



**AN IAS VIRTUAL CONFERENCE | 10 - 11 JULY 2020**

# Anti-Black Racism and COVID-19 Inequities: Explaining the System, Exposing the Set-Up, and Exploring the Solutions

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## Disclosure slide

I do not have a conflict of interest.



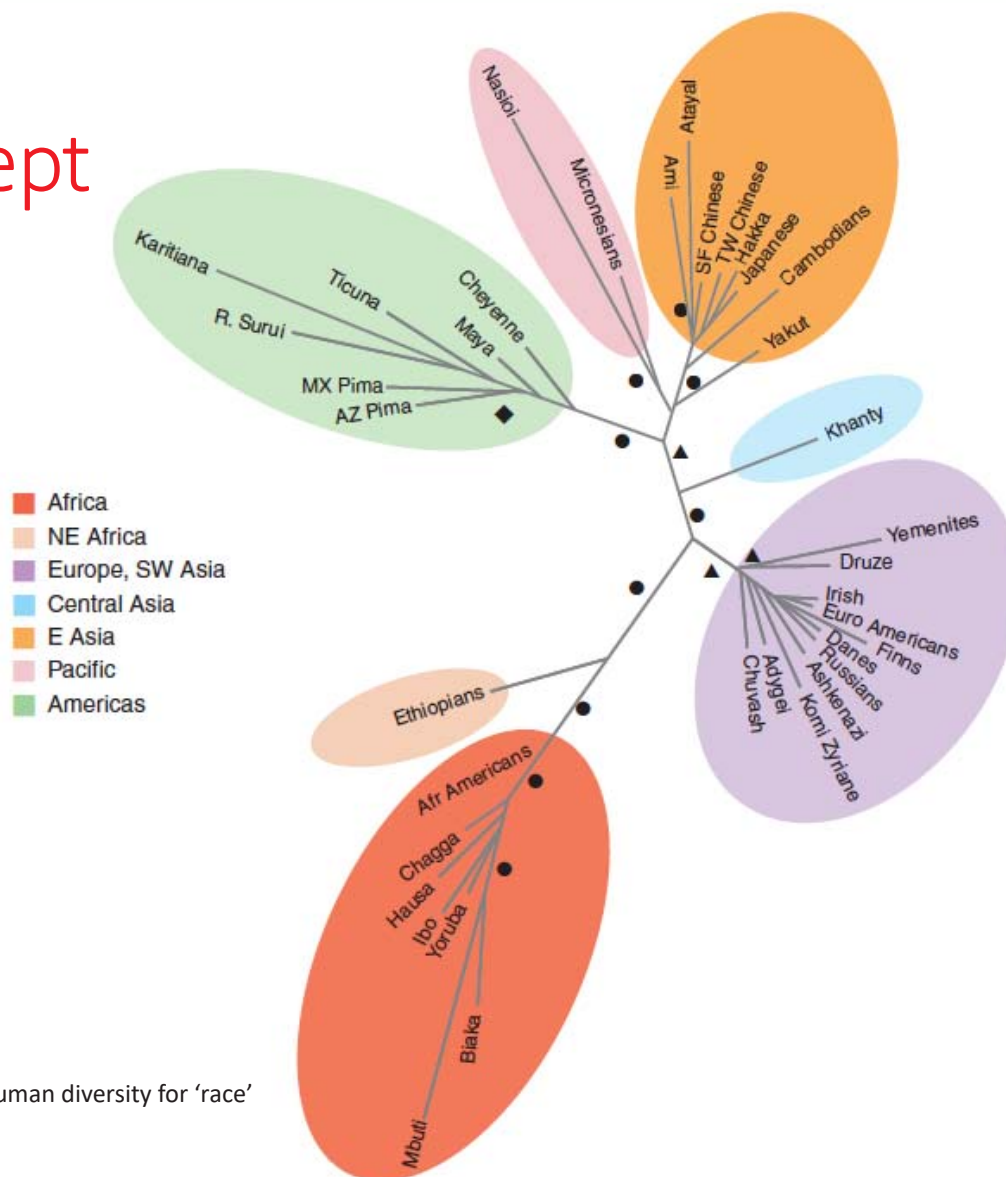
# Explaining the System

Anti-Black Racism and COVID-19



# Race is a social concept

- Modern humans originated in what is now known as Africa
  - Single origin
  - Features used to categorize people into a “race” is a function of movement distance from origin
- The idea of race as a scientifically valid biological taxonomy is thoroughly discredited
- Race is a social concept



**Credit:** Tishkoff SA & Kid KK (2004). Implications of biogeography of human diversity for ‘race’ and medicine. *Nature Genetics*, 36(11): S21-S27

# RACISM IS A SOCIAL SYSTEM

- Multi-dimensional organizing logic of human power relations
