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MARY ANN SWETLAND
CENTER FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The Swetland Scoop

July 2020

News & Announcements

A Note From Our Director

Swetland Partners and Friends,

Years ago I read an article about the invisibility of racism to those who benefit from it. The article compared three different kinds of swimming:

1. Riding a wave, gently moving your hands and legs, and sailing into the shore with great force – because of the wave, of course.
2. Swimming against the current. Vigorously kicking. Moving forward a few feet before the current pushes you back almost to where you started.
3. Swimming into a fire hose. As hard as you try, as much as you kick and flutter, you barely move.

These visualize the reality known by so many. The fact that the current is set up such that movement is nearly impossible. Those of us riding the wave of white

Cultural tides shift because of forces that abruptly transition our paths into a new direction. In policy speak, this is often referred to as a “window of opportunity” when the impossible seems possible. Declaring racism a public health crisis, formally honoring the Juneteenth holiday, a virtual “Day of Dialogue” to unpack the role we as a university play in structures of racism, and organized protests across the US for the rights and dignity of Black lives are examples of efforts to seize this moment for change.

Yet, we know this work will require a deeper look within ourselves, our organizations, and our communities to examine how we contribute to oppressive structures while also committing ourselves to the hard work needed to dismantle systems of racism. At the Swetland Center, we pledge to take an in-depth inward look at how we are complicit with racist practices and policies. At the same time, we are seeking opportunities to engage across CWRU and with our community partners on combined initiatives aimed as system-level change.

These times are not easy. A reality known by so many of our Black and Brown students, colleagues, and partners for far too long. The vision of the Swetland Center to leverage diverse skills and experiences through transformative research, training and community engagement in order to achieve environmental health equity is more important than ever. We look forward to working with you to bring this vision to life.

In solidarity and justice,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darcy Freedman".

Darcy Freedman, PhD, MPH

Research Report on Racial Disparities and Lead Poisoning

*Downstream Consequences of Childhood Lead Poisoning:
A Longitudinal Study of Cleveland Children
from Birth to Early Adulthood*

Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development analyzes over 10,000 Cleveland children over the course of 20 years, to track the consequences of lead exposure from birth through early adulthood. The study analyzes children's blood-lead levels and links youth with elevated blood lead levels with numerous negative outcomes in education, behavior and health. Swetland Faculty Affiliate Claudia Coulton states "It's clear; lead poisoning in early childhood can altogether shift the trajectory of a person's life at key stages of development and leave lasting long-term consequences." A key finding from the study is that Black students were disproportionately affected with lead poisoning compared to their white counterparts, and lead exposure is concentrated in areas of dis-invested neighborhoods—areas historically tied to segregation, redlining and subprime lending. Co-author Robert Fischer, PhD explains, "Documenting the downstream consequences of lead poisoning can help society acknowledge and appreciate the costs of inaction—and to target resources where they are most needed." Read the full research report [here](#).

**Colleen Walsh, PhD Published in Journal of
Public Health Management and Practice:**

***Learning to See Racism: Perspective Transformation Among
Stakeholders in a Regional Health and Equity Initiative***

Swetland Faculty Affiliate and Assistant Professor at Cleveland State University, Colleen Walsh, PhD, recently published an Op-Ed in the Journal of Public Health Management and Practice titled 'Learning to See Racism: Perspective Transformation Among Stakeholders in a Regional Health and Equity Initiative.' As our country becomes increasingly aware of the deeply rooted systemic racism that is and has been occurring in the U.S. for over 400 years, this paper explores the health inequities between racial and ethnic groups, diving deeper into a means of bridging the gap. While policy and programmatic changes must continue to begin closing the gaps of inequality, these actions alone are not sufficient and an "perspective transformation" around systematic

with Dr. Walsh and support her work to identify catalysts and the effects of perspective transformation among health equity stakeholders!

Be sure to keep up with Swetland news through our online [News & Events](#) page!

Events & Opportunities

Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition Virtual Convening

July 31st | 11:00 – 1:00 pm

In January 2019, Mayor Frank Jackson, Cleveland City Council and local organizations announced a partnership to create the [Lead Safe Cleveland](#) Coalition and host the Cleveland Lead Safe Summit. Lead Safe Cleveland elevates work that is already being done in Cleveland communities and brings together local partners and experts to "dissolve operational silos and collaboratively tackle lead poisoning" in Cleveland. If you are interested in learning more, getting involved, promoting your work, or have questions, please email info@leadsafecle.org. The virtual convening hosted on July 31st, 2020 will be available on the Zoom platform and all are welcome.

July Seminar: Understanding Food Systems from a Life Cycle Perspective

July 28th | 9:00 – 10:00 AM

Learn more about the environmental impacts associated with crop production in the U.S. Midwest, as well as respiratory effects associated with residential proximity to bio-refineries in New York State. Access this event via Zoom by following this link. This seminar is hosted by the Swetland Center and presented by Eun Kyung Lee, PhD, Swetland Center for Environmental Health.

Helpful Resources

Local News Source: The Land

The Land is a local news startup that began reporting in May 2020. This is a great resource for current Cleveland and inner ring suburb neighborhood news stories. They deliver "in-depth stories that foster accountability, inform the community, and inspire people to take action." To sign up for The Land's weekly newsletter including a round up of local news, go [here](#).

Support: Local Black Organizations Fighting Systematic Racism

As more communities, organizations, and individuals are acknowledging the impacts of systematic racism, we would like to highlight some organizations who have been fighting racism in our communities for years. Below are a few organizations that work to fight racism and support equality in Cleveland. This list has been adapted from the [Cleveland Scene Magazines](#) list of black organizations in Cleveland who are fighting racism in healthcare, housing, education, and the arts:

- [**Birthing Beautiful Communities**](#) - This local organization works to address and improve the systematic and community structures that lead to poor birth outcomes by providing free neighborhood based services in childbirth, parenting education workshops, perinatal support training, postpartum health, and family planning.
- [**Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition**](#) - The Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition seeks to build health equity among the African American population in NE Ohio by addressing and fighting disparities in education, employment, housing, social determinants of health, and more recently, the impact of COVID-19 on the black community.
- [**Ohio Gap Closers**](#) - By working with parents, custodial caregivers, social workers, teachers, public and private agencies, Ohio Gap Closers mission is to purposely improve the academic achievements of youth living in foster care.
- [**United Black Fund of Greater Cleveland**](#) - Since 1981, the United Black Fund of Greater Cleveland has provided local, grassroots service

Have an opportunity you'd like us to feature in our next newsletter?

We are accepting content submissions! You can find the submission form [here](#).

Swetland Spotlight

Community Partner Marilyn Burns Sets Goal to Collect 1,000 Masks

Longtime community researcher at Case Western and partner of the Swetland Center, Marilyn Burns recognized that some Cleveland community members did not have the resources to properly protect

themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic. She has stepped up for those Cleveland residents by starting a cloth mask drive to provide those who do not have the resources to buy or make a mask with adequate personal protective gear, with a goal of collecting 1,000 masks to donate. Please consider donating a mask or funds today! For more information or to schedule a drop-off, email Marylin at marilyn.burns85@yahoo.com or send a donation through Cash App (username: babycant123).



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