

Resolution

ORDER NO: 2020-0583

DATE: June 16, 2020

STATE OF TEXAS §

COUNTY OF DALLAS §



BE IT REMEMBERED, at a regular meeting of the Commissioners Court of Dallas County, Texas on the 16th day of June, 2020, on motion made by John Wiley Price, Commissioner District No. 3 and seconded by Dr. Elba Garcia, Commissioner District No. 4, the following Resolution was adopted:

Dallas County Commissioners Court

Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever effects one directly, affects all indirectly!"

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

WHEREAS, the Dallas County Commissioners Court has a demonstrated track record of promoting racial equity, inclusion and diversity in county government. This commitment is exemplified in Dallas County's hiring practices as 49% of the Dallas County workforce is Black and Dallas County adopted the "Ban the Box" initiative in its hiring practices, eliminating the question of past criminal record on employment applications in specific County positions; and

WHEREAS, these initiatives are in direct response to addressing traditional reactions to race as an identifying stumbling block for career advancement and employment opportunities in Dallas County and this lack of opportunity is directly linked to root causes of poverty and constricted economic mobility; and

WHEREAS, race is a social construct with no biological basis¹; and

WHEREAS, racism is a negative social system with multiple dimensions including: individual prejudices that are internalized or interpersonal; and 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 looks²; 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"³, and Dallas County's collective prosperity depends upon the equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin; and

WHEREAS, racism causes persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes in many areas of life, including housing, education, business, employment and criminal

1 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)

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 May 2, 2020.

justice; and an emerging body of research demonstrates that racism itself is a social determinant of health⁴; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Census noted Dallas County's Black residents experience dramatically higher unemployment rates (White: 3.9%, Black: 8.1%), face a higher poverty rate as a community (White: 12.5%, Black: 18.4%), have incomes that are less than 60% of the median income of White residents (\$65,902 vs. \$43,717), have lower home ownership rates (White: 57%, Black: 33%)⁵, are more likely to live in neighborhoods with low performing schools and experience disproportionately higher incarceration rates in the Texas prison system (Whites: 457 per 100,000, Black 1,844 per 100,000)⁶; and

WHEREAS, through the leadership of the Commissioners Court, the Dallas County Criminal Justice Advisory Board, the Dallas County District Attorney and the Dallas County Sheriff, Dallas County is committed to the elimination of racial disparities in the criminal justice system, to prioritize racial equity in our decision making processes, to acknowledge that Black communities 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, racism and segregation in Texas and Dallas County have also exacerbated a health divide resulting in Black residents having lower life expectancies than White residents; Black residents being far more likely than other races to die prematurely (before the age of 75); and Black residents to die of heart disease, cancer or stroke. Black residents also have higher levels of infant mortality, lower birth weights, are more likely to be overweight or obese, have adult diabetes, have long-term complications from diabetes and report poor mental health⁷; and

WHEREAS, Black communities, working class residents, and those that suffer from disabilities, are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of the social determinants of health — health inequities stemming from economic instability, education, physical environment, living in food and broadband deserts and inadequate access to health care systems; and

WHEREAS, a contemporary example of such disparity is highlighted by the coronavirus data and its impact on the Black Community. According to a recent CDC-MMWR study, Blacks are hospitalized at a much higher rate than other groups and the death rate of Blacks in that study is twice the rate of Whites⁸; and

WHEREAS, more than 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes⁹; and

WHEREAS, Dallas County Health and Human Services Department has acknowledged that the health impact of racism in Texas and Dallas County is a public health crisis, as defined by Dr. Sandro Galea: "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"¹⁰; and

WHEREAS, racism has created physical and social hazards for Latin Americans in this country throughout the last century such as the 1918 Massacre at Porvenir (Presidio County) where Texas Rangers killed 15 men and boys for suspicion of cattle-rustling, to the tragic murder of Santos Rodriguez at the hands of a Dallas Police officer in the 1970s to the disparagement of Latin American immigrants by some national figures which

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

⁵U.S. Census Bureau

⁶ The Sentencing Project: The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons. June 2016

⁷ Dallas County Community Health Needs Assessment 2019

8. CDC – Centers for Disease Control – Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups

9. Institute of Medicine. Unequal Treatment. <https://www.nap.edu/read/10260/chapter/2#7>. May 2, 2020; 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.

