RESOLUTION NUMBER 43, 2020**
A Resolution Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County

WHEREAS, throughout the history of the United States, black America has suffered, endured and overcome the indignities, abuse and subjugation of white America, only because of their color; and to this day, black America is wrongfully discriminated against, deprived of the housing, education, jobs and opportunities available to white America; and

WHEREAS, the pervasive racism in America, if left unchecked, will continue to divide these United States and exacerbate the disparities which exist in healthcare, diet, safe and affordable housing, transportation, jobs, business ownership opportunities, safe meeting places and social entertainment; and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, public health is "the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private communities, and individuals;" and

WHEREAS, a growing body of research indicates that racism negatively impacts people of every ethnic and socio-economic background, damages social trust and cohesion, sets the stage for the increased development of individual mental disorders, drains social resources, as direct and significant measured economic impacts upon society as a whole; and

WHEREAS, Erie County seeks to address the impact of racism on public health at all levels of county government, improving healthcare, healthy food, safe and affordable housing, education, transportation, well-paying jobs and business ownership opportunities, resulting in improved health outcomes and longer life expectancies among black people; and

HEALTHCARE: *General Population*

WHEREAS, in Erie County, food insecurity was higher among the Black population at 22% compared with Whites at 9%; and

WHEREAS, over half of Erie City's census tracts are more than a half-mile from the nearest supermarket; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the percentage of low birthweight babies born to Black mothers at 12.8% is higher than 7.0% for White mothers; and

**AS AMENDED

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Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County, Pennsylvania

WHEREAS, in Erie County, 68.2% of Black women received first trimester prenatal care compared with 82.9% for White women; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the infant mortality rate of 22.8 per 1,000 live births for the Black population is significantly higher than the rate of 4.9 for the White population; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the age-adjusted rate for all causes of death among Black residents at 980.1 per 100,000 is significantly higher than the rate for White residents at 783.4; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the age-adjusted rate for cancer deaths among Black residents at 269.9 per 100,000 is significantly higher than the rate for White residents at 177.6; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the age-adjusted rate for diabetes deaths among Black residents at 56.7 per 100,000 is significantly higher than the rate for White residents at 27.5; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the percentage of heart attacks was higher among Black adults at 11% compared with the rate for White adults at 7%; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, COPD prevalence was higher among Black adults at 9% compared with the rate for White adults at 6%; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, self-reported mental health was higher among Black adults at 49% compared with the rate for White adults at 41%; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, 64% of Black adults reported poor physical health in the past month compared with 43% for White adults; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, Black residents experience obesity rates of 48%, while the White population sits at 34%; and

SAFE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

WHEREAS, businesses traditionally are reluctant to invest in historically Black communities; and

WHEREAS, historical policies and practices, such as discriminatory

lending practices known as "redlining," have shaped the differences in opportunities for safe and affordable housing for Black people; and

WHEREAS, federal agencies financed nearly half of all suburban homes in the 1950s and 1960s, with White people making up 98% of those loans approved; and

WHEREAS, over 37% of subsidized housing in Erie County is occupied by persons of color, who represent just 16% of the demographic population; and

WHEREAS, persons of color in Erie County represent nearly 20% of all rental units, while only representing 5% of all home ownership; and

WELL-PAYING JOBS & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

WHEREAS, in Erie County, Black people are disproportionately represented in low-wage occupations such as healthcare support and custodial services compared to White people who disproportionately represent higher-wage occupations like management and healthcare practice; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the median income for family households is $63,235 for White residents compared to $28,814 for the Black population; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the median income for nonfamily households is $28,349 for White residents compared to $16,585 for the Black population; and

WHEREAS, remaining virtually unchanged since before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the average wealth of White households is more than six times the average wealth of Black households; and

WHEREAS, over a third (38.6%) of Erie County's Black residents are living below the poverty level, compared to approximately 14.1% of White residents; and

WHEREAS, even in stable economic years, Black unemployment in Erie County is twice as high as White unemployment; and

