

June 15, 2020

## RESOLUTION

### **A RESOLUTION BY THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA, TO DECLARE RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

**WHEREAS**, the Governing Authority of DeKalb County has a demonstrated track record of promoting racial equity, inclusion and diversity in all aspects of county government. This commitment is most recently exemplified in Resolution supporting the passage of Hate Crime legislation by the Georgia General Assembly; and

**WHEREAS**, these significant initiatives identified racism as a root cause of poverty and constricted economic mobility; and

**WHEREAS**, race is a social construct with no biological basis<sup>1</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, racism is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual racism that is internalized or interpersonal; systemic racism that is institutional or structural, and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks; and

**WHEREAS**, racism causes persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes in many areas of life, including housing, education, employment, and criminal justice; and an emerging body of research demonstrates that racism itself is a social determinant of health<sup>2</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, racism unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities, while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources<sup>3</sup>, and DeKalb County's collective prosperity depends upon the equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin; and

**WHEREAS**, communities of color, working class residents, and those that suffer from disabilities, are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of their social

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<sup>1</sup> Garcia JJ, Sharif MZ. Black Lives Matter: A Commentary on Race and Racism. *AmJ Public Health.* 2015; 105: e27–e30. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2015.302706

<sup>2</sup> American Community Survey 2013 – 2017 5-Year Estimates for DeKalb County; Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Annual Survey of Jails (ASJ) and Census of Jails (COJ) 2015 Dataset; Georgia School District Report Card Website – Kirwan analysis; Jones CP. Confronting Institutionalized Racism. *Phylon.* 2002; 50(1/2):7---22; and American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>. Accessed May 2, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Flynn, A., Holmberg, S., Warren, D., and Wong, F. REWRITE the Racial Rules: Building an Inclusive American Economy. Roosevelt Institute, 2016.

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determinants of health — health inequities stemming from economic stability, education, physical environment, food and access to health care systems<sup>4</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, through the leadership of the Governing Authority, DeKalb County has committed to the elimination of racial disparities in the criminal justice system, to prioritize racial equity in our decision making processes, to acknowledge that communities of color have borne the burdens of inequitable social, environmental, economic, and criminal justice policies practices and investments, to understand that the legacy of these inequitable policies has caused deep disparities, harm, and mistrust, and to recognize that racial equity is realized when and only when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes; and

**WHEREAS**, DeKalb County is the home of over 700,000 residents which is comprised of 34.6% White, 54.0% Black or African American, 0.7% American Indian or Alaska Native, 6.0% Asian, 2.0% Other, and 2.7% claiming two or more<sup>5</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, racism and segregation in Georgia and DeKalb County have also exacerbated a health divide resulting in African American residents reporting higher negative health outcomes than their White counterparts. In DeKalb County, African American residents, when compared to White residents, have a higher overall mortality rate (770.8 African American deaths per 100,000 population compared to 572.2 White deaths)<sup>6</sup>. The disparities are also noted for several health indicators with African Americans having higher mortality rates due to major cardiovascular diseases (227.7 African American deaths per 100,000 population compared to 147.5 White deaths)<sup>7</sup>. Infant mortality rates (11.3 African American deaths per 1,000 live births compared to 2.1 White deaths)<sup>8,9</sup>, and higher obesity rates (37.6% of African American adults compared to 19.5% of White adults)<sup>10</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, a contemporary example of such disparity is highlighted by the coronavirus data in DeKalb County that African American residents comprise of the majority of both hospitalizations (55.6%) and deaths (57.2%) related to COVID-19<sup>11</sup> that can suggest African Americans are disproportionately affected by the disease; and

**WHEREAS**, more than 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes<sup>12</sup>; and

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4 Health Policy Institute of Georgia, 2017 Health Value Dashboard (Health equity profiles).

5 2013-2017 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

6 Mortality, Online Analytical Statistical Information System, Office of Health Indicators for Planning, Georgia Department of Public Health, 2018.

7 Mortality, Online Analytical Statistical Information System, Office of Health Indicators for Planning, Georgia Department of Public Health, 2018.

8 Infant Mortality, Online Analytical Statistical Information System, Office of Health Indicators for Planning, Georgia Department of Public Health, 2018.

9 Births, Online Analytical Statistical Information System, Office of Health Indicators for Planning, Georgia Department of Public Health, 2019.

10 Georgia Department of Public Health, Georgia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2017.

11 State Electronic Notifiable Disease Surveillance System, Georgia Department of Public Health, 2020.

12 Institute of Medicine. Unequal Treatment. <https://www.nap.edu/read/10260/chapter/2#7>. May 2, 2020. 10 American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>. Accessed May 2, 2020.

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**WHEREAS**, DeKalb County acknowledges that the health impact of racism in Georgia and DeKalb County rises to the definition of a public health crisis proposed by Dr. Sandro Galea who notes: “The problem must affect large numbers of people, it must threaten health over the long-term, and it must require the adoption of large scale solutions.”<sup>13</sup>; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA:**

1. Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire county.
2. Work to progress as an equity and justice-oriented organization, with the Governing Authority and its staff leadership continuing to identify specific activities to further enhance diversity and to ensure antiracism principles across the Governing Authority’s leadership, staffing and contracting.
3. Promote equity through all policies approved by the Governing Authority and enhance educational efforts aimed at understanding, addressing and dismantling racism and how it affects the delivery of human and social services, economic development and public safety.
4. Continue to advocate locally and through the National Association of Counties for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and supports local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism.
5. 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.
6. Support community efforts to amplify issues of racism and engage actively and authentically with communities of color wherever they live.
7. To always promote and support policies that prioritize the health of all people, especially people of color by mitigating exposure to adverse childhood experiences.
8. Continue on-going racial equity training with the goal of reaching all Governing Authority’s staff.
9. Encourage racial equity training among all community partners, grantees, vendors and contractors.
10. Identify clear goals and objectives, including periodic reports to the Governing Authority, to assess progress and capitalize on opportunities to further advance racial equity; and

**Further Resolved**, That the Governing Authority supports all additional efforts in DeKalb County the State of Georgia, and nationwide to address racism and public health disparities due to racial inequities; and, be it

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**Further Resolved,** That the DeKalb County Governing Authority call upon the Governor, the Speaker of the Georgia House, and the Georgia Senate to join with us to declare racism as a public health crisis and to enact equity in all policies of the State of Georgia.

**ADOPTED** by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

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**STEPHEN R. BRADSHAW**

Presiding Officer  
Board of Commissioners  
DeKalb County, Georgia

**APPROVED** by the Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County, this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

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**MICHAEL L. THURMOND**

Chief Executive Officer  
DeKalb County, Georgia

**ATTEST:**

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**BARBARA H. SANDERS-NORWOOD, CCC**

Clerk to the Board of Commissioners and  
Chief Executive Officer  
DeKalb County, Georgia

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

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**VIVIANE H. ERNSTES**

County Attorney