

## **Call to Action: Stamford Stands Against Racism**

As a collective of human service and faith-based organizations in Stamford, we represent and serve the vast majority of our community. Many of Stamford's elected officials and local leaders have made a genuine effort to understand the challenges of the community that we serve and model active engagement. However, recent events across the country have shown us that as a community and as nation, we need to do much more to move forward. Our organizations work directly with the most vulnerable among us and know that their voices need to be heard by those who have access to power in our city.

We are pledging immediate action by our own organizations, and also calling for our city government and all our fellow residents to join us.

The tragic events of the past few weeks lay bare the plain truth that merely to discuss our desire to exist in a more racially just community is just a starting point. The time has come for each of us as human services and faith-based organizations to declare explicitly and publicly what actions we are taking to dismantle the purposeful and systemic racism that exists in our community and beyond. The murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor have brought racial injustice to the forefront of our country's consciousness. Unfortunately, we know that these are not isolated events. Instead, they are brutal evidence of the institutionalized racism that every day negates the ideals on which this country was founded. The attitudes and policies that permit these acts of violence have been with us far too long. We are left to ask ourselves: when will there be a time when we are not having the conversation—in this community and beyond— that this violence must stop?

We look forward to being a community that leads by example! It is no longer enough to lament this violence and systemic racism. All of us must be committed to speaking up and acting when we encounter these injustices.

As a collective of Stamford-based human service and faith-based organizations, we commit to do the following:

1. Engage national expert(s) to work with each leadership team to identify, discuss and confront the issues of institutionalized racism.
2. Train 100% of our staff in an anti-racism curriculum. The curriculum used is at the discretion of each partner organization, provided the training examines institutionalized racism, rather than focusing on racism at the individual level. This should include an examination of the history of how racism was built into all of our institutions and the role that the policies, practices and structures of these institutions have on perpetuating disparities that have negative impacts on people of color. To the greatest extent feasible, each partner organization is committed to choosing a curriculum and schedule for trainings prior to December 31, 2020.
3. Work to eradicate policies and practices in our areas of focus that contribute to systemic racism, which we know is embedded in all facets of American life. Each of us commits to publicly identify at least one specific policy or practice that we will implement or end in our own organization by December 31, 2020.
4. Confront injustices when we encounter them in order to ensure we are building an equitable and loving community here in Stamford.

As a collective of Stamford based human service and faith-based organizations, we also urgently request that our school system and police department commit to concrete actions to begin to dismantle systemic racism in these institutions, both of which have historically had profound negative impacts on people of color:

1. In conjunction with the leadership of Stamford Police Department (SPD) and Stamford Public Schools (SPS), develop a plan in the next 45 days (by July 31<sup>st</sup>) to identify and implement actionable changes to address institutional racism in our police department and in our schools.
2. Work with community members of diverse racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds in developing a concrete plan with SPD and SPS that will encompass all their members to create awareness, train and agree on actionable steps to address specific issues of racism in our nation and in our local community.
3. SPS will work in collaboration with human service and faith-based organizations and residents reflective of the demographics of Stamford to develop a specific plan with measurable objectives to foster a culture of mutual respect, improved communications, transparency and accountability. A mutually agreeable entity/group will be given responsibility to review, comment, and recommend changes/adjustments on policies, practices, and other school culture-related matters that directly impact the school community and particularly affect communities of color.
4. Recognizing the importance of community trust and input, transparency and accountability, and consistent with recommendations from the [President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing](https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf)<sup>1</sup>, we ask that the Stamford Police Department, utilizing the services of the above expert and in collaboration with Stamford community residents, human service and faith-based organizations, and other parties deemed necessary, explore the feasibility and establishment of a professional civilian review board in addition to other measures to ensure authentic and ongoing accountability.

We know that meaningful change does not come quickly or easily. As a collective we are committed to being in this struggle for as long as it takes. We believe that our community can be a beacon for justice and a model to follow. Please join us in our fight against structural racism.

We also call upon the Mayor's Office, as our city's chief executive, and the Board of Representatives, as our legislative body, to partner with us in taking immediate action. For our city to thrive, we need these bodies to take leadership roles to ensure across all departments a diverse city government that mirrors the beautiful mosaic that is Stamford's population.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce\\_finalreport.pdf](https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf)