



**The Association for Community Organization and Social Administration
Statement in Response to Recent Events in Ferguson, Missouri**

“If not us, who? If not now, when?” – John F. Kennedy

In times of systemic injustice, social workers have historically chosen action over inaction. The recent death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, and the national conversation it stimulated has highlighted the extent to which institutional racism still exists in the United States. Our longstanding ethical commitment to social justice requires social workers, regardless of their primary method or field of practice, to take action to address the multiple manifestations of institutional racism. ACOSA calls on all social work professional organizations, social work schools, and individual social workers to make their voices heard, locally in their communities and organizations, and in the state and national policy arenas. Here are some tangible steps all social workers can take to create a more equitable, safe, and just society. We urge you to join with us in taking action.

Professional Social Work Organizations:

- Council on Social Work Education, National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work, & Society for Social Work Research should hold special forums or symposia at their annual meetings to discuss the social work response to the issue of institutional racism.
- The editors of the *Journal of Social Work Education*, *Social Work*, and the *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work* should publish a special issue dedicated to this topic.
- The newsletters of all professional organizations should feature a regular column in which people can submit ideas for a social work response.

Schools of Social Work:

- We encourage all schools of social work to organize a series of events that involve faculty, students, and community members to discuss the implications of what happened in Ferguson for their communities and to formulate policy solutions at the local, state, and national levels.
- We encourage all faculty members to facilitate conversations regarding the events in Ferguson and their implications for the people and communities with whom social workers work. These conversations can add context to the larger systemic issues, especially when linked to the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis. Discussing the impact racism has in such diverse areas as criminal and juvenile justice, education, employment, health care, and housing is key to advancing social justice.
- We encourage schools of social work to provide faculty development opportunities to assist faculty members facilitate difficult conversations about race, racism, and injustice in a safe classroom environment and among their colleagues. This enables faculty to make the connections between institutional forces and their manifestations in the lives of our clients and constituents.

- We encourage schools of social work to highlight the work of faculty doing research with implications in this area. Schools can provide development opportunities for faculty to translate their research into forums that could heighten public awareness of these issues and influence policymakers. Examples include the development of a speakers bureau for media and community consultation when need arises, training in the use of social media, the submission of op-ed essays, and testimony before legislative bodies.

Individual social workers:

- **Write** letters to the editor of your local newspapers and speak to your local and federal officials about your concerns.
- **Lead** a discussion of these issues in your local church, synagogue, temple, mosque, discussion group, book club.
- **Discuss** the issue with your colleagues, friends, and neighbors. Do not be silent.
- **Meet** with members of law enforcement in your community. Discuss your concerns and hear theirs. Using your social work skills, facilitate discussions with community leaders
- **Vote.** Make lawmakers know that you vote and for what reasons.
- **Organize.** With members of the community most directly affected by institutional racism, identify issues for action and take action to change conditions.

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends” –
Martin Luther King, Jr.