

“Where do we go from here?” A Letter from Girls Inc.
National *(June 4, 2020)*

As we all reflect on where we are as a country, it is important to ask ourselves what role we can and must play to create positive change. At the forefront of everything we do at Girls Inc. are our girls. It is because of them that we are so dedicated to working toward both short- and long-term solutions.

One of the many powerful moments from the protests and marches has been an **emotional exchange** between three generations, centered on what role the next generation will play in responding to the historic problem of racial injustice. The pain caused by longstanding racial and social inequity is heart-wrenching, as is the recognition that what we’ve been doing to improve this situation has not worked—and that we will need to come up with a new, better way.

We have been inspired to see young people over these past weeks mobilize and work to enact change. They have great energy and determination, and we can learn a great deal from their perspectives and their efforts to create a more equitable and just society. However, we cannot simply hand over the responsibility to them before their time. They are great partners, but the generations currently in leadership positions cannot shirk the responsibility we have to pass along a world that’s in better shape than what we’ve managed thus far.

Girls, and all young people, are powerful and tremendous leaders when given the opportunity to realize their full potential. As they contend with the loss of school—a valuable lifeline and source of

safety and support—and deal with the current unrest in our nation, and the everyday realities of discrimination and injustice, we at Girls Inc. are committed as ever to our mission and the work to break down the barriers that stand in their way. We remain focused on ensuring that girls have the crucial supports they need to succeed.

1. The right relationships—to let them know they are not alone, expose them to new pathways, and encourage them to take risks.
2. Encouragement to develop and use their voices—to stand up for their beliefs, advocate for others, and influence and improve their communities.
3. Positive self-image—to make positive choices, have confidence in their abilities, and know they are worthy and valuable.
4. Intellectual confidence—to be curious about the world, think outside the box, and embrace life-long learning.

Change should not be entirely the responsibility of young people, however powerful they may be. We have a moral imperative to do everything we can to improve what will be their future.

Join us in taking action. Here are some ways:

Contact state and local leaders, sign a petition, donate, volunteer, learn, and find other ways to **support racial justice and equity**.

Vote and engage civically. One of the most effective ways we change the conditions for girls is to change local and national leadership, and the practices and policies that exacerbate racial

and socioeconomic inequity. (And help ensure **fair and safe elections** in November.)

Volunteer your own or your organization's expertise and support to ensure the strength of your local youth-serving organizations. Click here to **find a Girls Inc.** in your local area.

Lend your voice to the advocacy efforts locally and nationally in support of the nonprofits whose services have seamlessly supported your community, particularly the youngest and most vulnerable members.

Look for opportunities to **mentor** the young people in your area whose future may be tenuous, but whose potential is limitless.

Lastly, listen to young people and to each other. Create space for and connect with those most affected by the problem to develop solutions, together. The change we seek will involve each and every one of us.