

From the St. Louis Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/stlouis/news/2020/06/11/commentary-end-racism-with-an-inclusive-view-at-a.html>

Commentary: End racism with an inclusive view at a young age

As America wrestles with the impact of racism, Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois focuses on the solution. Children often learn racism at home. When girls join Girl Scouts, they see volunteers model respect for all, inclusivity and fairness. In Girl Scouts, girls of all races have equal opportunities to lead, set goals and achieve them. They work together on service projects, learn entrepreneurship and have fun together.



In February, Girl Scouts and Girl Guides around the world celebrated the diversity in our movement on our annual Thinking Day. Girls in 150 countries reflected on how to put equity and inclusion into practice. Throughout the year, Girl Scout leaders ensure girls of all races, ethnicities and abilities are included in activities and treated fairly.

As a female African American leader, I see tremendous value in getting to know people of other cultures and races because understanding is the key to ending racism. My dream is that we all accept that people are people, no matter what color a person's skin is, where they were born, or what religion they belong to. We have similar needs and desires. We all want to live in peace, make a decent living and raise healthy families.

Girl Scouts arms girls with the courage, confidence and character to be leaders in their schools, communities and careers. Some may become leaders of the next generation's fight to end the impact of racism.

GIRL SCOUTS OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

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I care deeply about ending racism because I grew up in the Deep South. My father was a sharecropper in rural South Carolina who died when I was a child. My mother was a strong, optimistic woman who worked as a school custodian. She wanted better for her 14 children. So, she talked the school administration into allowing her children to attend the white high school. We lived on the white side of the tracks and were decidedly different because of our mother.

My first assignment in my Girl Scout career was in North Dakota, a place with few Black people. I like to say country music star Charley Pride and I were the only two Black people there. My 26 years in North Dakota built bridges. My colleagues, Girl Scout volunteers, friends and neighbors learned that I am a lot like them.

Loretta Graham is CEO of the Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois.