

RACIAL INJUSTICE AND TRAUMA IN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The mission of Michigan PTA is to mobilize the forces of school, home, and community in order to ensure a quality education and nurturing environment for every child. The conditions that children and youth are exposed to now have a significant impact on their overall development. Environments that belittle, degrade, demean, and abuse individuals, especially children, can stunt their ability to achieve their full potential. Trauma of any kind causes undue stress. Historically, persons of color, in particular, the African-American community, have endured generations of senseless inequities based solely upon their skin color. The African-American community, inclusive of their youth, experience continuous implicit and overt racial bias, profiling, injury, and sometimes death by perpetrators charged with protecting all people. Inequities in health care, limited access to educational tools and opportunities, and lack of safe and affordable transportation options to obtain basic necessities further adversely affect potential positive outcomes. A domino effect of these historical racial injustices has come to a boiling point.

In addition to COVID-19, the African-American community is bombarded with an onslaught of unfair treatment because of the color of their skin. The simple act of bird watching in a park and asking a fellow human being to leash their dog in an area where dogs may not roam freely nearly cost Christian Cooper his life. Taking steps toward maintaining health by jogging in a neighborhood, as Ahmaud Arbery did, cost him his last breath. A call for help from those who are trained and paid to protect, cost, Breonna Taylor, an acclaimed emergency medical technician, the gift of life. Realizing that his life was drawing to an abrupt ending, George Floyd, called out to the only person that he felt could hear his plea, his deceased mother.

When children, in the present day, continually endure the dreadful experiences that they have read and heard about from their teachers, parents, and loved ones of past generations, the emotional trauma presents a narrative of helplessness. Michigan PTA condemns the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Further, Michigan PTA opposes all acts of brutality and implicit bias toward communities of color.

Michigan PTA joins our community, education, and equity partners in seeking concrete actions to address the pattern of institutional and systemic racism, implicit bias, and violence against African Americans and people of color. Michigan PTA commits to examining our own practices and structures to work towards eliminating implicit bias, racism, and inequities. We call upon each of our local PTAs, PTSAs, and councils throughout Michigan to bring to life the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. In order for diversity and inclusion to work in our communities, we must address equity for those we serve - all children and families.

Adopted: by the 2020 Michigan PTA Board of Directors

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