RESOLUTION NUMBER 43, 2020

Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County, Pennsylvania

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

WHEREAS, in Pennsylvania, Black students face a dropout rate over 3% as compared to their White peers (1%); and

WHEREAS, Black students in the Erie City school district had a 66.5% graduation rate in 2019 as compared to 79.8% for White students; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, approximately 81% of Black people possess a high school diploma, compared to 93% of White people; and

WHEREAS, nearly a third (27.8%) of White residents in Erie County have a bachelor's degree or higher education, compared to only 13.8% of Black residents; and

WHEREAS, Black residents in Erie County are twice as likely to not have home internet access, and are almost three times as likely to have no computer in their household as compared to White residents; and

WHEREAS, anti-racist policy requires fundamental changes to all structural systems in Erie County, the dedication of resources and the development and implementation of effective strategies and programming; and

WHEREAS, Erie County is committed to openly and honestly address racism.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the County Council of Erie County, Pennsylvania:

SECTION 1. That the Eire County Council declares racism to be a public health crisis in Erie County.

SECTION 2. That Erie County Council, through its legislative and policy making powers, hereby commits to openly and honestly address racism to eliminate the disparity between black and white people when it comes to healthcare, healthy food, safe and affordable housing, well-paying jobs and business ownership opportunities, quality transportation, educational opportunities, and safe places to be active.

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A Resolution Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County

SECTION 3. That Erie County Executive shall review, assess and recommend departmental changes to eliminate/reduce the disparities between black and white people when it comes to healthcare, healthy food, safe and affordable housing, well-paying jobs and business ownership opportunities, quality transportation, educational opportunities, and quality of living including the following areas with a status report no later than six (6) months of adoption of Resolution:

a) Proposed changes to the Administrative Code, Purchasing Code, Personnel Code and departmental organization and structure;

b) Education and training of County employees;

c) Changes to the County's recruitment and advancement of employees, governance, leadership, procurement, economic development and other changes intended to eliminate racism in Erie County;

d) Establish contacts with interested community partners and to prioritize and identify resources for data collection and reporting on racial disparities in health throughout Erie County;

e) Develop and advocate for a legislative agenda at the local, state and federal levels of government to help end racism and improve the public health crisis that currently exists for black people;

f) The strategic plan's goals and objective will be aligned with the County's annual budget process in order to oversee all monetary actions toward the design, monitoring and advancement of equitable strategies Countywide.

This Resolution shall be effective immediately upon adoption.

On the motion of Carl Anderson III, seconded by Kimberly Clear, this Resolution was passed on this 8th day of September, 2020 by a vote of 5 to 2.

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A Resolution Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County

Attest:

Douglas R. Smith
County Clerk

Date: 9-8-20

Approved by:

Kathy Dahlkemper,
County Executive

Date: 9/10/2020

COUNTY COUNCIL OF THE
COUNTY OF ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA

Andre R. Horton, Chairman

Carl Anderson, III, Vice Chairman
-Voted "Yes"

Kim Clear - Voted "Yes"

Mary Rennie - Voted "Yes"

Brian Shank - Voted "No"

Scott R. Rastetter - Voted "No"

Ellen Schauerman - Voted "Yes"

RESOLUTION NUMBER 43, 2020

Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County, Pennsylvania

WHEREAS, the Charter of Erie County declares that the people of Erie County desire an improved focus on equity for all our communities and citizens; and

WHEREAS, almost all of the four hundred years of history for Blacks in America has been under either slavery or Jim Crow Laws, which subjected Black people to tremendous hardships and disadvantages in all areas of life; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states Public Health is "the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private communities, and individuals"; and

WHEREAS, structural/systemic racism creates a disparity between Black and White people in nearly all aspects of people's lives but most importantly in healthcare, healthy food, safe and affordable housing, well-paying jobs and business ownership opportunities, quality transportation, educational opportunities, and safe places to be active, resulting in adverse health outcomes and shorter life expectancies among people of color, thus creating a public health crisis; and

