Grand Challenges for Social Work Announces
Grand Challenge to Eliminate Racism

--Effort led by two national leaders to focus
on transformative research, action and policy efforts--

June 26, 2020 (Baltimore, MD) – In a moment when the nation and the world's attention is focused on racial injustice and ending systemic violence and oppression against Black people, the Grand Challenges for Social Work is proud to announce the *Grand Challenge to Eliminate Racism*.

The network supporting this Grand Challenge effort will be led by two-co-chairs: Martell Teasley, PhD, MSW, Dean of College of Social Work at the University of Utah, and president of the National Association of Deans and Directors of Schools of Social Work; and Michael S. Spencer, PhD, MSSW, University of Washington (UW) Presidential Term Professor in Social Work and the Director of Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Oceanic Affairs at the UW Indigenous Wellness Research Institute.

"The United States is built on a legacy of racism and white supremacy that has consistently and significantly impacted the daily lives of millions of people," says Dr. Teasley, noting that racist policies, bias, and discriminatory practices continue to promote racial inequality in myriad ways. "The Grand Challenge network will focus on promoting culturally-grounded upstream interventions and prevention efforts that eradicate these disadvantages."

"Social work has been on the forefront of anti-racism in higher education, but we can and should do more," says Dr. Spencer. "This Grand Challenge calls for social work and society to promote innovative ways of preventing or interrupting racism and to continue providing evidence of effectiveness. We must abolish racism within our profession through our research teaching, and work with communities. This challenge is core to social justice."

Racism is inextricably linked to all of the Grand Challenges for Social Work, first announced in 2016. The Grand Challenges had previously developed a statement of "Vision, Mission, Domain, Guiding Principles, and Guideposts to Action," that clarified that "the commitment to ending racism and other injustices is fundamental throughout the Grand Challenges." Yet this statement was not strong or specific enough to express our commitment to eliminate the scourge of historic and structural racism. We expect that these principles will be further operationalized with the innovative research and interventions that will be developed and accelerated under the leadership of this new Grand Challenge network.

"The Grand Challenge to Eliminate Racism underscores the importance of racism in all of our Grand Challenges and builds on the values embodied in the aspiration of the Grand Challenges to achieve broad goals including the achievement of individual and family well-being, a stronger social fabric, and a just

society," says Richard Barth, PhD, Chair of the Executive Committee of the Grand Challenges initiative. "This Grand Challenge will be a centerpiece of the Grand Challenges effort going forward, as we build on five years of progress along so many grand challenge fronts."

Plans for the Grand Challenge to Eliminate Racism include:

- Promoting evidence- and practice-based research that cultivates improvements in the daily lives of people affected by racism, facilitating systemic change on the individual, organizational, community, and societal levels;
- Advancing community empowerment and advocacy to address and eradicate racism and white supremacy;
- Foster the development of an anti-racist social work workforce that promotes access to resources and opportunities and encompasses transdisciplinary collaboration;
- Promote teaching and learning within social work education programs that examines structural inequalities and white privilege, and their impact on individual and group outcomes; and
- Develop a policy agenda for eradicating racism and white supremacy from institutions and organizations, where structural racism is evident and causes the most damage.

A book on the Grand Challenge to Eliminate Racism—edited by Teasley and Spencer and including authors from each of 12 the Grand Challenge networks—is already in progress with Oxford University Press and should be ready for release later in the year or early 2021.

For more information about the Grand Challenge to Eliminate Racism or to join the burgeoning network, please contact: GCSocialWork@ssw.umaryland.edu.

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About the Grand Challenges for Social Work
Initiated by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, the Grand Challenges for Social Work (GCSW) is a groundbreaking initiative to champion social progress powered by science. It's a call to action for all of us to work together to tackle our nation's toughest social problems. The 13 Challenges are:

Individual and family well-being
- Ensure healthy development for all youth
- Close the health gap
- Build healthy relationships to end violence
- Advance long and productive lives

Stronger social fabric
- Eradicate social isolation
- End homelessness
- Create social responses to a changing environment
- Harness technology for social good

Just society
- Eliminate racism
- Promote smart decarceration
- Build financial capability for all
- Reduce extreme economic inequality
- Achieve equal opportunity and justice

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For a complete description of the initiative and its accomplishments, please see our web site at: https://grandchallengesforsocialwork.org/.

Read or sign up for UP!, the Grand Challenges newsletter at: https://grandchallengesforsocialwork.org/resources-landing/newsletter/

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