

An Open Letter To:

THE BOURBON & AMERICAN WHISKEY INDUSTRY



For the past two weeks, our country has had to face the ugliness of racism, injustice, and police brutality head on. We've witnessed demonstrations taking place in all 50 states, 18 countries and throughout social media. Last Tuesday, we applauded businesses and brands across industry sectors that joined these demonstrations in support by participating in #BlackOutTuesday, issuing Corporate Statements to their employees and constituents, and donating money towards organizations fighting for equality, justice, and to eradicate racism in this country.

While applauding companies that took a bold stance in standing in solidarity, we also kept note of which companies and brands didn't. By and large, the Bourbon and American Whiskey Industry has remained silent all week.

Where were you?

It is known that African Americans spend at least 3.5 Billion dollars on wine, spirits, and tobacco annually. Our demographic over-indexes in spending and is a major source of revenue that the brands and the whiskey community benefit from and rely on. African Americans have long supported this industry - from the very beginning. We have made your barrels. We have built your rickhouses. We have harvested your corn. We have bottled your product. We have played every role except one of leadership to make this industry what is today. And even with that, we purchase (and collect) your products, we visit your distilleries, and we use our influence to share our love for Bourbon and American Whiskey with our families, friends, and networks.

**Your silence over the past two weeks has not gone unnoticed.
In fact, it's deafening.**

As a Society with over 17,000 members, we insist you openly and publicly stand with the millions of voices demanding change in this country. We need to know, and we need you to show that you care. We also need tangible action to take place within our industry to address issues of racial stereotypes and biases, lack of diversity and inclusion, and the erasure of our significant contributions in building up this industry so that we are never faced with these issues in the future again.



We insist on the implementation of permanent programs that foster more inclusive and diverse environments within your organizational structures and marketing practices.

We insist on additional funding for targeted marketing campaigns for consumers of color.

We insist on a firm financial commitment to developing a pipeline for diverse talent to enter the industry, and to create measurable protocols that provide opportunities for advancement once diverse talent enters the industry.

Finally, we demand financial and physical support of the initiatives and programs that are being brought forth to make Diversity and Inclusion a cemented part of the Bourbon and American Whiskey Industry, and not just a temporary gesture that doesn't take a permanent hold.

As protests and demonstrations continue to happen across our world, it is safe to say that this is not just a moment; this is a movement. One that you must be a part of.

Will you join us?

Samara Rivers

CEO/Founder of Black Bourbon Society

Armond Davis

COO of Black Bourbon Society