



## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

### **BLACK LADIES IN PUBLIC HEALTH MEMORIALIZE BLACK LIVES LOST TO COVID-19** ***United Memories Website Gives Visual Voice to the Black Community*** ***Disproportionately Affected by COVID-19***

Arlington, TX (July 14, 2020): More than 138,000 deaths are attributed to the novel coronavirus in the United States. Blacks in America are disproportionately affected by this disease and five times more likely to have hospitalizations or death due to COVID-19. Through this crisis has come the great epiphany that Black people are dying at the highest rate from underlying issues that are exacerbated by the virus. Black Ladies in Public Health (BLiPH) has launched the United Memories (UM) website to bring the names, faces and stories of the diverse community of Black people who have lost their lives to COVID-19 in the United States to the forefront. Their lives must not be forgotten among the systemic racial disparity of disease amidst this global pandemic.

The COVID-19 experience is steeped in the unknown and tackled in isolation. When someone dies from complications of the virus, families often cope without the comfort of human contact and physical proximity. Founder of BLiPH, Jasmine Ward, Ph.D., is a leader in the push for public health initiatives centered on equity and justice. She recognized the urgent need for an innovative way to gather, grieve, and honor these black lives that matter in this era of quarantine and physical distance. In collaboration with dynamic Black women from across the country who also serve as leaders in public health, she set to action creating a safe virtual space to memorialize Black victims of COVID-19.

Like the Wall of Names in Paris, France, or the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., UM serves to represent the diverse communities of Black people who fell victim to this deadly disease. UM serves to intentionally build a space for family and friends to share the memories of their loved ones, uplift the community, and identify resources to assist in the grieving process. UM aims to elevate our culture, voices, stories, and experiences so they live in perpetuity as a testimony and testament to our ancestors, foremothers, and forefathers.

United Memories exists as a memorial to the Black lives lost. It brings people together to share our public reverence of those who have transitioned. It is dedicated to real people who are the hearts and souls behind the numbers of real Black lives lost. UM offer this space, the art, stories, and support as a cultural libation poured into this world, as a ritual of honor, recognition, and remembrance.



## PRESS RELEASE, CONT'D

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Dr. Ward shares, “Art is an expression of love. We purposefully use a visual format to express our grief, healing, and memories of our loved ones in a creative way through an online platform.” The UM website allows for sharing of pictures and stories of those lost to COVID-19. The submission of related, visual art, music, and poetry is encouraged. To learn more about United Memories or to submit information about an honoree, share artwork, or resources to support this grief process, please visit the website at [unitedmemories.com](http://unitedmemories.com).

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**About Black Ladies in Public Health** Black Ladies in Public Health (BLiPH) is a network and resource for advancing public health careers and outcomes for Black Women and the communities they serve. BLiPH has connected more than 14,000 students and professionals engaged in and leading initiatives for health equity. They contribute to the scholarship and service within the field, prioritize social justice, encourage self-care, and provide safe spaces and support to one another. Embracing the intersectional identity of being Black and women, they leverage their collective education, expertise, and experiences as the trusted voice for health equity and public health advancement. For more information about BLiPH, visit the website at <https://bliph.org/>.

**About United Memories** United Memories is a digital memorial of reverence dedicated to the Black community going through and looking back on COVID-19 pandemic. Along with the founder and CEO of Black Ladies in Public Health, Dr. Jasmine Ward, Black women in public health invest their talents, time, and treasures to organize and mobilize the community in an effort to memorialize and pay tribute to Black individuals who have lost their lives to COVID-19. To honor or recognize a loved one or to share your artwork, visit <http://www.unitedmemories.com>.