

# Progressive Point

National News Updates  
from AFT Progressive Caucus



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## Progressive Caucus – Energy in Engagement

*Caucus strives to engage members in union participation and activism.*

### Caucus Hosts Paneled Discussion Featuring Sybrina Fulton, Mother of Trayvon Martin

At the AFT Civil, Human, and Women's Rights Conference in New Orleans, your Progressive Caucus hosted Ms. Sybrina Fulton for a Q&A with the members attending the Conference. If you have not heard of Ms. Fulton, you no doubt have heard of her son, Trayvon Martin.



Over 125 Caucus members and guests attended the special event held on Saturday, October 3, and were transfixed by her message. Mark Richard, co-chair of the Progressive Caucus, was the MC for the event. Dr. Lorretta Johnson, AFT Secretary Treasurer, spoke of the need for AFT and organized labor to continue to help move the change in our society for the racial justice movement. Dr. Fed Ingram, AFT Vice President and President of United Teachers of Dade in Miami provided us with his life's example as a path forward.

But it was Trayvon's mother, Ms. Fulton, who provided us with the reality in which we live. She spoke of her loss, she spoke of her pain, and she spoke of her fear of that racism that still exists today, deeply engrained within our country. She shared with our caucus what she has gone through from that first phone call, up to her current leadership in the movement. She also gave us glimpses of what an amazing young man Trayvon really was.



The conference and presentation by Ms. Fulton represented the culmination of the work by Dr. Lorretta Johnson on Racial Equity. Most recently, Dr. Johnson passed a resolution at the Executive Council to hold a task force on "Closing the Opportunity Gap for Black Males." Progressive Caucus members David Gray,

Keith Johnson, Richard Franklin, Candice Owley, Jeff Freitas and Lisa Ochs actively participate on this important team. The task force subsequently produced a summary report of findings, available for download via the [AFT.org](http://AFT.org) website, which was passed by the Executive Council at the last meeting. It is the hope of Dr. Johnson that AFT state federations and locals take the recommendations from the report and move our Racial Justice mandates forward.

The task force is just a beginning and presentations such as the important one with Sybrina Fulton must continue throughout our caucus. This recent fight for Racial Justice by AFT isn't the first time AFT has shown leadership. In the 1950's, AFT mandated that white-only segregated unions integrate or be kicked out. The leadership of the Progressive Caucus feels strongly that this work for Racial Equality must be the work of our union.

 <p><b>Susan Solomon</b> @UESFVP</p> <p>Thx to speaker #Justice2015 who said Black and non-black folks were present. Why is the default always "non-white"?@UESF</p>	 <p><b>Louis Malfaro</b> @louismalfaro</p> <p>#immigrants = citizens in waiting, aspiring Americans @MontserratVPEDA @NatImmForum @AFTUnion #Justice2015 @TexasAFT @rweingarten</p>
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## President Randi Weingarten – “Race in America: Changing Reality by Facing It”

October was an important month for Progressive Caucus members. In early October, the AFT Civil, Human, and Women's Rights Conference in New Orleans successfully inspired and worked with fellow



**Loretta Johnson** @LorettaJohnson · 4h

Sister @rweingarten on how @AFTUnion can lead the way 4 people of conscience on "the righteous path" on racism [aft.to/nytblacklives](http://aft.to/nytblacklives)

activist attendees in our joint efforts to push the agenda even further.

We took great pride in reading President Weingarten's powerful piece, published on October 18 in the New York Times and on the Huffington Post, entitled, "Race in America: Changing Reality by Facing It."

The article hit home in highlighting racism as "America's original sin." Randi boldly reminded readers that we see racism in politics, exemplified, but not limited by Donald Trump's comments about mass deportation of immigrants and disgusting references to Mexican immigrants as "rapists" and "criminals."



**David Quolke** @CTU279 · 8h

Powerful read from @rweingarten on the work needed to ensure #BlackLivesMatter, esp the need to face our privilege [aft.to/nytblacklives](http://aft.to/nytblacklives)

She deftly pinpoints racism's influence in our daily lives and its impact, or lack thereof, on us, because of the color of our skin. "White Americans can go a long time without ever thinking about the color of their skin. Black

and brown Americans have no choice but to confront issues of race every day. Most white Americans haven't had to -- and, honestly, haven't wanted to -- confront these realities. But we must."

Read this compelling article, carry its message with you, and please share with others.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/randi-weingarten/race-in-america-changing\\_b\\_8323992.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/randi-weingarten/race-in-america-changing_b_8323992.html)

**Twitter Users: Follow**

**Loretta @LorettaJohnson    Randi @rweingarten    Mary Cathryn @mcricker**

## A Glance at What's Happening Across the Country

"It is time the Secretary and the Governor stop using New Mexico as an experiment for so-called corporate education reform. We renew our call for a three year moratorium on making student advancement and educator employment decisions based on results from high-stakes testing, and we further call on the Governor and the Secretary of Education to halt the unnecessary, over-testing of our students and implement meaningful reforms in our schools focusing on universal, high-quality early education and increased time and resources focused on math and reading intervention," said Ly.

In New Mexico ... President Stephanie Ly speaks out in defense of students and teachers, calling for a three-year moratorium on decision-making based on high-stakes testing results. Her calls for a halt to the test-and-punish system were accompanied with suggestions that more time and money be spent on academic intervention.

In Cleveland ... President David Quolke remains on the cutting edge as he advocates for his members. His timely and savvy posts, found on the Cleveland Teachers Union blog and in social media, coupled with smart advocacy resonates with members in moving forward on behalf of our union.



 **Jerry T. Jordan** @jerrytjordan · 4h  
200+ #phled teacher vacancies have nothing to do with budget. This was pure negligence by the District [bit.ly/1kkFfgY](http://bit.ly/1kkFfgY)

In Philadelphia ... President Jerry Jordan continues his strong efforts on behalf of public education, his members and educational communities.

**Progressive Caucus wants to hear your union news! Send your updates to the Progressive Caucus at [progressivecaucusaft@gmail.com](mailto:progressivecaucusaft@gmail.com)**