

“How Racism Makes Us Sick”

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzyjDR_AWzE [May 2, 2017 (17 mins)]

David R Williams, Ph.D., is a Professor of Public Health at Harvard and of African and African American Studies and Sociology “developed a scale to measure the impact of discrimination on well-being, going beyond traditional measures like income and education to reveal how factors like implicit bias, residential segregation and negative stereotypes create and sustain inequality” (from YouTube description).

Clyde Murphy, a Graduate of Yale and a top Civil Rights lawyer dies of a blood clot; like his Black peers in his 1970 law school class, Mr. Murphy was three times as likely to die young—regardless of income and education. “Every seven minutes, a Black person dies prematurely in the United States,” reports Dr. Williams. At every level of education, whites regardless of education live longer than Blacks; “whites with only a high school degree live longer than Blacks with a college degree.” Dr. Williams set out to over the last 25 years to understand why. What beyond education and income affects health? Racism, otherwise understood as, “Ways in which the dignity and the respect of people who society does not value is chipped away on a daily basis. Research has found that higher levels of discrimination are associated with an elevated risk of a broad range of diseases from blood pressure to abdominal obesity to breast cancer to heart disease and even premature mortality.” Dr. Williams describes the unconscious bias in health care that further harms Blacks already harmed through the discrimination of daily living. A study of 171 cities concluded that there was not one city in which whites lived under the conditions that Blacks endured. A 40-year (static) statistic: Black households earn 60 cents for every dollar whites earn; Latinos receive 72 cents.

Finally, Dr. Williams points out that we can all be part of the ripples of hope in the fight against oppression: Affirmative Action and eliminating segregation would go far to reducing the health and economic disparities. Specific programs are highlighted that are part of the ripples of hope in the fight against oppression—a dozen programs nation-wide are named. We can and must turn racial justice passion into action.

Additional Resources:

“The Color of Health: The Devastating Toll of Racism on Black Lives” published by Common Ground is an excellent primer: [37712-common-ground-health-book-reader-spreads-fix.pdf](https://www.common-ground-health.com/37712-common-ground-health-book-reader-spreads-fix.pdf) ([cmsmax.com](https://www.cmsmax.com))

COVID-19 and Health Equity—A New Kind of “Herd Immunity” David R. Williams, PhD, MPH; Lisa A. Cooper, MD, MPH www.chausa.org/docs/default-source/diversity-and-disparities/jama_williams_herd-immunity.pdf?sfvrsn=2

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/magazine/black-mothers-babies-death-maternal-mortality.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/11/17/opinion/maternal-pregnancy-health.html>

[racial-disparities-COVID19_V5_April-July-2020.pdf](https://www.childrensinstitute.net/racial-disparities-COVID19_V5_April-July-2020.pdf) ([childrensinstitute.net](https://www.childrensinstitute.net))