

## Los Angeles County African American Infant and Maternal Mortality Prevention Initiative Steering Committee and Community Action Teams

July 2020

### JOINT STATEMENT OPPOSING THE KILLING OF BLACK INDIVIDUALS, RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We, who are engaged in the fight to prevent Black infant and maternal death know that this very epidemic of racism expressed in the killing of Black individuals at the hands of law enforcement and others has a multi-generational impact on Black people and our communities. Experiencing this complex trauma puts toxic stress on both pregnant mothers and their babies, which impacts the immune system, cognitive development, and overall health of mothers, babies, and the entire family unit. We know that the recurring trauma from seeing unarmed black people killed is detrimental to the mental health and wellness of the entire community, including pregnant Black women.

We, as members of the African American Infant and Maternal Mortality Prevention Initiative, stand in solidarity against the vicious and brutal scourge of racism in all of its forms, which has most recently resulted in the unjust killings of Black people: Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd.

As a coalition of community members, community-based organizations, funders, health care providers, public agencies and others united in addressing the injustice of inequitably high rates of Black infant and maternal deaths in Los Angeles County, this issue is our issue.

We are not only deeply saddened, we are weary of this centuries-long struggle and fight to convince our society what should be self-evident: that the killing of Black people and the devaluing of Black bodies that we witness day in and day out in various forms are egregiously unjust, inhumane, and cannot continue. This struggle includes racially charged false statements being made by individuals to weaponize the police against Black bodies, which dates back to the lynching of a 14-year-old African American, Emmett Till in 1955.

Black people deserve, like every other race, to give birth and parent without fear that he or she will be hurt or killed, especially by those who have taken a sworn oath to "Protect and Serve." Furthermore, freedom from this type of violence is our human right.

As we embrace the Black family, we are united in speaking out, in speaking up, and in taking action to ensure justice and healing. We are also united in the belief that not speaking out or taking action to stop further trauma caused by racism is tantamount to being complicit in these crimes.

#### THEREFORE:

*We acknowledge the pain and suffering that anti-Black racism has caused for centuries and continues to cause.*

*We speak out against racism in all of its forms.*

*We speak out against oppression.*

*We speak out against the recent killings of unarmed Black people, most recently Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd.*

*We stand in solidarity with those who pursue equity, justice, human dignity for all, and an end to racism in all systems.*

*We demand appropriate measures be taken to uphold our 14th amendment rights in the face of police brutality.*

*We demand tangible and punitive consequences for those who continue to aggressively target our community.*

*We commit to taking action to address racism, racist structures, and inequity in all of its forms.*

*We call upon all advocates, allies, holders of power, funders and system influencers to prioritize equity for Black individuals and families as well to ensure such efforts and investments are a part of their mission.*

Finally, we invite our colleagues, supporters, institutions, and collaborators to adopt these statements as their own and are appreciative of those who are already doing so. We also encourage all who believe racism is wrong to take healing actions, engage in self-reflection, change practices, policy and laws that reinforce racist structures and behavior. In so doing, we advance the important work of seeing change once and for all.

LA County Department of Public Health  
Los Angeles County African American Infant  
& Maternal Mortality Steering Committee

Antelope Valley African American Infant  
& Maternal Mortality Community Action Team

South LA/South Bay African American Infant & Maternal  
Mortality Community Action Team & Policy Workgroup

First 5 LA

Santa Clarita Valley/San Fernando Valley  
Community Action Team

San Gabriel Valley African American Infant  
& Maternal Mortality Community Action Team

Los Angeles County African American Infant  
& Maternal Mortality Doula Advisory Committee

**Black Infants & Families**  
**LOS ANGELES**

[BlackInfantsAndFamilies.org](http://BlackInfantsAndFamilies.org)