

## **An Open Letter to Sunshine State TESOL (SSTESOL) of Florida Community**

### **on Racial Injustice, Discrimination, Inequity, and the Advance of Social Justice**

**June 15, 2020**

SSTESOL joins protesters against racism, injustice, and inequity in support of Black Lives Matter and its cause, which is to end the deliberate and implicit oppression, discrimination, inequity, and disrespect for the sanctity of Black life. We grieve with the families of George Floyd, Ahmad Arbery and Breonna Taylor who were killed senselessly at the hands of white police officers' brutal and inhumane treatment. They are among the many victims of structural racism, implicit bias, and injustices functioning as toxic diseases in our Black community, which includes Black immigrants, Afro-Asians, and AfroLatinxs. SSTESOL condemns racism, discrimination and injustice of any form and these manifestations of hatred and violence are unequivocally wrong.



As an organization that is a trusted leader in teaching for multilingual/multidialectalism and the development of cultural competency of education professionals in the state of Florida, SSTESOL is proud to embrace diversity, inclusion, equality and equity as we stand in solidarity with our fellow Black educators, their families, and their children who are our students. In line with our mission, we are committed to supporting members from different backgrounds by "providing leadership and advocacy in language policy issues and access to professional development opportunities, resources, and lively interaction in a professional network at all levels." SSTESOL President Arlene Costello stated that "each child/[individual] who lives in a multicultural, pluralistic society - regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, language or cultural background - should have equal access to high quality education, all educational opportunities and experiences offered by the American public school system to meet his or her learning needs," (1994, p. 24) and pursuit of happiness.

As TESOL International President Deborah Short (2020) stated, "When systemic racism challenges the safety and well-being of any group within our society, we must join together to denounce it with all our collective strength and resolve. As language educators, we are all too familiar with the effects of trauma and violence on the ability to learn and thrive. Colleagues of color, their families, their friends and their students continue to be harmed by racism, discrimination, and xenophobia. Now is the time to come together and demand that this injustice finally stops." At SSTESOL, as always and during these difficult days, you can find support and strength as we work

together and move forward in achieving social justice for the good of humanity and culture. As advocates and leaders in the field of English language teaching, we also pledge to take actions that will create positive change in communities of learning and beyond.

SSTESOL members are leaders, advocates, professional resources, and agents of change. We challenge you to join us in our work to reform racist systems by reflecting and educating ourselves on our own role within the racist systems. These reform steps begin with listening, communicating, understanding and accepting. Thank you for joining SSTESOL in our quest for advancing social justice, equality, and happiness for all.

#### References

Aronson, R. & Short, D. (2020). TESOL statement on racial injustice and inequality.

Wells, E., Barrett, J., Olivares, K., & King, O. (1994). Escambia FTP-NEA member honored as one of 5 top teachers nationwide. *Advocate*, 20(4).

Sincerely,

The SSTESOL Advocate Liaisons on behalf of SSTESOL Board of Directors

Arlene Costello, Ed.D.

SSTESOL President & Advocacy Liaison

and

Ryan Pontier

Member-At-Large & Advocacy Liaison