



# American Ethical Union

## *Inspiring Ethical Communities*

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### **BLACK LIVES MATTER TO AEU: Reaffirming Resolutions against Racism and for Civil Rights**

The current public health crisis with COVID-19 has exposed many of the inequalities within American society. The inequalities include, but are not limited to, the disproportionate impact on minority and immigrant populations that have inadequate access to affordable health care, that face systemic bias in the health care that is available to them, and that face increased risk of sickness and death because of unsafe working conditions in low-paying jobs. Further systemic inequities have been highlighted and compounded by egregious murder and public mistreatment of Black Americans by police and private citizens. The subsequent public reaction, in the US and abroad, has united a broad coalition to protest via the internet, in the press, and even during a pandemic, in the streets to say: BLACK LIVES MATTER. As a result, more of the nation are now confronting systemic racism and taking active steps to address many of these difficult issues.

The history of the Ethical Culture Movement is filled with affirmation, by word and deed, of the inherent worth and dignity of all humans. Ethical Culture as a religion of relationships, values and respects the worth of each individual. This value and respect are not abstract or theoretical; they are real and concrete. In the past nine years, every national Assembly has addressed some aspect of systemic racism with educational programs and ethical actions:

2012: Humanizing Criminal Justice (Albany, NY)

2013: Inspiring Action: Making a Difference (Fairfax, VA)

2014: Revitalizing Democracy! Money, Power and Politics (Skokie, IL)

2015: Creating a Sustainable Future (Stamford, CT)

2016: Bending the Arc of History Toward Justice (St. Louis, MO)

2017: Communities Confronting Systemic Racism (Baltimore, MD)

2018: Seeds for the Future: Environmental Justice and Ethical Culture (Albuquerque, NM)

2019: Reclaiming Democracy for All (Tampa, FL)

In the past five years, the AEU has passed five resolutions aimed at encouraging its members to personally assist in undoing racism and promoting equity:



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[2015 – Criminal Justice](#)

[2016 – Systemic Racism in the United States](#)

[2017 – Toward Repairing the Harm of Racism](#)

[2018 – Climate Action](#)

[2019 – Defending the Right to Vote](#)

AEU members and Societies have added to that record with platforms and public speeches, marches and demonstrations, works of social service and of social justice. The Ethical Culture Movement has not always lived up to its aspirations in uprooting white supremacist values and practices, in our work to dismantle institutional racism that pervades society and within our own communities. Recent events have shown that systemic racism continues and tells us that there is much work to be done. We must not let this moment pass.

As we come to the third decade of the twenty-first century--144 years since Felix Adler's Founding Address, 131 years since the founding of the American Ethical Union--what more can we possibly do? The issues are of a magnitude so vast that we cannot see their full scope. The problems are so pervasive that every aspect of our American society seems to reflect racism--from our food and clothing up to our highest levels of governance and back again to the songs and cartoons that indoctrinate our children.

Simply put, the first step in doing any task is to commit to its doing. Let us now commit ourselves in this third decade of the twenty-first century to work together as Ethical Humanists to engage more fully in our resistance to racism. Let us look at action items in our Five Resolutions as a starting point. Let us re-read these resolutions, educate ourselves more thoroughly about the issues they address, and take clear and effective actions that will help us bring about the changes they call for. These include actions about our own internal culture as well as actions in the wider culture.

Let us also seek to avoid becoming overwhelmed and disheartened by the work we must do. We can do this by supporting each other and working together, not only within our Ethical Culture Societies but also within our American Ethical Union. We can do this by focusing our efforts on the manageable and doable tasks that fall within our capacities. We can do this by partnering with other organizations and communities to amplify their work with the additional human and material resources we can share. In all this reaffirmation and commitment we will respond, once again, to Felix Adler's call: "The time calls for action. Up, then, and let us do our part faithfully and well."

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**Action:** The AEU in its 105th Annual Assembly reaffirms the five above-listed resolutions, and the specific calls for actions contained therein, and calls on AEU leadership, member Societies, and individual members to renew anti-racist efforts and support equal rights, opportunity, and inclusion for all.



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We specifically, in light of this moment in history, call on our Societies to organize and support change at all government levels to public safety and policing, including approaches to reform and abolition, and to dismantle the systemic biases that have contributed to racial inequities in this current public health crisis. This would include study and then action. We recognize that it is crucial in this work to follow the guidance of those most directly affected, and look to the leadership of such organizations as Movement for Black Lives, Black Lives Matter and the Poor People's Campaign..

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