



A Message from Co-President Brian Burns

Racism

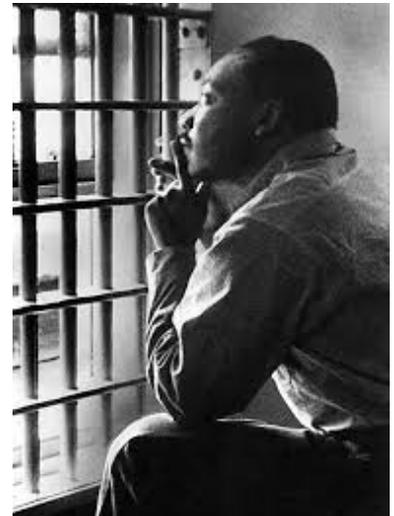
Remember when the conversation in the world revolved around a virus, whose presence suddenly and unexpectedly changed the way we live our lives?

Remember life before that, only a little more than 3 months ago?

For me, it's 'yes' to the first question, and 'just barely' to the second. Now what dominates my thoughts, and likely many of yours, is the pain of institutional racism, social unrest, privilege, and justice. It feels to me like the world is changing.

I have a confession. I first read Dr. Martin Luther King's *Letter from Birmingham Jail* last week. Yes, LAST WEEK!! Somehow through 47 years of living in the USA, a public education, and a graduate level education I have never been exposed to this document. I suppose there are a lot of factors to blame, including my own lack of curiosity, and I deeply regret this loss. I am a case example of white privilege and how easy it is to be ignorant of problems that do not directly affect my life. If you have not read MLK's letter, or listened to it, please do. It is insightful, articulate, reasonable, and brilliant. Dr. King is writing to a group of religious leaders at the time, in response to their accusing him of being too radical. He could be writing it to all of us. And it is just as relevant and likely accurate today as it was 50 years ago. Most unfortunately for Black Americans.

So, as I think about this topic, I am more keenly aware that as a community CLI is predominantly White and European-American. Our membership is representative of only a part of the communities and people we hope to work with and for. I am not sure if this will change, but



I can't see how we don't try. We possess valuable skills and knowledge that can make a difference in the world – resolving conflict in a healthy and a humane way. Our White communities need it. Our Black communities need it. Our political leaders need it. Our law enforcement/public safety system needs it. But we cannot do it well if our Institute does not better represent all the colors of the community.

I invite you to brainstorm with me as many options for action each of us can take in this important direction. Here's a start:

- Volunteer on at least one **Sliding Scale Fee** Collaborative case each year, which are more likely to represent client who are hampered by cycles of poverty.
- Invite people of color as speakers at our trainings and learning sessions.
- Review your online and marketing material. How would a person of color perceive what he or she views?
- Read or listen to material published by people of color.
- Commit to attending or supporting in some way events that support Black lives, including memorials, parades, Rondo Days in St. Paul?

May we all do better.

2020 Co-President CLI,

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Links included in the article:

[Dr. Martin Luther King's Letter from Birmingham Jail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_from_Birmingham_Jail)

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