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## At PAC – Black Lives Matter

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At Positive Approach to Care® (PAC) we strive to be a company that supports and includes everyone involved in the world of dementia. We attempt to seek out and find out about others and adapt our approach, offerings, and care routines to match different cultures, heritages, personal life stories, personal preferences and abilities, and age cohorts. We believe that through an appreciation of each human being and their history, story, and heritage we can more fully support them as they live life with dementia. We believe that helping their families and friends better appreciate what is happening to them, can and does change how life happens.

In all that we do, we are committed to exploring in what ways our perspectives and points of view impact others and either enhance or impede communication and interactions. Dementia certainly affects all races and all people in one way or another. And yet, there is absolutely no denying that institutionalized racial policies and biases have negatively impacted people of color in so many ways for so many years. It has altered whether dementia is noticed, how it is detected, what happens after it is identified, the amount and type of care that is available, who is available to help in what ways, what family members think and do, what the community does and does not do, how other residents in care communities behave toward the person of color living with them, and very importantly, whether help is even sought, and how and when that assistance is provided.

We know that stress and distress is a huge contributor to the risk of developing dementia. To me, what has been done and continues to be done to people of color in work situations, living situations, economic situations, and health care situations simply magnifies the problems when we add in the condition called dementia. Throughout my forty plus years of clinical practice I have witnessed first-hand systems that are institutionally structured to keep people of color from receiving the same quality and variety of opportunities, services, and options provided to people who are *white*. I have also seen efforts on the parts of selected programs, leaders, and organizations attempt to address those issues and modify those biases. It is certainly possible to begin to address the challenges, but only if we openly acknowledge them and come together to explore them and address them.

If there was ever a place and time that we need to see things differently, in my mind, it is here and now. At PAC we do believe that there has been injustice done to people of color, due simply to the color of their skin, the location of their homes, or where their families came from. There are biases in the legal and medical systems. There are far too many essential health care workers who are not being raised up and recognized for their valiant and repeated efforts to provide the best care that they can. The phrase *doctors and nurses* gets used far more often than *aides, food service personnel, housekeeping personnel, and grounds and maintenance personnel* in messages of thanks and recognition of risks being taken.

At PAC we have a long way to go to be the best we can be in addressing racial, social, cultural, legal, and economic inequalities. There are five statements I would make:

1. I am sorry all of this has happened; it should never have happened! It has caused such harm. For what I have contributed to or allowed to happen, through being unaware or inactive, I offer a personal apology.
2. This is a very hard thing to address and attempt to overcome and change, and yet I am committed to doing what I can to make changes that can help make a difference, whenever and wherever I can.
3. Our company is not currently adequately employing people of color with life and work experiences to help us better address the needs of people of color who are living with dementia and their families and care providers. We have much to learn about how to improve and are not sure how to begin to better serve this community with resources and services that are of importance or have value to these individuals.
4. There are multiple problems in the world of dementia that are directly related to race and cultural issues. I will continue to seek ways in which to better address the ugliness that happens when people who are living with dementia demonstrate racial biases or make negative or derogatory statements about other ethnic or cultural groups in ways that are not helpful, ugly, or painful.
5. I firmly believe that each life matters in the world of dementia. I commit myself to seeking out relationships and opportunities to explore racial and cultural differences and unique features that impact care and services, so that challenges are addressed rather than ignored.

The phrase, ***no care about me, without me***, takes on special meaning as we seek to better serve people of color, receive care from people of color, and try to figure out what needs to change so that life improves for each person who is involved. At PAC, we hope to be part of the conversations, collaborations, and solutions.