

## FROM THE DESK OF PRESIDENT DEB PETERSON

September is the beginning of NYSUT's fiscal and membership year, which affords us all with the opportunity for renewal and rejuvenation. It is also an opportunity to answer the charge of the NYSUT Standing Committee on Civil and Human Rights to advance the union's efforts to promote equity and social justice. NYSUT's agenda promotes equal access to society's opportunities, thereby empowering people to have choices and control over their own destiny. This agenda stems from the belief that injustice and oppression in other communities and nations directly impacts members of the labor movement. The premise behind this agenda is that a socially just world affords individuals and groups fair treatment and an impartial share of society's benefits. NYSUT believes that it is the fundamental responsibility of labor leaders is to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and fight to ensure that every individual enjoys basic human rights. A social justice agenda is a strategy that transforms individuals and communities.

To that end, I would like to highlight 2 NYSUT Social Justice Programs that will be introduced at both the NYSUT RC 43 Annual Conference in Orlando on September 27<sup>th</sup> and the NYSUT Regional Conference in Palm Beach Gardens on January 17, 2017.

The "Why in 5" campaign for Social Justice is a way for NYSUT members to use a short set of talking points to educate others about significant Social Justice issues. It is for members to use in line at the grocery store checkout, at holiday time while attending a family dinner, or in the stands at a sporting event.

With today's political landscape, it is more important than ever that our members are educated about key issues and can help us educate the members of the communities they serve so that we can continue to improve the living and working conditions both locally and nationally. Each "business size" card has 5 key points listed on the back challenging us to "Be the Union" for:



NYSUT's "Start the Conversation Program" shines a light on race and ethnicity. It encourages us all to begin a dialogue with friends, family and our fraternal brothers & sisters to discuss such topics like: What does racial equality mean? What aspect of your race makes you the most proud? Have you ever felt "out of place" in a group setting because of your race/ethnicity? For more information, please visit the Resources section at <http://www.nysut.org/>



*"Part of what we do... is to raise people up. That's what social justice is - empowering people." - NYSUT Vice President Paul Pecorale*



NYSUT members interested in submitting ideas or having their local union become involved in social justice issues can visit the resources section of the social justice page at [www.nysut.org/socialjustice](http://www.nysut.org/socialjustice) or contact Sonia Basko, NYSUT special projects coordinator at: [sbasko@nysutmail.org](mailto:sbasko@nysutmail.org) or 518-213-6000, ext. 6380.