



A BRIDGE TO INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Almost two months ago, protests spurred by the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery spread from U.S. cities to cities across the globe. Citizens of France, Brazil, Japan, and Syria stood up in global solidarity with Americans calling for change and meaningful redress for prolonged systemic discrimination.

Every part of society has been called upon to take on the mantle of ally and advocate for change. At BCIU, we accept this as a solemn responsibility. Our mission has always been to bring business and government together to promote international understanding – and with that, to help drive progress around the world. At this pivotal moment in history, we feel the urgency of recommitting and expanding upon that mission.

At our core, BCIU brings people from all over the world together to address complex global challenges. We work within an ecosystem of partners with different backgrounds and points of view, which can sometimes be hard to transcend. The process of promoting understanding is often two steps forward, one step back. We rely on cooperation and engagement, but sometimes a lack of common ground encumbers progress.

In our experience, we overcome the barriers that divide us by listening, empathizing, and engaging with each other – in short, by understanding all sides. This has always been essential in helping us mobilize our network and resources in support of positive social impact. Just recently, we've unlocked humanitarian supplies that were stuck in customs. Connected technology executives with policymakers to bring affordable internet access to remote locations. And helped find fabric supplies so manufacturers can produce more PPE.

These are meaningful accomplishments that help all kinds of people, but in the wake of this global movement, we all know we need to do more to promote understanding, opportunity, and equality for people experiencing discrimination. Too many of the world's populations have long been plagued by poverty and gaps in education, health care, housing, and security that have been laid all too bare by the COVID-19 pandemic. This status quo cannot stand and systemic change is vital.

That's why we've made a number of changes recently: we launched a new committee on our Board focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are seeking out new partnerships focused on serving the public good. We are widening our platform so that all stakeholders can reap the benefits of collaboration and commercial diplomacy. And we are continuing to focus on core-to-mission issues like life sciences, education, food security, and sustainability, so that our work directly tackles the global disparities that leave too many communities behind.

Ultimately, the challenges the world faces today are too big to face alone. BCIU can play an important role by offering strategic expertise and establishing progress-oriented partnerships that help the global community create more equality and prosperity. But achieving common goals like the UN Sustainable Development Goals will require more partnerships and increased open dialogue. We need to work with and learn from people of varied backgrounds and not let the barriers that divide us define us moving forward.

To paraphrase philanthropist Ronnie Chan speaking to a BCIU audience: yes, build bridges, be humble, but change will only come when you cross those bridges and understand all sides.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Tichansky". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Peter Tichansky
President and Chief Executive Officer