



SBM Calls for Social Justice and Health Equity in Response to Black Deaths and Civil Unrest

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The Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) is appalled by the recently publicized deaths of Mr. George Floyd (Minneapolis, MN), Ms. Breonna Taylor (Louisville, KY) and Mr. Ahmaud Arbery (Brunswick, GA). Their senseless killings were fueled by hatred, bigotry, and racism against blacks in the United States. We therefore stand in solidarity with many other medical, psychological, and public health professional societies in calling out racism and its negative impact on the mental, behavioral, and physical health of blacks and other racial/ethnic groups that have been targets of violent and traumatic events. For example, racism is associated with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, and cardiovascular disease. Repeated events like the killings of Mr. Floyd, Ms. Taylor, Mr. Arbery, and far too many others before them, also contribute to flash points of anger like those happening in many cities across the country, where people are sick and tired of being ignored and unheard. There is evidence that repeated micro-aggressions like these, as well as major traumas, contribute to poor mental health.

Enough is enough! We must not be silent or turn a deaf ear to deep-rooted institutional and structural racism that breeds acts of police violence and vigilante justice. SBM urges its membership of behavioral medicine researchers, clinicians, nurses, public health practitioners, educators, and others, along with partnering organizations and societies, to collectively lift our voices and create platforms to ensure that stories of human rights violations and social injustices are heard throughout the nation and beyond. We must be inclusive in our membership, intentionally including those with lived experience to participate in developing solutions and decision-making. We must be innovative in our efforts to identify and promote those solutions with meaningful and long-lasting impact. We must continuously seek opportunities to influence policies and practices that promote social justice and health equity.