

**Minnesota Public Health Association
Declares Racism a Public Health Crisis**
Approved by email vote 10/20/2020

WHEREAS, race is a social construct with no biologic basis¹; and

WHEREAS, society is built on racial hierarchies, established through colonization, that pervade structures, histories, politics, and, ultimately, minds; and

WHEREAS, racism is a social system with multiple dimensions, including individual racism, which is internalized or interpersonal¹; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism, which is institutional or structural, is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value through the social interpretation of one's race²; and

WHEREAS, the cumulative result of these racist systems and structures has contributed to an environment that is persistently unhealthy and unsafe for Black communities, American Indian communities, Latinx, and Asian communities³; and

WHEREAS, studies show moderate to strong positive relations between racism and trauma. Black, American Indian, and People of Color are unfairly burdened with the responsibility of coping with the painful existence of those oppressive experiences⁴; and

Whereas, racism in all its forms causes persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes in many areas of life, including housing, education, health, employment, public safety and criminal justice⁵. And it is amplified during this pandemic as communities of color face inequities in everything from a greater burden of COVID-19 cases to less access to testing, treatment and care^{5 6 7}; and

WHEREAS, a multitude of studies connect racism to inequitable health outcomes for Black, American Indians, and People of Color, including cancer, coronary heart disease, asthma, diabetes, hypertension, mental health, high infant and maternal mortality rates demonstrating that racism is the root cause of social determinants of health^{8 9 10 11}; and

WHEREAS, racism is killing Black Americans—both by fueling police violence against them and by propelling adverse socioeconomic conditions that contribute to serious health issues. George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police officers is a visceral reminder of the reality Black Americans know all too well: Racism is a public health crisis¹²; and

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Public Health Association (MPHA) recognizes that Africans were forcibly brought to this country, enslaved, and after the Emancipation Proclamation, citizens of this country perpetuated Anti-Black racism through violence, mass incarceration and Anti-Black policies, including redlining, and that the social construction of race was used to justify their enslavement as well as the removal of American Indian peoples off their land pushing them onto land deemed less desirable¹³; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota—which received its name from the Dakota [Sioux] word for Mississippi's major tributary in the state, the Minnesota River, "Sky-Tinted Water"¹⁵—is largely built upon Ojibwe [Anishinaabe] and Dakota homelands. American Indians have lived upon this land and

waters since time immemorial, and the land and water itself carries historical trauma, and that genocidal policies have aimed to strip tribal nations not only of land, but of culture, language, and family systems¹⁴; and

WHEREAS, MPHA also recognizes that the long-standing persuasive anti-immigrant sentiment and treatment works against the well-being of Latinx peoples—whether an immigrant or born in the U.S. Viewed as an alien and low status, many continue to be scapegoated and targeted for mistreatment¹⁶; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic is not the first public health crisis for racist policies and political rhetoric targeted Asian-Americans. During the bubonic plague in 1900, public health officials quarantined Chinese residents in Chinatown and during the SARS outbreak in the early 2000's East Asians experienced stigmatization worldwide. Today, Asians and people of Asian descent around the world continue to be subjected to attacks and beatings, violent bullying, threats, and discrimination linked to the current pandemic¹⁷; and

WHEREAS, anti-racism means actively participating in dismantling racist systems and institutional practices, as well as addressing personal and interpersonal acts of racism; and

WHEREAS, embodied anti-racism acknowledges the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of racial prejudice and discrimination that lives in bodies today⁸; and

WHEREAS, unfair and race-based inequities will continue unless we undertake the uncomfortable but necessary work to dismantle the institutions and systems that perpetuate racism, violence, poverty, and injustice¹⁸; and

WHEREAS, MPHA membership is committed to ending racism and building an active, anti-racist culture across the organization and community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that upon adoption of this resolution, by the MPHA:

That by declaring racism a public health crisis, MPHA will recognize the severe impact of racism on the well-being of Minnesotans and actively engage in racial equity in order to name, reverse, and repair that harm done to American Indian and People of Color in Minnesota, including the following actions:

1. Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire society
2. Honor the Dakota and Anishinaabe people, ancestors, and descendants, as well as the land and water itself
3. Center the voices, work, and leadership of the communities most affected by racism
4. Reshape our discourse and agenda and commit to recognizing personal biases, educating ourselves to understand the structures and behaviors that propagate racism, listening to and speaking up for those who are affected by racism so that all MPHA workgroups, membership and our overall work and strategic plans actively engage in anti-racism.
5. Continue to advocate locally for relevant policies that improve health in American Indian communities and communities of color, and support local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism

6. Further work to solidify alliances and partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism and encourage other local, state, regional and national entities to recognize racism as a public health crisis.

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