

Racial Justice in Education:
Affiliates in Action



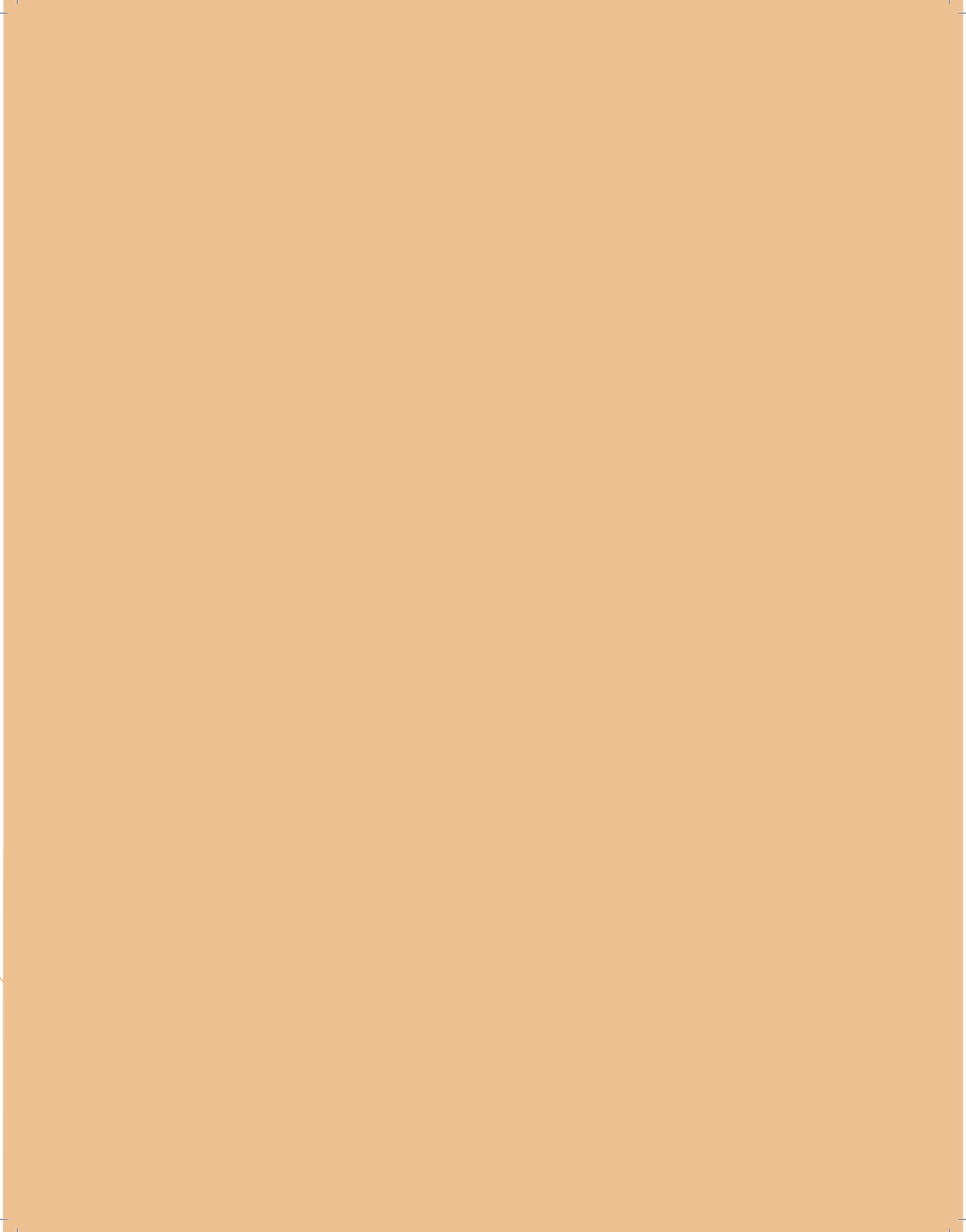


Table Of Contents

Vision	3
Executive Summary	5
Mission	7
State Vignettes	8
Racial Justice in Education Pre-Reading/Resources Materials	36
A Look Forward	40

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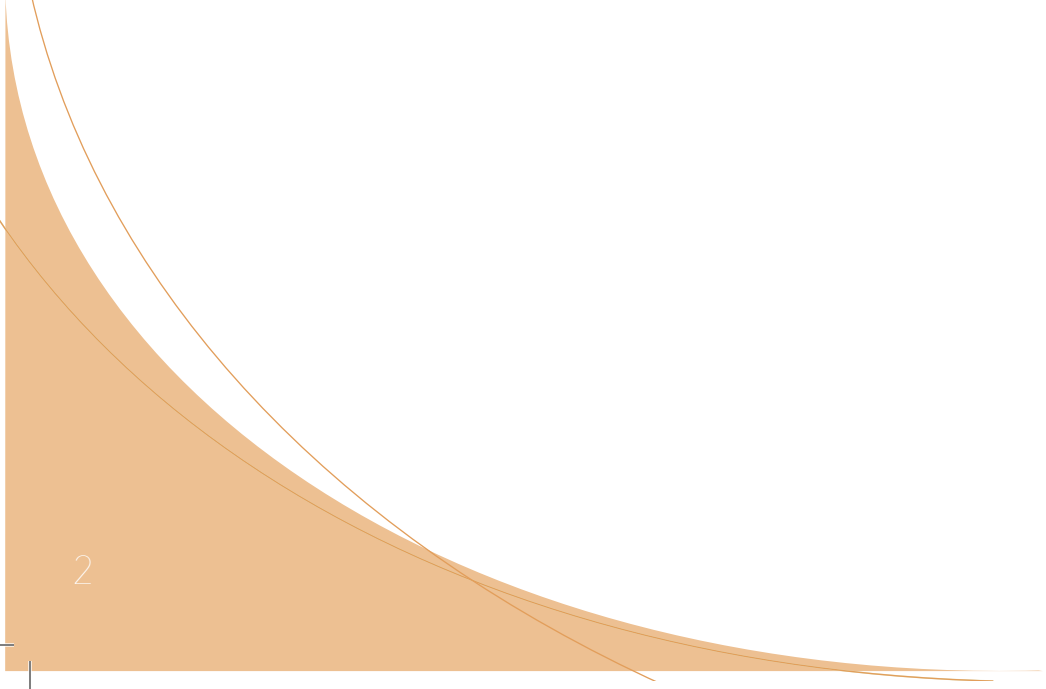
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Vision

Great Public Schools for Every Student. These six words define the vision and aspirations of our Association and more than three million educators. The words are simple, but the task is not. Students come into America's public schools with very different needs, backgrounds, levels of preparation and support.

As an Association, we continually ask ourselves how we can elevate all of our students and give them the opportunity, resources, and support they need to be successful. Our Racial Justice in Education work was established to help us answer some of those questions.

Two years ago, when NEA passed NBI B, we challenged ourselves to discuss and fight the very complex and damaging issue of institutional racism in our schools. We chose not to accept conditions as they exist, but to accept the responsibility for changing them.

This journey has been emotional and even uncomfortable, but we have a special responsibility because we're educators. We all know that that every oppressor throughout history has used education to hold down the oppressed. Women weren't allowed to go to universities. It was against the law to teach slaves to read.

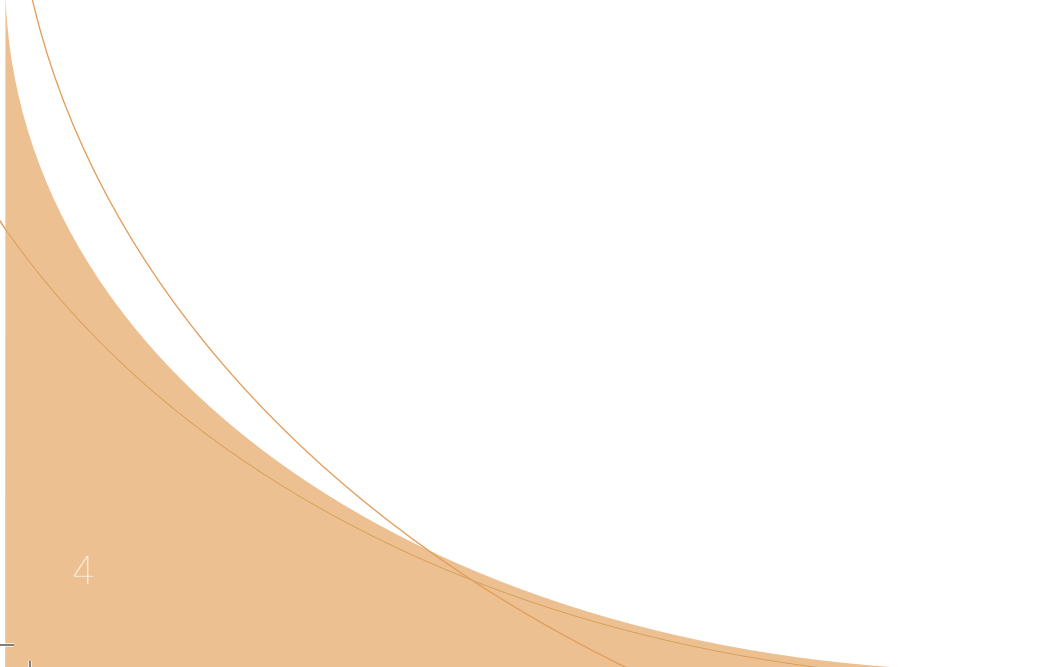
Education has been a tool of institutional racism, and education must be the first step in eradicating it.

