

**ALLIANCE
AGAINST**

**SECLUSION
RESTRAINT**

June 3rd, 2020

Statement on George Floyd's Death by Police Restraint

The Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint (AASR) viewed the video of the last moments of George Floyd's life with horror, fury, and unbearable sadness. We feel deep sorrow for George Floyd and his family as well as unrelenting sadness and despair for the black community and our country. It is incumbent on our leaders and indeed, every individual to learn and understand the underlying factors that have perpetuated the discrimination and devaluation of black lives.

For AASR team members, Mr. Floyd's death was a grim reminder of what is occurring in schools across the United States. April 30, 2020, Cornelius Frederick, a 16-year-old black student was restrained at his school after throwing a sandwich. He died as a result of that restraint. He was not the first black student to die from being restrained at school. Corey Foster, 16, died on April 18, 2012, after being restrained by 5 school employees as he sat in a corner of the gym after playing basketball. Michael Renner-Lewis III, a 15-year-old African-American autistic student, was killed on August 25, 2003, his first day of high school when he was restrained face-down by several staff members at Parchment High School in Michigan after he became agitated following a seizure.

African American students face a greater risk of harsh disciplinary practices than white students beginning in preschool, where they are suspended or expelled at double to four times the rate of white children. The disparity is even greater in some areas of the country. Black students are punished more harshly for the same infractions as white students; white students are given a pass for the same behaviors for which black students are punished; and black students are punished more for subjective behaviors, such as disrespect, loitering or making excessive noise, whereas their white schoolmates are likelier to be suspended for offenses that are more concrete, including smoking, skipping school, or vandalism. In addition to suspension and expulsion, disciplinary practices include restraint and seclusion, and corporal punishment in some states. The disparity is linked not only to explicit and implicit bias but also to the racism that exists within our educational system.

As a result of harsh punitive school disciplinary practices, the children are not only traumatized but are left with diminished self-worth, a reduced capacity to learn, disengagement from school, and a much higher likelihood of involvement with the criminal justice system. This is how the school to prison pipeline works against black students.

AASR believes that our country must move away from the beliefs, practices, policies, and laws associated with zero tolerance and punitive disciplinary practices, and move to empathy, compassion, and restorative and trauma-informed practices. Compassionate practices allow students to feel safe, valued, respected, and inspired, the hallmark of education.

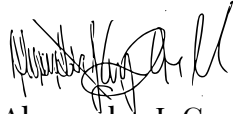
AASR stands in solidarity of activists who are against all forms of oppression including the use of restraints and seclusion against the black community in and out of school.

AASR urges our communities to band together in this current fight for equality. Reform is needed in the criminal justice system; and we must also appropriately address the needs of African American students in our school settings to end the school-to-prison pipeline.

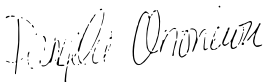
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