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**Statement by Dr. Gail C. Christopher, Executive Director, National Collaborative for Health Equity**

**NATIONAL DAY OF RACIAL HEALING CELEBRATES THE VOICES IN AMERICA CALLING FOR UNITY AND PEACE**

**Dr. Christopher's Complete Video Message is [HERE](#)**

WASHINGTON – “The National Collaborative for Health Equity has a vision and a mission to eliminate health inequities and to help create conditions that will allow all people to experience optimal health and well-being. But we know that the biggest barrier to achieving that mission is racism. And so, as part of our work, we are helping this country to overcome racism and its harmful legacy. Today is the 6th annual National Day of Racial Healing. Why focus a day on racial healing? Because we need to lift up the voices for unity, for peace, for engaging communities in the process of learning how to see ourselves in the face of the perceived other. America was built on a fallacy, on a hierarchy of human value. In the early centuries of this country that belief system was enacted through the decimation and the taking of the lands of indigenous people, the forced enslavement of African people, immigration policies that were based on that racial hierarchy.

“This notion of racism is built into the systems and structures of our society. And to a large measure, we're in denial about that as a root cause and a root threat to the very viability of our democracy. Now, if you turn on the news these days, you'll hear whispers about the possibility of a civil war. You'll also hear about surveys that say that a large number of people think that political violence is okay.

“I want us to recognize that we have the power to quiet those voices. We have the power to come together as a society and actualize the core tenets of our democracy. All people were created equal and all people should have an equal right to life, liberty and the pursuit of

happiness. But that will only happen when all people, and certainly the majority of people, actually commit to that as our primary work. And that's what the National Day of Racial Healing is about. It's about paying attention to the unfinished business of creating an equitable society. It's about working to eliminate the permission to devalue some people and value others based on superficial characteristics. And it's about creating structures of opportunity and putting in place practices that understand the complexity of that work.

“We created the National Day of Racial Healing to fall every year one day after we celebrate the Martin Luther King Jr holiday. Why is that? Because it's a day that we set aside to pay attention to the reasons Dr. King both lived and died to help us as a country believe that we could create the Beloved Community. And, the Beloved Community is built on valuing all people equally.

“I'm excited that our national partners are also committed to this work. Over 300 organizations are supporting the call for the creation of a National Commission on Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT). Many communities are implementing a version of the TRHT process. I define racial healing as our individual and collective efforts to eliminate the belief in the false hierarchy of human value. And most importantly, to replace that belief with a reverence and respect and regard for our interconnectedness and learning how to see ourselves in the face of the other or the perceived other. That's learning how to be empathetic, how to be compassionate and how to translate that empathy and compassion into standing up for justice in this country and for fair and equitable opportunities.

“Voices are calling for unity and peace, calling for embracing our full humanity as a society, the full humanity of all of us. And we know that we must do this for ourselves and for future generations. Our democracy depends on our collective effort to heal and to transform. I hope this National Day of Racial Healing is an important day for you because you recognize the primacy of this work.”

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(To schedule an interview with Dr. Christopher, please contact Michael K. Frisby  
202-625-4328/mike@frisbyassociates.com.)

### **About NCHE**

Founded in 2014, NCHE established to promote health equity through action, leadership, inclusion and collaboration. We work to create environments that foster the best possible health outcomes for all populations, regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or nativity. NCHE also works to improve conditions for health and well-being, including those related to housing, education, income and wealth and the physical and social environment. Further, it is imperative that we address historic and contemporary structural, institutional and interpersonal racism, which fuels inequities in our society.