

Chapter Talking Points

June 8, 2020

Chapter chairs: The critical role you play as leaders in your school community is amplified during this time of pain and protest. We encourage you to hold a meeting with your members this week about the fight against anti-Black racism and the police violence against Black people. These are not easy conversations to have but we must have them, with respect and support.

We encourage you to review our FAQ, including the section on the UTLA Board of Directors overwhelmingly endorsing a call to eliminate the LA School Police budget and redirect those funds into the expansion of Community Schools, especially in schools with higher numbers of Black students, and supports for students such as psychiatric social workers, counselors, and other health and human services professionals. The UTLA Racial Justice Task Force is developing education pieces to create dialogue with members at all school sites around these goals.

To become formal UTLA policy, the Board motion must be passed by the UTLA House of Representatives. The House will consider the motion at its meeting later in June. At the UTLA Area meeting on June 17, chapter leaders will share feedback from these member conversations, in advance of the UTLA House meeting.

Please reach out to your Area leadership and Area representatives with issues and concerns.

Info for chapter leaders

Budget petition & school rosters

- Continue asking members to sign the [Classrooms and Communities Over Cuts petition](#), a critical first step in our fight back against layoffs, program cuts, and attacks on our healthcare and retirement.

- Updated rosters are accessible through the special email set up for this purpose for your site. Instructions and the link to get your school's roster were sent on May 19. These rosters have been updated to reflect everyone who has signed the [Classrooms and Communities Over Cuts petition](#) as of Friday, June 5. Use the rosters to identify and communicate with members who have not signed the petition.

If you did not receive instructions on how to access your rosters, or have any issues logging in please visit <https://www.utla.net/resources/tech-help-request-form>

PETITION TOOLS

- [Budget fight flyer](#)
 - [Chapter Meeting PowerPoint](#) (file will download)
 - [Classrooms and Communities Over Cuts petition link](#)
 - [Tracking form](#)
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Area meetings, Wednesday, June 17

- Chapter leaders will share feedback from your meeting with your members about the fight against anti-Black racism and police brutality and we'll continue work on our budget fight and the Classroom and Communities Over Cuts petition. Invite CAT members to attend.
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Talking points for chapter meetings

FAQ: The fight for Black lives

These issues call for a deep, sustained dialogue but we hope this FAQ can help continue the conversations we are having with each other and our students, parents, and community.

What is UTLA's role in the fight for Black lives?

United Teachers Los Angeles as a union, and whose individual members are citizens of our Los Angeles communities, must be explicitly and organizationally anti-racist. UTLA has been a leading voice in the call for social and racial justice, and now we need to deepen that work.

The students we teach are more than 88% students of color, and LAUSD serves more Black

students than any school district in the state of California, and more than most districts across the country. The recent police violence and murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Tony McDade have impacted us as educators, our students, and the communities we live and teach in. Seeing these murders has caused trauma, grief, pain, and anger. It is our responsibility as a union, just as some unions stood up during the Civil Rights movement, to denounce the police violence and stand with and in the Black Lives Matter movement. Because we have the power of a large organization, we carry an awesome and special responsibility to build the movement for Black Lives in this moment and in the future to change conditions in our society.

Last week, UTLA joined with more than 20 community, labor, policy, and academic organizations to endorse immediate “first step” demands to combat anti-Black racism and address policing, including stopping the armed occupation of neighborhoods, launching an investigation of excessive use of force by LAPD at peaceful protests, reducing spending on the police, investing money in overpoliced, high-needs communities, and exploring alternatives to policing to keep the public safe. Read the letter [here](#).

These demands follow the overwhelming endorsement by our House of Representatives of Black Lives Matter LA’s demands in light of COVID-19 and rates of black death. These demands were developed by a coalition of more than 50 Black Los Angeles-based community leaders. Included are both immediate demands meant for emergency implementation during the coronavirus crisis, and long-term demands, necessary to eradicate the underlying conditions that are at the root of the disproportionate impact of the public health crisis and economic fallout on Black lives. Read the full demands [here](#).

How do I talk with my colleagues who say UTLA should not take on racial justice?

The first step is being willing to have that conversation and recognize that it is not always easy, but that is why we have to have it. You may want to start the conversation by asking how your colleagues think our students experience racism and its impacts in their lives. You could remind them of how much support we received from the community during our strike, because the community understood it as a strike for social justice.

The struggle for Black lives is inextricably woven with the struggle for quality public schools. In a school district like LAUSD, with 88% students of color, education is a racial justice issue and our school budgets are one reflection of the amount of racial justice in our society.

You may want to remind them that saying Black Lives Matter does not mean that their life matters

less — it means that the lives of Black people are under attack and need to be lifted up as equal and important to the lives of non-Black people. When someone's house is on fire, you have the obligation to help put that fire out. We are an organization of 34,000 educators with real power in this city, and we have an obligation to stand up to anti-Black racism and police violence.

How can I support Black colleagues, students, and their parents and guardians?

Listen to Black people and listen carefully for what is said and not said. Do not make demands of Black people or tell them what to do or feel; just listen. If you have strong feelings that arise from what you hear, take care of yourself and do not make Black people responsible for your emotional reaction. Do your own ongoing work of healing and personal growth. Organize with others in your family and community. Support and amplify Black voices who call for racial justice and healing.

What are ways we can help the movement right now?

