



National Speleological Society Press Release *For Immediate Release*

CONTACT INFORMATION:

The National Speleological Society
6001 Pulaski Pike, Huntsville, AL 35810

Geary Schindel
NSS President

Nathan Farrar
Chair of the
NSS Directorate

Amanda Willis
NSS PR Division Chief

NSS Diversity Committee
Brienne Jameson, Co-Chair
Kara Dittmer Savvas, Co-Chair
Sonia Meyer, Member

RELEASE DATE:

June 9, 2020

The National Speleological Society Stands in Solidarity

NSS Headquarters, Huntsville, AL – These past few months have been difficult for us all. Our Society at large is missing our caving community, we have struggled with health and finances due to COVID-19, and the recent repeated events of injustice have stirred the world. Our NSS community is deeply disturbed by the far-too-long list of black lives unjustly taken. These all-too-often occurring injustices reflect the deeply rooted systemic racism of our country. We, the National Speleological Society, wish to extend our condolences to the black community for the pain, anger, fear and frustrations that are renewed with each death and never allowed to heal.

The NSS does not track race or ethnicity of its members, but anecdotally, we are not a reputedly diverse organization. The NSS must grow in diversity, represent our local communities, and be inclusive to ALL—regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age, gender, or other identifiers. Today, we address our black community because in a world where unjust black deaths are commonplace—we hear you, we see you, and we publicly state that **Black Lives Matter**.

Racism is a reality for the black, indigenous, and people of color in our country. The time has come to listen and seek to understand experiences different than our own. To be dismissive ends the conversation before it can begin. The NSS is committed to identifying and dismantling systems and behaviors within our own Society that could be harmful. We commit the NSS to making sure our national events, online communities, and volunteer workspaces are safe, both physically and psychologically, for all. We strongly encourage NSS Regions and Internal Organizations (IOs) to make the same commitment.

To reach these goals, we will:

- Finalize the NSS Code of Conduct and present it at this year's Congress of Grottos to be voted on at the summer Board of Governors meeting.
- Provide diversity, equity and inclusion framework for IOs to use, which will include membership growth strategies, education, training, outreach, and opportunities for dialogue through the Diversity Committee and Membership Committee by 2021 summer Board of Governors meeting.

- Work actively to invite more black and other underrepresented identities to the caving world and support their leadership growth.

What you can do:

- Listen with kindness and compassion
- Volunteer for the Diversity Committee, Membership Committee, and/or Code of Conduct Committee (contact@caves.org)
- Choose to lead with curiosity and compassion by educating yourself AND those around you: watch a documentary on black history to celebrate Juneteenth (6/19/2020) in solidarity with black Americans.

Today, we want each of you to know that we stand in solidarity with our caving community.

###

The National Speleological Society with more than 7,000 members and 250 grottos (chapters), the National Speleological Society is the largest organization in the world working every day to further the exploration, study, and protection of caves and their environments, and foster fellowship among cavers.

For over 70 years, the National Speleological Society has promoted safe and responsible caving practices, effective cave and karst management, speleology, and conservation. Our members are bound together by their love of caves and caving and their desire to learn about the underground wilderness and protect it for future generations.

NSS membership offers worldwide caver camaraderie and networking opportunities and access to information about discoveries and developments in caving, speleology, equipment, and techniques through our publications, annual conventions, grottos and other internal organizations, and NSS-sponsored projects, expeditions, and surveys.