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### Unity is the Key

We are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and there are still things in America that evidently need work. The horrific event that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia is proof that some beliefs and practices are still very much embedded in America's soil. To be specific; racism, discrimination, and laws and policies that preserve inequities. When will communities join together and say enough is enough? It is past time for people of every race, gender, and age to make a final stand against those who try to sustain oppression. Unity is the only cure for this nasty disease.

The type of unity that could solve most of America's issues is one that is genuine, persistent, and intentional. Not the type people take part in because of convenience. A united group, including compassionate citizens and individuals from all walks of life, working together will silence conversations that reek of division and disharmony. A great example of the power unity can have is the Civil Rights Movement which lasted from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s.

The Civil Rights Movement was formed to achieve civil rights that were equal to whites including equal opportunity housing, employment, education, the right to vote, equal access to public facilities, and the right to be free of racial discrimination. This type of unity led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voters Right Act of 1965. People of all backgrounds tirelessly worked with each other to put a stop to the wrong-doings of biased figures in power. This framework of togetherness was extremely powerful and obviously effective.

Darlington County First Steps understands the importance of unity as it is the foundation of all that we do. One of our core values is community engagement which requires us to build long term relationships with funders, individuals, parents, community partners, and other stakeholders, ensuring maximum benefits to the families and communities we serve. With the help of individuals that sincerely care about children and families in Darlington County, DCFS is able to address issues in education, family-wellbeing, and health. We cannot be great as a county or country if we don't work alongside each other to end generational cycles of poverty and inequities. Real change is a result of true unity which starts at the community level.

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Change will never happen until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are affected." America could achieve far more than before if the concept of unity is accepted and embraced by everyone. There is no better time than now to be energized and motivated to create change.

While you read the paper or watch the news in complete dismay at the current state of America, ask yourself these things:

What power do I have to change injustices in my community?

How can I work with others to better my community?

Then, discover the answers and be the change you wish to see.