There are so many ways to be a part of the movement for Black lives. Everyone can contribute toward a victory and genuine justice. *Immediate* ways to be a part of the movement for Black Lives include:

1. Information for in-person actions can be accessed at: <https://www.blmla.org/>
 2. To donate to a bail and medical fees fund for protesters via Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, go here: <https://linktr.ee/ActionBailFundLA>
 3. See the UTLA page on educator resources to engage in anti-racist pedagogy and how to talk to your loved ones about the Movement for Black Lives: <https://www.utla.net/campaigns-issues/issues/racial-justice>. If you have a resource you think we should share, email webmaster@utla.net, subject line: Racial Justice Resource.
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How do I talk with my colleagues who say police are here to protect and serve?

That is the stated intent of the police department and undoubtedly the intentions of many who go into public service. Some of our members have worked positively with school police officers and have law enforcement in the family. But we have to look at both intentions and impacts, and it's clear that the institution of policing is failing our most vulnerable communities. This year, American police have already killed more than 500 people. Black people are three times more likely to be killed by the

police than White people, and 99% of police killings have not resulted in officers being charged with a crime (2013-2019).

Why is there a movement to eliminate school police?

In Minneapolis, the city where George Floyd was killed, the school district has cancelled its contract with the police department. Portland Public Schools in Oregon announced it will no longer have police patrol its halls and will increase spending on social workers, counselors, and culturally specific supports for students. Other districts across the country — including in Arizona, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Washington, Oregon, New York, and Illinois — are exploring similar actions.

This week, the UTLA Board of Directors overwhelmingly endorsed a call to eliminate the LA School Police budget and redirect those funds into the expansion of Community Schools, especially in schools with higher numbers of Black students, and supports for students such as psychiatric social workers, pupil services and attendance counselors, school counselors, nurses, and other crucial direct student services. The UTLA Racial Justice Task Force is developing education pieces to create dialogue with members at all school sites around these goals, and we are talking with our labor partners, the school district, our chapter leaders, and the House of Representatives about this motion. To become formal UTLA policy, the Board motion must be passed by the UTLA House of Representatives. The House will consider the motion at its June 25 meeting.

If our goal is to educate young people, then we must create an environment of love, trust, and respect. Research shows that having police in schools has a negative impact on student learning and makes kids feel unsafe. Read some of the research [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) and an overview [here](#). The impact of school policing on our students is that it serves to funnel young people, mostly Black and Brown, into the school-to-prison pipeline. Behaviors that should be addressed within the school community are instead outsourced to police, and such infractions create a record that follows a young person throughout their educational career and limits the scope of their opportunities.

What are alternatives to policing to keep our schools and communities safe?

We need to think differently about what our students need. Black and Brown kids in more challenging situations do not need police to make them “act right.” Fully funded community schools and educator teams are the answer to keeping our schools safe. Students need smaller class sizes, counselors, social workers, mental health services, conflict resolution support, homeless

coordinators, talking circles, restorative justice, peer counseling and mediation, enrichment opportunities, and mentors to help them. For the community, meeting Common Good demands, like expanding affordable housing, job opportunities, and healthcare for Black people, will build stronger neighborhoods.

UTLA survey on safe reopening of schools

- Educators' voices must be heard in bargaining with LAUSD and in our broader work on the Common Good demands that we have long fought for, but are more important than ever now, regarding racial, economic, social, and educational justice.
 - Last week we sent a survey to UTLA members on these and other issues: *What are the challenges you face working remotely? What are your biggest safety concerns about returning to school? What are some of the academic and socio-emotional supports necessary to reopen schools?*
 - We encourage you to use the open-ended questions of the survey to express and share your concerns. Our survey is a complement to the chapter-based discussions that happened school by school last week. Beutner has begun discussing various hybrid plans for reopening schools, and any reopening must be bargained with UTLA. We need your feedback — please complete the survey if you haven't already.
 - If you did not get the survey or have tech issues completing it, submit the form at www.utla.net/resources/utla-survey-help-form
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Labor leaders unite behind movement for Black lives and divesting from the police state

On Monday, UTLA will join SEIU, AFSCME 3299, UNITE HERE Local 11, UAW 2865, and NUHW in supporting the movement for Black lives and pledging to help win a new agenda — in Los Angeles, the People's Budget — that moves money from policing to services.

Standing with leaders of Black Lives Matter-LA and the Movement for Black Lives, labor and community leaders will denounce the centuries of racism that has both destroyed lives and propped up an economic system that also destroys lives. Homelessness, food insecurity, and death grow

while US billionaires have added \$424 billion in wealth since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak. From 1989 to 2018, the top 1% increased its total net worth by \$21 trillion while the net worth of the bottom 50% decreased by \$900 billion over the same period. Read the news release [here](#).

News conference in support of the movement for Black Lives

Monday, June 8, 5 pm

LA City Hall

200 N Spring Street

****This will be an in-person social distancing press conference. Feel free to attend if you can.****

This week: SCF Tele-Town Hall Summer Launch

- Celebrate the official qualification of the Schools & Communities First measure for the November ballot and learn about the summer field plan. Passing SCF is critical for recovering from the impact of the COVID crisis and fully funding schools and social services.
- Sessions in English and Spanish. Share the info with your community and parent leaders.

When:

—Spanish: June 9, 5:30 pm. **RSVP at** scf.vote/vota

—English: June 10, 5:30 pm. **RSVP at** scf.vote/summer_launch

[ENGLISH FLYER](#)

[SPANISH FLYER](#)

Chapter chair election resources

- [Notice of Chapter Chair Elections](#)
 - [Virtual Special Category Instructions](#)
 - [Special Category Chapter Chair Election Form 2020-21](#)
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UTLA calendar

June 17: Area meeting

Aug 4 - 6: Virtual Leadership Conference