- Continuously operating and does not require conscious participation
- Distributes social status benefits based on race category assignment
  - White vs Black
  - Access vs Barriers
  - Immunity vs Punishment
  - Justice vs Apathy
- High status (whiteness) can be assigned provisionally and can be revoked

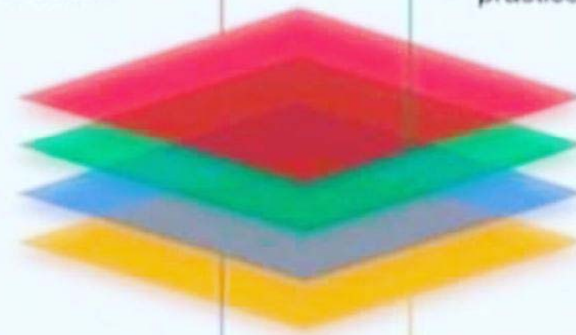
## THE FOUR OF DIMENSIONS **RACISM**

### **INSTITUTIONAL**

Policies and practices that reinforce racist standards within a workspace or organization.

### **STRUCTURAL**

Multiple institutions collectively upholding racist policies and practices, i.e. society.



### **INTERPERSONAL**

Racist acts and micro-aggressions carried out from one person to another.

### **INTERNALIZED**

The subtle and overt messages that reinforce negative beliefs and self-hatred in individuals.

