

Researchers develop new toolkit for social justice action

July 30 2020, by Christina Holt



Credit: Pixabay

When protests erupted over the death of George Floyd and ongoing systemic racism in the United States in the spring, entrepreneur David Dennis was reminded of the stories his mother had told him of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. He said he hadn't imagined that civil unrest would affect another generation.

"I saw the pain of people," he said. "I saw them tearing up their

communities because of the knees on our necks for years. I said, there has to be a better way to show frustration. So, I scoured the internet to find a way to do it."

Through his search, Dennis, founder of International Food Group in Little Rock, Arkansas, discovered the [Community Tool Box](#), a global resource developed at the University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development.

At the same time, Christina Holt, assistant director of the center, and other staff were exploring the creation of a specific list of resources to help people create [social change](#) as part of the Community Tool Box.

"When David reached out to us about resources for [social justice](#), it was perfect timing," she said. "It lit a fire under us to create this resource and to do it well."

The Justice Action Toolkit distills the many resources of the [tool](#) box website into a set of actions that can be used to create social change. It takes visitors step by step through registering voters, reaching out and developing relationships with elected officials, organizing demonstrations, and advocacy, among many other actions.

"The tragic death of George Floyd and the structural inequities laid bare by COVID-19 have galvanized people in communities across the country to action," Holt said. "The Community Tool Box exists to provide tools for change and improvement, and after decades engaging in this work, our team has a moral obligation to make these accessible for our current context. In this spirit, we have lifted up resources providing education, strategies for engaging in direct action, and effective forms of advocacy. It is our hope that these resources will bolster communities' transformative efforts for racial justice."

For his part, Dennis has been working to promote and find resources to support the toolkit. Working through his network of connections in business, churches, foundations and government, he said he hopes to raise investment in the toolbox to develop and distribute its resources more widely.

"I've had my own challenges with systemic racism in banking, or business or [different places](#), and when I came up against those situations, I started to respond in a negative way," Dennis said. "But you need a system or resources that help you address it. With this, you have a platform and the tools to learn how to petition, how to make sure people are getting out the vote, how to help and how to measure your results."

More information: The Justice Action Toolkit: ctb.ku.edu/en/justice-action-toolkit

Provided by University of Kansas

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