

Alders Declare Racism A Public Health Crisis

by **THOMAS BREEN** | Jul 6, 2020 9:39 pm

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THOMAS BREEN PHOTO

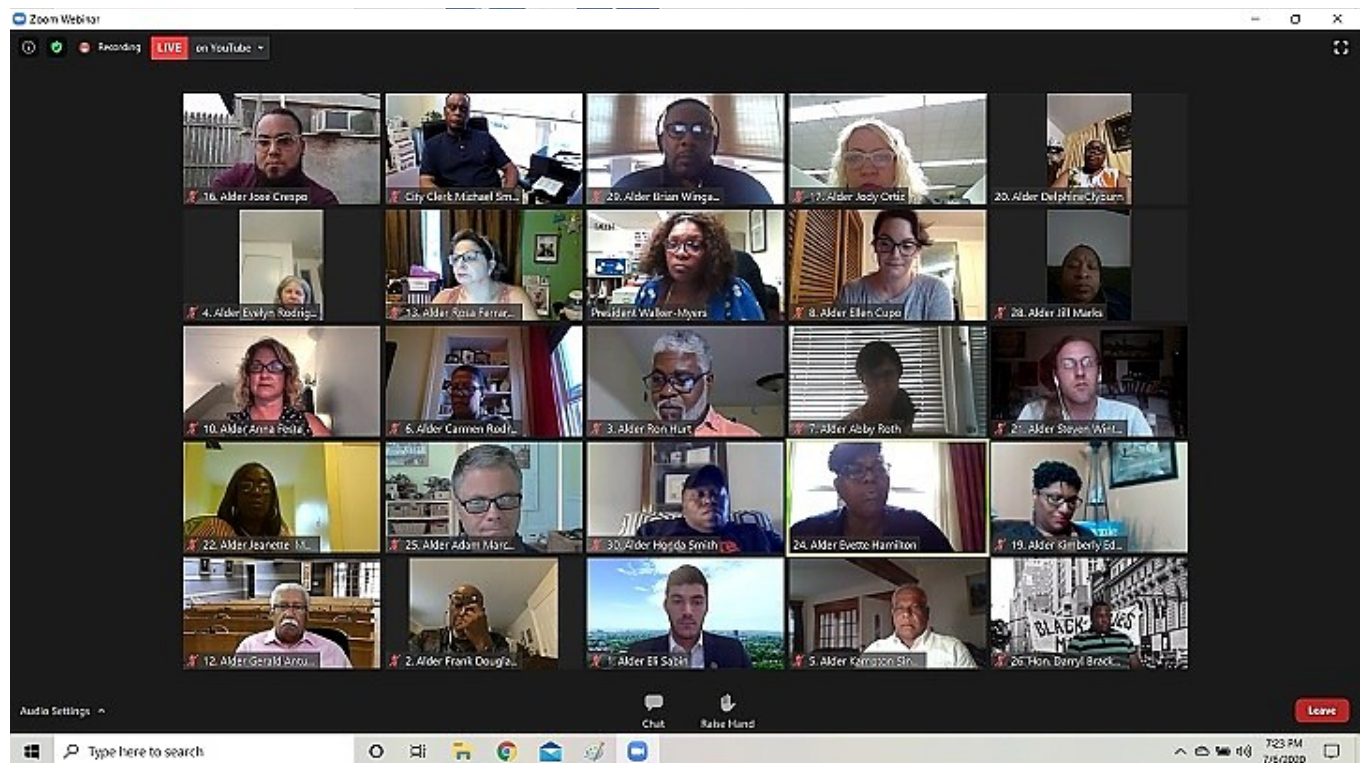
Protesters at a Black Lives Matter march in June.

Racism is now an officially recognized public health crisis in the City of New Haven.

Local legislators unanimously voted to declare as such Monday night during the latest full Board of Alders meeting. The meeting was held online via the Zoom videoconferencing platform because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

New Haven now joins fellow Connecticut municipalities Windsor, Hartford, Bloomfield, and West Hartford — as well as [more than 20 cities and three states across the country](#) — in recognizing that racism has tangible, negative health consequences that have only been exacerbated by the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The resolution, which can be read in full below, recognizes racism as “a root cause of poverty” and as causing poor health outcomes and “inequities in economic stability, education, physical environment, food, and access to health care” for Black, Native American, Asian and Latino residents.



ZOOM

Monday night's full Board of Alders meeting.

Westville Alder Darryl Brackeen, Jr. [introduced the resolution to the board earlier this month](#). No alders discussed the resolution publicly on the floor of Monday night's meeting before casting their votes.

The alders also voted Monday to create a working group to recommend appropriate actions regarding racism as a public health issue in New Haven.

"Proponents of such resolutions assert that the impacts of racism and purposeful disinvestment in the social and economic well-being of people of color has resulted in disproportionately higher rates of chronic stress, lower infant birth rates and [higher rates of COVID-19 infection and death](#)," Brackeen wrote in a letter to his colleagues in which he urged them to support the resolution. "This resolution demonstrates a commitment to advancing racial equity, including health disparities."

