



President's Message

*International System Safety Society President
Russ Mitchell*

Committing to an Inclusive Society

Dear Colleagues,

We are professionals dedicated to the safety of systems, products and services. Our hope is to make these elements safe for all who use them. In my mind, this vision is agnostic regarding color and culture. Our very work effort is offered because we hold life and health as a fundamental value underlying our society.

We have recently witnessed disturbing events in the U.S., in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic that we have all been coping with for months now. The murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor have made it unbearably apparent to me that racial injustice is very much a reality in the U.S. — and that it continues to plague the lives of people of color. Our membership includes people of color who are our colleagues and practitioners of safety, committed to our same vision. Our ranks are inclusive of race, color and gender. I am personally committed to ensuring their experience is professional, engaging, enriching, and free of both racism and genderism.

So, I am taking this opportunity to share my personal stance. I want to be anti-racist. I believe there is more to do than simply not behaving contemptuously to anyone based upon skin tone, gender, culture or personal beliefs. I believe that part of being anti-racist is about *inquisitively taking interest in others' perspectives*, and I welcome your feedback regarding a unified Society position about how we can engage and overcome racism, wherever it exists.

To my colleagues of color who are system safety practitioners, please reach out to engage me in efforts that influence our industry in ways that institution-

alize improvement, with insightful approaches that enable correction, and with opportunities to measure progress. The unrest in streets both in America and around the world is not unexpected, given the systemic, long-term inequities many of you have had to endure. This is an unconscionable situation. I stand by you, and I want to convey my compassion whenever you are fearful for your own safety. In light of current

events, I also want to share my personal commitment to work for your appropriate and rightful professional opportunity so that your practice is impactful and satisfying.

The International System Safety Society membership consists of a wealth of diverse and talented individuals from a variety of cultures, employed by entire industries and various institutions. Recently, you have probably been sent messaging by the leaders of your own industries and businesses reaffirming their commitment to inclusion

and diversity, and their strong opposition to all forms of discrimination, including racism.

On behalf of the International System Safety Society as a whole, I strongly emphasize that we already uphold those same values and have for decades. I ask you to reach out to me with any affirmation of this commitment so that I can confidently represent that we are engaged in delivering a safe, wholesome work environment that appreciates, welcomes, protects and rewards people of color.

As president, I would like to create and implement policies that deliver solutions that enable and empower practitioners of color. I want there to be no doubt that, as a professional society, we have influ-

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enced industry to provide fair and respectful opportunities for all of our members and have addressed the current disparities that many members experience due to the color of their skin.

As a professional society, I am confident that we aspire to create a safe environment to protect us all against discriminatory practices. Let us all strive to focus on what we each can do, and what we as a community can do, to make things better for people of color so that we can make positive, measurable change. Let us open a dialog to help one another better understand the range of perspectives we bring to the table. Please reach out to me or any EC member you feel comfortable talking to.

If you are unsure how to personally examine your own behaviors, or are interested in expanding your perspective, I have found the following YouTube content helpful:

- The series “Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man,” with Emmanuel Acho

- “Can We Talk?” by Kenston Henderson Sr., presented at TEDxDayton

The following books are useful and insightful:

- *How to be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *So, You Want to Talk about Race* by Ijeoma Oluo

We *will* get through this. We have the opportunity to influence the design and eventual fielding and operation of one of the most challenging projects and exciting scientific experiments of our time. We work to make life safer for all; it's literally our job. Let's make sure we are committed to making society safe and fair for all — and let's work together to make society safer for *all* of our colleagues.

Best Regards,
Russell Mitchell, C.S.P., F.I.S.S.S
ISSC President