We must continue to explore the impact of the way an institution - an institution like education - is structured that advantages one race and disadvantages another - whether it intends to or not.

This work is about educating ourselves on ways to see where the design of an institution like a public school or a university may actually be an obstacle to some of our most vulnerable students. It's about our responsibility to act to lift up all students so that when we say: All students have the opportunity to succeed, it's not just a slogan. It's that we truly begin building our institutions around all students, knowing that each student and each community may need something very different.

I am asking you to continue to raise awareness, build capacity, and take strategic action on behalf of our nation's students. Amplify the voices and experiences of your students and fellow educators. Take a moment to listen to each other's stories and be open to learn and think more deeply about this work. Make a commitment to try new strategies and engage with allies, partners, and communities in new and different ways. And always, be determined to move beyond talk, beyond rhetoric, and even beyond rage.

Take heart my sisters and brothers. Find strength. Be resolved. Onward!



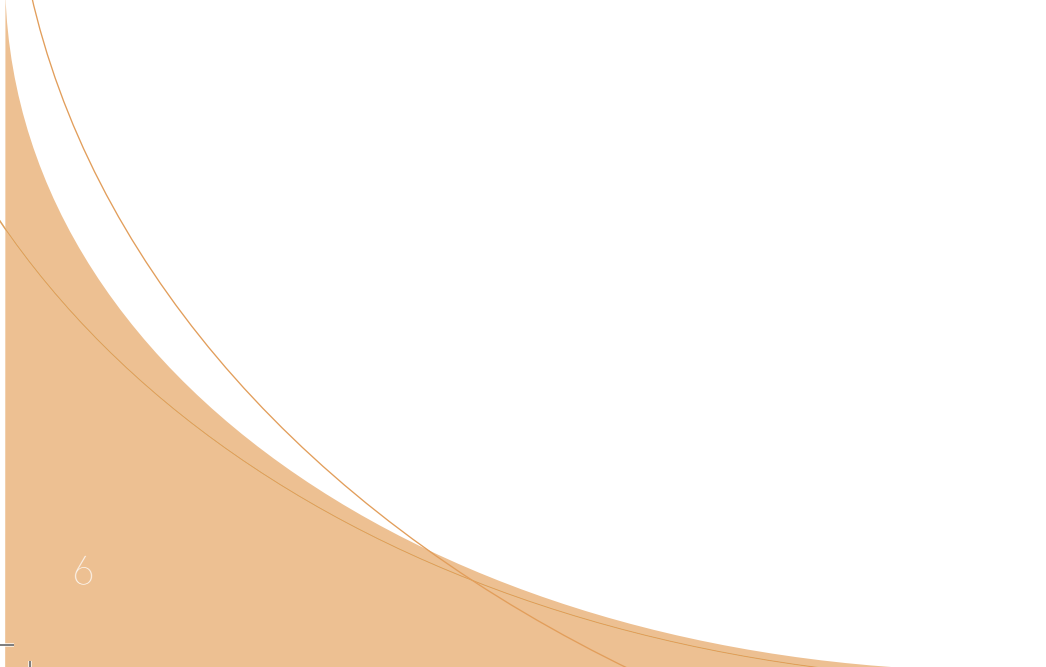
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Executive Summary

Combating institutional racism and advancing Racial Justice in Education is at the forefront of the National Education Association's vision—to provide a great public school for every student. It is a significant charge that requires us to be open to changes in traditional ways of thinking about and approaching solutions. When the NEA Representative Assembly passed New Business Item (NBI) B in 2015, we pledged a commitment to use our collective voice to bring to light and demand change to policies, programs, and practices that condone or ignore unequal treatment and hinder student success. Educator's unique perspective on institutional racism in schools and communities calls on NEA to look internally and externally to address the momentous issues that shape the lives of the students and communities we serve.

This journey may be rocky and fraught with frustration and is one on which we must embark. By leaning on each other, the NEA family can shoulder this responsibility to redirect our compass Northward towards Racial Justice in Education. Contained within the pages of this report are examples of your colleagues' work in state affiliates throughout the nation. The vignettes of their work are intended to inform, motivate, and create new pathways for ushering in a new and lasting era of racial justice in education. Their inspiring actions range from increasing awareness, to capacity building, and taking direct action. We hope that you're moved to make a strong commitment to joining colleagues in your state to take similar actions.

Transformation begins in communities where you connect with students, their families, and community leaders. Educators are uniquely positioned because we know how our environment is affecting students of color in schools. Only we have the ability to transform public education and combat institutional racism from within. We hope these examples will resonate with you and catalyze the change that must happen.



6

Mission

The National Education Association is uniquely positioned to impact racial justice in education by focusing the work on awareness, capacity building, and action. We will build a union of members who, through their organization, are more aware of racial justice, receive and use racial justice tools, and who, together with other educators and key stakeholders, take action to address racial injustice in schools and related institutions:

By raising **awareness** about institutional racism and working towards creating racial justice in education, the National Education Association provides shared knowledge and conceptual clarity in racially aware work;

By creating and disseminating **capacity building** tools, skills, strategies, and resources to our members, leaders, staff, students and partners, we lead creating racial justice in education in more powerful and meaningful ways;

By lifting, connecting and taking **action** with an intentional focus on movement building, we create racial equity in our classrooms, worksites, and in our communities while growing and strengthening the Association and our ability to impact the education justice movement.

These are our commitments. This is our mission.

State Vignettes

Colorado Education Association

Racial Justice Communities

The passage of NBI B¹ at the 2015 NEA Representative Assembly also marked a shift for the Colorado Education Association (CEA) toward actively advocating for racial equity. From that inflection point, CEA President Kerrie Dallman felt as if a new collective attitude emerged. *“As educators and agents of change, we need to work to eradicate institutional racism in public education, we are intentional about approaching all of our work through a racial justice lens,”* she says.

By April 2016, CEA’s delegate assembly passed its own version of NBI B and two additional complementary policies on racial justice. The first directed the CEA to support community schools as an organizational priority, the second NBI was focused on working with community partners on the connection between poverty and student success. Work on this second NBI resulted in the successful ballot campaign to raise Colorado’s minimum wage. The combined result of these NBI’s was a two-year strategic plan to work with educators and community partners to develop and implement social justice campaigns tackling institutional racism. The intersection of racial equity, community schools, and living wages was key to bringing racial justice to the forefront of CEA’s agenda. *“We felt that this was a powerful trio to demonstrate that institutional racism is about systemic inequities,”* Dallman says.

Through the community schools and racial justice work, CEA has held several walk-ins and rallies in support of the alliance to reclaim our schools platform. By partnering with Jobs for Justice, they have gathered over 300 Alliance to Reclaim our Schools (AROS) pledgers. They plan to further expand their coalition and campaign around racial justice and affordable housing as they expand their capacity to include strategies like coordinated bargaining for the common good.

Capacity Building

One of CEA’s closest collaborators to address barriers faced by students of color was the group Padres & Jóvenes Unidos. The partnership with Padres, the Advancement Project, Denver Public Schools, and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association centered on restorative justice practices in schools. With the aid of a grant from the NEA, the CEA set to expand its restorative practices work beyond Denver and began hosting regional summits to enhance participation from rural school districts.

CEA’s ongoing work with Padres & Jóvenes Unidos illustrates how racial justice in education can transform relationships with community organizations. *“Our relationship with Padres has really blossomed. They produce an annual report on discipline disparities across the state by district, and last year they invited me to write the foreword to the report. That would not have happened three years ago. Back then, a common view amongst our members would have been, ‘The mere existence of the report is about blaming teachers.’ Now, we don’t see it as blaming an individual teacher but look at it from a systems perspective and so do they,”* says Dallman.

¹References to New Business item (NBI) B are made throughout the document. Additional information about NBI B is located in the Executive Summary.

