

**IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON
FOR JEFFERSON COUNTY
JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE
JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF
HEALTH DECLARING RACISM
A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

No. 65-20

PREAMBLE:

“We in this country are like homeowners who inherited a house on a piece of land that is beautiful on the outside but whose soil is unstable lam and rock, heaving and contracting over generations, cracks patched but the deeper ruptures waved away for decades, centuries even. Many people might rightly say: ‘I had nothing to do with how all this started. I have nothing to do with the sins of the past. My ancestors never attacked indigenous people, never owned slaves.’ And yes. Not one of us was here when this house was built. Our immediate ancestors may have had nothing to do with it, but here we are, the current occupants of a property with stress cracks and bowed walls and fissures in the foundation. We are the heirs to whatever is right or wrong with it. We did not erect the uneven pillars or joists, but they are ours to deal with now.

And any further deterioration is, in fact, on our hands.”

—Isabel Wilkerson, “America’s Enduring Caste System,” N.Y. Times Magazine, July 5, 2020 (adapted from the book, CASTE: THE ORIGINS OF OUR DISCONTENTS (2020).

The Jefferson County Board of Health is adopting this Resolution to declare that racism is a public health crisis. In doing so, the Board takes express notice of and adopts the following findings, facts, statements, and good faith beliefs:

1. We acknowledge that in East Jefferson County we live on land usurped from indigenous peoples and that the ongoing presence of systemic, cultural, and personal racism in this

country continues to distribute privilege and access inequitably.

2. We recognize that the boundaries of Jefferson County occupy the ancestral lands of the S'Klallams, Quileute, Holt, Quinault, and Skokomish tribal nations. We honor the treaty rights of tribes as sovereign nations and participate in good faith consultation and Government-to-Government relations.

3. Racism has deep and harmful impacts that unfairly disadvantages too many, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color (“BIPOC”), and unfairly advantages others, including people who identify as white.

4. At this moment in time, the term BIPOC is widely used and accepted; however, we recognize that it may not seem or be inclusive enough to all. We also acknowledge that, with passage of time, this term may no longer be fully appropriate or as widely used and accepted. We intend this Resolution to apply to all people who are marginalized due to difference and encourage the changing of the terminology over time to reflect respect and changing concepts of race and ethnicity. Further, we understand and use “POC” or “person of color” to be an umbrella term that broadly refers to all non-white individuals who often face discrimination.¹

5. Racism harms every person in our society and is a root cause of poverty and economic inequality.

6. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. memorably and truthfully stated that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” More recently, the great civil rights leader, John Lewis, who passed away on July 17, wrote in an essay published on the day of his funeral:

Like so many young people today, I was searching for a way out, or some might say a way in, and then I heard the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on an old radio. He was talking about the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. He said we are all complicit when we tolerate injustice. He said it is not enough to say it will get better by and by. He said each of

¹ For further information about the meaning and use of these terms, see Kendra Cherry, “What Does BIPOC Mean?” at <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-bipoc-5025158> and Sandra E. Garcia, “BIPOC: What does it mean?” N.Y. Times, June 17, 2020 at <https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-bipoc.html>.

us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up and speak out. When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something. Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself.

7. Whether intended or not, racism becomes ingrained in institutional policies and practices, creating differential access to opportunities and resources, and causes disparate outcomes in all aspects of life affecting health.
8. By maintaining the status quo and existing systems of power and privilege based on our country's long history of and continued persistence of white supremacy, institutional policies and practices do not need to be explicitly racist in order to have racist impacts on residents.
9. The legacy of racist policies and practices often continue to exist after the policies and practices have been changed.
10. Reversing the legacy of institutional racism calls for an understanding of the intersectional nature of power and oppression that amplify adverse effects on people who experience more than one form of marginalization (such as race, gender and disability) and a commitment to anti-racist policies and practices.
11. Decades of data collected by public health agencies have demonstrated how marginalized communities, including especially BIPOC communities, are affected by more acute impacts, such as gun violence, and chronic impacts such as higher rates of cardiovascular disease and diabetes, maternal and infant mortality, underweight babies and shorter, less-healthy lives overall.
12. Victims of racism or marginalization, including especially BIPOC residents of Jefferson County, are more likely to experience inequities in social determinants of health, including education, access to jobs, earning power, adequate and safe housing, higher rates of policing and involvement in the criminal legal system, and overall quality of life.
13. The disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 on victims of racism or marginalization, including especially our BIPOC communities, is a present-day demonstration of the

systemic racism in institutions and systems that have not valued and supported human life equitably.

14. We recognize that historically and currently Jefferson County has been complicit in maintaining and perpetuating structural racism, and that as an institution the Board of Health must stand in support of dismantling oppressive systems grounded white supremacy.

15. Jefferson County government and Board of Health have a mandate to serve all, without prejudice, and have expressed a commitment to developing stronger and better resourced partnerships with community organizations and leaders to disrupt and dismantle racism and protect the health and well-being of all residents without exception, including our BIPOC residents, using quantitative data, including data about racial inequities, along with voices and knowledge of community leaders and residents in an effort to heal the wounds of racism and build a welcoming and anti-racist community.

16. The Board of Health is committed to addressing racial equity and health disparities in all forms and at all levels, which are the individual, institutional and systemic levels, across the county.


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Jefferson County Board of Health—

- A. The Board declares racism an acute and chronic public health crisis;
- B. The Board supports Jefferson County Public Health immediately in the work to advance a public health approach in identifying and addressing any institutional and systemic racism;
- C. The Board commits to assessing and revising its policies, practices, and culture with a racial justice and equity lens including the Board of Health Code and annual work plan; and
- D. The Board members commit to ongoing work around race and equity such as participating in racial equity training, engaging and being responsive to communities and

residents impacted by racism as partners in identifying and implementing solutions, establishing an agreed upon understanding of racial equity principles to work towards antiracist policies and practices and to serve as ambassadors of racial equity work, seeking diversity in board membership, the need to include voices of people of color when addressing issues of racism, and to hold one another accountable to addressing implicit biases of all kinds.

APPROVED this 15th day of October 2020.

Approved Telephonically
Sheila Westerman, Chair



Greg Brotherton, Member

Approved Telephonically
Pamela Adams, Vice Chair

Approved Telephonically
Kees Koff, Member

Voted against
David Sullivan, Member

approved telephonically
Denis Stearns, Member



Kate Dean, Member