

# RESOLUTION 3

## THE URGENT FIGHT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

Submitted by the Committee on Civil and Human Rights and the Executive Council

The fight for racial justice in the United States is more urgent than ever. The AFL-CIO continues our commitment to represent all workers, in all of their diversity, since multiracial, working-class solidarity is essential for building worker power.

Our work on racial justice is strengthened by the leadership and activism of the AFL-CIO constituency groups, especially those representing people of color: the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI), Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), Pride At Work (P@W) and the newly formed Union Veterans Council (UVC).

Many of our members live at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities as people of color, women, immigrants, LGBTQ+ workers and more. Communities of color still face economic inequities and disparities as a result of structural racism in housing, health care, education and employment. Racism, the cornerstone of white supremacy, directly threatens workers, our unions and our democracy.

The AFL-CIO calls for bold action to promote equity, safety, security and dignity for all people, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

In 2020, the pandemic laid bare and deepened racial inequities. Our nation witnessed a series of heartrending murders of Black people, including that of George Floyd, and the systemic racism that they evidenced. Those murders reopened deep wounds, necessitated a moral reckoning and put the Black Lives Matter movement at the center of our national dialogue. At the same time, we witnessed increased xenophobia and racial discrimination in the workplace and in society against Asian Americans.

In 2021, we witnessed a vicious hate crime against Asian American women in Atlanta and the abuse of immigrants at the border.

These targeted attacks all happened against the background of structural racism, which promotes and contributes to economic disparity. These are deep, long-term challenges that continue today. Most recently, we have seen shameless attacks on our voting rights, largely targeted at people of color, which is an urgent priority for America and for the labor movement.

Our movement has been called to action. We have joined the movement for racial justice because these are our core values. We have increased our focus on, and commitment to, this work, including through the AFL-CIO Task Force on Racial Justice formed in July 2020, and through the dedication of additional resources and capacity for the federation's racial justice work.

In 2017, the AFL-CIO Convention adopted Resolution 16, which committed us to build solidarity and understanding among union leaders and members on how race has been used to weaken labor unity; build a more diverse and inclusive labor movement by integrating the issues and concerns of members and workers of color into labor's political and policy work at every level; and work to ensure labor's leadership and decision-making structures reflect the diversity of our members and all working people.

The Task Force on Racial Justice has taken on the work of turning these words into reality and deepened our understanding of the action steps we can take to implement these commitments.

In an attempt to address public safety concerns, we adopted the Public Safety Blueprint for Change in 2021. The fundamental goal of this blueprint is to build

productive, positive and trusting community relationships, and for the working professionals who provide public safety daily to be a driving force for meaningful reforms grounded in equity, inclusion and racial justice.

In order to continue our commitment to racial justice, the AFL-CIO commits to do the following:

- Build multiracial, working-class solidarity by growing our unions. Unions have historically increased racial equity and decreased the racial wealth gap. This foundational goal leads the charge to continue to invite new groups of workers to join us in our labor movement. Unions are a path to economic security, especially for people of color.
- Bring a racial justice lens to all of our policy work and political programs as the AFL-CIO, affiliated unions and federated bodies.
- Equip staff and leaders assigned to labor get-out-the-vote efforts with the tools to have effective and powerful conversations about racial and economic justice, and the ways that race has been used to divide workers.
- Use the Workers First Agenda developed in the early days of the Biden-Harris administration as a road map for moving a racial justice agenda through federal policy and legislation, and continue to hold elected officials accountable to that agenda.
- Continue working to pass both the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to restore provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that have been eroded and done away with by the Supreme Court, and the Freedom to Vote Act to reverse state voter suppression laws passed in the wake of attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election, because every American should have access to the ballot box.
- Continue the fight for voting rights on all fronts: grassroots action, recruiting candidates for office who will defend voting rights, holding elected officials accountable and pushing for legislation at all levels to guarantee the right to vote for all.
- Take action and support measures to stop the ongoing epidemic of racially motivated, hate-inspired terrorist attacks on innocent people, such as the horrific massacre at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, last month, the 2019 massacre at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, and the 2018 massacre at a synagogue in Pittsburgh.
- Encourage all affiliates to help secure Juneteenth as a paid holiday for all workers, through collective bargaining and other means.
- Commit to the important initiatives outlined by our national leadership, including the work of the Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice.
- Educate members about the ways race, ethnicity and other differences impact the lives of our members and would-be members, and build common understandings of how racial bias and discrimination divide working people and undermine our collective power.
- Support federated bodies (state federations, area labor federations and central labor councils) in setting strategic and measurable goals for political and policy work that advance racial justice. We must learn from case studies of success and failure.
- Strengthen and expand our work with allies and partners to achieve racial justice goals, whether we are in the lead or whether we are in support of another organization that is leading on a racial justice fight.