



# AFT Pennsylvania

*A Union of Professionals*

## ***AFTPA and Affiliates' Five Principles of Racial Justice***

### ***Context***

The unrest unfolding across the nation is borne out of centuries of a society founded on racism, a society rooted in the notion that black and brown people have to, time and again, prove their humanity. The murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police is another searing example of the criminalization of blackness in America, and it is emblematic of the profound injustice that permeates nearly every aspect of our society. The story of this unrest is not the broken windows. We cannot and will not be distracted from the root cause, from the cries of pain.

The story of this moment is the story of every micro and macro aggression that people of color endure each day. It is a systemic disinvestment from public education--but not in wealthy, white areas. It is the lack of affordable housing. It is the hedge funds and healthcare systems robbing people of their fair share every single day. It is the uprising of a collective consciousness and of an unapologetic demand for better for people of color in our society.

For decades, our students have been robbed of their constitutional right to a thorough and efficient public education system. We have taken our fight to the ballot box, to the streets, and to the courts. But still, for far too many across the country, the promise of an education system that recognizes their inherent value as a human being goes unrealized. The chronic underfunding of an education system is a feature--not a bug--of a society deeply rooted in racism. And as educators, and quite frankly as human beings, we have a fundamental responsibility to recognize the systems that perpetuate the dehumanization of our students and communities.



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***As a union of educators, we are deeply committed to the following principles, and we urge educators, parents, elected officials, and community partners to endorse these foundational principles:***

- 1. The connection between an underfunded education system and the criminalization of blackness cannot be disregarded.** Our fight for a fair and just education system must be [rooted in a fight for racial justice](#).
- 2. From the [literal poisoning](#) of students and staff in school buildings to [massive budget cuts](#) leaving students without nurses and counselors (with deadly consequences in the case of Philadelphia student [Laporshia Massey](#))-- the injustices in our education system are deeply rooted in a racist system. **Education funding and investment must address decades of systemic disinvestment; further, education funding should not be reliant on a property tax system that further perpetuates and exacerbates inequitable wealth, too often leaving communities of color shortchanged.****
- 3. While we fight for an equitable education system, so too must we fight for deeply interconnected fights for [housing](#), for [healthcare](#), and for [job access and workers' rights](#).** The disenfranchising of people of color is pervasive in all facets of society.
- 4. Our criminal justice system perpetuates the criminalization of black and brown people. **The school to prison pipeline is real, and it threatens the futures and the lives of black and brown children every single day. Without a massive overhaul, the system will continue to have deadly consequences for people of color.**** It is a system that time and again sets our young people up for failure or even death. At the local, state, and federal levels, the overfunding of police and militaries must stop. Rather than investing in our children from early ages, our society chooses to spend [\\$80 Billion annually](#) to incarcerate predominantly people of color.
- 5. Educators and all people must take actionable steps to dismantle a violent system of white supremacy that has jeopardized the very humanity of the students in our classrooms, their families, and our communities.** School systems make overtures indicating they are interested in recruiting teachers of color, but allow schools to operate without any teachers of color. We are committed to fighting to ensure meaningful policies are put in place that promote diverse teaching populations in every school; we are committed to ongoing professional development on anti-racist practices; and we are committed to working to build an education system that reflects the humanity of every single child.