

## AAPA OPEN LETTER & CALL TO ACTION

**Initial Release Date: July 14, 2016**

**Link: <https://goo.gl/AqeF1v>**

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

The recent deaths of Alton Sterling, Philandro Castile, and Dallas Police Officers, Lorne Ahrens, Michael Krol, Michael J. Smith, Brent Thompson, and Patrick Zamarripa, have amplified the violence and turmoil in the U.S. at this time. As leaders in the Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA), we ourselves are grieving and experiencing the range of emotions - intense sadness and loss, fear and helplessness, anger and frustration. We are at a critical crossroads as a community. We must raise our collective voice and resist the temptation to remain silent. We must stand and act in solidarity with our Black brothers and sisters, including our own Black Asian family. We reaffirm our commitment to #BlackLivesMatter, as echoed in our [January 2015 statement on the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner](#). Importantly, we seek to move beyond statements and call for action as #API4BlackLives.

We must now come together professionally to stand with our African American and Black brothers and sisters.

As professionals and students in the field of Psychology and Mental Health, we are in a unique position to contribute to the efforts of combating anti-Blackness and responding to the deadly consequences of racism in this country. Many of us have access to opportunities to impact change at multiple levels. We ask that you reflect individually and collectively with your own networks to assess what skills, experience, and wisdom you hold that may serve to actively resist the system of racial oppression that continues to devalue Black and Brown lives. We honor that these actions, however small, involve taking risks and shoring up the courage to enact change. It is within AAPA's mission and our ethical duty to help individuals and communities heal from these ongoing and historical traumas, as well as to work towards education and prevention of these toxic societal environments.

The AAPA Executive Committee has compiled a list of actions and resources that we, as Asian American/ Pacific Islander psychologists, allied professionals, and students can engage in. This list is organized by various contexts in which you may intervene - as individuals, within our families, in academic & educational settings, in clinical & therapy settings, and through other systems.

### **Individual Levels**

- **Take action:** Small actions add up and contribute to resisting despair. Share information, attend rallies or vigils, speak up, and be in community with other folks.
- **Check in with your Black loved ones** and offer support however they may need.
- **Understand your own biases** by taking an implicit bias test. Dialogue about your results with someone you care about and can encourage you to challenge these biases:  
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
- **#StayWoke** ([www.staywoke.org](http://www.staywoke.org)) surveys your strengths and interests to connect you with activism opportunities (approx. 5 minutes).

- **Continue educating yourself on the issues.** Some resources include:
  - Campaign Zero (<http://www.joincampaignzero.org/#vision>) collects data to recommend policy solutions regarding issues affecting violence by police directed toward Black and Brown people.
  - An open-source, working document, “Resources for non-Black Asians on Anti-Blackness”:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I1BUMrKPUaERiph\\_3Arq8\\_MqQ2SDqdpF7mxQXt3\\_DT/mobiledbasic?pli=1](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I1BUMrKPUaERiph_3Arq8_MqQ2SDqdpF7mxQXt3_DT/mobiledbasic?pli=1)
- **Own your privilege** by participating in the #IOwnMyPrivilege social media campaign
- **Practice self-care!** As we take care of our community, it is essential to take care of ourselves and acknowledge the physical, emotional, and spiritual toll anti-racism work takes. Suggestions include taking time away from social media, exercising, seeking personal therapy or support circles, meditation, and other religious and spiritual practices. Here is a guide for creating a self-care plan in the aftermath of racial trauma, noting that #racialtraumaisreal:  
[http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/lsoe\\_sites/isprc/pdf/racialtraumaisreal.pdf](http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/lsoe_sites/isprc/pdf/racialtraumaisreal.pdf)
- Additional action ideas: [https://issuu.com/nlc.sf.2014/docs/beyondthestreets\\_final/1](https://issuu.com/nlc.sf.2014/docs/beyondthestreets_final/1)

## Family

- **Talk to your family members** of all generations about why #BlackLivesMatter. This is one open-source example created by several AAPI leaders (other languages also available) to help start this conversation with family:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jJwrgAk923hTSHVNkqPo610FMBNrecWz04NCK55VMJ4/preview>
- **Translate information.** Be reminded that much of our AAPI community would benefit from discussions and information communicated in their respective ethnic language. Consider the use of language, metaphors, and personal experience to share a challenging perspective.
- **Consider historical race-based trauma within your family.** Be mindful that our immigrant and refugee community may be triggered by the constant violence and brutality in the media.
- **Stress the interconnectedness of AAPI and Black experiences with racism.** Check in with folks and help them to understand that a system that does not respect Black lives will not respect Asian and Pacific Islander lives.
- **Engage in a conversation with children about racial injustice,** and provide a safe space for them to ask questions and talk about their feelings. One helpful website is called Raising Race-Conscious Children (<http://www.raceconscious.org/>). You can also find other articles here:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I1BUMrKPUaERiph\\_3Arq8\\_MqQ2SDqdpF7mxQXt3\\_DT/mobiledbasic?pli=1#h.2m3b6zf7wxph](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I1BUMrKPUaERiph_3Arq8_MqQ2SDqdpF7mxQXt3_DT/mobiledbasic?pli=1#h.2m3b6zf7wxph)