Their work on discipline disparities ultimately led the CEA to support efforts to prohibit out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for students in pre-kindergarten through third grade by opposing a strict disciplinary bill. This new approach marked a real transformation for the association. Dallman believes that before CEA began its student centered advocacy and racial justice work, it would have taken a different approach to this piece of legislation. *"It would have been seen as a challenge to an educator's ability to teach in the classroom and would have been opposed as an unfunded mandate,"* she says. While the legislation was not successful this year, they are committed to working with their partners to ban corporal punishment and limit suspensions and expulsions next legislative session.

Similarly, prior to 2015, CEA had no relationship with the NAACP in Colorado. But the association began a very strong relationship with the then educational director for NAACP Denver, Dr. Joyce Brooks, who later became the State Education Director for the Colorado NAACP. Dr. Brooks and the NAACP along with Padres were instrumental in helping us defeat a number of bad bills this year.

CEA has also started conversations with the deans of education from every university in Colorado to form a taskforce to make recommendations on recruiting students of color into teacher preparation programs.

Action

After the NBI B call to action in 2015, many members became more engaged in the union. This year CEA hosted a *"sanctuary summit"* with several community partners. At this summit educators gathered with immigrant rights groups to learn about sanctuary schools and to develop plans for passing local school board resolutions to make schools safe for immigrant students. Members in Aurora and Denver have put their newfound knowledge into practice by working with local school boards to draft, introduce and adopt local safe zone school districts or racial equity resolutions. Additionally members have been very active in advocating that longmont and boulder city councils who pass similar resolutions.

Additionally, members partnered with CEA and local community stakeholders to host Know Your Rights trainings to be supportive of undocumented students and their parents and educate Colorado schools and communities who are impacted by the federal government's immigration enforcement. The morning after the 2016 presidential election, second-grade teacher Rachel Sandoval received a phone call from a parent asking Sandoval to take custody of her children if she and her husband were deported. Ms. Sandoval's heart broke. Of course she wanted to act to take care of her students, - but how would that help to combat the bullying and attacks on her students and their immigrant families? After attending the trainings, Sandoval reached out to CEA and became more involved with Padres y Jóvenes Unidos to help form and lead a group of activists committed to advocating for immigration reform through a public education lens.

CEA has also started implementing and facilitating deep-dive anti-oppression trainings to include 12 all-day trainings over a two-year period to empower participants to help to facilitate organization-wide changes and awareness raising throughout the state. Others partnered with Race Forward to host day-long trainings on how to effect change at a local-level.

CEA also reviewed and updated its current internal hiring and culturally relevant policies to be more intentional and racially aware. And CEA's statewide Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC) met in May 2017 to discuss to what degree its work was impacting racial justice. They worked to fine tune techniques to more effectively implement their work and encourage local EMACs to take a more critical look at the work being done at the local level.

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STRENGTH & GROWTH

"This work is definitely helping us strengthen and grow our base. We're seeing increased activity in our student program because of our commitment to social and racial justice. More early career educators are getting involved in our GLUE (Growth Leadership and Union Engagement) and Ed Summer organizing programs," says Dallman

Florida Education Association

Disrupting the Zip Code-to-Prison Pipeline in Florida

Federick Ingram, Vice President of the Florida Education Association (FEA), frequently observed the effects racism had on his career. In Florida, recent examples have been particularly jarring. *"Trayvon Martin was our kid. He came from Miami-Dade County where I taught, and he was killed in Sanford. We still talk about that all the time,"* says Ingram.

Ingram is acutely aware of the challenges students of color face. He explains that children of color, particularly black children, face challenges rooted in characteristics over which they have no control like the color of their skin, how big or tall they are, or even if a stranger perceives them as *"imposing."* Societal biases set the stage for an uphill battle where children of color face negative perceptions before they even have an opportunity to make a positive first impression.

Awareness

After the 2016 election, acts of hate in Florida increased, not only against African Americans but against Jewish and Hispanic youth and their families. Recent events were not isolated examples of institutional racism. Racism in Florida historically has been pervasive.

One example of this extremely troubling phenomenon in the state is the extent to which overall performance deviates between student populations. *“We talked about our school grading systems in the state of Florida, and how if you want to guess how kids are doing on a particular grade, you can trace it by zip code,”* Ingram explains.

He describes how anyone can pick a zip code on a map and based only on that zip code, they can identify the consequences of top-down education, over-sized classes, and the lack of arts education. You'll know that's where you'll find students of color, higher truancy rates, and higher juvenile detention rates,” he says.

In 2016, FEA's executive cabinet travelled to Dallas, Texas, for NEA's Leadership Summit where they heard Dr. Bertrice Berry speak, a speech that would ultimately serve as a catalyst to spur the FEA to action. *“I don't think that our executive cabinet ever thought of institutional racism in that particular way. . . . It's happening in and around you. For example, there is still an alarming rate of young people, boys of color, going to jail as young people, creating criminal records that will affect them the rest of their lives,”* Ingram says.

Capacity Building

The State Cohort Racial Justice Planning and Strategy Session the NEA Center for Social Justice held in Orlando, FL, provided FEA a pathway forward as an association. *“Knowing so many other people who are at many different levels of trying to impact institutional racism helped all of us to know that we are not alone in this work,”* Ingram remarks. Similarly, FEA wanted its local affiliates to feel supported. So, FEA dedicated an entire unit to assist local leaders in implementing programs.

At the local level, efforts were still evolving; some local affiliates are on their way to making systemic changes, while others still grapple with accepting that institutional racism exists. To assist in their efforts, the FEA served as a resource hub providing research, producing presentations, and developing and supporting racial justice workshops at the local level. Likewise, the FEA relied on aligned organizations to supplement its resources. *“Any time we don't have workshops developed, we call the NEA; we call AFL-CIO; we call sister organizations like the NAACP, and we try to make sure that a local gets what they need,”* Ingram states.

Action

In Florida, local action has taken many forms, each specific to the needs of the area.

In Volusia County, the president of Volusia United Educators (VUE) established a Human and Civil Rights Committee. VUE formed partnerships with the local civic and social organizations, historically black colleges and universities, and even local police. VUE regularly held town hall meetings and plenary workshops with the objective of forming partnerships to eliminate the school to prison pipeline.

In Miami-Dade County, the predominantly Hispanic population is being adversely impacted by federal and local level immigration enforcement policies. The Miami-Dade School board, with the support of the United Teachers of Dade County, unanimously passed a resolution informed

by the NEA model policy stating that students will be safe, unquestioned, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents will not enforce actions on school property.

For the association, open dialogue is essential for achieving racial justice in education. At the state level, FEA partnered with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, a professor at the University of Florida and National Book Award Winning Author of *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. Dr. Kendi will address FEA members on four occasions across the state. *"Anytime you avail yourself to having the dialogue, things can get better, even when people do not agree or find themselves on separate places. Once people open dialogue much more can be accomplished,"* Ingram concludes.

"The awareness alone puts us at a different level of understanding. Moreover, it provides a moral compass for our work. A guide and direction that parents, businesses, politicians, and our members can all rally around, equity for all children no matter their race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. It has also helped us to broaden the definition of who we are as an organization. Addressing racism and working towards racial justice in education has made us a stronger organization," says Ingram.

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STRENGTH & GROWTH

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Hawaii State Teachers Association

Challenging the Narrative of Paradise in Hawaii

The Hawaii Race to the Top grant application required adherence to a rigid and punitive approach to teacher evaluation, and elided the connection between standardized testing and racial/ethnic inequities in public education. But HSTA has been pushing back on an accountability narrative focused on identifying the 'bad teacher' and 'failing schools'. HSTA is forcing state lawmakers and community leaders to look at the ways in which teacher evaluation and testing regimes reflect and reinforce institutional racism, and are the responsibility of policymakers to address.

Creating Capacity for Meaningful Awareness

For HSTA, the hard work of awareness building is only in its beginning stages. HSTA is helping teachers become effective advocates for their students by intentionally promoting racial justice in public schools. *"It's really important that teachers recognize the power they have to affect children's self-perception and assign importance to race, ethnicity, and identity as well as connecting with the community,"* emphasizes Amy Perruso, HSTA's Secretary and Treasurer.

In Hawaii, one barrier to racial equity manifests itself in a lack of teachers working in their own communities; many teachers work in communities of color in which they do not live or actively participate. A disconnect between schools and neighborhoods is exacerbated by the schools operated by the state.

To help connect teachers to their students' communities, HSTA began implementing a wide range of initiatives to address racial inequality and build cultural competence, including publications, professional development concepts and approaches, and racial equity trainings. They can be found on NEA EdCommunities group, Racial Justice in Education.