*Inspired by  
Race Forward Trainings*

**Credit: Slow Factory  
Foundation**

# Exposing the Set Up

Anti-Black Racism and COVID-19



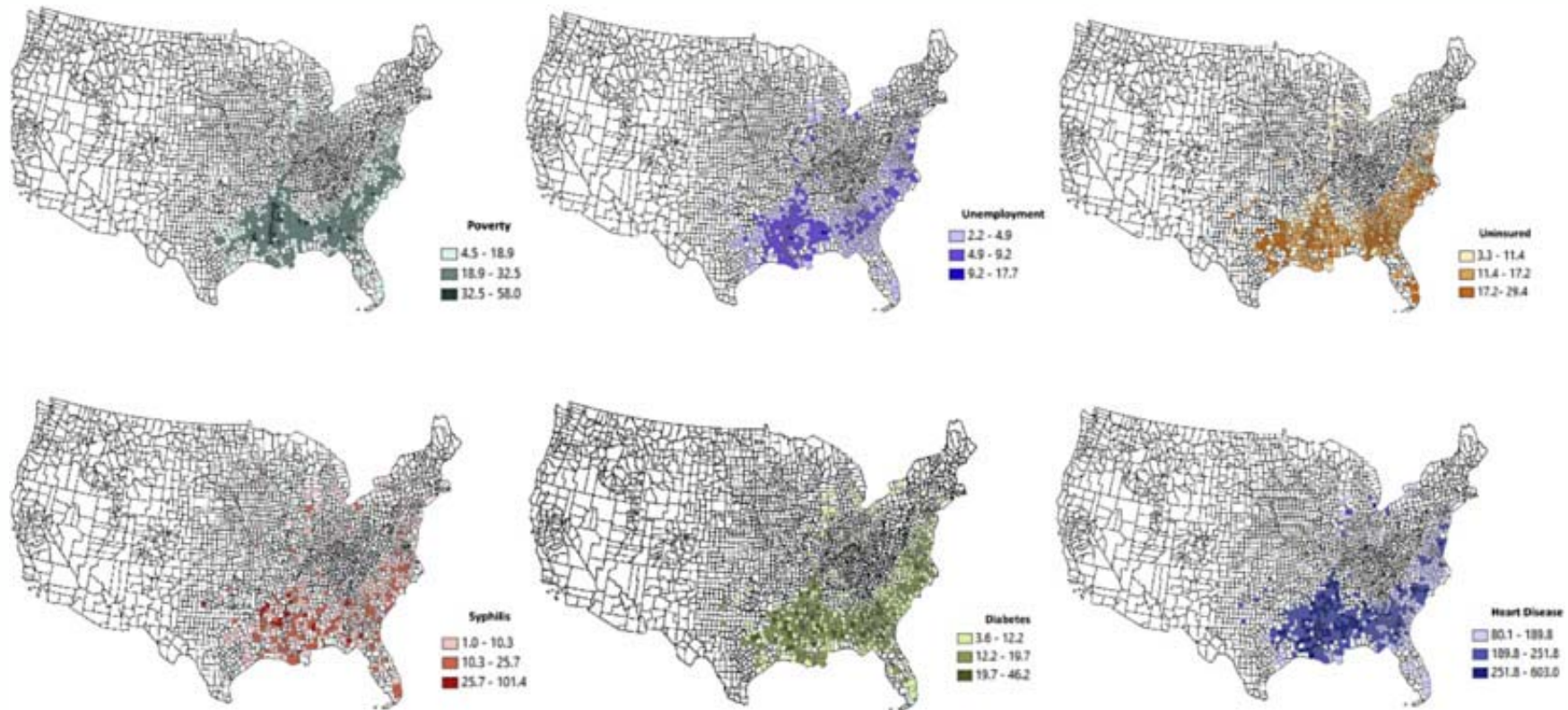
Racism is a form of structural violence  
because it produces socially unjust  
conditions that predispose Black  
communities to disability and death

**Credit:** Poteat T, Millett GA, Nelson LE, Beyrer C. (2020). Understanding COVID-19 risks and vulnerabilities among Black communities in America: The lethal force of syndemics. *Annals of Epidemiology*, 47: 1-3.





