

## Racism as Health Crisis?

August 7, 2020

How can you tell when people really care?

It is *not* when they mouth the right platitudes.

Or advance a carefully crafted political agenda.

What counts more?  
Something practical.

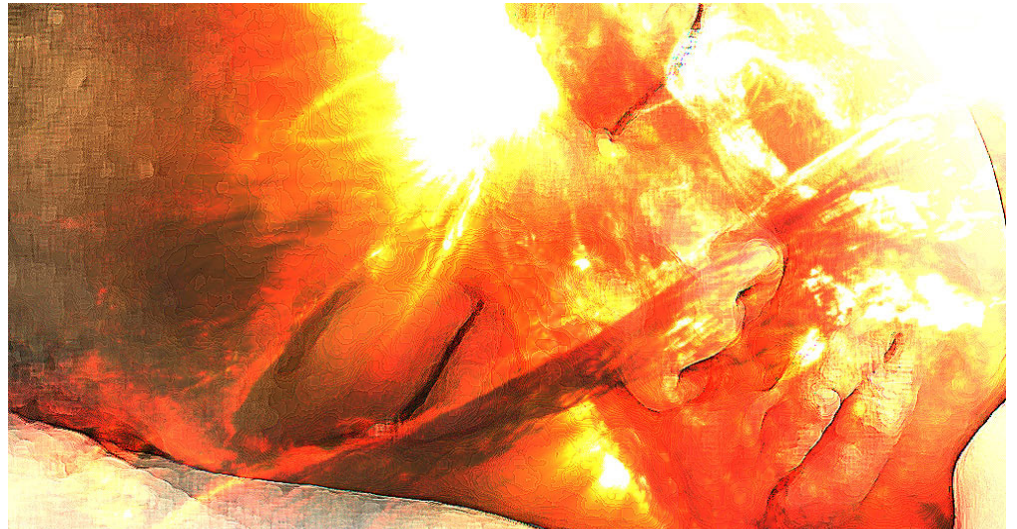
Michigan's Governor Gretchen Whitmer cracked down further with COVID-related health care mitigation efforts this week. One stands out: on Wednesday she "declared racism a public health crisis, ordered implicit bias training for all state employees, and," reports Paul Egan of the *Detroit Free Press*, "created a state advisory council to focus on issues affecting Black people in Michigan."

"We have a lot of work to do to eliminate the systemic racism that Black Americans have experienced for generations," the governor said.

Whitmer noted that black Michiganders are four times more likely to die from COVID-19

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than white Michiganders — because, well, you probably do not need to read deeply into her communiqués or watch *USA Today's* helpful video. The arguments are familiar.



And not completely without merit.

But notice what she did *not* say.

She did not advise darker-skinned people to take Vitamin D supplements and go outside and soak in more rays than they might, otherwise.

Vitamin D deficiency has been repeatedly linked as a co-factor for the development of severe COVID-19.

*Race*, not racism, may be what's most relevant. Or, as the president might say, "it is what it is": white skin more efficiently absorbs solar radiation to produce Vitamin D than higher-melanin skin, an adaptation for northern climes where solar radiation is less intense than in the tropics.\*

While this is certainly not the only factor in susceptibility to the virus's worst effects, and it is still unproven — a word to the wise.

*From* the caring.

*Not* the politicians.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

\* "According to a CDC study published in 2006," offered the Arizona Republic, "21% of non-Hispanic white people are at risk of having inadequate levels of vitamin D, versus 73% of Black people and 42% of Hispanic people."