

## **Commitment to Anti-Racism and Equity**

The CDC reports that Blacks are overrepresented in COVID-19 hospitalizations; 33% of hospitalized patients were Black even though only 18% of the particular community was Black.

February 23, 2020: *Ahmaud Arbery* was hunted down and shot to death while jogging in Georgia.

March 13, 2020: *Breonna Taylor* was shot to death in her Louisville, KY home by police with a no-knock warrant.

March 25, 2020: *George Floyd* died of asphyxiation after a police officer kneeled on his neck for almost 9 minutes

May 26, 2020: *Christian Cooper*, an avid birdwatcher, was threatened with potential deadly police force by a white woman.

May 27, 2020: *Tony McDade* was fatally shot by an officer of the Tallahassee, FL police force.

March 30, 2020: *Daniel Prude*, experienced a mental health episode. Police restraint led to asphyxiation. A week later, Prude was disconnected from life support.

August 23, 2020: *Jacob Blake* became paralyzed after being shot seven times in the back by a police officer in Kenosha, Wisconsin while three of Blake's sons were in the backseat.

### **Black Lives Matter**

Racism is a longstanding public health issue. Racism, not race, accounts for the health disparities we have witnessed across the centuries. We are heartbroken and angry about the ongoing systemic racism and blatant disregard that burdens Communities of Color – especially the Black community. The recent painful events build upon centuries of abuses and have heightened our awareness of savage inequalities and atrocities of white supremacy that challenge and prematurely end the lives of Black Americans via disease, murder, or the daily depletion and fatigue inflicted by micro-aggressions. The injustice must end and fairness and equity must prevail.

The UTK Department of Public Health is committed to contributing to solutions through education, research, and professional development opportunities. We appreciate that we function in the haze of intrinsic bias and are prepared to self-examine and promote anti-racist actions. We understand that silence is complacency. This commitment is and will continue to be an ongoing process that requires much intention, fostering, and prioritization. Only personal reflection, action, and policy reform – both formal and informal – will promote healing and justice for all -- particularly the Black community.