WHEREAS, the following are specific areas of disparity between Black and White people in healthcare, healthy food, safe and affordable housing, well-paying jobs and business ownership opportunities, quality transportation, educational opportunities, and safe places to be active; and

WHEREAS, Erie County seeks to address the impact of racism on public health at all levels of county government; and

WHEREAS, anti-racism requires fundamental changes to all structural systems in Erie County; for equitable policies and programs to be effective, attention, priority and resources must be allocated to the implementation of strategies that are long-term and sustainable; and

WHEREAS, Erie County Council and the Erie County Executive intend to take immediate action to address these obvious and crippling inequities, which are at the root of health disparities in our community and one of the effects of racism; and

WHEREAS, because of these factors, statistics, information and history, Erie County Council and the Erie County Executive desire to declare racism a public health crisis in Erie County; and

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Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County, Pennsylvania

WHEREAS, Erie County is committing its resources to openly and honestly address racism and to improve areas of all of the county's residents including ending the disparity between Black and White people when it comes to healthcare, healthy food, safe and affordable housing, well-paying jobs and business ownership opportunities, quality transportation, educational opportunities, and safe places to be active.

HEALTHCARE: *General Population*

WHEREAS, in Erie County, food insecurity was higher among the Black population at 22% compared with Whites at 9%; and

WHEREAS, over half of Erie City's census tracts are more than a half-mile from the nearest supermarket; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the percentage of low birthweight babies born to Black mothers at 12.8% is higher than 7.0% for White mothers; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, 68.2% of Black women received first trimester prenatal care compared with 82.9% for White women; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the infant mortality rate of 22.8 per 1,000 live births for the Black population is significantly higher than the rate of 4.9 for the White population; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the age-adjusted rate for all causes of death among Black residents at 980.1 per 100,000 is significantly higher than the rate for White residents at 783.4; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the age-adjusted rate for cancer deaths among Black residents at 269.9 per 100,000 is significantly higher than the rate for White residents at 177.6; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the age-adjusted rate for diabetes deaths among Black residents at 56.7 per 100,000 is significantly higher than the rate for White residents at 27.5; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the percentage of heart attacks was higher among Black adults at 11% compared with the rate for White adults at 7%; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, COPD prevalence was higher among Black adults at 9% compared with the rate for White adults at 6%; and

RESOLUTION NUMBER 43, 2020

Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County, Pennsylvania

WHEREAS, in Erie County, self-reported mental health was higher among Black adults at 49% compared with the rate for White adults at 41%; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, 64% of Black adults reported poor physical health in the past month compared with 43% for White adults; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, Black residents experience obesity rates of 48%, while the White population sits at 34%; and

SAFE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

WHEREAS, businesses traditionally are reluctant to invest in historically Black communities; and

WHEREAS, historical policies and practices, such as discriminatory lending practices known as "redlining," have shaped the differences in opportunities for safe and affordable housing for Black people; and

WHEREAS, federal agencies financed nearly half of all suburban homes in the 1950s and 1960s, with White people making up 98% of those loans approved; and

WHEREAS, over 37% of subsidized housing in Erie County is occupied by persons of color, who represent just 16% of the demographic population; and

WHEREAS, persons of color in Erie County represent nearly 20% of all rental units, while only representing 5% of all home ownership; and

WELL-PAYING JOBS & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

WHEREAS, in Erie County, Black people are disproportionately represented in low-wage occupations such as healthcare support and custodial services compared to White people who disproportionately represent higher-wage occupations like management and healthcare practice; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the median income for family households is $63,235 for White residents compared to $28,814 for the Black population; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, the median income for nonfamily households is $28,349 for White residents compared to $16,585 for the Black population; and

WHEREAS, remaining virtually unchanged since before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the average wealth of White households is more than six times the average wealth of Black households; and

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Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County, Pennsylvania

