

Dear Assembly Friends,

As most of you know, the MUR Committee of our organization and Assembly is charged with " **advocating for minority mental health issues, etc.**" Our nation faces a plethora of painful crises in minority communities, including the Asian-American, LatinX, LGBTQ, Jewish, Native American, Muslim, immigrant and women's communities. While we intend to address all these important MUR issues this year, recent events compel us to address now the longstanding issue of violence and unequal treatment directed against our Black community .

Systemic racism and its lethal guardians in this country have always had annihilatory control over the lives and souls of Black Americans. We know that because we have observed that in full view for the 25-100 years we have been living in the United States. If that is not a topic to be addressed by this organization and most particularly by its minority committee, then we are losing the battle for the soul of our work as mediators of health.

Our Black psychiatry colleagues at the APA have faced living with racism, excessive force and murders by law enforcement, profiling, gun violence, correctional and judicial system injustice, increased maternal and infant mortality, widespread health disparities including with COVID and on and on and at some point have become "symptomatic" with rage, hopelessness, daily fear, exhaustion, leading finally at times to pure sorrow and weeping. The level of stress on Black Americans at this time is beyond comprehension to us. To consider this social scourge outside of the purview of our practice of psychiatry would be a grave mistake.

As non-Black members of the Assembly , we will never be fully able to understand what our Black colleagues have always lived with. But we should all care deeply about this problem so we ask: How far can we go to make use of our power and privilege to make lasting change instead of just experiencing transient concern?

When I spoke with Black members, they have shared **three ways** in which we can be of help to make lasting change.

The **first** way is that if we hope to be clear and present allies for them, we can learn to avoid our own problematic behaviors and statements with regard to race. To that end, here is a link to an excellent scaffolded reference sheet created by Black community members that will enlighten us. As Assembly representatives, we can also work with our own District Branches and Area Councils to encourage them to provide programming on these topics.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PrAq4iBNb4nVicTsLcNIW8zjaQXBLkWayL8EaPlh0bc/mobilebasic>

The **second** way is that we need to examine the actions of our own community of members and employees at the APA before we are quick to judge our society. In the words of one member :

"I think it is important that work is done to ensure that our Black members are supported. This includes making us aware that our non-Black members are genuinely concerned for our well being. The reality is that as Black psychiatrists we are processing through this re-experienced trauma while continuing to show up to work every single day to do what we were trained and love to do. We watch the news, have difficult conversations with our children, cry, deal with the racial tensions in our day-to-day (not just the past week) then take a shower and get back to work as a psychiatrist -- sitting with and containing all of our patients' trauma (related or unrelated). It's exhausting. There should be a call to action for the APA and its leadership to recognize this difficulty/hardship for members of our own community. There

should be a call to action for all Assembly members to champion the needs of black psychiatrists and our communities and a restatement of the Assembly's commitment to make racial and health equity priorities within our own organization. The APA is not immune to any of the racial issues that play out in our country. As an organization we still have a lot work to do. "

If our psychiatric organization is strong in fabric, it should be a place where we support one another and share ideas about how to survive and improve the circumstances in our lives and our careers as psychiatrists. As always, as we as physicians go about working for change, we must realize that because of our ingrained reflex to care for others and the Hippocratic oath we have taken, we must be careful to heed the warning signs if we are reaching our limits and seek rest and perhaps help from others when we need it.

The **third** way is to express our anti-racism solidarity by using our own resources to lift up and donate to some causes and organizations in the Black community which are proved assets in the struggle to overcome injustices. They need funds to do their work. Here is a list of 10 ideas for great organizations you could donate to or join now, once, or hopefully in an ongoing way.

1.) To contribute to the George Floyd family's well being and future: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/georgefloyd>

2.) To contribute to the bail of protesters who were arrested: Bail funds are likely in every state as well .

National Bail Fund https://secure.actblue.com/donate/bail_funds_george_floyd

Minnesota Freedom Fund <https://minnesotafreedomfund.org/>

Colin Kaepernick's Know Your Rights Legal Initiative <https://www.knowyourrightscamp.com/legal>

3.) To contribute to an organization that works to build Black political power by initiating their national voter registration drive and supporting the Black agenda 2020.

Black Futures Lab <https://blackfutureslab.org/>

4.) To contribute to an organization looking at data- and research- informed policy solutions that communities can put in place to end police violence. .

Campaign Zero <https://www.joincampaignzero.org/solutions#solutionsoverview>

5.) To contribute to a Black, Queer, and Trans led organization committed to dismantling systems of oppression and violence, and shifting the public narrative to create long term change.

Black Visions <https://www.blackvisionsmn.org/>

6.) To support criminal justice and education reform for minorities

Equal Justice Initiative <https://eji.org>

7.) To contribute to a nonprofit media organization in Minnesota which is working on exposing the root causes of dynamic social and economic injustice and environmental issues

Unicorn Riot <https://unicornriot.ninja/>

8.) To contribute to Black Women's justice and health initiatives:

Black Women's Justice Institute <https://www.nbwji.org/>

Black Women's Maternal Health <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/health/reports/black-womens-maternal-health.html>

9.) To contribute to Barack Obama's My Brother's Keeper Initiative to build lifetime support for Black men and boys <https://www.obama.org/mbka/>

10.) To contribute to an organization that works for environmental and climate justice

NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program <https://www.naacp.org/environmental-climate-justice-about/>

Thank you for your having taken the time to read this. Let's make a resounding difference beyond our initial outrage.

Maureen

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