Stay informed. Sign up and follow us at mynea360.org

Action

In addition to creating capacity for meaningful awareness, HSTA has developed partnerships with positive and passionate community organizations and advocates. Their main racial justice actions have centered on lifting student voices, growing their own teacher pipeline, and advocating for equitable school funding.

In April 2016, after a year of dialogue and engagement with the Micronesian Community, HSTA participated in a student-led Micronesian Youth Summit. The idea for HSTA participation in the summit came from one of HSTA's listening sessions with Micronesian leaders, where some students shared their frustrations in communicating with teachers. The leaders of the Micronesian community organized the event, and HSTA's goal for the summit was to show its support.

This self-directed leadership opportunity was a tremendously positive experience for the students, and their teachers walked away impressed by the dynamism of their students and the complexities of the institutional barriers they face. *"The summit had a high profile at our school so the entire student body knew it was taking place. Our students were excited to participate with Micronesian students from across the island and to meet political, educational, and community leaders during the summit. They left talking about the next summit and discussing possible college plans,"* says Tracy Palmgren, an HSTA Speakers Bureau leader who attended the summit.

For many students of color, Educational Assistants (EA) are the only professional staff who look like them and with whom they interact daily, and not classroom teachers or administrators. In response, HSTA is developing a Grow Your Own educator pathway grounded in support for the EAs, who are primarily Hawaiian, Filipino, and local community members already working in the schools. HSTA's multifaceted approach, in addition to focusing on high school's pre-teacher program or academies, also works with community organizations who want to foster EAs. *"Educational assistants live in the community, and they stay in the community. Some just have not gone on to school to become teachers. They lack the confidence and resources even though they are perfectly capable, which is an outcome of the structure [of institutional racism],"* notes Perruso.

Nonetheless, progress for this Grow Our Own Initiative faces an uphill battle. HSTA is supporting the work of the EAs' union and the Hawaii Department of Education to improve the EAs' salary structure in an effort to help EAs become teachers. *"It's critical for the EA to see movement within a pay scale that reflects their growth into becoming a teacher, which helps them survive and helps motivate them,"* suggests Perruso.

In Hawaii, the education reform effort fed a narrative of the *"failure of public schools."* *"The teachers' union has long been attacked for 'protecting bad teachers.' We represent so much more than due process rights to prevent abusive management. Racial justice in education shines a light on the racism long hidden by standardized tests, school funding formulas and policies, and one-size fits all measures of students. We are grappling with the difficult questions, and developing courageous ways to dismantle barriers in partnership with communities,"* says Perruso.

STRENGTH & GROWTH

Amy Perruso, HSTA's Secretary and Treasurer, *"The teachers' union has long been attacked for 'protecting bad teachers.' We represent so much more than due process rights to prevent abusive management. Racial justice in education puts students first and shines a light on the racism long hidden by standardized tests, school funding formulas and policies, and one-size fits all measures of students. We are grappling with very difficult questions and trying to find ways to dismantle barriers in partnership with communities."*

Idaho Education Association

Confronting Institutional Racism in the Gem State

The ability of educators to end racism in school hallways and classrooms depends on their own commitment to listen and learn. In a state like Idaho where nearly 90 percent of the population is white, opportunities for teachers to take part in these conversations can be limited. Through a series of trainings, the Idaho Education Association (IEA) is providing those worldview-changing experiences. A recent IEA training led to a striking a-ha moment when one member raised their hand and asked, *“Why are we talking about this? We are all white in this room.”* A hush fell over the participants, and then everyone began talking at once stating, *“No we are not.”* And, *“If we don’t recognize these issues, who will,”... or, “That statement is exactly why we are talking about this.”*

Building Capacity for Awareness

The same year that the NEA NBI B was adopted by the NEA Representative Assembly, IEA president Penni Cyr was serving on NEA’s school to prison pipeline task force and witnessed those same issues on the ground. Specifically, her time on the task force exposed her to the problems of white privilege and prejudice in school disciplinary procedures and effective solutions to increase awareness and action. *“Previously, members knew there were issues, but they didn’t have a way to organize around the issues or to bring them to light on a statewide level.”*

IEA responded to the need for awareness with two racial justice hearings, one attended by NEA executive committee member Kevin Gilbert, and the other by NEA president Lily Eskelsen García. At the 2016 Delegate Assembly, IEA passed two resolutions; one on racial justice that mirrored NEA’s language and one on social justice. Later at the 2017 Delegate Assembly, which marked IEA’s 125th Anniversary, a NBI passed directing the IEA to incorporate eradicating institutional racism into its strategic action plan.

To support educators in developing goals, President Cyr invited Kathy Yamamoto, IEA’s Western Region Organizing Center Director, to work with the IEA Board to make specific commitments about what steps each would take back to their locals and regions, including holding similar conversations at the region level.

IEA members and the president also attended NEA’s Race Forward training in Florida and developed a plan to continue involving members in racial justice issues. Through their awareness-raising efforts, members began communicating more and critically assessing whether their books, curriculum, and classroom activities are best meeting the needs of their students of color.

Despite challenges and road bumps, teachers eagerly explored race and identity, sometimes for the first time in their career. Cyr observes, *“They are excited to make every educator and their communities more aware of what is really going on and how we need, we must, address these issues and confront white privilege so that our students are not hurt or worse.”*

Action

IEA is planning a two-day task force meeting where the Human and Civil Rights (HCR) committee and interested members who attended the Delegate Assembly racial justice hearing will convene, develop a full-day training for IEA's Summer Institute, and create a toolkit that can be used in locals and regions. This toolkit will contain a link to a 30-minute webinar hosted on the IEA online portal discussing and defining racial justice, institutional racism, and the school to prison pipeline. It will also contain booklists with reading guides and reference lists of books for classrooms, curriculum, and libraries. A template plan will be included for locals and classrooms to hold discussions on racial justice and suggested language for district policies and/or negotiated agreements to address racial justice in our schools. IEA will encourage members to hold meetings in their locals using NEA materials and ask the same questions to encourage dialogue.

"Social justice issues are huge to early career educators, and I see their engagement with us as a result. They want an association that works on social justice issues and that provides them a place to work on what they're passionate about. So, I think that they will move us forward in that area by letting them know we think that it's important." says Cyr of the experience.

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STRENGTH & GROWTH

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Minnesota Education Association

Affinity for Racial Justice in Minnesota

In the last ten years, Minnesota’s student population has become significantly more diverse. In response to the state’s changing demographics, Education Minnesota (EDMN) has moved its members toward a greater level of cultural competence and is organizing them to address the racial injustices experienced by both students and educators of color.

Creating Capacity for Meaningful Awareness

EDMN’s Ethnic Minority Affairs Council (EMAC) has been an active part of the union for over a decade. EMAC members developed an Affirmative Involvement Plan (AIP), which laid out a long-term vision for EDMN’s racial justice work. A joint committee of the Governing Board and EMAC review and update the plan every two years.

Early on, the council’s work focused on the need for greater engagement from members of color in the union and creating a supportive community for them, who in many cases are the only person of color in their school. *“Initially, EMAC identified racial isolation as one of its biggest concerns; very frequently, our members of color are the only person of color in an entire building. That level of isolation can be very challenging, especially when no one around you is capable of understanding that isolation,”* recalls Carrie Lucking, EDMN Director of Policy, Research, and Outreach.

Bias magnifies the isolation, and in some cases, that bias is less visible. *“It’s not uncommon for administrators to hold members of color to higher standards. And, in turn, to call them on the carpet when they advocate for students, particularly when they advocate for students of color,”* explains Lucking. In other cases, the bias is more overt, where a teacher is on the receiving end of a racial epithet from a colleague.

One way EDMN has confronted this injustice is through its Facing Inequities and Racism in Education (FIRE) program. FIRE’s objective is to build a professional development pathway for educators to *“authentically disrupt systemic racism and racial inequities in the classroom.”* Last year, EDMN invited members to serve on FIRE’s curriculum writing team, which required volunteering on weekends. Despite the sacrifice of free time, EDMN received five times the number of volunteers that it needed.

This level of enthusiasm is explained, in part, by what the FIRE curriculum writing process represented in contrast to what can otherwise be a disenfranchising experience. *“When you engage in racial equity work in a school district, it can be very isolating, even if you’re [white], because often you’re pushing your colleagues to change their instructional tactics or changing their behavioral intervention, which can be hard,”* says Lucking.

The FIRE team was more than a curriculum writing group. It was a space where educators who are passionate and share an affinity for racial justice came together in a supportive and empowering way. In this space, they developed a community storytelling curriculum that provides for all members of a school community an interactive, sustainable framework for developing a growth mindset in racial equity. Uniquely structured, the community storytelling experience is a scalable program designed to meet a variety of learning styles and address equity concerns as they relate to specific community needs.