RESOLUTION DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS IN THE CITY OF NEW HAVEN

WHEREAS: Racism is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual racism that is interpersonal and/or internalized or 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; and

WHEREAS: race is a social construct with no biological basis; and

WHEREAS: racism and racial discrimination threaten human development because of the obstacles which they pose to the fulfillment to basic human rights to survival, security, development, and social participation; and

WHEREAS: racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance have been shown to be attitudes and behaviors that are learned; and

WHEREAS: racism has been shown to have negative cognitive, behavioral, affective, and relational

effects on both child and adult victims nationally and globally, historically, and contemporarily; 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; and

WHEREAS: racism is a root cause of poverty and constricts economic mobility; and

WHEREAS: racism causes persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes in many areas of life, including housing, education, employment, and criminal justice, and is itself a social determinant of health; and

WHEREAS: racism has been shown to increase anxiety, depression, and is linked to a host of medical complications in ethnic minority individuals; and

WHEREAS: racism and segregation have exacerbated a health divide resulting in people of color in Connecticut bearing a disproportionate burden of illness and mortality including COVID-19 infection and death, heart disease, diabetes, and infant mortality; and

WHEREAS: COVID-19 is just the latest example where minority populations are disproportionately harmed; and

WHEREAS: Black, Native American, Asian and Latino residents are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of inequities in economic stability, education, physical environment, food, and access to health care and these inequities are, themselves, a result of racism;

WHEREAS: studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes; and

WHEREAS: the collective prosperity and wellbeing of New Haven depends upon equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the New Haven Board of Alders denounces racism in all its forms and declares racism as a public health crisis.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Alders:

(1) Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting our city and all of Connecticut; (2) Work to progress as an equity and justice-oriented organization, by continuing to identify specific activities to enhance diversity and to ensure anti-racism principles across our leadership, staffing and contracting; (3) Promote equity through all policies approved by the Board of Alders 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) Improve the quality of the data our city collects and the analysis of that data, as it is not enough to assume that an initiative is producing its intended outcome, qualitative and quantitative data should be used to assess inequities in impact and continuously improve; (5) Continue to advocate locally for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and support local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism; (6) 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; (7) Support community efforts to amplify issues of racism and engage actively and authentically with communities of color wherever they live; and (8) Identify clear goals and objectives, including periodic reports to the Board of Alders, to assess progress and

capitalize on opportunities to further advance racial equity.

Commenting has closed for this entry

Comments

posted by: NH Republican on July 6, 2020 10:49pm

These alders are something else! Let me ask you this; if a white man kindly asks a group of black men to stop shooting off fireworks at midnight so he can sleep and go to work in the morning, is that racist? Will he be deterring “advances to racial equity?”

Maybe it won't even matter since Elicker cut \$1/2m to the police and \$1/2m to the fire dept, there will be nobody to stop fireworks, homicides, gun violence, litter, graffiti, rape, etc.

posted by: Dennis.. on July 7, 2020 12:29am

2 weeks ago I commented how the BOA's were in hiding. Most are career politicians responsible for the mess that most people have been protesting. No word from the Alders on the huge budget deficit or the the string of shootings and violence spreading across the City. I surmised they were working on “the mother of all resolutions”. And now we have it. Resolution approved. All City problems solved with one stroke of the pen. I feel better already.

Dennis Serfilippi

posted by: CityYankee on July 7, 2020 6:20am

Why don't we have a vote by ward in NH? The wards that want to defund police and fire can have those services withdrawn and those wards that want them can have the displaced police/fire reassigned there. No outside agitators allowed.

This seems to be the most fair way to distribute services and allow real choice instead of a vocal minority ramming this down everyone's throats.. It seems like there is no interest in seeing what people really want because the radicals will lose. Most people are not so out of their minds yet as to agree to be without protection and security.

Put a question up and have a special vote on this issue, New Haven.

posted by: eagsye on July 7, 2020 9:12am

@NH Republicans shows how delusional you are that you believe the cops stop any of those things lol, come back to reality any time

posted by: Heather C. on July 7, 2020 1:21pm

The prior comments are all about crimes and misdemeanors and defunding police.

The article is about the Alders recognizing that institutionalized/systemic socio-economic racism causes tremendous disparities in physical and mental health, the ability to obtain wealth and success, housing and schooling, and reinforces the racial divide and perpetuates further racism.

If society eliminated all or the majority of the factors that created and enforced racism in our laws and in our current society's structures and institutions, much of the crime that occurs from the fallout of poverty and racism would be reduced.

To think that the Alders addressing systemic racism is the same as encouraging or condoning crime in minority populations, is a false equivalency, and is racist.

posted by: manofthepeople on July 7, 2020 8:00pm

Is it because New Haven has had a democratic mayor since the 1950s the beginning of its racism? Is it that there has been a majority of democratic alderman for 70 years? Is it the fact that 93% of the voters are democrats in New Haven?

When can we stop these racists?

[Ed.: According to a recent tally, New Haven had 37,877 registered Democratic voters, 15,223 registered unaffiliated voters, 2,338 registered Republicans, and 577 "others" (including Greens).].