# Overlay of Health and Social Disparities



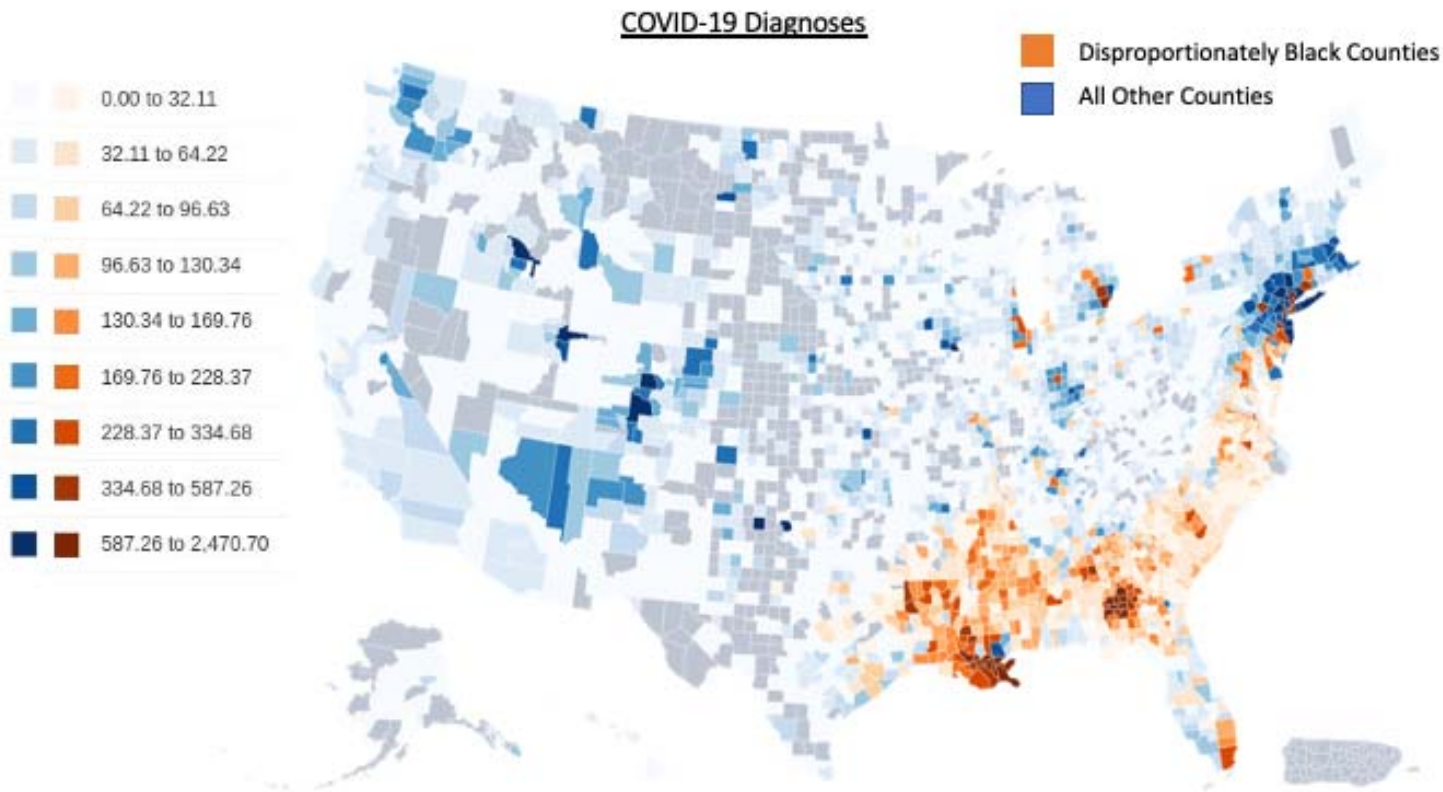
**Credit:** Figure courtesy of amfAR, excerpted from Greg Millet's July AIDS 2020 plenary.

**Credit:** Poteat T, Millett GA, Nelson LE, Beyrer C. (2020). Understanding COVID-19 risks and vulnerabilities among Black communities in America: The lethal force of syndemics. *Annals of Epidemiology*, 47: 1-3.

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# Racial Disparities: COVID-19 Diagnoses