WHEREAS, over a third (38.6%) of Erie County's Black residents are living below the poverty level, compared to approximately 14.1% of White residents; and

WHEREAS, even in stable economic years, Black unemployment in Erie County is twice as high as White unemployment; and

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

WHEREAS, in Pennsylvania, Black students face a dropout rate over 3% as compared to their White peers (1%); and

WHEREAS, Black students in the Erie City school district had a 66.5% graduation rate in 2019 as compared to 79.8% for White students; and

WHEREAS, in Erie County, approximately 81% of Black people possess a high school diploma, compared to 93% of White people; and

WHEREAS, nearly a third (27.8%) of White residents in Erie County have a bachelor's degree or higher education, compared to only 13.8% of Black residents; and

WHEREAS, Black residents in Erie County are twice as likely to not have home internet access, and are almost three times as likely to have no computer in their household as compared to White residents; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the County Council of Erie County, Pennsylvania:

SECTION 1. That the Erie County Council and Erie County Executive hereby declare racism to be a public health crisis in Erie County.

SECTION 2. Erie County is committing its resources in all areas of its government and throughout all of its departments and divisions to openly and honestly address racism and to eliminate the disparity between Black and White people when it comes to healthcare, healthy food, safe and affordable housing, well-paying jobs and business ownership opportunities, quality transportation, educational opportunities, and safe places to be active.

SECTION 3. The Erie County Executive and Erie County Council will review, focus and provide recommendations to reduce the disparity between Black and White people when it comes to healthcare, healthy food, safe and affordable housing, well-paying jobs and business ownership opportunities, quality transportation, educational opportunities, and quality of living including the following areas with a status report no later than six months of adoption of Resolution:

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Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County, Pennsylvania

a) Any changes to county policies, procedures, procurement, structure of county government, and the Erie County Code;

b) Provide input to educate and train county employees on how their decision-making and work impact Black people;

c) Provide any recommendations to make changes to the county's recruitment and advancement of employees, governance, leadership, procurement policies, economic development, specific dedication of funds, and any other necessary changes needed through legislative action to eliminate racism in Erie County;

d) Provide recommendations on how the county can work with the Erie County Department of Health, and other community and interested partners, to prioritize and identify resources for data collection and reporting on racial disparities in health throughout Erie County;

e) Develop and advocate for a legislative agenda at the local, state and federal levels of government to help end racism and improve the public health crisis that currently exists for Black people;

f) The strategic plan's goals and objectives will be aligned with the County's annual budget process in order to oversee all monetary actions toward the design, monitoring and advancement of equitable strategies Countywide;

SECTION 4. It is necessary that this Resolution become immediately effective for the usual daily operation of the County; the preservation of public peace, health or safety in the county; and any additional reasons set forth in the preamble. Provided that this Resolution receives the affirmative vote of at least four members of County Council, it shall take effect and be enforced immediately upon the earliest occurrence of any of the following: (1) its approval by the County Executive through signature, (2) the expiration of the time during which it may be disapproved by the County Executive under Article II, Section 3(D)(1) of the Erie County Charter, or (3) its passage by at least four members of County Council after disapproval pursuant to the Erie County Charter. Otherwise, it shall take effect and be enforced from and after the earliest period allowed by law.

SECTION 5. It is found and determined that all formal actions of this Council relating to the adoption of this Resolution were adopted in an open meeting of the Council, and that all deliberations of this Council and of any of its committees that resulted in such formal action were in meetings open to the public, in compliance with all legal requirements, including 65 Pa. C.S.A. Section 701, et. seq.

RESOLUTION NUMBER 43 , 2020

Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Erie County, Pennsylvania

On the motion of _____, seconded by _____, this resolution was passed on this _____ day of _____, 2020 by a vote of _____ to _____.

APPROVED BY:

_____

André R. Horton, Chairman
Erie County Council

_____

Kathy Dahlkemper,
County Executive

Date:_____

ATTEST:

_____

Douglas R. Smith
County Clerk

Date:_____