

Our local MBPA community and the world at large shares in the anguish and rage felt after witnessing the murder of an African American male, George Floyd, at the hands of law enforcement officers. At this point we can all list the many and growing list of names of people of color who have fallen victim to discrimination, hatred, abuse and violence. A recent landscape characterized by COVID-19 and the indisputable, disproportionate toll it has taken on African-American and Latinx lives, along with the recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Stephon Clark, and Tony McDade set the stage for a spark to be ignited. Research has shown us that racial inequalities for people of color result in reduced access to healthcare, less access to higher paying jobs, fewer opportunities for educational advancement, and a distinct over-representation in our prison systems.

Sandra Schulman, PhD, president of the American Psychological Association, recently echoed a common sentiment, “We are living in a racism pandemic.” There is a growing and concerning reality of racism and white supremacy in America today. MBPA stands with other state psychological associations in condemning these acts of violence committed in the name of law enforcement, whether directly by police or by those citizens who deem themselves worthy of assuming the mantle. As psychologists, we must use our knowledge, skills, and resources to closely examine all of the individual and societal factors that serve to maintain racial injustice and inequality at the very core of our social, economic, political, educational, ideological, and criminal justice systems. We must, as a nation, a community, and a profession, also dig deep to do the difficult work of identifying our own implicit biases. White privilege is insidious and can blind us to a true understanding of the experiences of those who have long been disenfranchised through institutional racism. Those who have not experienced discrimination can never truly understand the legacy of centuries of trauma as a result of a history of slavery and oppression.

MBPA is calling on all of our members to stand up and be part of the conversation and do our part to live up to our constitutional right for all people living in America to have an equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is abhorrent to know that even as this is written our friends, colleagues, and neighbors are in fear for their own lives and the lives of their children and families because the color of their skin is brown or black. A seismic shift is needed in our psychological, economic, and cultural approach to our current well-embedded racist policies. How might psychology help to inform and contribute to bringing about these essential changes? In affirming that we all need--and deserve--to truly be and feel equal, we might refer to research by Edmonds (1999) who found we all do better when we feel safe and when we can be more creative, happy, and healthy. She found that people of color especially feel less safe than others, so we need to explore meaningful ways to ensure opportunities for marginalized communities to develop a sense of security, value, and respect.

We will continue to speak out against such abhorrent racism and MBPA will be working hard to learn what we, as an organization, might do better or differently in order to work toward solutions to the conditions that lead to racism, prejudice, and violence perpetrated against others who do not look or think or act in accordance with presumed norms that are harmful to people of color.

### **What actions can we take?**

1. MBPA can offer a free CE course in Diversity and Racial Bias that includes a discussion on white privilege.
2. MBPA can resurrect the diversity chair position on the board and actively seek qualified leaders in our community able to raise awareness amongst our membership, community leaders, and legislators representing Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties.
3. MBPA can make a commitment to actively recruit a more diverse membership and board composition.
4. We all can increase our advocacy efforts in identifying needs and lobbying for change in the unmet healthcare needs of our underserved community. As one example, we can support mental health policies that put mental health on par with physical health, such as with California Senate Bill 855, which requires health plans to cover mental health services as they do physical health treatments. As

another example, California Surgeon General Burke Harris, reports from her research that African American children growing up in poverty show more childhood adversity, or what she referred to as “toxic stress” (Harris, 2018). She has instituted a policy for pediatricians to identify levels of trauma and then to be certain the children are referred for appropriate mental health care.

- a. Write directly and confidentially to the MBPA board, write to your local legislators, vote based on informed choices for those leaders who will show compassion and respect for people of color in our community and our nation.
5. We can all support and shop in businesses and restaurants owned by people of color.
6. We can all donate to anti-racist organizations that support people of color.
7. We can support neighborhood policing and humane policies where there isn’t racial profiling or undue use of force.
8. Mental health providers can learn how to identify and encourage conversation about comments that contain casual racism and prejudiced thinking. For those of us who are white psychologists, we must own and understand our white privilege.
9. Mental health providers can encourage conversation about racism and how it affects our family lives and the lives of our children.
10. We can support schools in countering microaggressions with micro-affirmations, stop harassment or bullying, emphasize positive images of people of color, and discuss the impact of prejudice.
11. For mental health providers who do research, critically evaluate racial bias in theoretical constructs and studies that intentionally/unintentionally hold whiteness as a standard.
12. For mental health providers who teach, ensure that people of color are represented in your syllabi.
13. For mental health providers who train, think about the ways to recruit students and people of color.
14. Mental health providers can make every effort to become more aware of their own biases, both professionally and personally.
15. We can all educate ourselves. Share resources. Below are a few guides and resources:
  - [75 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice](#)
  - [bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCE](http://bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCE)
  - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4181672/>
  - Uprooting Whiteness [Supremacy and Domination] – Resources. This google document, created, curated, and maintained by William R. Frey, doctoral student at Columbia University’s School of Social Work is a 17-page (and continually growing) resource list.
  - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1F8v8BQOcN3kODbxntkPS7snNjIuV1Cz5QDLQEq5XPa8/edit>

The future is what we make it.

Monterey Bay Psychological Association Board of Directors