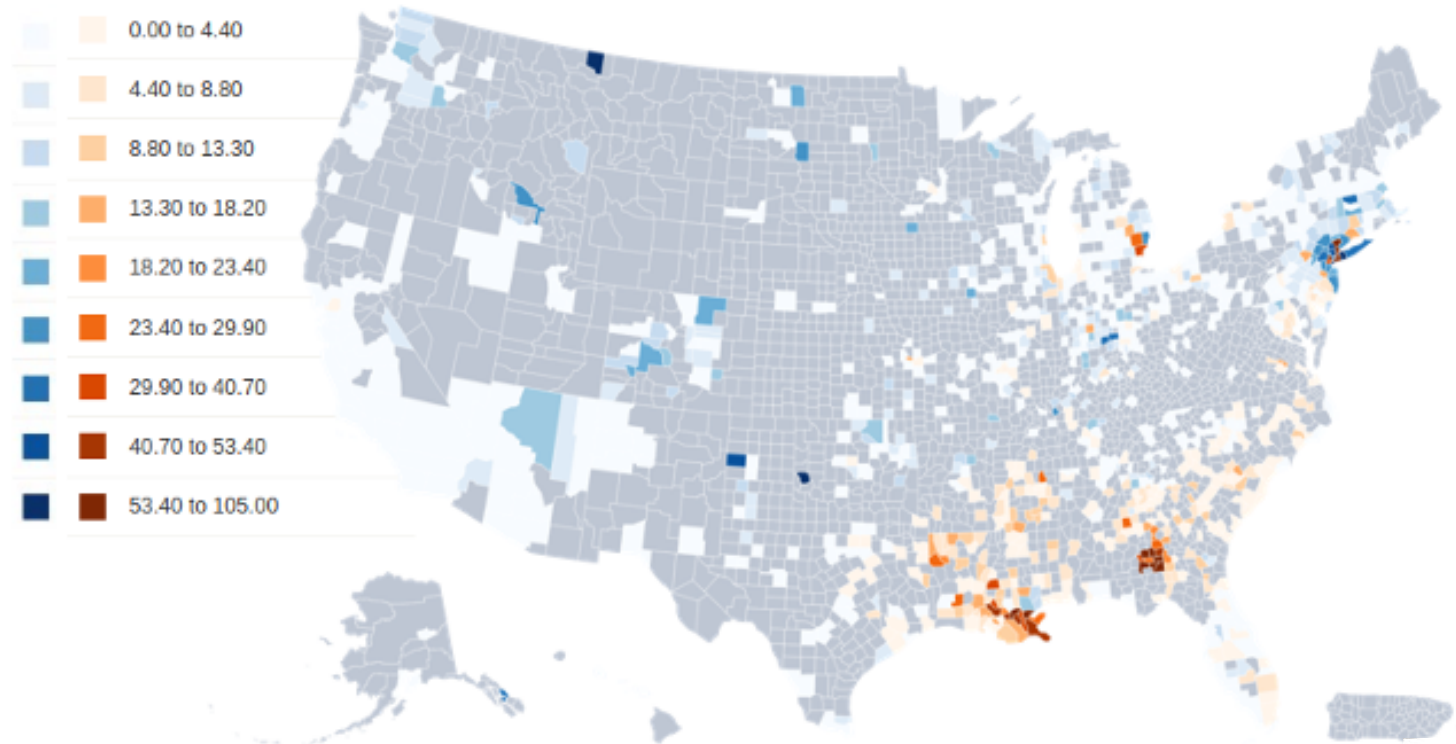
**Credit:** Millett GA, Jones AT, Benkeser D, Baral S, Mercer L, Beyrer C, Honermann B, Lankiewicz E, Mena L, Crowley JS, Sherwood J, Sullivan P. (2020). Assessing differential impacts of COVID-19 risks on Black communities. *Annals of Epidemiology*, doi: 10.1016/j.annepidem.2020.05.003.

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# Racial Disparities: COVID-19 Deaths

COVID-19 Deaths



**Credit:** Millett GA, Jones AT, Benkeser D, Baral S, Mercer L, Beyrer C, Honermann B, Lankiewicz E, Mena L, Crowley JS, Sherwood J, Sullivan P. (2020). Assessing differential impacts of COVID-19 risks on Black communities. *Annals of Epidemiology*, doi: 10.1016/j.annepidem.2020.05.003.

