



“In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist.” - Angela Y. Davis

We, the African American Health Equity Task Force, the Buffalo Center for Health Equity and the UB Community Health Equity Research Institute say the names of those who have recently died at the hands of racism; Ahmaud Aubery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Sean Reed, Tony McDade and all others who have lost lives in this battle against individual, institutional and systemic racism.

With their murders collectively on the minds of millions, racism is destroying the long-held myth that the United States of America is the land of the free. The inevitable truth is black and brown bodies are not valued in this country and have not been valued since white feet stepped on this land. The time has come to understand that being “well-meaning” and “not racist” isn’t enough. It is time to be anti-racist and develop and implement an anti-racist agenda.

Racism is not a feeling or emotion. It is a way of thinking, creating, and implementing policies and laws that provide privileges to whites that are nonexistent to minorities. Racism exists on an individual level but more importantly, racism exists in the institutions and structures of our society. This paradigm, that white skin is superior to black and brown skin is at the foundation of our country. For that to change we must address our foundation and the collective trauma and pain of racism, while developing anti-racist laws, policies and regulations that uplift all Americans.

When police officers murder black and brown people it is impossible to look away from the fact that racism kills. We seek to end this violence. We seek to undo the often overlooked ways systemic racism -- the endemic expression of white supremacy in all of our policies, procedures, and deformation of our social contract-- is killing millions due to disease. Racism in the shape of segregated cities, mass incarceration of black men and women for minor or non-offenses, underfunded and poor-quality education, exclusion from the workplace, and failure to protect communities of color from toxic environmental exposures are killing black and brown people every day. These are the ultimate reasons black people living in the US are more than three and a half times more likely to die of COVID-19 than white people.

Over the last decade “race” has been pushed to the side for a more friendly “diversity & inclusion” policy. We must re-center the discussion and solutions specifically as they relate to race. To eliminate the social determinants of adverse health conditions means

you must also address racism. The two go hand in hand. The intentional work to improve outcomes must be interlocked. You cannot address one without the other.

Racism plays out in every single institution and area of life. It is woven into the fabric of our society. It manifests itself in daily activities that stop people from participating and actively engaging in the American dream. It's giving a white person the benefit of the doubt and assuming a black person, doing the same thing, is engaging in illegal behavior.

What solutions are we working on?

- Developing a community education course on Critical Race Theory & Anti-racism
- Developing an anti-racism agenda for legislation
- Making immersion internships with innovative educators available across all the schools at UB through the Institute

What can you do?

You do not have to be paralyzed. No matter the color of your skin, you can be active and involved in the mission to eliminate race-based health disparities. Educate yourself on how we got here. The collective trauma of African Americans needs to be understood by everyone. Including those that are traumatized.

Become an anti-racist:

- Acknowledge the factual history of this country and the generational trauma inflicted on the indigenous people.
- Educate yourself and be intentional in adopting anti-racist practices
- Use your privilege to advance change & equity in our region.
- Complete the census & encourage others to do the same
- Vote.

This is a journey we commit to and will see it to its completion. We cannot become complacent with small steps forward. It took centuries to get to this place and it will take the intentional work of the whole to eradicate racism. Resources to become an anti-racist can be found on the Buffalo Center for Health Equity website: buffalohealthequity.org.

Sincerely

The African American Health Equity Task Force
The Buffalo Center for Health Equity &
The UB Community Health Equity Research Institute