

## **Statement from the Connecticut Human Rights Partnership on Upholding Black Lives and Envisioning a New Future**

Founded in 2015, the Connecticut Human Rights Partnership (CHRP) is a diverse group of educators, scholars, activists, and community organization leaders deeply committed to the promotion of a culture of human rights in Connecticut. Our work includes creating learning opportunities for high school and college students, promoting human rights education inside and outside schools; fostering dialogue and collaboration among community organizations; and advocating for human rights concerns.

From our work in education and action for human rights, we see several basic truths that must be affirmed at this moment:

***Black lives matter.*** Like many individuals, nonprofit organizations, and businesses, CHRP is dismayed at the blatant disregard for the dignity of Black people that could permit a police officer to kill George Floyd while other officers stood by, doing nothing. CHRP joins its voice to those of many allies condemning the senseless and systemic violence perpetrated against Black people and all marginalized persons.

***The government's use of force demands accountability.*** Police are granted very potent powers—to take people into custody and to use deadly force. Such power requires strong democratic oversight. As a panel of independent experts of the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council [recently declared](#), “The true demonstration of whether Black lives do indeed matter remains to be seen in the steps that public authorities and private citizens take in response to the concrete demands that protestors are making.” CHRP demands the uprooting of damaging practices and policies that strip people of their fundamental rights and dignity. Instead, we call for police departments to be held accountable to the communities they are supposed to serve and to no longer be able to hide behind laws and policies that give them more immunity than others have.

***Fulfilling the promise of human rights requires systemic political, economic, and cultural changes.*** Human rights are interconnected and universal. In order to fulfill the promises set forth in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), deliberate and cooperative systems rethinking must be implemented. Satisfying the unmet socioeconomic rights of marginalized persons and communities—such as the right to equal education, to employment, and to health care—is necessary for achieving racial justice. We know this work has been and will be challenging. It will require the resiliency, innovation, and commitment of all to initiate systemic change.

***Protest is a powerful tool for change.*** The late civil rights activist Bayard Rustin said, “When an individual is protesting society’s refusal to acknowledge his dignity as a human being, his very act of protest confers dignity on him.” The most important changes for human rights and social justice have always been driven from the grassroots. The overwhelmingly peaceful protests that have been occurring daily around the country since May 26 are arguably the largest sustained mass movement in American history. Public officials must listen to and address what these protesters are demanding. The demands of protesters may not be dismissed by hypocritically pointing to rare instances of violence by some.

***To make lasting change, we must educate, vote, organize, and act in solidarity.*** The fulfillment of human rights is an ongoing, collaborative, and democratic process. Anti-racism protesters and human rights groups have decried obstacles to civil-political and social-economic rights. These obstacles include the disenfranchisement of black voters by a variety of methods and, in many states, an inadequate response to the need for mail-in voting during the Covid-19 pandemic. Americans are eager to make change; they must not be prevented from doing so by the curtailment of their rights.

**In light of these values, CHRP commits itself to the following:**

- We acknowledge that, as a predominantly white organization, we must commit to becoming more anti-racist in our work.
- We strive to be allies in the struggle against anti-Black racism, following the lead of Black and brown leaders and activists.
- We will continue to work for dismantling of white supremacy, challenge all forms of discrimination, and demand the protection of rights for all.
- We will forge new collaborations with colleagues and organizations striving towards racial justice.
- We will work to bring the constructive practices and reforms that we see on the national level to the state of Connecticut and our local communities.
- We will continue to build a mutually inclusive statewide community of human rights advocates, we will offer opportunities for both education and praxis, including workshops for secondary and post-secondary teachers, resource sharing and collaborative summits for community groups.

We invite all Connecticut residents and organizations—educational, nonprofit, cultural, religious, business, and governmental—to partner with us in this work. Connect with us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

*Released June 11, 2020*