



June 4, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

In his I Have a Dream speech, in 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King said: *“It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro’s legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality.”*

That invigorating autumn has yet to arrive. The events of the past week, since the killing of George Floyd, have brought America once again to the precipice.

The Academy of Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies has, since its inception in 1998, been dedicated to the advancement of psychological science in the service of alleviating human suffering. Ours is an international organization. Our concerns for racial, economic, and social injustice extend to all of the countries represented in our membership. At the same time, this is a particularly dire and painful hour in America.

We know that the burdens of a racially and economically unjust society inflict enduring harm on minorities of all kinds. Economic disparities in America have led to a crisis of despair for those who are burdened by severe income inequality. Poorer health and mental health outcomes, reduced social mobility, and declining life spans are now a feature in the lives of black, Hispanic, and high-school educated white Americans. The added burdens of institutionalized racism especially erode the wellbeing and safety of black Americans. That is now taking the form of disproportionate mortality, due to COVID19, and institutionalized racism.

The Academy stands in solidarity with those who are suffering the effects of racial and economic injustice. The Academy lends its support to the families who are grieving the losses of loved ones, due to racially motivated violence. We also support our colleagues who are people of color in this difficult moment.

As mental health professionals, we strive to uphold social justice and address the pervasive suffering inflicted by racism. It is not sufficient to confine our efforts to the consulting room. We are committed to redoubling our efforts to use our knowledge and skills to help change the social institutions in which we all live. We will seek to unite with other health and mental health organizations to improve and expand services to affected minority communities. For example, the Academy will continue to provide training and dissemination of culturally responsive CBT to over 2,000 clinicians serving in LA County's Department of Mental Health, serving the poor and underserved of LA County, one of the most diverse counties in the United States, ethnically, racially, and economically. We are committed to reducing health disparities by teaching state of the art treatments for the most vulnerable members of the county.

And above all, we commit to helping to bring about the just society in which all our citizens live in freedom from violence, freedom from discrimination, with improved access to affordable health and mental health care, and with freedom from economic injustice.

In closing, we want to echo the words of Dr. King at his September speech at the American Psychological Association's Annual Convention:

*"I have not lost hope. I must confess that these have been very difficult days for me personally. And these have been difficult days for every civil rights leader, for every lover of justice and peace."*

Sincerely,

*The Board of the Academy of Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies*

