



Dear Colleagues,

February is 'Black History Month', designated as such to honor the African American range of notable and often unrecognized experiences, struggles and achievements throughout history and into modern day. There is a great deal to be celebrated, as the achievements and contributions of the black community to America and American Society are immense and as much a contributor to our societal fabric as any part of the melting pot we call America.

This year's theme for Black History Month is: "The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity". I'm sure intended nobly to cause reflection on the importance of family and self-identity, as well and to celebrate diversity in the black community and our society at large. Quite a lofty theme when considering how the black family has been fractured, marginalized, stereotyped, vilified and thus degraded.

My personal focus of discussion, action and celebration in terms of this year's theme is; What can we do? How do we support family in the black community? How do we create opportunity, improve education and reduce those things that tear families apart? How do we encourage the re-emergence of the strong family culture in the black community? How do we make the future celebration of Black History Month truly a family affair? These are questions each of us need to ask ourselves and work to find our own answers, in order to bring about meaningful change.

Black History is American History, truth be told. As much a part of who we are as any segment of our society. To be able to truly celebrate American History, there must come a day when we find it unthinkable that the amount of melanin in one's skin, the shape of one's eyes, or one's gender matter more than the unique identities each of us as complex human beings bring to our shared community.

Quoting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., *"The time is always right to do what is right"*.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Edick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "E".

Paul Edick
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer
February 17, 2021