**NEA Action for Social Justice**

**Challenge**

The United States has a long history of social injustice beginning with the earliest settlers’ encounter with North American Indians. These early injustices included the massacre and relocation of Indians and the enslavement of Africans. Examples of later social injustices included legalized racial segregation, internment camps for Japanese citizens, and forced boarding school attendance for Indian children. Contemporary examples of social injustice include police brutality, employment and housing discrimination, inequities in educational opportunities, and the detainment and separation of children and their parents at the southern border of the United States.

**Intervention**

In 1899 NEA established the Department of Indian Education to investigate the impact of boarding schools on Indian students.

NEA spoke out against the internment camps for Japanese American citizens during World War II.

In 1904 John Robert Edward Lee founded the National Association of Colored Teachers, later identified as the American Teachers Association (ATA). The ATA advocated for improving the quality of education for Black students. An important effort of the ATA was the accreditation of segregated high schools for Black students. The Southern Association for the Accreditation of Colleges and Schools refused to accredit legally segregated Black high schools. This limited Black students’ access to a college education. In 1929, NEA collaborated with ATA to achieve accreditation for segregated Black High Schools. ATA was among the organizations that made the largest financial contribution to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund supporting the Brown V. Topeka Board of Education (1954). The celebrated decision in this Supreme Court case resulted in thousands of Black teachers losing their teaching positions. The NEA supported the ATA in the advocacy for school desegregation and afterwards supported Black teachers in their struggle for equal employment opportunities. In 1966 ATE and NEA merged. In 1968, NEA elected its first Black president, Elizabeth Duncan Koontz.

**Follow-up**

NEA continues to support social justice through its annual social justice awards, its Center for Social Justice, diversity toolkit, and social justice lesson plans for teachers. The following is a recent statement from the NEA website:

The impacts of the pandemic and violence against Indigenous, Black, brown and LGBTQ communities has us all thinking a lot about what it means to be a community, how much harder we need to work to end systemic injustices, and the value of our public spaces and services to ensure our health, safety and ability to thrive. These unusual times provide an opportunity to explore innovative strategies to spark change while also taking time to experience healing and joy.  <http://www.nea.org/grants/JointConference.html>