



A Statement from the Society for Health Communication on Anti-Black Racism in America

The broad mandate of health communication is to engage, empower, serve, and improve health for all — but particularly those in greatest need. As an organization, we seek to harness the immense power of language to fulfill this purpose. Too often, we use terms such as “hard to reach” or “marginalized” when talking about Black communities. This language masks the reality that Black people are dying from violence, neglect, stress, racism, and general health threats that are the legacy of slavery. It also masks the white supremacy in this country and how resulting state-sanctioned violence, inflicted on black and brown bodies by white people in power, has gone unchecked for centuries.

Words matter, and we are inspired by the courage of those using their words and their actions to advocate for change to make us a more just and equitable society. We commit to being direct and purposeful in our communication so that our message is clear. The systemic and individual racism born out of white supremacy and kept alive by white privilege must be called out by name. **Black Lives Matter**. We will use our expertise as health communicators to help dismantle racism and improve the health and wellbeing of Black people.

A critical part of communication is listening. The Society pledges to be an active listener so that, when we speak, we amplify the voices and achievements of Black people. We pledge to continue our efforts to prioritize racial equity in our work — and to increase the diversity of our membership and Society leadership. We acknowledge that we have more work to do to be a truly equitable, anti-racist organization, and this moment calls us to do it.

In solidarity,
The Society for Health Communication Steering Committee