

June 4, 2020

Dear Rutgers School of Public Health,

The United States is battling three epidemics that are having an enormous impact on public health: 1) the viral COVID-19 pandemic; 2) the ongoing racism, discrimination, oppression, and police brutality against Black and Brown communities; and 3) an economic crisis that rivals the Great Depression. Sadly, these crises all expose the continuing problem of injustice, inequality, and structural and systemic racism in America.

As [we have said before](#), we must continue our [ongoing vigilance to speak out and act against any form of discrimination](#). It is also imperative that our research, education, and community engagement initiatives remain guided and informed by the principles of social justice and health equity to address structural conditions that fuel health disparities, including the disproportionate number of COVID-19 related deaths and the endless violence experienced by Black and Brown communities.

[Racism is \(and has been\) a public health crisis](#), and we have a duty to confront it not only through our work as public health professionals, but also in our personal lives. Our [colleagues at the Paul Robeson Cultural Center offer several recommendations of things that you can do to address injustice and disrupt silence](#) on racism, discrimination, and oppression:

1. **Demand police accountability from your legislators:** make ending police brutality and violence a litmus test for your political support. Familiarize yourself with laws in your area and contact your representatives at all levels (local, state, and national) to press them for their plans on ending discrimination in law enforcement.
2. **Join a protest, if you feel you can do so safely:** If you choose to join a local protest, please remember that we are still dealing with a global health pandemic, and all cautions regarding your well-being should be adhered to including isolation if you are showing symptoms. If you decide to participate because police brutality poses an immediate risk to the health and well-being of our communities and is often a fatal risk, please wear a mask, and take other safety measures.
3. **Offer resources to protestors and affected communities in your area:** If you have the means, consider offering participants bottled water, food, masks, hand sanitizer, and other supplies ahead of protests in your area. Providing these basics is a way to support the cause even if you feel you cannot join in safely yourself.
4. **Educate yourself, educate others:** Take the time to learn how systemic racism operates in this county. Anti-racism demands that we identify hierarchies and power structures that disadvantage Black and Brown communities.
5. **Build community, for yourself and others:** Participate in or host a processing or healing space. Host a virtual session that can educate others. Find community, because all of us are witnessing the tragedies occurring right now and should not feel alone in this fight.
6. **Make a donation:** If you have the financial means, consider making a donation, however small it might seem to you. You can donate directly to support victims of police violence or send your donation to an organization such as [the ACLU](#), [Black Lives Matter](#), or other grassroots organizations whose missions align with the cause you want to support.

The Rutgers School of Public Health will be hosting a **virtual discussion on the topic of racism as a public health crisis on June 10, 2020, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.** The webinar will be an opportunity for individuals to share their thoughts, recommendations, and ways for us as public health professionals to address this epidemic. All faculty, staff, students, and alumni are invited.

The event will be led by Teri Lassiter, Assistant Professor and Assistant Dean of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Thurman Barnes, Associate Professor and Assistant Director of the New Jersey Center on Gun Violence Research; Devin English, Assistant Professor and health disparities researcher; and Deandrah Cameron, Rutgers School of Public Health Alum and former Student Government Association President. [You can register for the webinar and submit questions/topics that you would like our thought leaders to consider during the event here.](#)

We also encourage you to participate in the **Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion's visual campaign, "COVID-19: Stories of Resiliency, Strength, and Support."** You can either upload a 60-second [video here](#) or submit a 150-word narrative to diversityandinclusion@sph.rutgers.edu.

Finally, the Rutgers School of Public Health is committed to diversity and inclusion across our faculty, staff, and student bodies, enacting and enabling change from within. We look forward to discussing how we can and will take these steps as a School community through the webinar, visual campaign, and other initiatives.

Please feel free to reach out to either of us using the information in our signatures below to continue the conversation.

Sincerely,

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