
HOUSE RESOLUTION

DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.

1 WHEREAS, the World Health Organization identifies the right
2 to health, defined as the enjoyment of the highest attainable
3 standard of health, as a fundamental human right, which must be
4 enjoyed without discrimination on the grounds of race, age,
5 ethnicity, or any other status; and
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7 WHEREAS, racism's influence on public health has been
8 recognized by the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease
9 Control and Prevention, Department of Health, Judiciary, Hawai'i
10 State Commission on the Status of Women, Papa Ola Lōkahi, 'Ahahui
11 o Nā Kauka, American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i, and many
12 others; and
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14 WHEREAS, Hawai'i's historical trauma caused by racism
15 demonstrates that it is not immune to nor void of the existence
16 and insidious ways in which racism operationalizes at
17 institutional, systemic, and personal levels; and
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19 WHEREAS, Native Hawaiians are the native people of Hawai'i
20 and maintained a once thriving population estimated to be over
21 one million inhabitants, whose land and resource management
22 practices allowed them to live harmoniously with their
23 environment; and
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25 WHEREAS, the arrival of westerners caused a shift in this
26 balance, resulting in colonization and the erosion and eventual
27 loss of Native Hawaiian governance over Hawai'i's lands and
28 resources; and
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30 WHEREAS, the decimation of the Native Hawaiian population,
31 the dispossession and disconnection of Native Hawaiians from
32 their lands, and the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom were
33 motivated by foreign colonial motives that resulted in further
34 historical injustices, systemic inequities, and subsequent



1 racist policies favoring foreign colonizers that continue to
2 impact the Native Hawaiian community; and

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4 WHEREAS, a series of epidemics from foreign diseases in
5 particular contributed significantly to the historic decline of
6 the Native Hawaiian population and the generational trauma that
7 Native Hawaiians are still healing from today; and

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9 WHEREAS, the trauma caused by colonizers exacerbated
10 historical injustices, perpetuated by western individuals and
11 interests, led to the oppression of Native Hawaiian culture and
12 people, the consequences of which Native Hawaiians continue to
13 experience today; and

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15 WHEREAS, the perpetuation of laws, policies, and political
16 structures that have arisen from, and the continued failure to
17 acknowledge and address, these historical injustices have
18 resulted in the continued oppression of Native Hawaiians as well
19 as other Pacific Islanders in Hawai'i; and

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21 WHEREAS, racism was the driving force of the unjust and
22 wrongful accusation, trial, and murder of Joseph Kahahawai, Jr.;
23 and

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25 WHEREAS, Hawai'i is the most multi-racial population in the
26 United States and yet Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders
27 experience the poorest health outcomes due to systemic racism;
28 and

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30 WHEREAS, Native Hawaiians continue to be overrepresented in
31 state prisons and jails, and recent data by the Office of
32 Hawaiian Education substantiates the school-to-prison pipeline
33 that disproportionately impacts Native Hawaiian youth; and

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35 WHEREAS, systemic racism is a social determinant of health,
36 with persistent racial disparities in criminal justice, housing,
37 education, health care, economic opportunities, and employment;
38 and

39
40 WHEREAS, racism manifests in distinct ways across other
41 social dimensions, including gender identity, sexual
42 orientation, socioeconomic class, disability, immigration



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1 status, and age, and collectively reinforces the racial
2 hierarchy throughout these intersections, which weakens the
3 strength of our entire humanity; and

4
5 WHEREAS, racism is a threat to public health and safety,
6 and is a paramount social determinant of health, shaping access
7 to the resources that create opportunities for health, including
8 public safety, housing, education, and employment, and is a
9 persistent barrier to health equity for all of Hawai'i; and

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11 WHEREAS, there is also a long line of strong, Hawai'i
12 matriarchal trailblazers--Queen Lili'uokalani, Princess Bernice
13 Pauahi Bishop, Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani, and the Honorable
14 Patsy Mink--who each stood for justice for all of Hawai'i and who
15 are upheld as role models and leaders we should strive to
16 emulate; and

17
18 WHEREAS, in recognition of the historical injustices and
19 ongoing inequities faced by Native Hawaiians, the Hawai'i State
20 Constitution and Hawai'i Revised Statutes memorializes provisions
21 that aim at restoring justice for Native Hawaiians; and

22
23 WHEREAS, section 226-20, Hawai'i Revised Statutes,
24 acknowledges the social determinants of health that influence
25 Native Hawaiian health, and expresses the State of Hawai'i's
26 commitment to reducing these health disparities for Native
27 Hawaiians and other groups through a social determinants of
28 health approach; and

29
30 WHEREAS, to best accomplish the Hawai'i State Planning Act's
31 objective of the "elimination of health disparities by
32 identifying and addressing social determinants of health",
33 institutionalized racism and racist policies must be dismantled;
34 and

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36 WHEREAS, the recent COVID-19 pandemic reopened the wound of
37 Hawai'i's historically shared trauma founded on racism and
38 discrimination, like the forced relocation of those with leprosy
39 to Kalaupapa; and



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1 WHEREAS, the recovery and resilience of the Native
2 Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and indigenous communities are
3 dependent on our collective efforts to not only recognize the
4 need for equity and justice, but to also acknowledge the effect
5 of racism; now, therefore,
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7 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
8 Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawai'i, Regular Session
9 of 2021, that this body declares racism as a public health
10 crisis; and
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12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body recognizes the
13 importance of educational opportunities, training, and continued
14 learning aimed at understanding and addressing systemic racism,
15 and of the need for our collective effort to dismantle all forms
16 of racism at all levels and its impacts on the delivery and
17 implementation of human and social services, economic
18 development, health care, and public safety; and
19

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body recognizes the need
21 to adopt a Hawai'i-based, culturally-based, health justice
22 framework that will further combat the continuation of racism
23 with policymaking while also promoting racial equity; and
24

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body urges the Governor to
26 also declare racism a public health crisis and direct the
27 departments to assess how systemic racism exists in the
28 departments' policies, programs, and services, and to take all
29 steps necessary to address racism in promoting racial equity;
30 and
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32 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
33 Resolution be transmitted to the Governor and directors or
34 chairs of all departments.
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OFFERED BY:

Alan A. Uschitt

MAR 11 2021