Action

The FIRE Program marked an important shift in focus for EDMN's AIP. According to Lucking, it represented an evolution from *"engaging members of color in a vibrant union that represents them and looks like them, to encouraging all members to work toward wide-ranging racial equity within Minnesota public education."*

The enthusiasm for FIRE was a solid testament to EDMN's member commitment, but it also showed the extent to which members, even those who were previously less engaged with the union, wanted to work toward strengthening policies geared toward racial justice.

While the latter goal is far broader, high-quality professional development and support can spur teachers to pursue racial justice initiatives within their own schools, districts, and communities. With members of color at the helm of planning and directing this work, EDMN is developing a framework of racial justice modules and a network of Race Equity Advocates who will train and organize EDMN staff, the governing board, and members throughout the state.

By far the greatest outcome is the groundswell of support from members who want to be engaged in this work. *"We have hundreds of members who have not otherwise been involved in Education Minnesota who have come to the union to work on racial justice issues. Just two weeks ago, about 45 of the 60 participants at our symposium on trauma-informed restorative practice indicated that this was the first time they had participated in a union-related activity,"* says Lucking.

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Missouri Education Association

In Missouri, Words and Deeds Will Continue in Others

Many of the Missouri National Education Association's (MNEA) local affiliates are in less racially diverse, more suburban and rural areas of the state, and MNEA has been a leader in implementing the NEA's 3-1(g) policies for decades. Enacted over 40 years ago, bylaw 3-1(g) stipulates that a state delegation is representative of a state's demographic composition. Bylaw 3-1(g) is the Association's most effective and comprehensive measure for encouraging racial/ethnic diversity in leadership at all levels of the organization. *"Our racial and social justice actions have attracted a diverse complement of educators participating in the process. This diversity contributes to ideas and strategies that consider multiple perspectives. This makes the association stronger. Our diversity is our strength,"* says Charles Smith, MNEA's president.

The historic passage of NBI B moved the Missouri National Education Association (MNEA) to create a new framework to analyze and update its policies and practices. *"It sends a message to children and parents that not only do we care about their education, we care about them as people,"* Smith says.

The work is empowering Missouri educators to be racial justice advocates.

Awareness

Through a series of racial justice trainings for the board, MNEA leaders cultivated a deeper understanding of the unmitigated effects of institutional racism. Through pre-reading assignments, white board members were surprised to learn about the housing discrimination practice of redlining.

As one board member says, "People who are not old enough to have witnessed the Civil Rights movement and have had little exposure to people of color simply have not witnessed racism. Those of us who were born in the late sixties and grew up in rural communities have not seen racism and struggle to believe it happens until it is pointed out or explained. Eyes have opened through the training and conversations. A little digging reveals that institutional racism [through redlining] was the reason that people of color stayed away from rural communities."

The training provided a new awareness of persistent inequities in education, such as unconscious bias in test design. These biases can result in lower test scores among students of color, causing them to fail admissions exams for educator training programs. Or how zero-tolerance discipline policies disproportionately target students of color. *"We used to not think about these issues in terms of their harm or effect on our students of color,"* Smith says.

Building Capacity for Action

After the racial justice trainings, many board members recognized the need to update MNEA's policies and practices and provide similar trainings to local affiliate leaders.

The board revisited the association's belief statements and legislative platform to reflect a new focus on racial justice and eliminating educational disparities. MNEA's resolutions and legislative committees completed a comprehensive review to identify policies in MNEA's platform that propped up institutional racism. *"We looked at what we believed about education and about what we were communicating to legislators. Some of those beliefs were not gelling with our focus on racial and social justice. We needed to change our message. We needed to change our attitude,"* says Smith.

The committees ultimately made several profound changes, including:

- ▶ **Discipline:** Implement trauma-informed and restorative justice programs while reducing zero-tolerance policies
- ▶ **Special needs programs:** Add race as a descriptor to examine for disproportionate placement of students of color into special needs programs
- ▶ **High-stakes testing:** Mandate that standardized tests be culturally relevant and unbiased
- ▶ **Public school integration:** Strengthen policies and guidelines for school integration to comply with judicial decisions and civil rights legislation

Missouri NEA has prioritized the racial justice in education development of 100 percent of local affiliate leadership teams in the state. This development opportunity is considered a core competency for all Missouri NEA leaders.

The racial justice trainings have better equipped MNEA to begin critical conversations with staff and students when national tragedies like Ferguson occur. *"The training gives you the background, the opportunity, to begin to have these conversations that hopefully will keep us from getting to a point like what we saw in Ferguson,"* Smith says.

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STRENGTH & GROWTH

Charles Smith, Missouri NEA President, *"our racial and social justice actions have attracted a diverse complement of educators participating in the process. This diversity contributes to ideas and strategies that consider multiple perspectives. This makes the association stronger. Our diversity is our strength."*

NEA-New Mexico

Disenfranchisement in the Land of Enchantment

New Mexico's demographic composition varies greatly across different regions of the state. The southwest and southeast regions are predominantly Hispanic, and the northwest region primarily Native American. With most of the population concentrated in the center of the state, racial inequities in the other regions often go overlooked.

Awareness

New Mexico is the third-most multilingual state in the country; 34 percent of its population speaks a language other than English, most often Spanish. Many speak Navajo or other Native American languages. Most of the state's teacher workforce does not boast the same rich diversity as the myriad of cultures, races, and countries of origin these languages represent. Educators identify and address inequities because of heightened awareness and action.


An increase in hate incidents during the 2016 presidential campaign revealed the invisibility of racial inequity and animosity against immigrants and their children in New Mexico. *"After the election, we had [white] high school students telling [Latino] groups of students to 'go back across the border,' and 'to go back to the reservation,"* laments National Education Association-New Mexico's (NEA-NM) President Betty Patterson.

The election outcome, in addition to creating a hostile learning environment, resulted in displacing many students from their homes. As Patterson recalls, *"After the election, the increase in the number of ICE [immigration enforcement] agents around our schools was immediately noticeable. Right away, we had a situation where students couldn't go home because no one was there [because their parents had been detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement]."*

Building Capacity for Action

In response to the tense national climate around race and immigration, NEA-NM members put into practice the training they received at NEA's Race Forward summit in Orlando, FL. Working together with local affiliates, NEA-NM incorporated racial justice training into all new employee orientations. Subsequently, the union experienced an increase in educators joining and taking action because of our Racial Equity position. *"Educators are joining NEA-New Mexico and becoming more involved because of our racial equity position. This is such an important issue to our early career educators. They are racial justice warriors,"* says Patterson.

Additionally, NEA-NM began to actively invest in a more diverse teacher workforce by partnering with the Educators Rising program at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. When teachers of colors serve as positive role models, they help break down stereotypes and better prepare their students for life in a multiracial society.



Faced with a community crisis in the wake of mass deportations, *"The teachers were pleading for guidance on how to work with their students,"* recalls Patterson. In response, NEA-NM organized a racial justice training in Las Cruces. It brought together immigration movement leaders, attorneys, and academics to support educators navigating the evolving policy shifts from Washington, DC and promote interagency coordination, all while striving to provide strong emotional support to students separated from their families.

This guidance put into practice meant educators were prepared to navigate sensitive topics in the classroom and best support students experiencing stress because of their race or family's immigration status. The training became particularly relevant for one teacher when the ICE-agent parent of one of his students detained a classmate's parents. The teacher deftly opened up a conversation and his students were empowered to communicate their feelings and reactions to the extraordinarily difficult circumstances of one student's dad being responsible for tearing apart another student's family.

The trainings have not only helped to strengthen classroom ties, but community ties. With the backing of NEA-NM, the cities of Santa Fe and Las Cruces adopted Sanctuary Cities resolutions.

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STRENGTH & GROWTH

Betty, NEA-NM President, *"Educators are joining NEA-New Mexico and becoming more involved because of our racial equity position. This is such an important issue to our early career educators. They are racial justice warriors."*

Ohio Education Association

Reading Between the (Red)lines in Ohio

For some time, Ohio Education Association (OEA) delegates, members, and staff have supported NEA's work around racial justice. Since 2012, OEA has supported NEA efforts related to eliminating the school to prison pipeline. In spring of 2016, following the NEA's model, the OEA Representative Assembly passed NBI 1 acknowledging the existence of institutional racism and established a task force to support OEA's work in promoting social and racial justice in Ohio's education system.

Prior to the NEA's passage of NBI B, OEA sought to address social justice issues through its participation in NEA sponsored programs and activities such as the Minority Leadership Training program and the NEA member Diversity Training cadre. OEA also supported work to promote social justice and diversity sessions at the annual OEA Summer Academy. However, since the passage of NBI B, OEA has established a statewide social justice task force and with the assistance of Dr. Antoinette Miranda trained a staff cadre of cultural competence facilitators. Additionally, members of the Board of Directors participated in a training related to social justice, cultural competence, and institutional racism.

