

1 **RESOLUTION NO.**

2 **WHEREAS**, Public Health Awareness establishes the relationship
3 between the health of individuals and the health of their communities; and

4 **WHEREAS**, race is a social construction with no biological basis¹; and

5 **WHEREAS**, racism is a negative social system with multiple
6 dimensions including individual prejudices that are internalized or
7 interpersonal; and systemic racism is institutional or structural, and is a system
8 of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social
9 interpretation of how one looks; and

10 **WHEREAS**, racism unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and
11 communities, while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and
12 communities, and diminishes the strength of the whole society through the waste
13 of human resources; and

14 **WHEREAS**, the City of Austin’s collective prosperity depends upon
15 the equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of
16 their skin; and

17 **WHEREAS**, the 1928 Master Plan separated Austinites with race as a
18 sole factor, acting as a legalized form of segregation, created a “negro

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20 ¹Garcia JJ, Sharif MZ. Black lives Matter: A Commentary on Race and Racism. AmJ Public
21 Health. 2015; 105: e27- e30. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2015.302706).
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23 district,” and resulted in the intentional and negatively disproportional
24 restriction of resources for the Black community – the residual effects of
25 which are still experienced today; and

26 **WHEREAS**, racism causes persistent discrimination and disparate
27 outcomes in many areas of life, including housing, education, business,
28 employment and criminal justice; and an emerging body of research demonstrates
29 that racism itself is a social determinant of health; and

30 **WHEREAS**, the promotion of healthy communities directly relates to the
31 health of individuals, and encourages expanding public health support networks
32 to decrease racial disparities in health outcomes; and

33 **WHEREAS**, more than 100 studies have linked racism to negative health
34 outcomes;² and

35 **WHEREAS**, the U.S. Census noted that the City of Austin’s Black
36 residents experience dramatically higher unemployment rates (White: 3.0%,
37 Black: 9.5%), face a higher poverty rate as a community (White: 9.1%, Black:
38 22.9%), have incomes that are 55% of the median income of white residents, have
39 lower home ownership rates (White: 52%, Black: 31.5%)³ and lower

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41 ²Institute of Medicine. Unequal Treatment. <https://www.nap.edu/read/10260/chapter/2#7>.
42 May 2, 2020; and American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at:
43 <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>.

44 ³U.S. Census Bureau.

45 health coverage rates (White: 89%, Black: 75.2%)⁴ and are more likely to live in
46 neighborhoods with low-performing schools and experience disproportionately
47 higher incarceration rates in the Texas prison system (Whites: 457 per 100,000,
48 Black: 1,844 per 100,000)⁵; and

49 **WHEREAS**, racism and economic segregation in Texas and the City of
50 Austin have also exacerbated a health divide resulting in East Austin residents
51 having lower life expectancies than West Austin residents;⁶ and Black residents
52 are far more likely to die of heart disease, cancer, diabetes or stroke. Black
53 residents also have higher levels of lower birth weights, are more likely to be
54 overweight or obese, have long-term complications from diabetes, notably higher
55 rates of new HIV cases, and report poor mental health⁷; and

56 **WHEREAS**, a current example of such disparity is highlighted by data
57 from Austin Public Health indicating disproportionate numbers of COVID-19
58 deaths and hospitalizations among Austin's Latinx and Black communities; and

59 **WHEREAS**, Austin is committed to undoing the systemic racism and
60 institutional inequity abetted for far too long and pervasive in all systems; and

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62 ⁴Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Texas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance
63 Survey Data. Atlanta, Georgia: US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for
64 Disease Control and Prevention, 2011 -2015

65 ⁵The Sentencing Project: The Color of Justice; Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State
66 Prisons. June 2016.

67 ⁶ UT Southwestern Medical Center
68 [https://www.utsouthwestern.edu/newsroom/articles/year-2019/life-expectancy-texas-
70 zipcode.html](https://www.utsouthwestern.edu/newsroom/articles/year-2019/life-expectancy-texas-
69 zipcode.html).

70 ⁷ Community Health Assessment Austin/Travis County September 2017.
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73 **WHEREAS**, in 2017 the Mayor’s Task Force on Institutional Racism and
74 Systemic Inequities convened a wide range of regional leaders and issued a report
75 that included recommendations for local action to address racial equity; and

76 **WHEREAS**, while there is no epidemiologic definition of “crisis”, the
77 health impact of racism clearly rises to the definition of “crisis” proposed by the
78 Dr. Sandro Galea, dean of the Boston University School of Public Health, who
79 stated, “[t]he problem must affect large numbers of people, it must threaten
80 health over the long-term, and it must require the adoption of large-scale solutions”;
81 and

82 **WHEREAS**, with support from community partners, Austin Public Health
83 and the Equity Office, it is the City of Austin’s responsibility to address racism,
84 including seeking solutions to reshape the discourse and actively engage all
85 citizens in racial justice work; and

86 **WHEREAS**, the City of Austin is committed to achieving health equity;

87 **NOW, THEREFORE,**

88 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

89 Racism is a public health crisis in the City of Austin.

90 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

91 The City Manager is directed to continue work to advance the City of
92 Austin as a race equity and justice-oriented organization, with the Equity Office
93 and departmental leadership continuing to identify specific activities to further
94 enhance diversity and to ensure anti-racism principles across leadership, City
95 staffing and contracting, enhance educational trainings/activities for employees
96 aimed at understanding, addressing and dismantling racism and how it affects the
97 delivery of human and social services, economic development and public safety,
98 and promote relevant policies that improve health in communities of color.

99 The Equity Office should review recommendations included in the Mayor's
100 Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities for those that are
101 actionable by the City of Austin and make recommendations for the highest
102 priority actions that can be taken to assist communities of color. These
103 recommendations should be in the areas of:

- 104 - Education
- 105 - Real Estate & Housing
- 106 - Health
- 107 - Finance, Banking & Industry
- 108 - Civil & Criminal Justice

109 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

110 The City Manager is directed to advocate locally and through the National
111 League of Cities and Texas Municipal League for relevant policies that improve
112 health in low-income communities and communities of color, and supports local,
113 state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic
114 racism. The city manager is to report back to Council annually on advocacy
115 initiatives and progress on policy advancement.

116 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

117 The City Council hereby supports efforts to address public health
118 disparities due to racial inequities throughout the City of Austin, and calls upon
119 the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the Texas House, and the
120 Texas Attorney General to join with us to declare racism as a public health crisis
121 and to enact equity in all policies of the State of Texas.

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123 **ADOPTED:** _____, 2020

ATTEST: _____

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk

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