



Racial Justice and the Role of Socially Responsible Forestry

This is not a time to stay silent. The grave injustices and racism in our country demand a response. The Forest Stewards Guild mission calls for ecologically, economically, and socially responsible forestry. To be socially responsible means acknowledging that we live in a system based on racism and inequity – too often exemplified by gross injustices against Black, Latino, and Native Americans. It also means acknowledging that the fields of conservation and forestry have not been welcoming to people of color.

As a forester, I'm trained to understand ecological patterns and processes and feel ill-equipped to even comment on systemic inequality and the five centuries of racism that created it. But the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and far too many others show we're not doing enough. I must use the privilege I've inherited because of my identity to make change for the better. Even as the Guild has expanded opportunities and addressed inequities in our work, I am consistently reminded of how much more is needed for true change.

I need to listen. The Guild's principles require a humble approach and continuous learning. For me, that means actively listening to marginalized communities and people of color, hearing their stewardship insights, and getting out of the way so they can lead.

I need to speak up. Black lives matter. Black lives matter to me, to the Forest Stewards Guild, and to our vision for ecological stewardship across the country.

I need to act. Guild staff have identified immediate steps, and we are taking sustained action to do more in building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community of stewards. We will share these actions with our members and encourage all of you to engage in dialogue with us to offer new ideas, improve existing efforts, and identify resources to help us be as effective as we can.

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