

# [***Former Jamba Juice CEO James D. White On Anti-Racist Leadership Today***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69FG-6C41-DXVP-500P-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Diane Brady, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** Former Jamba Juice CEO James D. White says it's harder to for leaders to pursue equity, inclusion and racial justice in polarized times. All the more reason to do it.

**Body**

**We're beyond the point in our history to soften language, to make people comfortable. We actually have to describe things as what they are.**

As a Black man who rose through corporate America to become CEO and Chairman of Jamba Juice, James D. White has thought a lot about equity, inclusion and racial justice. Last year, he co-wrote a book with his daughter Krista called**Anti-Racist Leadership: How to Transform Corporate Culture in a Race-Conscious World**.

White joined me to talk about the current state of efforts in the C-suite to address racism and other forms of bias. White says he got a lot of calls from other CEOs and board directors in the aftermath of George Floyd s murder in 2020 and is still receiving the same set of calls.

The difference now, he says, is that his peers are nervous about trying to be anti-racist leaders in a world where race, religion, sexual identity and other topics have been weaponized as ways to further divide people. The topic of anti-racist leadership is even more important in this divided world but we've got to find ways to really unite our organizations to do the right work and create safe spaces for all the humans who work in our companies.

The change that started to happen in the aftermath of the George Floyd murder was the most significant and sustained change that I had seen inside of corporations across my entire work life, he says. I think the pushback that we've seen over the last year to 15 months is because so much progress and so much change was being made.

**A Generational Change**

I view the change to be a generational change that will continue to move and march forward, he adds. I think the best leaders won't get distracted by the pushback and will stay really focused on the mission.

Anti-racist leaders are more than inclusive, he argues. They take the stance that Black lives matter, that LGBTQIA rights are human rights, that people of all abilities deserve respect and access, and that people of all genders have the right to sovereignty over their body.

What I'm really all about is telling the truth and I think the truth actually matters, he adds. We're beyond the point in our history to soften language, to make people comfortable. We actually have to describe things as what they are.

And how do anti-racist leaders thrive in a polarized world? They find the things inside their own companies that unite them and they use that as the true north that that kind of guides them, says White. I stay out of ***politics*** unless it impacts the businesses.

If you can build processes and policies and systems that work for the most disadvantaged among us, they re going to work well for the most advantaged.

For more, click on the interview above.

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