



March 15, 2021

Dearest Aloha Community:

We want to take this opportunity to bring you up to date on our diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

Our Call to Action

The Aloha Foundation Board of Trustees and leadership team have taken a close look at how we can become a better community for all participants—current and future. We are committed to equity across the organization and are working to build sustainable policies and practices in alignment with that goal.

Our Community Engagement

In June 2020, we formed a seven-member DEI Task Force comprised of two Board members, the Executive Director, and five current and former counselors or Aloha Foundation staff ([DEI web page](#)). From June-November 2020, the Task Force met regularly to discuss equity issues at our summer camps.

The Task Force convened 150 counselors virtually for two listening sessions—one exclusively with counselors of color and one with recent counselors. The current and former staff who participated provided invaluable insight about their own experiences and those of other campers and staff. Many individuals agreed to share their stories anonymously through our Humans of Aloha social media series, which ran from July through December.

The Aloha Foundation also convened more than 200 people for our first-ever community-wide Town Hall featuring testimonies from counselors and keynote remarks by Martin and Arndrea King, and their daughter Yolanda, a current Hiver.

Based on the key themes from the listening sessions and the Town Hall, our Task Force formed five Working Groups, and invited all members of the Aloha community to participate. Each Working Group ultimately included 5-15 people and focused on one of these five areas: 1) staff training, 2) counseling strategies including Success Counseling, 3) singing and songbooks, 4) defining the concept of the “child’s world” we create at camp and how it intersects with the complex world beyond camp, and 5) research on Mamie Cochran and her role in the founding of our camps. These robust conversations resulted in program-focused recommendations to the Aloha Foundation leadership staff.

Next Steps

Following completion of the Working Group recommendations, the Aloha Foundation leadership staff began collaborating, across programs and camps, to create and implement plans for improvement. To date, these teams have convened, synthesized the recommendations, and are in the process of developing specific practices to implement by the time we welcome counselors and campers to the Alohas this summer. For example, we are revising the staff training program for summer 2021 with updated content and consistency across programs, so that staff are supported and prepared for the summer ahead. Program leaders will continue to draw on the experiences and insights of Task Force members and the broader Aloha community as they develop and finalize their plans across programs in the coming months.

This spring, we will be hiring a new DEI Manager who will focus on implementing and evaluating changes for summer 2021 and offer expertise as we develop the Aloha Foundation's long-term DEI goals. This individual will serve on a contract basis for 6-8 months—an approach that will allow us to establish our long-term goals. Our aim is to hire a permanent team member who has the experience and skillset that best match our needs in the years ahead.

The Foundation staff will continue to consult with experts, members of our community, and our Board, to help ensure that we continue to learn and improve.

The staff will report regularly to the Board on progress and challenges that arise in connection with this work to guide strategic discussions, make these efforts sustainable, and continue to bring forward changing dynamics in our society that affect equity.

We are grateful to everyone who has stepped up and raised their voice to help us improve. We are also grateful to previous leaders, supporters, campers, counselors, and parents who together have created these fun, wonderful camps, which mean so much to all of us.

With your continued help, engagement, and care, the Aloha Foundation will live up to its most deeply held values for generations to come.

Aloha,

Verna Cleveland, Trustee and Chair of the DEI Task Force
Elizabeth Grayer, Chair of the Board of Trustees
Vanessa Riegler, Executive Director