Awareness


Beginning with the cultural diversity awareness training attended by the Board of Directors, OEA has started the difficult work of having hard conversations within its membership. For example, trained OEA staff have worked with locals and school administrators to overcome prevalent misconceptions and predispositions. While some participants at first had trouble accepting they could be responsible for even unconscious bias, many supported the work from the beginning.

Building Capacity for Action

Several school districts have become exemplars for collaborative social justice work. In Sylvania, there is a long-established Middle-Eastern population. However, a shift occurred when that part of the state became a resettlement area for Syrian refugees. The school district was struggling to adapt to the English Language Learner (ELL) needs of newly settled refugee students from the Middle East.

Together with OEA facilitators, and led by Dan Greenberg, President of the Sylvania EA, teachers made a plan specific to their school site. A training, made possible with a \$12,000 grant from the NEA, culminated in the state's first collaborative social justice plan.

After a successful endeavor in Sylvania, other districts sought out OEA as a resource and requested collaborative social justice planning workshops in their schools as well. Youngstown Education Association's training efforts examined the effects of historic redlining, the practice of



denying home loans to people in areas deemed to be less desirable during the New Deal, which most negatively affected neighborhoods based on their racial makeup. *"I was very lucky to find an old redlining map from 1938, with property descriptions as written by the banks, and teachers said 'wow, that's almost what the map looks like now,'"* observed DeNoia. *"It was eye-opening for many of the teachers, especially those that live outside of that community."*

OEA's efforts center on building internal capacity to support members in the communities in which they work, and the students they serve. Made possible by OEA president Becky Higgins' continuous commitment to this work, the Social Justice Task Force will continue with a deeper and intentional focus on racial justice. The union intends to develop activities, trainings, and programs geared towards engaging new educators in racial justice and cultural competency, as well as continue engaging existing membership. *"Racial justice in education presents an opportunity to engage members on issues that they care about,"* says Higgins.

STRENGTH & GROWTH

Becky Higgins, Ohio EA President, *"racial justice in education presents an opportunity to engage members on issues that they care about."*

Oregon Education Association

Putting Racial Justice on the Map in Oregon

Last spring, contentious political campaigns exacerbated long-standing racial tensions in the United States. Communities around the country were taking a stand against derisive messages towards African American, Hispanic, Muslim, and immigrant communities. Amid this national conversation about race arose an unexpected chorus of voices from Washington County, Oregon, when hundreds of students and community members from the area's high schools walked out to protest a "Build a Wall" banner that was hung by a group of students at Forest Grove High School, a school where 50 percent of students are Hispanic.

This student-led movement was a valuable teaching moment for educators. It demonstrated that dismantling racial inequities required direct action by the adults in our public school system. Subsequently, during the 2016 Oregon Education Association (OEA) representative assembly (RA), more than 700 delegates adopted New Business Item (NBI) 20, which reads:

"[The]OEA shall lead in addressing institutional racism by: 1) spotlighting systemic patterns of inequity - racism and educational injustice - that impact our students; and 2) taking action to enhance access and opportunity for all Oregon students, consistent with the NEA Institutional Racism NBI. OEA will use our collective voice to bring to light the ongoing institutional racism and initiate change to policies, programs, and practices that condone or ignore unequal treatment and hinder student success."


Since then, the OEA has developed and grown relationships with community partners who believe in racial justice and are committed to a "Great Public School for Every Student."

Awareness

For the OEA, NBI 20 was an opportunity to bring their core values into racial justice action. While the OEA had always supported racial and social justice issues through its human and civil rights and ethnic minority affairs committees, NBI 20 made racial justice a driving force at every level of the organization. OEA President Hanna Vaandering said, "[NBI 20] was the direction we needed to fully engage in the work to eliminate the institutional racism in Oregon and within our own organization," says Hanna Vaandering, OEA's president.

Despite broad support, the OEA acknowledges that not all members were initially receptive to NBI 20. "We have some members who do not think racism exists in Oregon and who do not believe in this work. When you're having a conversation about race, everyone is on edge and doesn't want to say the wrong thing, which can cause people to disengage," Vaandering says.

However, the OEA has found when students are given a safe place to talk about the impact institutional racism has on their lives, it helps educators to fully engage. To create more safe places for students, educators, and community members to share their stories about institutional



racism and its impact on their own educational opportunities, the OEA helped local affiliates build capacity with a series of town halls and symposiums across the state. “Students’ stories bring a powerful element to the conversation, which moves the work forward in a positive direction for everyone,” says Vaandering.

Building Capacity for Action

OEA sought technical assistance from the National Education Association (NEA) and existing NEA diversity and race awareness toolkits to begin the dialogue and empower panelists of students and educators to explore how racism undermines educational opportunity.

“It’s about lifting the voices of students and bringing together community members. Whether it’s state and local law enforcement, local businesses, faith-based communities, or school administrators, we all have a role in this,” says Vaandering. To continue amplifying student voices, the OEA plans to roll out a video and trainings at council retreats to support the implementation of racial justice town hall symposiums across the state.

The OEA also formalized active partnerships with communities and encouraged member participation within racial and social justice groups, local campaigns, and individual action on issues affecting students. Gauging member activity to target its support efforts was also part of the plan. For example, they conducted a survey of members to collect data on their involvement with racial and social justice groups to identify potential partners. The data was then used to create a “hotmap” to provide a visual of member volunteer efforts.

The racial justice work also provided the opportunity to harmonize efforts where there had previously been discord with civil rights groups, such as disagreement on the merits of high-stakes testing. While standardized tests have been indisputably harmful to students of color, they do provide information on the opportunity gaps. Both groups began seeing the issue through a racial justice lens and understood the benefits of addressing systemic inequities.

OEA has also partnered with organizations led by communities of color focused on social justice issues. OEA is a founding partner in the Fair Shot Coalition, a group of over 20 labor unions, community groups, and racial justice organizations working toward racial, gender, and economic equality. Since this coalition was founded in 2014, it helped pass significant legislation that improves the lives of Oregonians, and they are working to pass more. In 2015 and 2016 the coalition passed the following legislation:

- ▶ **Expanding access to paid sick days;**
- ▶ **Establishing a secure way to save for retirement;**
- ▶ **Banning the box to create job opportunities for people with prior convictions and arrests;**
- ▶ **Ending profiling based on race, gender and sexual orientation;**
- ▶ **Raising the minimum wage.**

In 2017 the Fair Shot coalition is working to pass legislation that takes another step forward in addressing the reality that the status quo simply is not working for many of us – women, people of color, LGBTQ communities, immigrants, and working families. 2017 priorities include:

- ▶ **Access to healthcare for all kids regardless of immigration status**
- ▶ **Stable housing initiatives to stabilize rent and get rid of no cause evictions**
- ▶ **Paid family and medical leave**
- ▶ **End profiling data collection**
- ▶ **Access to the full range of reproductive healthcare for all Oregonians**

Educator voice and support are essential to passing a coalition agenda focused on dismantling institutionalized racism and advancing economic, racial, and gender justice.

The OEA's efforts demonstrate that working to end racial inequity in education identifies new leaders who may have previously been less involved with the organization. The work, in effect, yielded multiple benefits by ensuring quality education for all students, helping to activate civically oriented members, and cultivating new leaders. *"Our work has brought more members into our union and has inspired members to be more involved. With everything happening in Washington DC and across the nation, our members want to step up and make a difference. I believe lifting the voice of students has been a big boost for our membership,"* Vaandering says.

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STRENGTH & GROWTH

Hanna Vaandering, Oregon Education Association President, *"Our work to promote racial justice has reinvigorated our union. It has inspired many members to get involved and many who have been involved to be more involved. With everything happening in Washington DC and across the nation, our members are stepping up to make a difference. Our students deserve a safe, welcoming learning environment, and I believe our commitment to lifting the voice of students has changed the dialogue and has put us on the path to racial justice for all."*



Tennessee Education Association

The Power and Potential of Educators of Color in Tennessee's Classrooms

In 2017, the Tennessee Education Association (TEA) celebrated the 50th Anniversary of its merger with the Tennessee Education Congress. The merger, which brought together the white teachers' association and the black teachers' association, ensured that racial and social justice advocacy would remain at the forefront of TEA's mission to provide a quality public education for all students.

Awareness

In Tennessee, there are 122 school districts without a Hispanic teacher and 27 districts without a black teacher, according to a Tennessee Department of Public Instruction report on the educator pipeline and the need for diversity in the teacher workforce. *"We have places where we have students who have never seen a brown or black teacher, let alone a male teacher of color,"* says Barbara Gray, TEA president.