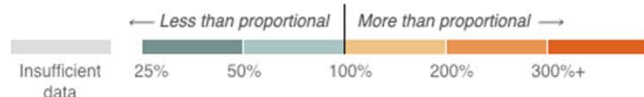
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# COVID-19 Disproportionately Impacting Blacks

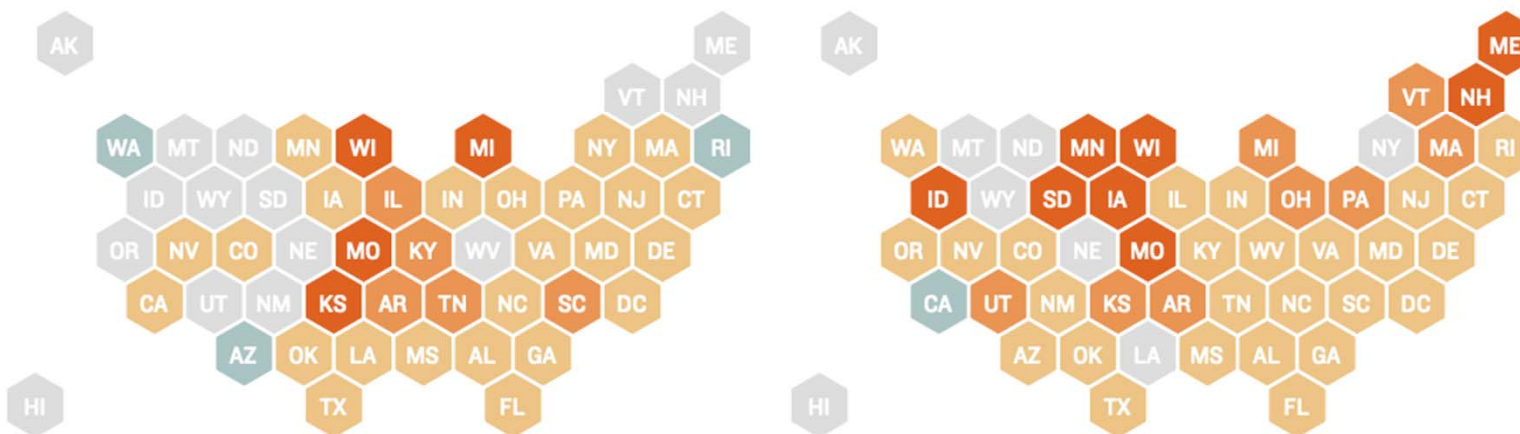
Deaths and Cases Disproportionately Affect African Americans In Most States

PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE IN SHARE OF DEATHS/CASES, COMPARED WITH AFRICAN AMERICANS' SHARE OF THE POPULATION



DEATHS

CASES



Source: COVID Tracking Project; 2018 American Community Survey five-year estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau

Credit: Daniel Wood and Connie Hanzhang Jin/NPR



# Exploring the Solution(s)

Anti-Black Racism and COVID-19



# FIGHTING ON TWO INTERSECTING FRONTS

ENDING RACISM CANNOT BE TRIAGED TO A POST-COVID 19 PRIORITY

- Reverse inequitable structural public health and social policies that funnels vulnerability to Black communities
  - Combatting structural racism and systems of white supremacy requires active and sustained measures
  - Advocacy at local, state, federal levels and through professional organizations
  - Support those risking their lives to fight on both of these front lines
- Mitigate the material conditions that increase vulnerability to SARS-CoV-2 exposure and COVID-19 disease and death must be improved.
  - Access to technology, health insurance, secure housing, and income



