

Statement of Solidarity

Category: Statement

written by NCUIH | June 17, 2020

Washington, DC (June 17, 2020) - Today, the National Council of Urban Indian Health released the following statement:

We stand in solidarity with our Black relatives who have been subject to centuries of violence. The recent senseless murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, are a painful reminder of this country's dark history that has not been forgotten. The National Council of Urban Indian Health stands with our Black brothers and sisters and our Afro-Indigenous relatives. We condemn racism in any form and demand justice from the system that caused this suffering.

Our world has spent the past few months embroiled in battle against a pandemic that is disproportionality affecting communities of color. The structures which created this country left a legacy of systemic racism that has directly affected the health and well-being of our communities. While the pandemic has only cast a cloud on our communities more recently, Black Americans and Native Americans have been battling for generations. As the world takes to the streets, we see that our brothers and sisters are in pain.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many underlying health disparities to the surface. Socioeconomic disparities are one of the largest factors in determining health outcomes, and here Black Americans and Native Americans top the charts again. With a lack of access to quality food, housing, and education combined with intergenerational trauma, both communities already face staggering inequities. The added stress of a pandemic is enough to topple communities and cause death rates to skyrocket. Especially when these populations are more likely to be low-wage, essential workers, and less likely to have access to essential resources like running water. The exact same disparities which underlie the health crisis in our communities are the ones that create over-policing in our communities, disproportionate use of force by the police, and higher rates of incarceration. But we know these disparities did not arise on their own.

The United States was built atop stolen land, and it was built by stolen bodies, stolen labor. The United States owes an invaluable debt to its Indigenous population and its slave descendants.

But now is the time to begin trying to heal old wounds through instituting lasting systemic change. We cannot heal when senseless murders are happening in our communities each day. It is time for the United States to invest in the communities who built this country.

As Natives, we cannot remain silent as the population who holds with us in every regard continues to die in the streets. As health care professionals, as we're in the midst of a another public health crisis, systemic racism, we cannot remain silent as the mental, physical, and spiritual health of this Nation is in peril due to the historical traumas our peoples have endured for centuries. We cannot allow this world to steal the breath from another soul. We cannot continue to support the system as it exists, as it is working the way it was meant to- against Black and Brown lives. We must be active in holding the United States accountable to change.

We urge you to educate and require more of yourself, your peers, and your family members. We must speak out in the face of blatant racism, in the face of microaggressions, to be prepared to make mistakes and to learn from them. It is long past time to create space for Black and Afro-Indigenous voices. Together, we will continue fight against any discrimination within our communities. Today,

and tomorrow, we call on you to lend your resources, your signature, and your voice as we demand systemic change. It is we who are responsible for creating a better society.

We remember Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, we remember Paul Castaway, Zachary Bearheels, Sarah Lee Circle Bear, Corey Kanosh, Jason Pero, and we remember the countless others whose lives touched our communities but whose names never see a headline.

To the Black community—we know these injustices will not be undone in a week, in a month, a year. It will take constant commitment from the entire Nation. The traumas you have faced, know you are not alone in them, and that we will heal together. As Natives we know we are all connected, that the Black community needs investment and healing but it is not an island alone. We must share our resources and share our healing. You cannot be healthy while everyone else around you is sick. We must heal each other by investing in one another. And for our Afro-Indigenous relatives, we want to assure you that you have a safe space in our Urban Indian Organizations, and that your voices are not only heard but are cherished. We are resilient and we are still here because we can stand together. #NativesforBlackLives

“The beauty of anti-racism is that you don’t have to pretend to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it’s the only way forward.” -Ijeoma Oluo

Urban Indian Organizations represent the trust responsibility the federal government has to its non-reservation Native populations. The trust responsibility is a recognition of the debt the United States owes its Indigenous population, health care we paid for with our land and blood.

Recommended Reading

- “How to Be an Antiracist” by Ibram X. Kendi
- “White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism” by Robin DiAngelo
- “Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do” by Jennifer L. Eberhardt
- “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness” by Michelle Alexander
- “So You Want to Talk About Race” by Ijeoma Oluo
- “Raising White Kids” by Jennifer Harvey
- “The Black and the Blue: A Cop Reveals the Crimes, Racism, and Injustice in America’s Law Enforcement” by Matthew Horace and Ron Harris
- “Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption” by Bryan Stevenson
- “The Fire Next Time” by James Baldwin
- “They Can’t Kill Us All: Ferguson, Baltimore, And A New Era In America’s Racial Justice Movement” by Wesley Lowery
- “Hood Feminism: Notes From The Women That The Movement Forgot” by Mikki Kendall
- “Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism” by Bell Hooks
- “Open Season: Legalized Genocide of Colored People” by Ben Crump
- “From Slavery To Freedom: A History of African Americans” by John Hope Franklin
- “The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement Is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear” by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and William Barber II
- “Between the World and Me” by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- “Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You” by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi

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The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) is the national non-profit organization devoted to the support and development of quality, accessible, and culturally-competent health and public health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) living in urban areas. NCUIH is the only national representative of the 41 Title V Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) under the Indian Health Service (IHS) in the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA). NCUIH strives to improve the health of the over 70% of the AI/AN population that lives in urban areas, supported by quality, accessible health care centers.