

Dear SPHHP students, staff and faculty,

When institutions who claim to nurture and protect their students remain silent and complicit in the face of injustice and violence, the hurt can be deep because it is a betrayal of trust. The leadership of SPHHP regrets that it has not reached out directly sooner to our community. We were wrong not to have made a statement of solidarity when we first learned of the murder of Ahmaud Arbery and when Breonna Taylor was killed when police stormed her home. In the meantime, more people have died--Sean Reed, Tony McDade, Sean Monterrosa--1099 people killed by police last year, and it is with remorse that this is the first time we are making a formal and public commitment to combatting this form of white supremacy.

We recognize that the murder of George Floyd is the continuation of 401 years of history of violence against Black people on stolen soil. At many points in the nation's history, White people have seen the injustice of white supremacy but have chosen, whether out of greed or bigotry, to continue to uphold and create laws, policies and structures that reinforce practices and norms that deny minoritized groups safety, freedom, voice and the basic necessities for a healthy life. To be anti-racist we can, today and every day, examine the practices and structures that enact racial bias both within the School of Public Health and Health Professions and beyond. We each can be of "right mind," reflecting on our interactions with one another. We can put the weight of our collective research, teaching and service behind the undoing of violence against black and brown bodies and other manifestations of systemic racism.

We stand in solidarity with those protesting for change and those who have been working for far too long on legislative, policy and practice changes to reform policing. We commit ourselves to the public health work of eliminating police violence, mass incarceration, vigilantism, and the predatory policing of black and brown communities. We also commit ourselves to undoing racism across all American systems, including health care, education, economic development, housing, transportation, and environmental protection. We recognize that systemic racism is the driver of health inequities that cause millions of premature deaths every year, including those from COVID-19.

Now is a time for action informed by careful listening and empathy. We are starting with the following steps:

- **Immediately, UB Counseling will facilitate a listening session for SPHHP students, staff and faculty that will focus on recognizing and coping with racialized trauma. It will be held by Zoom on Tues., June 9, at noon. This will be the first of weekly open calls that the School will be conducting throughout the summer to continue the Listening Campaign and deepen the conversations we have had in our calls with undergraduate students.**
- We recognize the need to teach about police violence and solutions to police violence in our public health classes. This extends to mass incarceration. We will incorporate this topic in courses in our school, and we encourage students to take PUB450, Incarceration and Public Health, which will be reoffered in the fall 2020 semester.
- We recognize the need to teach about the historic, political, economic and political context of systemic racism. We will expand our offerings on this topic through a series of events, organized with student input, which address racism as a public health emergency. We plan to cover topics that range from health care and housing to access to political institutions and environmental protections.
- We support and look forward to collaborating on student-led action to end systemic racism.
- We are initiating a year of collective reflection on inclusive pedagogy; resources and training will be offered to faculty by both the university and the school.
- We will continue to build and grow our collaborations with community organizations led by people of color or that place people of color in the center of their mission.

Finally, below is a list of resources that can help people individually take action:

- Please take a moment to read the [African American Health Equity Task Force's statement](#).
- Learn more about solutions to end police violence against people of color: <https://www.joincampaignzero.org/>
- Become engaged: <https://colorofchange.org/>
- Support Black-owned businesses and Black-led community organizations: <https://www.wkbw.com/news/local-news/western-new-yorkers-turn-to-help-black-owned-businesses>
- Learn what White people can do to end racial injustice: <https://medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234>

With heavy hearts we reflect on those who have lost their lives and the pain this has brought their families and friends. With determination we put our collective energy behind making real and lasting change.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jean Wactawski-Wende'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and 'W'.

Jean Wactawski-Wende, PhD
Dean
SUNY Distinguished Professor