

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a Black man, died in police custody in Minneapolis, Minnesota (USA). His death was the catalyst for worldwide demonstrations against racism and in support of the Black community. During the demonstrations, Sweet Adelines International released a version of the following statement on social media.

We want to thank our members for their candid comments and for bringing up this important issue. Racism is something we wholeheartedly condemn, and Sweet Adelines International is committed to addressing racial and other forms of inequity not only with our words but with our actions. We acknowledge that we have made mistakes in communicating our intention and commitment but please know that the organization feels strongly about being in alignment with our guiding principle surrounding diversity and inclusion:

Guiding Principle

We celebrate our differences as essential to the rich harmony that unites us. As we recognize barbershop's African American origins and learn from our exclusionary past toward women of color, we reject discrimination and unwaveringly strive toward greater awareness, openness, and understanding of each other.

Sweet Adelines International openly recognizes our racist history, a past that saw the organization ban membership for women of color. It is an ugly truth we acknowledged at our 2016 convention, and since then we have worked — in videos and in *The Pitch Pipe* — to educate our members about this truth and how we are working to use the history as a catalyst for our inclusion and equity work of today. We believe it's important to be clear about what happened in the past, because racism and discrimination were unacceptable then and they are something we will not tolerate now.

We are taking steps NOW to make this an organization that celebrates our differences and makes ALL its members feel welcomed. We're doing that in many ways, from the creation of our Diversity and Inclusion Task Force to the development of a comprehensive toolkit that soon will be available as a resource for chapters to give members the tools they need to help welcome members who come from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and people from varied religions.

We've also heard your feedback regarding the need to ban racist lyrics, and we promise we are working on that too. The Judge Specialists have written new language surrounding contestable songs for the Judging Category Description Book. These revisions are under final review by the Judge Specialists, the Education Direction Committee and the International Board of Directors. We expect to have the final reviews completed by July 2020. Until the revised information is available, please refer to the article below about inclusive music selection from *The Pitch Pipe*, October 2016.

We agree with our members that it's important to continue addressing racism within our organization. It's not always easy work, but we are determined to make Sweet Adelines International an organization that all of you are proud of and feel welcome in.



Sweet Adelines
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Additional resources can be found on our website at:
www.sweetadelines.com/education/diversity-and-inclusion