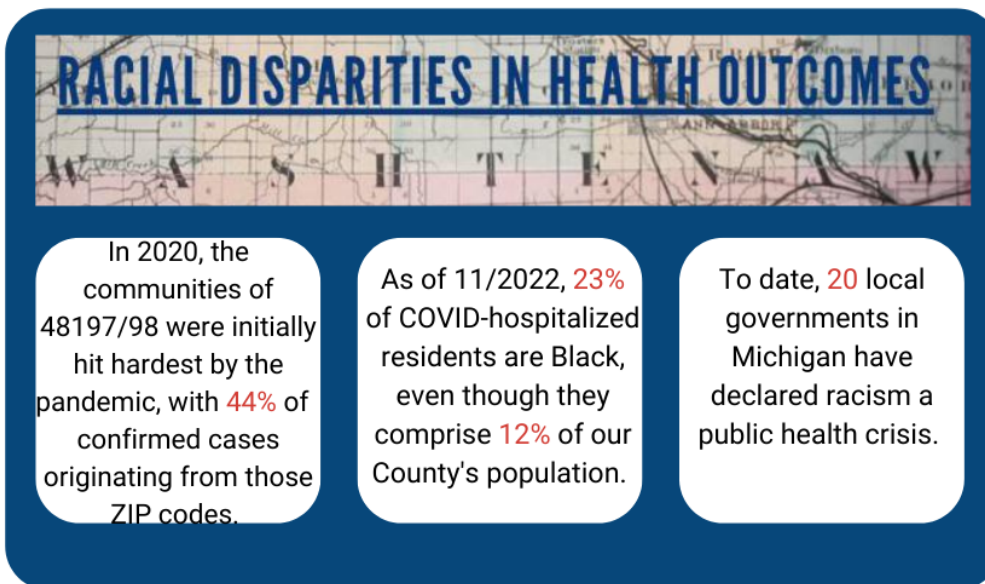


## DAY 8: Racism is a Public Health Crisis

*“Your ZIP code shouldn’t predict how long you live, but it does.”-- Dr. Robert Ross, President and CEO of the California Endowment*

On July 1, 2020, [the Washtenaw County Department of Health declared racism a public health crisis in our community](#). A declaration by the County’s Board of Commissioners followed. What does this mean? It confirms that racism-- not genetics, not culture, not health behaviors-- is the root cause of disparities that “harms, kills and prevents individuals and communities from living healthy lives,” and commits the Health Department to sharing power, decision-making and resources with community members and communities of color who are most impacted by existing health disparities.



According to the NY Times 1619 Project, “[racial health disparities are as foundational as democracy itself](#).” The negative and compounding impacts of socioeconomic status and institutional racism lead to [shorter life spans and higher likelihood of adverse health outcomes for people living in poverty and people of color](#). Importantly, a study published in the journal Nature illustrates that this is not a result of individual choices, but rather institutional racism. It found that [millions of Black people have been affected by racial bias in health-care algorithms used by many U.S. hospitals](#), resulting in Black people being less likely than white people who were equally sick being referred to programs.

Because healthcare costs typically make up a significant portion of a household’s annual budget, this places additional stress on families with low to moderate incomes (ALICE). And, just because you have healthcare does not guarantee that it is affordable or accessible.

**Share your reflections** on today’s topic on social media using the hashtag [#unitedforequity](#) or [#uwwcequitychallenge](#) and tag [@uwwashtenaw](#).

## Today's Challenge:

### Listen:

- [Listen to this podcast about how unconscious bias becomes dangerous in emergency medical situations](#) where providers are much more likely to default to making decisions based on stereotypes.
- Listen to this episode of Washtenaw United on WEMU, where [Dr. Roxane Raffin Chan shares practices for using holistic healing to cope with racism-related stress](#).
- [Hear the story of Henrietta Lacks](#), an African American woman whose cells have been used to test the effects of radiation and poisons and played a crucial role in the development of the polio vaccine. *Trigger warning: Viewers may experience strong emotions learning that while Ms. Lacks' cells have been the source of life-saving medical solutions, no consent was obtained to culture her cells, nor were she or her family compensated for their extraction or use.*

### Read:

- Check out this [Fact Sheet from the American Psychological Association](#) exploring the compounding impact of socioeconomic status and race on health.
- [Read this article to better understand COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among Black Americans](#), which points out that the Tuskegee experiment still looms large within the Black community.

### Watch:

- [Watch the Racial Roots of Vaccine Skepticism](#) – With Special Guests: Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II, Dr. Joneigh Khaldun- Chief Medical Executive and Chief Deputy Director for Health and Human Services.
- [Watch Dr. Nwando Olayiwola explain how the medical profession does harm to patients by perpetuating racism & committing place-ism](#), ignoring place & health connections.

### Act:

- **Today is [MLK Day](#). It is the only federal holiday designated as a national day of service** to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities. [Plan your "day on" by exploring ways to serve and learn through our virtual Volunteer Center](#).
- Journal, reflect and share:
  - Has a doctor ever dismissed your symptoms or made you feel as though it was "in your head"? How did it make you feel?
  - How have social determinants of health impacted your own quality of life or care?



**Discrimination?  
Injustice?  
Racial Inequities?**

**YES.**

**Click here to learn more  
and join the  
21-Day Equity  
Challenge: 2023 Edition**

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