## Academic & Educational Settings

- **How to Discuss Blackness and racism in academia:**  
(<https://www.facebook.com/notes/ellie-ade-kur/how-to-support-blacademics-for-non-black-faculty-and-grad-students-teaching-blac/10154178914344471>)
- **How to Discuss Blackness and racism in K-12 settings:**  
(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/07/11/teaching-about-race-racism>)

[-and-police-violence-resources-for-educators-and-parents/?postshare=9881468327255810&tid=ss\\_fb\)](#)

- **Address anti-Blackness and its relationship to AAPI history and mental health experiences.** Particularly if you're teaching a course in AAPI Psychology/Mental Health, assess how you are teaching about AAPI race-related stress and acculturative stress. Are there ways you can better introduce these topics as being inherently connected to the racism that other communities experience, and specifically Black communities in the US?
- **Address anti-Blackness and its relationship in particular to the Model Minority Myth.** Particularly, if you're teaching a course in AAPI Psychology/Mental Health, assess how you are discussing the Model Minority Myth in particular. Discuss with your students how the Model Minority Myth has been used to separate Black and AAPI communities. Claire Jean Kim's (1999) Racial Triangulation Theory is one work that articulates this phenomenon: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/217604787/KIM-CLaire-Jean-Racial-Triangulation-of-Asian-Americans>
- **Use your training as consumer and/or producer of research** to highlight critical research studies and also offer clarification when you come across inappropriate or faulty interpretation of research findings/statistics.
- **Fuel your passion and find opportunities.** As an educator or academic, find ways to allow these challenging emotions to fuel your work.

### **Clinical & Therapy Settings**

- **Invite your clients to discuss recent issues.** If you are feeling fearful or uncertain, seek consultation or supervision. Here are two articles to consider
  - Talking about race in trauma psychotherapy: <http://societyforpsychotherapy.org/talking-about-race-in-trauma-psychotherapy/>
  - Addressing clients' prejudices in counseling: <http://ct.counseling.org/2014/01/addressing-clients-prejudices-in-counseling>
- **Be mindful of ways that you may commit racial microaggressions in therapy settings:** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/culturally-speaking/201308/how-well-meaning-therapists-commit-racism>
- **Foster dialogue with other clinical staff.** If you work in a clinical setting with other clinicians (e.g., hospitals, university counseling centers, community mental health clinics), assess how well you are providing support for Black/African American communities as an institution, especially with regard to ongoing police brutality trauma.
- **Broach subjects of police brutality and related anti-Blackness in supervision.** If you provide clinical supervision for other clinicians/trainees, clarify that these topics are relevant and appropriate topics for the therapy space and for supervision. Model and engage in active dialogue with your supervisees, showing how to broach and explore their own affective experiences while discussing race, White supremacy, and anti-Blackness. Support them in being able to foster these conversations with their clients.

### **Psychology/Mental Health Partnerships with other Systems**

- **Work with police departments as psychology experts:**

- **Inquire if your local police department has required trainings or continuing education** opportunities regarding racism or social justice. If anything, find out if they have trainings on mental health issues; if you provide trainings about mental health issues, you can integrate issues related to racism and social justice in your work.
- Inquire if your police departments have a Community Affairs Bureau or Community Advisory Board. If they do, join it. If they don't, find out how to create one.
- **Go beyond working to educate White folks.**
- **Consider serving as a commissioner** if your hometown has a Human Relations Commission. You can also offer to speak at a commission meeting on public record about the importance of police-community dialogues and supporting safety for POC.
- **Request that your Mayor or City Council address concerns** about safety and trauma in your community.
- **Find other ways that fit your professional skills to center Blackness and work to support the Black community.**

We hope that these resources serve as a starting point for further exchange of support and collaboration among our members to promote #API4BlackLives. Through **Monday, August 8th**, this document will be open for comments, where members can add their ideas for action and resources to this compilation. The list will then be shared again to the general listserv. We also encourage members to consider the suggestions made by colleagues within APA's Division 17, as well as the empowering words of AAPA Past-President Dr. Derald Wing Sue and his ["Open Letter to Brothers and Sisters of Color."](#) Finally, we invite all members to engage in these topics and support one another at our Annual Convention this coming Wednesday, August 3rd, whose theme, ["Beyond 'Yellow' Borders: Revealing Our Diverse Community, Expanding Our Coalition Horizon"](#) is timely.

In Solidarity,

AAPA Executive Committee

[www.aapaonline.org](http://www.aapaonline.org) | [contact@aapaonline.org](mailto:contact@aapaonline.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/aapaonline>

Twitter: [@AAPAOnline](https://twitter.com/AAPAOnline)