# FIGHTING ON TWO INTERSECTING FRONTS

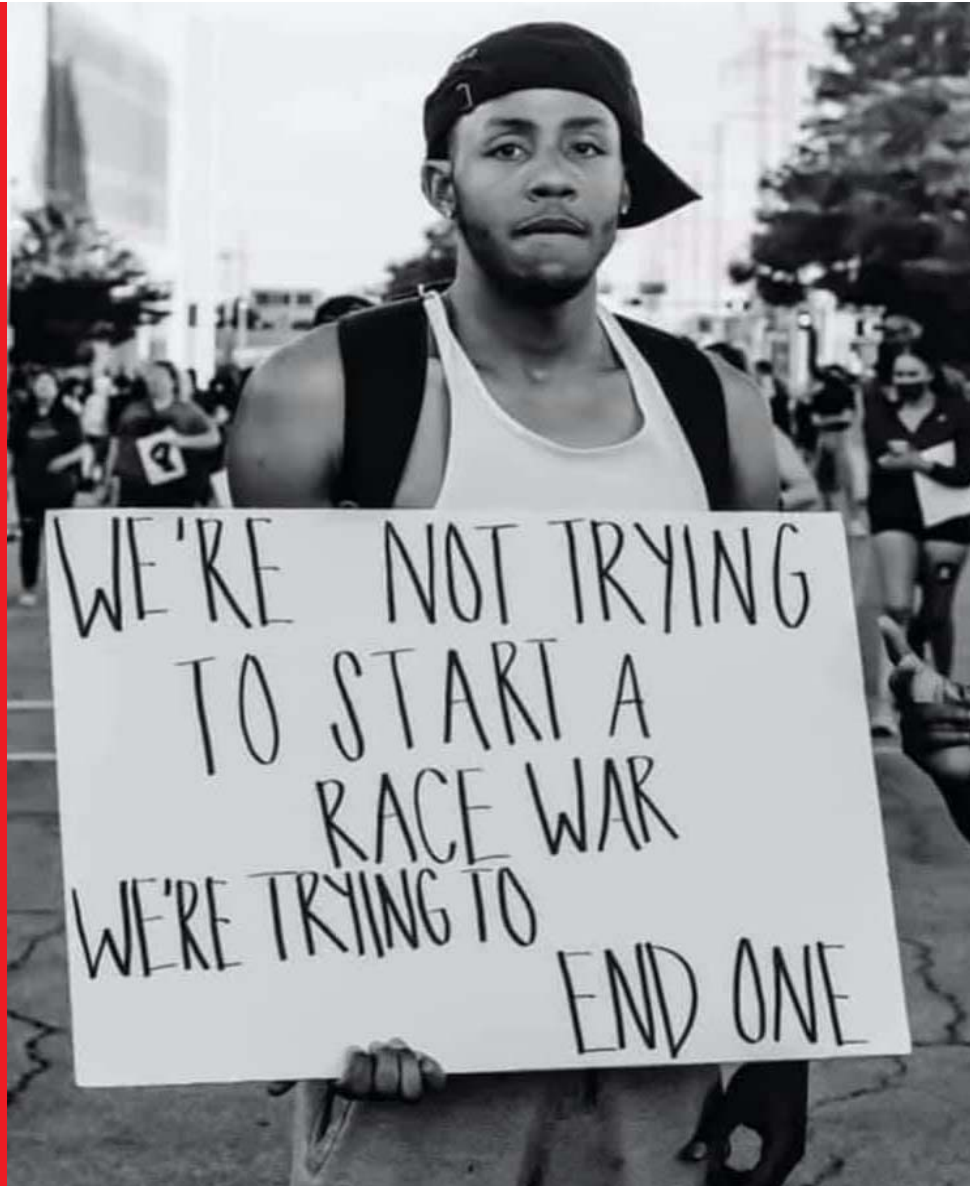
ENDING RACISM CANNOT BE TRIAGED TO A POST-COVID 19 PRIORITY

- Immediately incorporate anti-racism and structural competency in health professional education curriculum and evaluation
  - medicine, nursing, public health, social work etc...
  - including residencies, fellowships and continuing education





COVID-19 and Anti-Black Racism require rapid multi-level responses aimed at its eradication and preventing its resurgence.



LESS  
THEORIZING.

LESS  
APOLOGIZING.

MORE  
MOBILIZING.





RACISM IS NOT A  
SYSTEM THAT  
CAN BE

RACISM MUST BE DISMANTLED  
REFORMED



- The awakening of the moral conscience of the world is an opportunity to re-structure society to protect all human life, and the ecosystems that sustain it, against the global pandemic threats of racism and COVID-19.

Credit: "Awakening" (sculpture). Artist: Frantz Brent-Harris

