|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |

**Responding to the Murder of George Floyd**

The NJ Chapter of the Association of Black Psychologists (NJABPsi), the Latino/a/x Mental Health Association of NJ (LMHANJ) and the NJ Psychological Association (NJPA), as the Inter-Mental Health and Psychological Association Coalition (IMPAC), join in unison to acknowledge the trauma caused by racism and violence.

This statement is not only about the blame of a police officer’s actions, which led to George Floyd’s death. It is also not only about showing the differences in treatment or the harmful impact on Black communities. This statement is not about the potentially deadly outcomes Black citizens face when they engage with law enforcement or the criminal justice system, although it is important to comprehend that. We need to understand the historical context of legalizing the dehumanization of Black citizens in our laws and societal practices. It is also important to note the role of collective acts of civil disobedience among all Americans and our nation’s ability to begin healing that history. Police killed 1,099 people in 2019. Black people were 24% of those killed despite being only 13% of the population. Additionally, police are 3 times more likely to kill a Black person over a White person, even though Black people are 1.3 times more likely to be unarmed compared to White people (<https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>).

Acknowledging the policing practices that negatively impact our New Jersey friends, families, neighbors, and colleagues is only a first step. However, the psychological impact of living in fear, in anger, and in terror, impacts not only the psyche of people of color, but also the psyche of people who do not have similar experiences. It creates a division, a distance filled with hurt, denial, dissociation, and confusion. It is where racism flourishes.

We, as leaders in mental health, believe it is important to address racial bias and white privilege with clients and colleagues. This conversation is especially important with clients, who find these items relevant to the stories of who they are, where they come from, who they belong to (if/ when they have a sense of belonging), and how they see themselves living a good, safe, and healthy life.

The continued murders of Black citizens by law enforcement is the consequence of America’s failure to address the effects of 400 years of slavery, 99 years of Jim Crow, and the last 50 years of continued systemic racism. The death of George Floyd is unfortunately only the most recent in a repeated number of assaults against Black people. Emmitt Till, Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Black church bombings, Black church mass murders, and the lynching of African Americans no longer can remain invisible or disconnected. Although these lived experiences are a surprise for some, for many others, they are a reminder of a terrible reality. For Black and Brown people, these events are repetitive and traumatic. As such, they present a severe ongoing threat to everyone’s mental and physical health. We, as mental health professionals, are ethically bound to address it.

IMPAC wants to empower mental health professionals to advocate for a new social contract. For all of us, images like George Floyd’s murder, highlight one central point: the existing social contract has to eliminate White supremacy in all its manifestations. We need grassroot level leadership that empowers each of us to hold our fellow Americans accountable to support a system for all.  IMPAC members believe our social system requires immediate attention to heal the psyche of American society. Psychologists and mental health workers advocate for “justice for all,” which is living in a system that offers everyone equitable access to the tools and resources to succeed.

**IMPAC respectfully asks NJ Legislators to:**
**•  Consider the inequitable impact of laws and regulations on different groups.**
**•  Implement equitable laws and policies that can lead to the restoration of faith in the justice system.**

•  **Require all police departments in the state to train and sensitize all police in undoing racism.** Training must be ongoing; from recruitment to senior officers. Pictures of police officers in Camden, NJ, holding banners and walking side by side with Black citizens opposing police brutality, symbolized hope and empathy. More is needed.

**•  Consider a demilitarization of the police force.**
**•  Redirect funding to community groups who can generate initiatives to address local safety and health.**
IMPAC believes in the power of our collective voices. Our society must move from aspirational to practical steps and we, as psychologists and mental health professionals, have a role to play. We are available to help.

We are encouraged to use our collective voices in this time of turmoil, to implement change in our New Jersey communities and beyond. This Statement is a call to action!

Respectfully,
The NJ Psychological Association (NJPA)
The NJ Chapter of the Association of Black Psychologists (NJABPsi)
The Latino/a/x Mental Health Association of NJ (LMHANJ)

**IMPAC Mission Statement**
Through the New Jersey Inter-Mental Health and Psychological Associations Coalition (IMPAC), NJABPsi, LMHANJ, and NJPA join together as equal partners to contribute their unique educational acumen, expertise, experience, and perspectives to obtain synergy as a resource to promote equality in mental health care and to zealously advocate for the mental health needs for the diverse population of the state of New Jersey. This will be accomplished by our respective organizations working together to develop initiatives to educate the public, as well as healthcare providers through training, professional presentations and mobilizing resources as needed to provide counseling and psychological services under emergent circumstances.