

## **ASPPH Statement: Racism is a Public Health Crisis**

**August 9, 2020**

America faces three major crises right now, a pandemic the likes of which we have not seen since 1918, an economic collapse the likes of which we have not seen since 1932, and civil unrest, the likes of which we have not seen since 1968. While they are different, they have common threads. They all have enormous implications for public health. And, sadly, they all expose the continuing problem of injustice, inequality, and structural and systemic racism in America.

The more we learn about COVID-19, the more we see the disproportionate impact it has on communities of color. Moreover, we know that the economic pain caused by the pandemic will fall most heavily on minority communities, who lack the resources to absorb the loss of jobs and income that is currently reverberating across the nation. Finally, we see example after example of the egregious discrimination that many of our fellow citizens face daily, most recently evidenced in the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers.

This incident follows the murder of Ahmaud Arbery, which followed the killing of Breonna Taylor. Even the incident of the bird watcher versus the dog walker in New York's Central Park -- which thankfully did not generate casualties -- has fed the crisis-ridden atmosphere. It is no wonder that people have taken to the streets to demand justice.

In 2019, ASPPH issued a [\*\*Statement of Commitment to Zero Tolerance of Harassment and Discrimination\*\*](#). This statement is informed by the knowledge that aggressions in the form of harassment and discrimination undermine the health and well-being of individuals, the public, and populations.

The members and staff of ASPPH pledge to accelerate our commitment to address racial injustice by teaching skills to advocate for the essential public health values of compassion, empathy, justice, and equity, by advancing research on the structures that shape health inequities, and applying that knowledge into practice. We will work with community partners to model the behaviors and values that we must demand of both our national leaders and those who serve in law enforcement. We will continue to support the recruitment and retention of a diverse group of faculty, students, and staff to achieve inclusive excellence.

In the end, achieving a more just world, depends on more than statements and slogans. As an academic public health community, we recommit to our deeply held tenets of public health: human rights, social justice, and health equity for everyone, everywhere. ASPPH will not be silent on racial injustices. We will use our platform to advance our mission of improved health for everyone, everywhere.