



June 9, 2020

MPS Endorses the Black Psychiatrists of America and the American Association of Medical Colleges' Statements on Police Brutality and Racism in America

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) condemns racism in all of its forms including acts of oppression and murder of numerous Black people throughout America's history.

Over the past months, we have seen the deadly results of the COVID pandemic collide with the devastating effects of police brutality in black and brown communities. The killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery have succeeded many others, including the death under police custody of Freddie Gray here in Baltimore. We recognize these killings as a manifestation of deeply-entrenched racism within law enforcement and more broadly, within our institutions and society at large. As psychiatrists, we witness how these mental stressors plague our communities of color and recognize the subsequent toll that depression, anxiety, and PTSD take on individuals of these communities across generations. As we witness the numerous protests in Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and around the world, we at MPS recognize that we must take a stand. We condemn violence, police brutality and institutional racism, and are committed to question our practices and listen to people of color in our community.

As we work towards our own action plan, we look to 2 statements for guidance - the press release of Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc. (BPA), dated June 3, 2020 and the American Association of Medical Colleges' (AAMC) Statement on Police Brutality and Racism in America and Their Impact on Health, dated June 1, 2020. We side with the statement from the BPA as a form of solidarity to those who are oppressed and to catapult us into action. Furthermore, we look to AAMC to encourage us to recognize the biases inherent in the medical system and within ourselves in an effort to make long lasting change.

As outlined in the BPA's call for action, 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.

Over the next year, we are determined to design a plan with specific actions that create meaningful solutions for change and we make a pledge to implement this plan. As leaders of mental health in our state, it is imperative that we ensure that we provide quality and equitable care to our black and brown communities, and that we go beyond that work, by working on the prevention of the social causes that lead to mental health disorders, including racism. The members of the Maryland Psychiatry Society will no longer be silent and complacent as we now come together with the rest of the world to eradicate racism.

Statement Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc.: https://mdpsych.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/press-release_police-brutality_6.3.2020-002.pdf

Statement American Association of Medical Colleges: <https://mdpsych.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AAMC-Statement-on-Police-Brutality-and-Racism-in-America-and-Their-Impact-on-Health.pdf>

#####

Approved unanimously by MPS Council June 9, 2020