

SAY THEIR NAMES: ADDRESSING INSTITUTIONAL OR SYSTEMIC RACISM

Institutional racism is racism embedded as a routine practice within society or an organization, cumulatively and disparately impacting historically disadvantaged peoples.

Ongoing institutional racism and deeply embedded injustices, prejudices and inequities in the fabric of our nation have caused the violent deaths of innocent Black and Brown men, women and children over the years at the hands of a percentage of police officers and ordinary citizens.

National PTA stands firmly against racism in all forms and the culture of oppression that permeates the United States. As an association that represents all children, we must listen, educate and advocate beyond rhetoric and rise to correct all inequities and injustices.

In 1970, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers and the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers came together as one association because they understood the power of unity in our efforts. In the spirit of that unity, let us come together at all levels—national, state and local—to examine our policies, procedures and programs and eliminate any practices that disenfranchise or discourage Black and Brown families. We must look within ourselves and then call upon all other institutions to do the same if we are to end the practices that so adversely affect our children.

National PTA recognizes that African Americans have suffered from institutional racism for over 400 years. While civil rights legislation and grassroots advocacy have created progress, recent events compel us to recognize additional work is needed. As a nation born out of a need to be liberated and free to live out our true creed, we must acknowledge that racism is a learned behavior. We believe in fundamental human rights and loudly condemn systems that impede any individual's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as unconstitutional. Further, we view the systemic harm, abuse and attack on individuals and communities of color and other marginalized groups in the United States reprehensible and as civil rights violations.

As a nation, we continue to suffer from a legacy of racial division, dismissiveness, dissension and skepticism, failing to remedy past sins. This continued suffering raises profound questions in generation after generation regarding fairness and integrity in all of our institutions as they relate to Black and Brown communities.

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National PTA believes that it is our duty to disrupt the systems that propagate institutional racism. We call upon our PTA members to listen, educate and advocate to demand meaningful change to end institutional racism. Our efforts must be intentional, purposeful and relentless until every individual enjoys the freedoms guaranteed to all Americans.

LISTEN

National PTA and its constituent associations must work with community-based organizations whose mission and purpose are to address and dismantle deeply rooted issues related to race and culture.

National PTA and its constituent associations will hold courageous conversations with our membership and communities to understand the impact of institutional racism and how it affects the well-being of children of color. These conversations will include racism, social justice, equitable education, juvenile justice, affordable housing, food sustainability, economic wealth, and accessible and affordable healthcare for families of color.

EDUCATE

National PTA and its constituent associations must educate themselves and their communities on the disparities among students of color compared to their white peers related to issues such as housing, healthcare, environmental and community planning, criminal justice and employment. This knowledge is essential to understand the impact of institutional racism on school performance, which is manifested in attendance, discipline, academic achievement and graduation rates of students of color.

Federal and state policymakers, school district leaders, school administrators and educators should review bias in curriculum, policies, practices and programs to identify and address those that perpetuate inequities toward children or communities of color, resulting in Black and Brown students experiencing lower school achievement rates, commonly known as the “achievement gap” or “opportunity gap.”

ADVOCATE

National PTA and local and state PTAs/PTSAs must advocate at all levels to eradicate the negative impact of institutional racism.

National PTA strongly urges federal, state and local public officials to invest in educating students and teachers on the history and impact of institutional racism. Professional development and training must be provided for all school staff on implicit bias and culturally

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appropriate curriculum. School staff should also be provided professional development in mental health, trauma-informed care and restorative justice to provide a safe, inclusive environment for all students.

We recognize that action at the local level has a direct impact on our communities. Local advocacy should focus on issues such as disparate discipline, equitable education for immigrant children; recruitment and retention of Black and Brown teachers; housing development policies; access to equitable and affordable healthcare; juvenile and criminal justice; and other such issues which are relevant to local schools, communities and states. We will work to ensure more comprehensive guidelines and training are required on the use of force by school resource officers, other law enforcement officers and security personnel.

National PTA will support its constituent associations with resources to strengthen advocacy at the local level to address issues of equity and disparate outcomes for children of color.

We can eradicate racism and social injustices when we unite as a community regardless of skin color, race, language or culture. PTA reaffirms our commitment to advocate for all children, including and specifically for Black and Brown children to eliminate the negative impacts of institutional racism.

Adopted March 2022 by the 2022 National PTA Board of Directors

*Per the National PTA Governance Policy Manual, this position statement will be reviewed in 2027.