June 2, 2020

George Floyd was tortured and murdered at the hands of four police officers in Minneapolis. The immediate question is, will all four police officers be properly charged and prosecuted for their heinous actions?

Across the nation and in Pittsburgh however, Americans are asking far more questions while crying out in pain and anger for answers long denied them.

George Floyd was murdered by something larger and more menacing than that very small, terrible minority of police officers simply not fit to wear a badge. George Floyd was murdered by an institutionalized system of inherent racism that infects and permeates all walks of American society.

In our schools and in our courtrooms, in our neighborhoods and our places of work, black and brown people are not being guaranteed the simplest of promises made in our first founding document—The Declaration of Independence.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

1. There can be no Life when black and brown American citizens live in everyday fear of having that life snatched senselessly away.

2. There can be no Liberty when true freedom has a price tag too high for those suffering from chronically low wages, substandard healthcare, limited job opportunity and poor housing.

3. There can be no Pursuit of Happiness when our justice system is stacked massively against minorities, when children go hungry, when social safety nets are cut, and when access to and funding for public education is treated as a disparate community burden rather than a critical and essential national priority.

The Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers:
• Stands with the thousands of peaceful protesters in Pittsburgh and nationwide while standing against the comparatively few cowards trying to muddle the message through looting and destruction. Stay focused on the real story of desperately needed change!
• Stands for the rule of law, the political process to change bad laws, and the many police officers who protect and serve with distinction. We vehemently stand against police brutality, excessive use of force and racial profiling in all its forms. Reform is necessary everywhere!
• Stands for the equal rights of every person in America to enjoy fair and equal access to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and stands against moneyed or racially biased interests that minimize or curtail those rights. Voting and activism is power!
• **But most of all, the PFT stands for our kids**—the children inside PPS and their teachers, extended families, and the communities in which they live. They are our number one priority.

Our union is already fighting to secure the adequate funding necessary to improve and safeguard all of Pennsylvania’s schools. We will battle the state, certainly, but also a Federal government seemingly hell-bent on abandoning pubic education entirely.

We will do this while also fighting tooth and nail for each and every one of the remarkable professionals, paraprofessionals and technical clerical staff it will take to deliver on the promise of an equitable, accessible, high quality public education for every PPS student.

**We will need your help.** This tumultuous moment in our history is a perfect storm of challenges that can overwhelm the best of us if we’re not careful. We must continue to do important work that helps to make things better, and we must do that work together as a united membership of educators sounding off in a purposeful and loud union voice.

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**Here Are Some Things You Can Do Right Now:**

**Vote.** Not just today, but in every election ever from now on. Local, state, national, special—literally everything you need to know about PA voting is here.

**Show up.** At PPS Board of Directors meetings. At public information hearings. At PFT grassroots meetings. At PAC committee meetings. Be a part of the conversations that drive policy and make change.

**Be heard:** Contact your local government by phone, mail, email or in-person. Your state representatives and senators. Your national members of Congress. They are all easy to find at this single interface—click here.

**Fight:** Clearly our fight for education dollars and an equitable PPS agreement is something you’ll hear more about. But we must also fight for disenfranchised people of color throughout society by championing the causes of housing, healthcare, job access and workers’ rights.

**Join:** The reform movement is as broad, wide and deep as the systemic flaws and racial bias hard-boiled into our society. Learn more and choose a cause to rally around. 80 billion in costs for incarceration. Systemic racism—a reading list for action takers. Or check out these
AFT/Share My Lesson resources to promote the power of protest and the need for social justice.

The heart of the nation torn out by the senseless death of George Floyd can begin to be restored by seeing to it that his death was not, and shall never be, in vain.

And in the slow, inexorable struggle to reshape the uneven landscape of American society, we can help provide additional meaning to the thousands before him who have also been sacrificed at the terrible altar of racial inequality and injustice.

We owe this to our city, our schools, our members and our students.

In solidarity,
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