

CITY OF ALAMEDA RESOLUTION NO. 15684

DECLARING RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

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, that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources<sup>2,3</sup>; 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>1,4</sup>; and

WHEREAS, more than 100 studies have linked racism to worsened health outcomes<sup>5</sup>;

WHEREAS, racism and segregation exacerbate a health divide resulting in Black residents having the lowest life expectancies of any racial group in Alameda County. Black residents also suffer disproportionately from infant mortality, lower birth weights, obesity, asthma, diabetes, heart disease and strokes; and

WHEREAS, communities of color, and specifically Black people, are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of their social determinants of health — health inequities stemming from economic stability, education, physical environment, housing, food and access to health care systems. As an example, many studies link lack of housing to poor health outcomes. Black residents experience a higher burden of unaffordable housing, evictions, and homelessness than white residents, comprising 47% of unhoused residents in Alameda County despite only making up 11% of the population; and

WHEREAS, the same broad-sweeping structural racism that enables police brutality against people who are Black is also responsible for higher mortality among Black Americans with COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, Black people are disproportionately impacted by the policing and criminal justice system and one in every 1,000 Black men and boys can expect to be killed by police in this country, a fatality rate 2.8 times higher than whites. One-third of people arrested in the City of Alameda are Black, even though Black people only comprise 7% of the City's population, 11.2% of the population in Alameda County, and 6.5% in California; and

WHEREAS, the Alameda City Council acknowledges that communities of color - and specifically Black communities - have borne the burdens of inequitable social, environmental, economic, and criminal justice policies, practices and investments; and understands that the legacy of these inequitable policies has caused deep disparities, harm, and mistrust; and recognizes that racial equity is only realized when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Alameda declares that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire society; and:

1. The Alameda City Council commits to promote equity and justice through all policies and enhance educational efforts aimed at understanding, addressing and dismantling racism and how it affects delivery of human and social services, economic development and public safety.
2. Commits to conduct an assessment of internal policy and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element of the City of Alameda and explore alternative service delivery for calls for vulnerable members of the community, guided by community-led workgroups assembled by the City Manager other relevant parties, communicates results of assessment, and determines appropriate interval for reassessment.
3. Works to create an equity and justice oriented City, with the Council, its Boards and Commissions, and the community led workgroups evaluating existing practices and procedures and identifying specific activities to increase diversity and to incorporate anti-racism principles across leadership, staffing and contracting.
4. Incorporates into the organizational workplan educational efforts to address and dismantle racism, expand members' understanding racism, and how racism affects individual and population health and provide tools to assist members to engage actively and authentically with communities of color.
5. Advocates for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and supports local, state, and federal initiatives that advance social justice, while also encouraging individual member advocacy to dismantle systemic racism.
6. The City Council pledges to return in October 2020 prior to the next quarterly budget review to begin the process to develop, adopt and implement a comprehensive strategic plan informed in part by the community led workgroups.
7. Works to build alliances and partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism and encourages other local, state and national entities to recognize racism as a public health crisis.

End Note References:

1. Garda 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)

2. Jones CP. Confronting Institutionalized Racism. *Phylon*. 2002;50(1/2):7---22.
3. American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>. Accessed February 20, 2018.
4. Flynn, A., Holmberg, S., Warren, D., and Wong, F. *REWRITE the Racial Rules: Building an Inclusive American Economy*. Roosevelt Institute, 2016.
5. Institute of Medicine. Unequal Treatment. <https://www.nap.edu/read/10260/chapter/2#7>. Accessed 3/2/2018.

\* \* \* \* \*

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly adopted and passed by the Council of the City of Alameda in a regular meeting of the City Council assembled on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2020, by the following vote to wit:

AYES: Councilmembers Daysog, Oddie, Vella and Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft – 4.

NOES: Vice Mayor Knox White – 1.

ABSENT: None.

ABSTENTIONS: None.

IN WITNESS, WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the official seal of said City this 29<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2020.

---

Lara Weisiger, City Clerk  
City of Alameda

Approved as to Form:

---

Yibin Shen, City Attorney  
City of Alameda