



The Society for Black Neuropsychology (SBN) would like to offer our deepest sympathy and condolences to the family and loved ones of George Floyd. It also saddens us that we are mourning yet another senseless death due to police brutality.

The continual violence and threats to Black individuals in America create trauma for those who endure it as well as vicarious trauma for those who witness it. The consequence of generations of racism and discrimination have proven to be deleterious to the physical, mental, and neuropsychological wellbeing of Black people. These findings are borne from extensive research that demonstrate the impacts of stress on the body and the mind. The allostatic load that is created in the presence of chronic stress breaks down cellular function. Our collective body is "keeping the score." ¹ The cognitive, emotional, and physiological effects of these traumatic exposures contribute to the disproportionate presence of stress related health conditions within the Black community. In essence, these assaults on Black people are not only killing those who are murdered, but in a very literal sense, they are killing the entire Black community.

Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Aubrey, and George Floyd are just the most recent victims in a long line of those senselessly killed as a result of systemic discrimination. If we genuinely care about the psychological well-being of the Black community, these atrocities must stop. People of color should be able to trust that law enforcement agencies and justice departments will equitably protect and serve us. Until tangible actions are taken to eradicate inequities in our legal and justice systems, these problematic cycles will continue to create negative physical and mental health outcomes.

Our concern is not solely relegated to encounters wherein Black people are killed due to bias-fueled violence. Ordinary actions such as watching television in their own homes, jogging in the neighborhood, bird watching in the park, exercising in the gym in their building, or completing the tasks of their jobs such as delivering furniture or reporting the news, are all activities Black people should feel free to engage in without fear of obstruction from law enforcement or ill-intentioned citizens. Black people should be able to enjoy daily living without trepidation that they will be stopped, questioned, and/or harassed.

Moreover, our society has so commonly linked blackness with dangerous tropes of criminality, that people guilty of wrongdoing have falsely accused Black individuals for their own indiscretions. We saw this in the case of a Georgia man who was caught at a remote hotel when he arranged a meeting for a tryst: he attested he had been kidnapped by Black men. More

tragically, we saw this in the case of a Florida woman who killed her son and blamed it on fictitious Black assailants. Societal biases are so deeply ingrained that nonblack criminals deduce that blaming Black people will be readily accepted as a plausible claim.

Harboring these societal biases and deep seated fears of Black people is not a healthy cognitive space for nonblack communities to occupy either. For the sake of all peoples, these deleterious perspectives need to be eradicated. The collective well-being of our country will, in part, be predicated on racial reconciliation and healing. SBN condemns racism and bigotry in all its forms. We seek to promote holistic mental health for all people.

If you or someone you know is struggling to cope with the trauma of recent events, there are several resources for support. In the coming months, SBN will be providing a space for interested individuals to learn about the various ways individual and systemic bias affect Black people at every level (e.g., student, trainee, professional) and how these problems can be ameliorated in the field of neuropsychology.

References

1. Van der Kolk, B. A. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. New York: Viking.