

DEIRJ Language Proposal

Originated by

Girl Scouts of the USA National Board on recommendation of the DEIRJ Board Advisory Committee

Proposal

To amend the Preamble of the Constitution by inserting the words “and anti-racism” after the word “pluralism” in both places where that word occurs. If approved the test would read as follows:

Current Wording	Proposed Amendment	If Adopted, Will Read
DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM Girl Scouts advance diversity and pluralism in our Movement and in the communities in which we live.	DIVERSITY, PLURALISM <u>AND ANTI-RACISM</u> Girl Scouts advance diversity, pluralism, and anti-racism in our Movement and in the communities in which we live.	DIVERSITY, PLURALISM AND ANTI-RACISM Girl Scouts advance diversity, pluralism, and anti-racism in our Movement and in the communities in which we live.

Proposal Summary

This proposal amends the Preamble to our Constitution to emphasize our existing commitment to “diversity” and “pluralism,” as Girl Scout values. It underscores our dedication to the work of anti-racism as a fundamental principle of the Girl Scout Movement and its sustainability.

Understanding that racism involves addressing institutional policies and practices of society that shape the cultural beliefs and values that directly and indirectly exclude communities based on race¹, the updated language will create a comprehensive approach to not just attract and *include* people of different backgrounds in our Movement (“diversity” and “pluralism”), but to actively work to dismantle the structures that preclude their full participation (“anti-racism”).

The amendment strengthens and updates the references to “diversity” and “pluralism,” while naming and reflecting the contemporary language, actions, and priorities of Girl Scouts to actively work in opposition of racist structures (“anti-racism”).

As we prepare to develop the leaders of tomorrow, our success will be determined by the ability to create pathways towards full inclusion and belonging across the Movement.

¹ Anti-Racism Resources. (2022). Retrieved from Projects at Harvard
<https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/antiracismresources/allies>

Dedicating this line in our Constitution not only to reinforces our anti-racist values but signals our sustaining commitment to this work and paves the way for girls in all historically excluded communities to be a part of this Movement. As we know, the structural barriers created by racism are the foothold and foundation for societal effects experienced by other marginalized communities. Within those communities, race is one—in many cases the primary—factor, in determining how individuals are affected.

This amendment is urgent, timely, and important as it seeks to support the sustainability of decades long Movement-wide efforts made by our colleagues, volunteers, and Girl Scouts.

In proposing this Constitutional amendment, it is the intent of the National Board to codify in governing documents our commitment to racial equity. In our Anti-Racism Pledge, Girl Scouts of the USA has stated:

We will do our part to dismantle systemic racism. We recognize that this is far from easy or fast work, but we are Girl Scouts—we believe in sisterhood, justice, and fairness—so we are in it for the long haul. We take action when we see a need and we live by our Girl Scout Law, which demands we seek racial equity for everyone.²

Background:

As a century-old institution with traditions woven into the fabric of every residential zip code, we have a complex historical relationship of race and equity within the Girl Scout Movement.

In the early years of our Movement, girls and women of color faced the same limitations in our Movement as they did in the rest of society. Our troops were segregated until the Movement took a step in dismantling the system of inequity that existed for Black and brown girls in the organization.

The very first African American Girl Scout troupe assembled in 1917, just five years after Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low started the organization in Savannah, Georgia. It remained segregated until the 1950’s, when the organization made a national effort to desegregate *ALL* Girl Scout troops. This non-compromising attitude and commitment to that mission is what made Dr. King describe these brave young women as “a force for desegregation” in 1956.³

² GSUSA Anti-Racism Pledge

³ Ebony Magazine, March 9, 2012

In the 1950s Dr. Gloria Dean Randle Scott served as the President of the Negro Girl Scout Senior Planning board and in 1975 she became the first Black National President of the Girl Scouts. One year later, 1976, Ms. Frances Hesselbein became CEO of GSUSA. Ms. Hesselbein served as CEO until 1990. During that time, she was a champion for inclusivity and diversity and the strength it brought to our Movement.

Throughout her tenure, Ms. Hesselbein spearheaded the creation of groundbreaking programmatic resources on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) for the Movement. Partnering with the National Urban League, Ms. Hesselbein was able to engage consultants to support our diversity journey. She not only wanted any girl—of any background—to be able to find herself in our handbooks but took the work further to ensure equitable spaces so that girls of color felt included in every facet of the Movement. As a result of Ms. Hesselbein’s efforts, *membership for girls of color* tripled during her tenure as CEO.

Over the course of the next three decades, our equity work has continued. GSUSA and councils across the Movement have established diversity, equity, and inclusion teams, engaged in programmatic and process updates, and have provided staff and volunteer trainings.

In 2020, Girl Scouts responded to the call for racial justice in communities across the country by reinforcing that diversity, equity, and inclusion are valued by the Girl Scout Movement. Through [our Anti-Racism Pledge](#), GSUSA vowed to take action to support Black girls, their families, and their communities making Girl Scouting one of the first youth serving organizations to publicly commit to becoming an anti-racist organization. Our pledge then and now is to ensure all girls and their families have a place in Girl Scouting and our commitment to anti-racism will enable this.

In 2020, GSUSA formed a Board Advisory Committee and a Movement-wide Steering Committee, comprised of national board members, GSUSA staff, and Girl Scout council CEOs. This group is helping guide and prioritize how we embed diversity, equity, inclusion and racial justice (DEIRJ) in everything we do. Experts were commissioned to conduct a comprehensive audit of programs, policies, and practices as well as understand the Girl Scout experiences of members across the country. The results of this audit will inform our collective long-term DEIRJ objectives as we work to unite as one around this work. We have the opportunity to extend the work that has been done by each facet of the Movement and co-create a unified approach to which all members can contribute.

Research shows⁴ that organizations equipped with a wide range of voices and perspectives are better able to innovate, take risks, solve problems creatively, and turn challenges into opportunities. Therefore, given the ever-increasing diversity of our communities, creating a culture that embraces equity through the lens of anti-racism will be vital for us to continue to exist, grow, and be relevant to all girls in the nation.

This proposal is the next step in our Movement's journey to achieving our highest aspirations as a place to nurture all girls and their ambitions. Our ardent support to advance diversity, pluralism, and anti-racism in our Movement and in the communities in which we live demonstrates our commitment to make the world a better place. In doing so, we take heed to our former national CEO's call to action:

"We must take steps to address these inequalities. I have worked my entire life as a passionate advocate for inclusion and diversity, and we as a society still need to change."

Frances Hesselbein
Leader to Leader Fall 2020
"Battling Racial Injustice"

Financial Impact Statement

While this proposal does not have an immediate financial impact, future decisions based on activating our Movement's commitment to anti-racism may require financial investments that will be considered during the normal planning and budgeting processes.

Recommendation of the National Board

The board recommends approval of this constitutional amendment for the reasons stated above. The NCS Advisory Team supports the proposal.

⁴ Tsusaka, M., Krentz, M. Reeves, M. "The Business Imperative of Diversity." Boston Consulting Group. June 19, 2019