

ASPPH Statement: Racism is a Public Health Crisis

America faces three major crises right now, a viral pandemic the likes of which we have not seen since 1918, an economic collapse the likes of which we have not seen since 1932 at the onset of the Great Depression, and the ongoing struggle of civil rights and equity, the likes of which we have not seen since 1968. These are synergistic conditions, which in tandem 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 note the disproportionate impact it has on communities of color, which are also burdened by the economic pain caused by the pandemic and which lack the resources to absorb the loss of jobs and income that is currently reverberating across the nation. Finally, we witness 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 white Minneapolis police officers.

This incident follows the murder of Ahmaud Arbery for the crime of jogging, which followed the killing of Breonna Taylor in a case of mistaken identity. 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. And these unfortunately are only a snapshot of the over-policing and undermining of Brown and Black people. 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 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. ASPPH will never be silent on racial injustices. We will use our platform to advance our mission of improved health for everyone, everywhere.

We stand together.



Laura Magaña
President & CEO