



Justice for our spaces and places can never happen without a concerted commitment to justice for all members of our community. The South Florida Beekeeping Association is dedicated to fighting for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion of people, pollinators, and the planet through community and personal actions at the local and regional levels while influencing institutional and systemic transformation. Our professional student-led organization stands firm with our black members, their families, and the community at large: **Black Lives Matter!** As social, economic, and environmental injustices continue to affect and disproportionately impact and influence black communities across Florida and throughout the United States, we pledge to increase our grassroots efforts and develop a counter conduct to break through these systems of oppression and create a platform for our members and partners to negotiate, rethink, and reflect on the power that overwhelms our everyday encounters.

Fighting for social, economic, equitable, and inclusive racial justice starts at the individual level, proliferating through our community, lifting and supporting change agents, innovators, and advocates from all over. As a collective (*hive*), we demand change and a mandatory declaration for all to support solidarity, compassion, empathy, and understanding.

Racism among the people and systems is real and ubiquitous across the US. In our very own beekeeping community, there has been a long standing and misguided narrative centered around *Africanized Bees*. The Western honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) has a relative with a highly popularized and frightening reputation. Though there are many African subspecies of the Western honeybee, the “Africanized bee” (*A.m. scutellata*) is illustrated and labeled as a dangerous pest to many, inciting irrational fear and misinformed prejudice of this very crucial insect (1/3 of the food on our tables is provided through bees and various other pollinator activities). This fear and narrative bleeds into the fundamental way society views the African/Black label. They nicknamed them “Killer bees” for the defensive behavior of their hives and colonies. Though it may not seem like a big deal, many people associate fear with these specific bees, in contrast to other honeybee species, and ultimately seek to eradicate them due to the sensationalism of labels which beekeepers have been working to correct through education and outreach efforts on research and social platforms. The hate, fear, and ignorance towards African Bees is an effective analogy and *sign of the times* illustrating and echoing the current hostility aimed at Black people. Our community in South Florida at Florida International University calls for all beekeepers in Florida and across the US to stand united and speak out with us against false labels, systemic oppression, and racial injustice. Black Beekeepers, please reach out to us to **#AmplifyMelenatedVoices** and increase representation **#BlackInNature**.

Our promise and priorities have always revolved around cross pollination. Now more than ever, the **BUZZ** requires for Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion to empower us all to drastically improve our community efforts on human rights, public health, food sovereignty, education, and environmental stewardship. Our HIVE will NEVER Bee Silenced! We must actively **Save Black Lives**. Representation Matters - **Black Lives Matter! Black lives are precious!**

In Community and Service,

Megan Long
South Florida Beekeeping Association President