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PRESS RELEASE

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The Black Psychiatrists of America (BPA) condemns all acts of racism and police brutality, especially those that lead to the systemic oppression and murder of countless Black people who are not given the opportunity for true justice in this country. Today, there are two life-threatening pandemics occurring in America at this time, COVID-19 and racism. One, preceded the other but, both are killing Black people at alarming and disproportionate rates.

The Black Psychiatrists of America believes that a change is long overdue and must come sooner rather than later. Being Black in America should not be hazardous to your health. It is time that our country addresses these inequalities and hold these police officers (and any other citizen) accountable for the repeated hate crimes towards Black Americans. The time has come to hear what the many peaceful protests attempted to tell this country, "Black Lives Matter." Our lives depend on this if we are to reduce the impact of depression, suicide, anxiety, and PTSD level trauma resulting from the constant reality that one's life is considered less valuable. And we understand, better than most the long-lasting impact of continued individual and community trauma based on the government sponsored domestic terrorism being repeatedly unleashed on all communities of color, but especially Black Americans.

We believe the following actions should be taken immediately:

- Declare racism a public health problem and establish national goals for addressing this as a health equity issue. Give priority to addressing the issues of health care disparities including the mental health needs of historically marginalized communities across the US.
- Provide adequate funding for the clinical care, training, and research needed to eliminate health disparities and require racism impact statements for all government funded services and research.
- Establish a governmental multidisciplinary and ethnically diverse commission with representatives from the major health care professional associations in medicine, nursing, psychiatry, public health, psychology, social work, etc., and the faith-based community to provide recommendations to Congress regarding policies on how best to improve the health and well-being of our nation's Black citizens.

- Declare “Civic Mental Health” a national priority and incorporate it into the educational curriculum from K- college, as well as in the training of local, state and national officials, law enforcement, and the criminal justice system.
- Establish police community review boards with power to take action in areas of police misconduct pending formal review by the appropriate authorities. This will offer a level of empowerment when communities feel they have a voice that can be heard.
- Assure adequate insurance coverage for mental disorders and emotional distress that are the outgrowth of racism, police brutality, discrimination of all kinds and violence.

Fifty-one years ago, the Black Psychiatrists of America was founded in response to the failed response from the European model psychiatric system in America, to fight against racism, marginalization and other forms of racial discrimination against Black people. We will continue to fight for an end to these acts of racism that threaten the health of our community and all other areas of life for Blacks in America.