



American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry Statement on Racism and Violence

The American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry (AAGP) is a diverse, national organization of more than 1300 health professionals, scientists, and advocates committed to reducing mental suffering and promoting emotional and cognitive health in all older adults regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or faith community.

AAGP profoundly respects the essential worth of all individual people and cultures. Diversity, equality, and inclusion are core principles of AAGP. AAGP has worked hard to incorporate these values in all the work we do – in our leadership teams, our advocacy efforts, our residencies, and fellowships, and in the care we provide to the patients, families, and communities that we serve.

The Black community is disproportionately affected by illness, lack of healthcare access, mortality, and more. The COVID-19 pandemic has been no different, as Black community members are again at higher risk of dying than many others in the United States.

In addition, we must remember that Black Americans also face persistent racism on a daily basis, even while engaging in activities that many others take for granted. We must strive to remember the names and the legacies of Black people, old and young, whose lives have been lost or forever altered through racist violence. Individual experiences and witnessing of racist incidents evoke social and historical experiences of racism. For older Black Americans, these encounters for them and their families have accumulated over their lifespan, become part of their living memory, and relived and re-experienced with each new racist and violent event.

Living in fear of discrimination and violence directed towards them can have profound effects on mental health. This fear is part of a much broader reality that places all people of color at disproportionate risk for depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, substance use disorders, and more. As an organization concerned with the mental health of all older people, we cannot and will not ignore this reality.

As we face the current challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the more enduring challenges due to racism and violence in our society, there is one thing that remains constant:

The American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry is, and will always be, committed to reducing mental suffering and promoting emotional and cognitive health in all older adults regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or faith community. To help make that equality a reality, we pledge our resources, our expertise, our compassion, and our actions to the health and well-being of our Black colleagues, patients, and community. We will provide safe spaces for our Black patients and providers to be able to discuss issues of racism and violence. We will work to fight interpersonal, cultural, and systemic racism, work towards removing healthcare care disparities, and towards developing structural competency in our healthcare system.

AAGP Board of Directors