

In Solidarity with Ferguson

Students United for Public Education

November 28, 2014

Students United for Public Education (SUPE) is a community-based and national organization that aims to unite students of all ages across the United States to defend public education and promote quality education for all. Under the guise of “closing the achievement gap” and “school choice,” for-profit corporations and their political representatives have sought to privatize and sell off public education, particularly in poor communities of color. SUPE understands that a profit motive cannot guarantee a good education. Instead, only a robust and community-supported public education system — along with the courage and will to directly confront problems of racial and economic inequality — can provide a quality education for all.

On August 9, 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, a young unarmed black man named Michael Brown was gunned down by police officer Darren Wilson. On November 24, 2014, over a hundred days later, Brown’s family was denied the justice of a fair trial when the grand jury made the decision to not indict Wilson for his crime.

We, the student organizers of Students United for Public Education, know that achieving true justice means that our community’s struggle for educational justice must be linked to justice for Michael Brown and to a larger movement for social justice and equity. One of our core beliefs is that to achieve true educational justice, we must challenge ourselves to look at all other factors that are affecting our students. This is why we stand in solidarity with the family of Michael Brown, the community of Ferguson, and communities across the country calling for justice for Michael Brown.

Today, there are Michael Browns in classrooms across America who wonder why the world sees them as less than human or why the justice system wasn’t built for them. There are also Darren Wilsons in classrooms across America who are failed by an educational system that refuses to openly teach against racial prejudices and to encourage the questioning of the institutionalized racism that played a role in the killing of Michael Brown.

We believe what killed Michael Brown was not just our broken legal system but also our broken education system, which not only fails to teach its students to confront and unlearn anti-blackness and internalized racism but also fails to teach its students to see the one another’s humanity, to feel empathy for one another’s struggles, and to cultivate a passion for social justice. Our system doesn’t just fail when a young black man is denied life and justice; it continues to fail when there are individuals who remain silent about this injustice and who believe that yet another black person deserved to die.

The humanity of children of color is at the center of all issues in public education. It is the issue of whether or not we see children of color as deserving of the same dignity, respect, resources, and opportunities as white children. Just as we stand against educational policies that criminalize students of color and deny them of a well-rounded education, we stand with all those who struggle against the system of oppression that has denied those youth the right to live without fear.

We strongly urge our fellow educational justice organizers to support movements advocating for justice for Michael Brown and other victims of institutionalized racism in all of its forms. With this in mind, we remember and honor the lives of Michael Brown (2014), Sean Bell (2006), Rekia Boyd (2012), John Crawford (2014), Amadou Diallo (1999), Malcolm Ferguson (2000), Ezell Ford (2014), Oscar Grant (2009), Kathryn Johnston (2006), Renisha McBride (2013), Trayvon Martin (2012), Tamir Rice (2014), Yvette Smith (2014), Tarika Wilson (2008), and too many others to count. May they rest in power.

What you can do:

- Support the Brown family in their campaign [calling for police in Ferguson to wear body cameras](#).
- Participate in a [#JusticeForMikeBrown and #BlackLivesMatter action](#) near you.
- For educators, here are resources on how you can teach about Ferguson in your classrooms:
 - [Teaching About Ferguson](#) | Teaching for Change
 - [Talking to Students About Ferguson](#) | Facing History and Ourselves
 - [The Death of Michael Brown: Teaching about Ferguson](#) | NY Times
 - [#FergusonInClass](#) and [#FergusonSyllabus](#)

In Solidarity,

Hannah Nguyen and Brant Roberts

Co-National Organizers | Students United for Public Education