

# Eight Minutes, Forty-Six Seconds...Four Hundred Years

We say their names in memoriam: Emmett Till, Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Alton Sterling, Walter Scott, Botham Jean, Ahmaud Arbery, Stephon Clark, Eric Garner, Philando Castile, Atatiana Jefferson, Freddy Gray, Amadou Diallo, Oscar Grant, Korryn Gaines, Keith Lamont Scott, Deborah Danner, Ezell Ford, Akai Gurley, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, Jamar Clark, and George Floyd.

Driving. Jogging. Walking. Standing. Sleeping. Just....*being* !

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We lift up their names to remind ourselves that issues of systemic racism and violence are a pervasive threat to the health and prosperity of our nation. We lift up their names to remind ourselves that this country, that we all love, will never live up to the promise of its creed until we reconcile the wrongs and challenge and change the way our systems and institutions function.

We lift up their names to ask for forgiveness - for being complicit in our silence while our neighbors, communities, and fellow Americans continue to suffer at the hands of those whose job it is to protect and serve, and by those, who fail, time and again, to see the humanity and value of black life. We lift up their names to honor their lives and the personal and lasting loss to their families, and to remind ourselves that there is unfinished work we all must attend to.

## ***Eight Minutes, Forty Six Seconds....Four Hundred Years***

For **eight minutes and forty six seconds** George Floyd was pinned to the ground with a knee on his neck, unable to breathe.

For **four hundred years** African Americans have lived under the proverbial knee of a structural system of oppression designed to strip them of their life, liberty, and dignity.

These two events are not mutually exclusive. One does not exist without the other. Neither happened without intentionality or purpose. The lasting stain of America's original sin filters through to this day, and makes George Floyd's murder, and all those that came before him, possible and probable. Systemic, structural and institutional racism are alive and well.

Grief, hope, anger, and rage - genuine emotions that we are all experiencing, are meaningless without an equal amount of action or intention. As we grieve for the lives lost, hope for a better day, become enraged at the cruelty of man's inhumanity to man, we need to pause and think strategically about how to dismantle the structures of oppression, and change the hearts and minds of those vested in them. Though dark and depressing, we need to seize this moment in time. We must continue to raise our voices and channel our energy, skill and knowledge to make lasting and real change.

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At the Reach Institute for School Leadership, we work steadfastly to imbue our candidates with an equity lens. A lens that makes apparent and holds at the forefront the humanity of each and every child that steps into their school and classroom. We ask our teacher and administrator candidates to disrupt the systems of oppression and inequity within our schools - to use data to identify the black, brown and language minority students who may be overidentified for special education or disproportionately represented in discipline data; to learn *who* their students are beyond their outward appearance or spoken language - their family background, their hopes, interests and goals. We challenge ourselves as well as our candidates to confront our own implicit biases that may blur our equity lens, so that we can put forth programming and learning experiences that benefit the diverse communities we serve.

As we prepare for a new school year we will continue to work towards changing those things that are within our sphere of influence; to contribute our part in making this a better, more just world. Admittedly, there is a lot of work to do, but we remain committed and hopeful. Ever hopeful.

So we ask of you, as we ask of ourselves...what is in your locus of control? How can you become part of the solution? How can you prevent another George Floyd or Sandra Bland or Tamir Rice? How will you become the change you want to see?!

