



AAPA Statement on Michael Brown and Eric Garner
January 5, 2015

As we begin our work in 2015, the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA) wishes to reflect on the recent series of events that have sparked much pain and anguish across the country. The AAPA shares the deep sadness and anger across the country and world in response to recent grand jury decisions not to indict the police officers who were involved in killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York. We express our deepest condolences to the families and communities of Brown and Garner, and stand in solidarity with our African American brothers and sisters. We believe #BlackLivesMatter and we will continue to stand with the Black community and advocate for justice.

At the same time, we also mourn the deaths of NYPD officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu, dedicated public servants who were senselessly murdered by a deeply disturbed individual. We send our heartfelt condolences to the Ramos and Liu families and the communities the officers served. We acknowledge that law enforcement officers risk their lives every day to protect and serve the public, including protecting the freedom of speech and the right to assemble in peaceful protest. We strongly condemn any violence or threats against law enforcement. Violence is never the answer. We also believe that we can respect and show appreciation of law enforcement officers while still raising concerns about systemic and institutional inequities with respect to criminal enforcement that normalizes excessive use of force by police officers, racial profiling, and hyper-criminalization of Blackness. We are keenly aware that the recent deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice are not isolated incidents; rather, they are tied to a longstanding history of systemic racism that has plagued our country since its inception.

We remind ourselves of the ever-changing, dehumanizing, and stereotypical caricatures that have been used throughout history to justify violence against our communities of color, including the slavery of African Americans, genocide of Native Americans, colonization of Latinos/as and Pacific Islanders, and citizen exclusions and imprisonment of Asian Americans. We recognize that even “positive” stereotypes such as the myth of the “model minority” serve to silence our voices raised in solidarity, while simultaneously pathologizing Black experiences.

Though these forms of oppressions are interconnected, we understand that Black people are currently the primary target of state and police violence. We are troubled by recent research findings that our society has less empathy for those that are darker skinned (Trawalthe, Hoffman, & Waytz, 2012) and that African American boys are viewed older than their chronological age (Goff et al., 2014). We acknowledge the power of the implicit racial biases that informs all of our decision-making and behaviors (Greenwald et al., 2009), including the higher likelihood of perceiving Black males as dangerous and as

holding weapons despite being unarmed (Correll et al., 2002)—not even trained police officers are immune to this racial bias (Correll et al., 2007). Taken together, these studies provide an inexcusable context as to why Black men are more likely to be suspected, arrested, sentenced, and executed compared to their White peers (Eberhardt et al., 2006; Wade, 2014; Western, 2006).

The AAPA affirms that there is no justice when these systemic racial inequities are in place. We support social justice research, service, and practice that provide space for change and healing. We encourage our community to think and talk about how anti-Black racism has shaped our lives and then take actions to change these effects. We urge our members and friends to actively stand in solidarity with the Black community who ask only for social justice: that their human rights are recognized and respected. Black lives matter and the rest of our lives depend on this, as in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

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