCL. In fact, there is little about what you will read here that will cheer you up.

This issue results from an invitation made to some employees who wanted to give voice to their pain, fear, passion and hope for a better world for all of us, but especially for themselves and those they so dearly love. No editing, no scripting; just their own words. These are moving, inspiring, poignant, raw and heartbreaking testimonials from some of the most dedicated and caring group of moms, dads, sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles- **all human beings** - that we have the privilege of employing.

2020 has been a difficult year on so many levels. Covid has consumed our lives. Every reader of this issue has lived and struggled with the disruption and anxiety caused by the pandemic. What many of our readers don't directly struggle with, myself included, is what it means to be person of color in today's society. 75% of our employees are women and men of color. This issue of the newsletter is theirs.

It is true that our clients come first and that none of us would be here, at least not at JCL, if it weren't for them. However, fate has brought us together and the truth is we need each other. We are here-intentionally- to help them achieve their best version of themselves. What is less apparent, but no less true, is our clients are here, -albeit unintentionally- to help us be "better angels of our nature".

Therefore, this issue of our newsletter is dedicated to our employees who, every day, set aside their own struggles (or can they?) and carry out their duties to our JCL men and women. They have taken a risk sharing their inner selves. Their stories may be difficult to read but all inspire hope. Thank you for keeping an open mind and listening to them.

Please stay safe and please keep our employees in your thoughts.

Denis Geary, Executive Director



“Black Lives Matter is more than just a movement. It is me and my fear for my life when being pulled over by the police for a minor traffic violation.”

As a black man in this country, oftentimes I feel out of place. I feel like it is a constant struggle to prove I am just as good as my counterparts. Many of the fallen black men and women didn't have an opportunity to show the world they weren't criminals or animals because the media portrays us as such. We are the perceived threat even when no threat exists. I am grateful to work for a company and in an environment that makes me feel included and valued. JCL can speak to their dedication to fair wage practices and equal opportunities for growth. I recall being fired from a job because the boss said, "I didn't smile enough at the patrons". I know this was not the real reason for my termination. But I was young and didn't know how to handle this. I recall another incident at a job where my co-worker was receiving benefits that I was not and my boss did not have a good explanation for this. These situations (among others) could have derailed and discouraged me but I kept pushing forward and fighting for my fair shot in this world. Here at JCL, I have been afforded growth opportunities that otherwise wouldn't exist because of my race. This gives me motivation and confidence that my efforts and work ethic are not in vain. I am being included in conversations that directly impact me and this is important. This speaks to JCL's willingness to listen and provide a forum where people that look like me can speak and be heard. Black Lives Matter is more than just a movement. It is me and my fear for my life when being pulled over by the police for a minor traffic violation. I want to live. The Black Lives Matter movement will hopefully attack policy and ensure the longevity of my race and the human race as a whole.—Andre Rose, Assistant Life Skills Supervisor



“Can my black life & those of my family matter just like your white life?”



What is the first thing that comes to mind when you see these words? Is it, violence, rioting, lootings, burning buildings etc.?

Does injustice, police brutality, inequality, suffering, racism comes to mind at all?

Being a black woman, wife, mother & daughter of black parents, BLM means something entirely different to me. It means, “Can my black life & those of my family *matter* just like your white life?” To *MATTER* to someone is the least you can ask, the very least. To ask an ethnic group to let my life matter to them based on my skin color is most profoundly disparaging. We now live in a world where equality is controversial. People are more outraged over the death of a dog than they are a black man/woman being murdered on camera in the streets. Why does the color of my skin pose a threat to you? Why do I have to work that much harder

to be recognized? Why do I have to prove myself to you? Are we both not of one Race? Human race. We can't walk with Skittles, we can't jog, we can't walk freely in a store, we can't worship in our churches, we can't stand outside of our homes, we can't sleep in our beds, & we can't drive while black. Why? Because the color of my skin is a threat to you.

White America wonders why we kneel, & why we are outraged. Because ALL LIVES can't *MATTER* until it includes BLACK LIVES. We've tried peace, we've tried violence, we've marched, we've protested & still we get no justice. Our men, woman, children are murdered on camera, on TV & yet no one suffers the consequences of their actions. If the tables were turned, it would be much different, because we've seen that too. Hopefully, one day, maybe in the generations to come, black lives will matter because this fight is only beginning. We should matter. BLACK LIVES, *MATTER*.—Stacy Salmon, Life Skills Supervisor

“What I fear is the moral fraying of our society. “

I don't fear the virus. I have a healthy respect for it but don't fear it. What I fear is the moral fraying of our society. The allowance of unequal treatment, marginalization of fellow human beings, the denial of guaranteed rights under the law terrifies and angers me. It is an uncomfortable position to have privileges I did nothing to earn. I am learning this discomfort cannot keep me silent or stagnate me or become complicit in the injustice.

To my brothers and sisters I promise to engage in the conversation, I promise to stand and fight for the rights guaranteed to you at the inception of this country. I promise to call out the gross injustice and maltreatment. I promise to learn. I promise to work towards the eradication of discrimination and racial bias. I promise!!! #BLM — Gloria Carlson, Assistant Executive Director



“There was no way to prepare for this test.”

Doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success is, “Perseverance”, which is in high demand. The past year has been destructive, eye opening and a test of mind, body and soul. Everyone has there own personal life obstacles to face. Then you add a Global Pandemic and social injustice. There was no way to prepare for this test.

Being a Black Father of four boys I find myself trying to find ways to think positive. Every where I looked I'm afraid for their future. I feel my approach with my family is the same approach that can begin the process of making life better. Having a conversation with intention of facing the truth to begin rebuilding. “United we stand divided we fall”, John Dickinson told us many years ago. Let's stand together. Let's build together. Let's be honest. When Mr. Dickinson wrote this times were different, and it still applies to this day. Change and Perseverance will take us a long way. In order to maintain any business you must adjust with the times. This country is past

due for a make over. — Maurice King, Life Skills Instructor

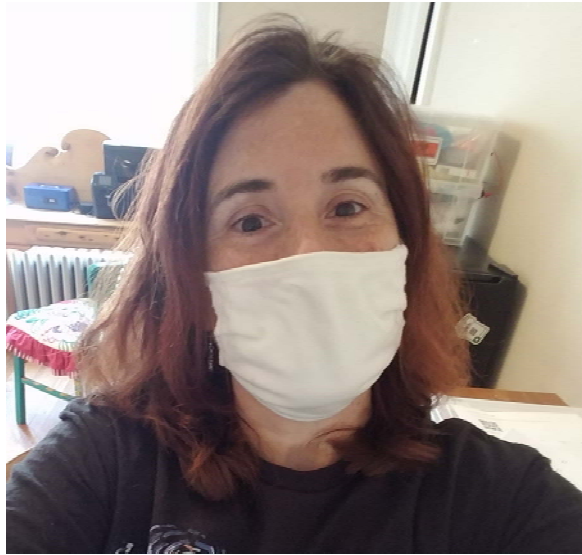


“A letter from a nervous and scared mom.”

I'm a Hispanic mother of a 20 year old young man. When my son was born my heart melted completely when I saw his dark beautiful brown eyes and his beautiful brown skin tone. I never in a million years would have thought that I would be praying for my son's safety every time he opened the doors to my house to go and hang out with his friends or even just to take a walk up to the store. I always told my kids, “Hey if you are in trouble call 911.” I also told them that cops are here to protect and serve our communities but now I feel like I lied to my kids to an extent. Yes there are some good cops out there that will protect and serve our communities, but how do you know which ones are they? I barely sleep at night if my child is not home and every time that phone rings my heart drops. I'm now constantly arguing with my child about wanting to go out at the age of 20 when instead I should just be telling him, “Ok baby have fun and be safe”. My heart is so saddened with the way our world is right now especially when you are raising children with beautiful brown skin tone.—Vanessa Roman, Life Skills Supervisor



“Did I make it known that I understand my white privilege and that I’m willing to speak up and be an ally for people of color?”



The other day a co-worker made a statement to the effect that absolutely nothing good has come out of 2020 thus far. My first instinct was to jump on his bandwagon of complaining how difficult life has been, and how our lives have changed so drastically. Instead I kept my mouth shut and pondered his statement the rest of the day. If I had the chance to go back to that conversation after fully reflecting on life since March until the present I’d like to discuss with him how much 2020 has given us the gift of truly showing up and making a change to become a better person each and every day!

While COVID-19 and Racism are two different viruses, I believe both have similarities in coming up with strategies to help eradicate these pandemics. The CDC recommendations are simple: Socially distance, wash your hands, and wear a mask. Why? To keep both yourself and your

neighbor safe! BLM- Black Lives Matter, again a simple statement that has been ignored for over 400 hundred years and continues to infect and destroy people on a daily basis. Both the guidelines and movement are asking for the same things: Care/Respect your neighbor! As a white immuno-compromised woman I am grateful for these recommendation and I have to regularly check in with myself and ask: “Was the small sacrifice of being uncomfortable keeping my mask on for the past 8 hours and sanitizing a house that was just sanitized 4 hours ago really that bad?”

These small humane protocols allow me to keep my guys, myself and staff safe another day! Or did I check in and have a discussion or just listen to staff or my friends when they want to talk about BLM? Did I make it known that I understand my white privilege and that I’m willing to speak up and be an ally for people of color? Did I set an example for my son that we all were created equal and people should not only be treated as such but also appreciated for their differences? Was I unselfish and mindful that today will be another day where I can make small changes to better a life besides mine? I understand every day is different and will continue to bring its challenges but I know today I’m a better person due to COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter Movement! Both pandemics have forced me to consider others before myself and while it has been heartbreaking, challenging, and an uncomfortable journey thus far! It has also made me a better person than I was yesterday! — Nicole Monaco, Life Skills Supervisor

An excerpt from “I want to live”, by John Denver

“We are standing all together
Face to face and arm in arm
We are standing on the threshold of a dream
No more hunger no more killing
No more wasting life away
It is simply an idea
And I know its time has come

I want to live I want to grow
I want to see I want to know
I want to share what I can give

.....I want to be I want to live”