In response, the association became a leader in the state on the critical need to recruit more people of color, particularly men of color, into the teaching profession. The result was the *Grow Your Own* partnership with the state's historically black colleges and universities.

Building Capacity for Action

As a first step in building the *Grow your Own* initiative, TEA assembled a team of student leaders, advisors, new and experienced teachers, and administrators to closely examine the following issues:

- ▶ What challenges do men of color interested in the field of education face?
- ▶ What stigmas are associated with men of color going into education?
- ▶ What are the financial realities about why they may be deterred from majoring in education?
- ▶ What considerations are there for the new benchmarking and the licensure requirements under the Education Teaching Performance Assessment?

“Our goal is just to make sure that we don't lose sight of the power and potential of people of color in education,” says Dr. Nicole Arrighi, NEA Member, professor at Tennessee State University and advisor to the Student Tennessee Education Association.

The provisional group made plans to hold their first official convening in fall 2017. Already, preliminary conversations and anecdotal evidence has uncovered important insights into the institutional barriers keeping men of color from entering the teaching profession, or if they do enter, remaining in the teaching profession.

As is the case in many states, teacher workforce pipeline challenges begin early in a prospective teacher's education. For an aspiring teacher of color to make it to the classroom, they must first make it to college. Tennessee has one of the lowest college-entry rates in the country. Over the past 14 years, the state's Hispanic population grew by almost 230 percent, yet maintains the lowest college matriculation rate among all ethnic groups in Tennessee.

In recognition of the institutional barriers that have led to low college-attendance rates, Tennessee passed a law making community college free, something the Grow Your Own initiative hopes to leverage. *“The NEA has always been at the forefront of putting together programs and resources to address the field of education as presented today,”* Gray says.

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STRENGTH & GROWTH

“TEA's focus on racial justice in education has reinvigorated participation by members and the broader community. Working to recruit and retain educators of color in Tennessee schools will have a long-lasting and positive effect on our membership,” says Gray.



Texas State Teachers Association

Don't Mess with Racial Justice in Texas

The culture of institutional racism in Texas leads to devastating consequences. The Texas State Constitution contains language requiring support and maintenance of an *“efficient system of public free schools,”* but in reality, the inadequate and inequitable Texas school finance system leaves students who live in property-poor communities, who are predominantly students of color, at a significant disadvantage.

As minority student enrollment has dramatically increased, the state share of education funding steadily declined. Noel Candelaria, the TSTA president, does not believe this trend is coincidental. *“In 2011, Hispanic students became a majority of K-12 enrollment in Texas, and two-thirds of that enrollment were of our students of color,”* he explained. *“That same year, the legislature cut \$5.4 billion from public education, and for the first time in history, the state did not provide funding to cover the cost of enrollment growth.”*

Candelaria also noted that disadvantaged communities in property-poor school districts suffer under the state’s inequitable school finance system. At a time when the state share of education funding is shrinking, taxpayers in local districts that have the lowest property wealth must pay a higher property tax rate to fund public schools.

Building Capacity for Awareness

In the initial stages of TSTA’s efforts, even before the association began to engage members and local affiliates in conversations about racial justice, TSTA recognized the need for internal training. *“At first, we were underprepared to discuss institutional racism and social injustice externally; we decided to train our leaders and our staff. We wanted to have a firm understanding and a grasp of the language around this work,”* says Candelaria. Awareness is the foundation on which TSTA plans to build initiatives to combat systemic racial inequity in public education.

“TSTA’s racial justice actions have engaged members from a different perspective in addition to organizing for salary and benefits and working conditions. Racial justice has encouraged members to stay members,” Candelaria says.

Action

TSTA sought to support members' grassroots efforts. In Amarillo, the incoming president of the local union, Aaron Phillips, saw the school district was not adequately meeting the language needs of its Somali student refugee population. Moreover, the only two Black principals in the school district announced their retirement this year. Local and grassroots leaders want to ensure the school district understands the significance of this leadership vacuum to communities of color and is urging them to increase the diversity of its school administrators. TSTA utilized its racial justice training to facilitate courageous dialogue. *"First, we will conduct a racial justice training. Then, we will transition to a community conversation with leaders from the Black, Hispanic, and refugee communities in Amarillo and the Texas Panhandle so that we may start an action plan,"* says Candelaria.

TSTA's awareness raising efforts have resulted in initiatives from both the member and leadership levels of the association. After their initial training, many of TSTA's board members led initiatives in their local school districts to push for "school safe zone" resolutions, modeled after the NEA's, in response to federal crack-down on peaceful immigrant communities. To date, fourteen school districts in Texas have adopted the "school safe zone" resolution, in addition, two TSTA locals are currently organizing their members to ask their school boards to adopt the resolution.

Ultimately, TSTA's efforts to promote racial equity in education engaged members on a different level. Candelaria believes the work will result in positive changes to Texan society and result in greater retention of members. *"We lose half of all new teachers in the first five years. They leave due to lack of support. They leave communities that are most impacted by institutional racism. The poorest communities are also those that have the highest teacher turnover. We expect this work will engage more members at a different level, to get them to see how their work inside the classroom connects within their communities."*

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STRENGTH & GROWTH

Noel Candelaria, Texas State Teachers Association President, *"TSTA's racial justice actions have engaged members from a different perspective in addition to organizing for salary and benefits and working conditions. Racial justice has encouraged members to stay members."*

Washington Education Association

Culturally Competency in Washington's Classrooms

In a survey conducted by the Washington Education Association (WEA) of over 11,000 teachers and public-school employees, WEA members, by a large margin, identified racial equity as a top priority for the union. WEA's approach to promoting racial justice in education is twofold. First, the association strives to build better relationships between the board, staff, and members by improving cultural competence throughout the organization. Second, they work to ensure access to cultural competence training and tools to transform classroom management.

WEA first set out to improve the process used to resolve personnel issues. Previously, the only pathway for resolving racial grievances was through its human resources (HR) department. The association recognized a need to delve deeper than HR and address institutional racism from a governance standpoint. The cultural competence training received by the board, the executive committee, and the staff, allowed them to identify existing offenses that otherwise went undefined, unnamed, or unnoticed. For example, HR was previously underprepared to deal with the fallout of micro aggressions, unconscious or unintended biases toward a member of a marginalized group. Trainings introduced tools for distinguishing inclusive practices from exclusionary ones. *"We're talking about what it means to thoughtfully interact with one another in an inclusive manner,"* Mead says.

To promote cross-cultural communication in the classroom, Ben Ibale, the staff member assigned to the WEA's Human and Civil Rights Committee, began working with the University of Washington to develop a curriculum that combines cultural competence work with classroom management strategies. *"My hope is we can get the curriculum to a point where it's incorporated as part of educator preparation programs,"* remarks Mead.

The first training objective was to better understand core practices for culturally responsive classroom management and ensure a positive and safe learning environment for students. The second was to cultivate an inclusive classroom community by appropriately incorporating students' cultures and meaningfully engaging their families. This meant asking hard questions such as, do biases or stereotypes affect disciplinary methods and frequency? What role does classroom management play in reducing the school to prison pipeline?

Building Capacity for Action

Individual reactions were mixed in response to the introspective work required by the training. As participants came to terms with their own biases, promising progress was made within the union's governance structure. This included a shift in attitude toward 3-1(g). *"Members no longer look at 3-1(g) as a box that needs to be checked. It's about encouraging everyone to feel they belong,"* Mead says.

The desire to achieve more than a quota led to the creation of first-time Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMACs) in a third of the state's councils. Another immediate change saw the state's affinity caucuses regrouped after years of inactivity. As a result, Mead observed greater participation from union members. *"Embracing and nurturing equity as our ongoing work will strengthen our organization. The professional growth opportunities developed as a result of our collaboration moves a student focused agenda. We aren't waiting. Students' success is what all educators want and we are leading the way."*

A change in attitude was also observed in rural areas. Washington's rural councils that have an underrepresentation of educators of color and typically resisted 3-1(g)'s requirements, have elevated their efforts to implement 3-1(g). *"Whereas 3-1(g) used to be seen as a punishment, now it's an opportunity,"* Mead says of educators beginning to understand the compelling need to bring communities of color into the school setting.

WEA's structural changes within the organization have had a positive effect throughout Washington's schools. WEA acknowledges racial inequities within its own organization and recognizes how those inequities hinder well-intentioned policies aimed at encouraging equal opportunity and equitable education for all students. By increasing awareness and changing internal practices among leaders and members, WEA's efforts for broader change have a firm foundation on which to build.

