

As a collective of human service and faith-based organizations in Stamford, we represent and serve the vast majority of our community. 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 only a starting point. The time has come for each of us as human services 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?

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 organizations, we commit to do the following:

1. Engage a national expert 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. Each partner organization is committed to choosing a curriculum and scheduling trainings prior to September 1, 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 we will implement or end in our own organization by September 1, 2020.
4. Confront injustices when we encounter them in order to ensure we are building an equitable and loving community here in Stamford.

Stamford Cradle to Career will work with organizations to assist them in reaching the goals set out in this letter.

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

1. Engage a national expert to work with each leadership team (police department and school staff) to identify, discuss, and confront the issues of institutionalized racism.
2. Train 100% of the police department and Stamford Public Schools staff members in an anti-racism curriculum matching the criteria above on an ongoing basis.
3. Engage a civilian review board for the police department to further police accountability and improve community relations. This review board will be developed in conjunction with human service organizations and residents reflective of the demographics of Stamford and will be given genuine authority regarding reviewing department policies, practices, and incidents.

4. Engage an advisory board for the school system that will likewise improve school accountability and improve community relations. This advisory board will also be developed in conjunction with human service organizations and residents reflective of the demographics of Stamford and will be given genuine authority regarding reviewing policies, practices, and disciplinary incidents.

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, their leadership within government will be needed to ensure, across all departments, a diverse city government that mirrors the beautiful mosaic that is Stamford's population.