

June 2,2020

UFF STATEMENT ON GEORGE FLOYD

George Floyd. Ahmaud Aubery. Breonna Taylor. One more family devastated. One more child without a parent. The list goes on and on, with incidents almost too frequent to be reported. Their crime was to be in the wrong place at the wrong time... and to be Black. The United Faculty of Florida strongly condemns not only the brutal murder of George Floyd, but the systemic racism that tries to excuse this and countless other acts of violence by law enforcement against Black Americans.

In a nation that boasts of guaranteeing its citizens life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, Black Americans are too often denied basic human rights that many of us take for granted. They can't jog without worrying about being shot. They can't sleep without worrying about being killed. They can't even go bird watching in a public park without being threatened.

No one should be afraid to live their lives as they choose or to seek help from police because of their skin color. A mother shouldn't be worried about her teenager because he wants to spend time in public with his friends. Fathers should not have to see murders on live TV, and project that nightmare onto their own children. Families should not have to bury their loved ones before they have graduated from high school or known the joy of holding a grandchild.

At UFF, we are committed to representing a diverse membership. We cherish that diversity. We only hope that we can understand the pain, anger and the outrage that these continued atrocities have produced. We stand with the thousands who have vocally and peacefully taken to the streets of our country. We stand with those who are the victims of this violence. We stand with those who are no longer requesting, but demanding, meaningful change.

The rage coursing through the streets of Minneapolis and other cities is born from hundreds of years of prejudice played out as personal discrimination or legal bias. We oppose any form of violence but cannot delude ourselves into believing that the responsibility lies only with others. It also lies within ourselves. Not one of us should feel that we are untouched by the effects of the pernicious disease of racism. Recent events only underscore this fact. The disproportionate mortality rate of the COVID virus on communities of color is only one more indication of its tragic and enduring legacy. We call upon our members, families, colleges, and communities to stand with us against racism in all its forms.

**The Higher Education Affiliate of Florida Education Association, National Education Association,
American Federation of Teachers, and AFL-CIO**

We also call upon Law Enforcement, and, particularly, our union sisters and brothers in Law Enforcement, to examine their contracts and policies to ensure that they are written in ways that hold those charged with keeping the peace accountable for their actions. We cannot claim to be a state which prizes equality so long as we have a criminal justice system that disproportionately impacts marginalized communities.

Those endangered by racism are our members and colleagues, families and friends, students and former students. It is critical at this time that we not only speak out but live out the values that we claim to cherish. Demands for respect, civility, diversity, equality, and inclusion cannot just be empty words shouted in the heat of the moment. We must speak up and speak out whenever we witness hatred, racism or injustice, however small or subtle it might be. This must be a part of what we do every minute of the day in both our personal and professional lives.

In our role as educators, researchers, and mentors, we must prepare those we teach to commit to vigorous and wholehearted participation in our democracy. An honest civic discourse cannot and may not obscure the truth. This cannot be “normal”. The killings must stop. The system must change. We all must work together to build a just society, where life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are guaranteed for each and every one of us, wherever we were born, whomever we love, and whatever the color of our skin.