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STRENGTH & GROWTH

Kim Mead, Washington EA President, *"Embracing and nurturing equity as our ongoing work will strengthen our organization. The professional growth opportunities developed as a result of our collaboration moves a student-focused agenda. We aren't waiting. Students' success is what all educators want, and we are leading the way."*



Wisconsin Education Association Council

Racial Justice Sheds New Light on Old Issues for Wisconsin

When Ron Duff Martin was a junior in high school, he knew he wanted to go to college. His high school counselor, on the other hand, advised him against applying. Ron's mom is a Chippewa Indian, and Ron's counselor expressed concern that college would be too much of a financial burden for his family. It was this institutional racism that led Ron to push for racial justice in education at every stage of his career; first as a college graduate, then as an eighth grade teacher, and now as the president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC). That's exactly the type of [unconscious] bias that's important we eradicate, not just the policies that are written, but ingrained.

Awareness

For several years, Wisconsin has been the epicenter of the anti-labor movement. At a time when WEAC and its values of equity and due process were attacked, many of WEAC's board members were apprehensive about tackling racial justice in education as a priority. As an awareness-building exercise, Martin assembled a book study based on the resources NEA provides through its Center for Social Justice. The book study was an opportunity for the board to reflect on literature and research to which they may otherwise not have been exposed. The reaction from many board members was shock at how systemic racial discrimination and bias were in education.

In Wisconsin, one specific concern was the over-identification of students of color as special needs students. Several years prior, in fact, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the U S Department of Education cited several school districts for disproportionately classifying Black, Hispanic, and Native American students as learning disabled. While incremental improvement had been made, the over-identification of students of color in special education persisted. Through the racial equity book study, board members were able to connect what they were reading to the real issue of over-identification. Equipped with the ability to better analyze this issue through a racial justice framework, WEAC members became motivated to make progress on eliminating this injustice.

Building Capacity for Action

In Wisconsin, the ultimate goal of raising awareness is shifting the lens through which policy is created. In addition to reflecting inward, the organization hosted a Call to Action event in February 2017. The event brought together education stakeholders from across the state to engage in conversation about racial justice. Call to Action participants included the

Department of Public Instruction, the state's four largest local affiliates (Milwaukee, Green Bay, Madison, and Racine), Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Association of Wisconsin School Administrators, and the Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services. WEAC members, academics, and diversity professionals moderated the forum. Participants heard from panels of community members and student leaders of color.

Community and student leaders of color shared their stories of growing up and the role of education in eradicating institutional racism, like the Native American student who organized his classmates to demand the Madison Area School Board create a dress code prohibiting the use of clothing that depicts Native Americans as mascots or logos. He was proud of this work, but even with the policy in place, expressed deep concern that his peers still didn't understand why the mascots and logos using Native Americans are hurtful. He hoped that schools would do a better job of teaching the history of Native Americans.

The event not only inspired WEAC members but challenged individuals to think about personal and collective action to address racial disparity in education in the state. Following the Call to Action, an advisory group formed to develop and offer proposals to State Superintendent Dr. Tony Evers and the Department of Public Instruction on how to eliminate institutional racism in Wisconsin.

In addition to the ongoing meetings, WEAC began considering offering mini-grants to local affiliates interested in tackling racial justice within their districts. WEAC also planned to incorporate a component of racial justice to the charges of each of its standing committees. Finally, it planned to continue building on the success of its book study by expanding the program for its professional and associate staff.

President Martin credits WEAC's early successes for seeding a homegrown initiative. *"We took a lot of time and putting the plan together, and when it comes from the heart of leadership, even the skeptics don't have the heart to fight it. This work shows members and potential members that our union cares about the students we teach and the communities in which we work. Local affiliates address racial justice within their district and people of color are more involved because of our actions,"* he says.

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STRENGTH & GROWTH

Ron Duff Martin, WEAC President, *"this work shows members and potential members that our union cares about the students we teach and the communities in which we work. Local affiliates address racial justice within their district and people of color are more involved because of our actions."*

Racial Justice in Education Pre-Reading / Resource Materials

Books NEA Leaders are reading:

- ▶ **Between the World and Me; Ta-Nehisi Coates**
- ▶ **The New Jim Crow; Michelle Alexander**
- ▶ **Brown is the New White; Steve Phillips**
- ▶ **Just Mercy; Bryan Stevenson**
- ▶ **Waking Up White; Debby Irving**

Online Resources

Structural Racialization by the Kirwan Institute

Racial inequity can persist without racist intent. The word "racism" is commonly understood to refer to instances in which one individual intentionally or unintentionally targets others for negative treatment because of their skin color or other group-based physical characteristics. Research conducted by the Kirwan Institute.

Read Position Paper here: <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/brochure-structural-racialization-systems-approach-to-understanding-the-causesand-consequences-of-racial-inequity/>

The Case for Reparations by Ta-Nehisi Coates

(June 2014)

Two hundred fifty years of slavery. Ninety years of Jim Crow. Sixty years of separate but equal. Thirty-five years of racist housing policy. Until we reckon with our compounding moral debts, America will never be whole.

Read the article online here: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

From Ferguson to Baltimore: The Fruits of Government-Sponsored Segregation

In Baltimore in 1910, a black Yale law school graduate purchased a home in a previously all-white neighborhood. The Baltimore city government reacted by adopting a residential segregation ordinance, restricting African

Americans to designated blocks. Explaining the policy, Baltimore's mayor proclaimed, "Blacks should be quarantined in isolated slums in order to reduce the incidence of civil disturbance, to prevent the spread of communicable disease into the nearby White neighborhoods, and to protect property values among the White majority."

Read the article online here: <http://www.epi.org/blog/from-ferguson-to-baltimore-the-fruits-of-government-sponsored-segregation/>

Race Matters: How to talk about Race by The Annie Casey Foundation

Conversations about race are never easy. Here are a few tips on how to keep the conversation productive. This is part of a comprehensive Race Matters toolkit.

Visit: <http://www.aecf.org/resources/race-matters-2/>

RaceForward "Moving the Race Conversation Forward" is a report by Race Forward: The Center for Racial

Justice Innovation that aims to reshape and reform the way we talk about race and racism in our country.

Visit: <https://www.raceforward.org/research/reports/moving-race-conversation-forwardRacial>

Equity Impact Assessment Tool: <https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/racial-equity-impact-assessment-toolkit>

Teaching Tolerance by the Southern Poverty Law Center

Lesson plans on a wide variety of social justice issues specifically focused on tolerance.

Visit: <https://www.splcenter.org/teaching-tolerance>

WGBH Educational Foundation

WGBH creates, distributes, and promotes FREE media resources to support innovative teaching and learning for all ages.

Visit: <http://www.wgbh.org/about/education.cfm>

Facing History and Ourselves

FHAO works with teachers, students, and communities everywhere, through online professional development, international events, and our free library of classroom resources.

The history of race in America encompasses questions of freedom, justice, equality, and citizenship.

Visit: <https://www.facinghistory.org/topics/race-us-history>

GARE/ Government Alliance on Race and Equity The Government Alliance on Race and Equity

(GARE) is a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. Across the country, governmental jurisdictions are: making a

commitment to achieving racial equity, focusing on the power and influence of their own institutions, and working in partnership with others. When this occurs, significant leverage and expansion opportunities emerge, setting the stage for the achievement of racial equity in our communities.

Visit: <http://www.racialequityalliance.org/>

Racial Equity Tools are designed to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions, including policies, practices, programs, and budgets. It is both a product and a process. Use of a racial equity tool can help to develop strategies and actions that reduce racial inequities and improve success for all groups.

Visit: <http://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-toolkit-opportunityoperationalize-equity/>

NEAEdjustice

Join NEAEdjustice, your source for social & racial justice activism – see and hear from fellow educator activists, collect resources and have a chance to share your activism learning experiences.

Visit: www.NEAEdjustice.org

Video “Marley Dias talks Institutional Racism”: <https://youtu.be/4M-5V8uUtKA>

EdCommunities

Join NEA’s online space for communication/ dialogue, sharing resources and experiences, and helping continue the conversation on racial justice in education.

Visit: www.mynea360.org



A LOOK FORWARD

“There’s no turning back...We will win...because ours is a revolution of mind and heart...”
With Cesar Chavez’s clarion call, I remind you of the critical, essential role you play as leaders of this Association - to teach and learn; to nurture and cajole; to push and to pull; to encourage, and to lift up. There’s no turning back, NEA. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. There’s no turning back, NEA. We are the men and women who have dedicated our lives to nurturing, supporting and educating ALL of America’s students. There’s no turning back, NEA. Our students are depending on us, and we will not let them down. NEA, there’s no turning back!

Are you engaged in
racial justice in education?

Tell us your story on NEA EdCommunities' Racial Justice in
Education group at <http://bit.ly/racialjusticeinedcommunities>.

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