

## **SDTA Statement on Anti-Racism**

After learning about George Floyd’s murder, I reflected on how often I had heard the same headline. I tried to remember how long ago it was when Michael Brown was murdered and Ferguson, Missouri, and then the world, erupted and cried out his name. I turned, as I so often do in times of uncertainty, to Google.

And this is what I found.

The top linked article gave me the information I’d been seeking, Michael Brown Jr. was killed on August 9, 2014, not quite six years ago. And when I scrolled past that article, I was met with a series of photos under the banner “People also search for”.

- Shooting of Tamir Rice
- Death of Eric Garner
- Death of Freddie Gray
- Death of Sandra Bland
- Shooting of Walter Scott

“View 15+ more”

And I clicked on.

- Shooting of Philando Castille
- Shooting of Alton Sterling
- Shooting of John Crawford II
- Shooting of Oscar Grant
- Shooting of Ezell Ford
- Shooting of Terence Crutcher
- Shooting of Akai Gurley
- Shooting of Trayvon Martin
- Shooting of Jamar Clark
- Shooting of Stephon Clark
- Shooting of Amadou Diallo
- Shooting of Samuel DuBose
- Shooting of Sean Bell
- Shooting of Jonathan Ferrell

Add to that list the names of Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery. All Black Americans. All killed in just over a decade. In the time our students have been in school, this is what they have known. This is what has been on the news. This is THEIR reality.

But this is not new. This is the fruit of the inequality on which this nation was founded and is only the newest chapter in the terror that people of color and most especially Black Americans have faced since first being brought forcibly to this land. We must recognize and confront that history in our curriculum and we must understand and combat its legacy in our classrooms and communities.

It is our job as educators to help to break the racist cycle that keeps Black Americans in the crosshairs. It is our purpose to help them see their value and empower them to speak up and to speak out and to change things where we have been unable to for far too long. The task is large, but it starts with us, every day, checking our own language and actions and helping to guide theirs.

As we examine how to dismantle the system of Institutional Racism that our students confront, we must remember that we are the biggest part of that institution that our students interact with. We must look at ourselves and our behavior and how they contribute to this system. We must examine our curriculum, our pedagogy, our classroom practices, our professional encounters with students and colleagues, and our external and internal biases so we can improve on them. Are we, in our work, being anti-black? How can we instead be anti-racist? How can we be a better teacher or counselor for all our students? How can we be better at including people and not excluding them? The goal is lofty, but we can only tear down institutionalized racism if we look first at ourselves.

We are not perfect, but we strive to be better. Our schools are not perfect, but they must be better. To our members - if you are concerned about comments, practices, or actions you witness in your work with our students, please reach out to a site rep. Let us be your partners in problem-solving and finding solutions. We were proud to support teachers of color in our district who raised their voices to demand that the district establish an Equity and Diversity Council, but we need to do more. We will continue to

seek out our members' voices on the types of support they need and will focus our work in the coming year about how to help our members on the path of self-reflection, examination, and progress.

We must also recognize we are not in this alone. We call on the District to live up to its goal to attract and retain a certificated staff that reflects its student population by examining and removing the hurdles that stand between educators of color and success in this District. We further call on the District to add a goal that administrative staff reflect the diversity of our student population as well.

We are committed to the cause of anti-racism and to reflecting that in our work and in our classrooms. We do not tolerate white supremacy.

Black lives matter.

Black students matter.

Black educators matter.

Black futures matter.

In Solidarity,

Edith Salvatore

SDTA President