10. Galea, Sandro. Crying "Crisis". Dean's Note. Boston University School of Public Health. <https://www.bu.edu.sph/2017/04/23/crying-crisis/>.

presents a health threat to all Brown people without regard to their citizenship status; and

WHEREAS, the Dallas County Commissioners Court stands with the residents of Dallas County with the declaration of racism as a public health crisis and acknowledge that all lives will matter in America only when there is recognition and affirmation that "Black Lives Matter"; now, therefore,

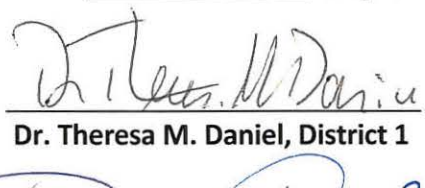
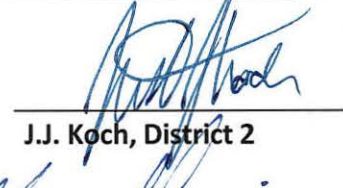
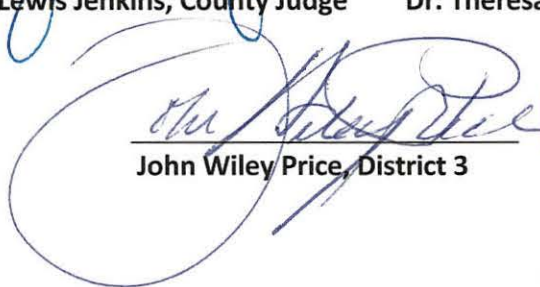
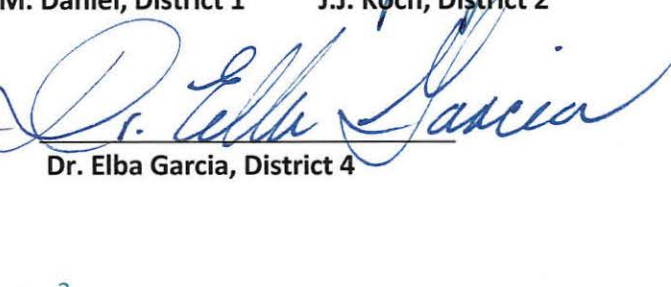
BE IT RESOLVED AND ORDERED THAT THE DALLAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT OF DALLAS COUNTY, STATE OF TEXAS:

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 Commissioners Court and its staff leadership continuing to identify specific activities to further enhance diversity and to ensure antiracism principles across Commissioners Court leadership, staffing and contracting.
3. Promote equity through all policies approved by the Commissioners Court 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 Black communities, 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. Institute racial equity training with the goal of reaching all Commissioners Court agency leadership and 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 Commissioners Court, to assess progress and capitalize on opportunities to further advance racial equity; and, be it

Further resolved, that the Commissioners Court supports all additional efforts in Dallas County, the State of Texas and nationwide to address racism and public health disparities due to racial inequities; and, be it

Further resolved, that the Dallas County Commissioners Court call upon the Governor, the Speaker of the Texas House, and the Texas Senate President and Attorney General to join with us to declare racism as a public health crisis and to enact equity in all policies of the State of Texas.

DONE IN OPEN COURT this the 16th day of June, 2020.

 Clay Lewis Jenkins, County Judge	 Dr. Theresa M. Daniel, District 1	 J.J. Koch, District 2
 John Wiley Price, District 3		 Dr. Elba Garcia, District 4