

Personal Counseling Services stands in solidarity with our Black/African American students, faculty, and staff in the wake of the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others who have lost their lives as a result of systematic racism, discrimination, and violence. Like many others, we are frustrated and heartbroken with the lack of actions taken to remedy the frequency of police violence against Black/African American citizens and the lack of action dedicated to making their lived experiences safer and more equitable. We find this disturbing and intolerable.

“Every year more than half a million college students are the targets of bias driven slurs or physical assaults; every day at least one hate crime occurs on a college campus; and every minute a college student somewhere hears or sees racist or otherwise biased words or images” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2004). It is important to understand that anxiety, depression, anger, disempowerment, weariness of strangers, and suicidal ideation are common reactions to racial trauma. Other reactions include helplessness, hopelessness, isolation, self-blame, and self-doubt. Personal Counseling, Student Health, and Social Services are available to those who have been impacted by these recent events. If you know someone who is struggling and needs help, reach out and get help for that person.

It is important to underscore that repeated exposure to race-based trauma impacts people in emotional, psychological, and physical ways. As a result, self-care is of vital importance. For some people, disconnection from triggering interactions that elicit trauma responses may be necessary. This may involve taking a break from the news, social media, or interpersonal relationships. Because experiences of racial trauma elicit neurological responses that mirror PTSD, it is crucial that individuals find healthy ways to expel physical energy and promote positive well-being. For example, exercise, yoga, or physical movement. Making sure that we are

eating regularly, getting enough sleep, and engaging in positive activities. Self-care offers us a chance to bring healing where pain once.

Other ways to combat the harmful effects of racial trauma include mobilizing social support networks, engaging in spiritual or religious practices, and utilizing other self-help strategies. Because these events are crises that have the potential to bring up old wounds and scars from the past, it is essential that seek community with people who have had similar experiences and feelings. For some people, support groups may be helpful, and for others, spirituality and religion play a central role in coping with stress. This may involve connecting with others who share similar beliefs or utilizing faith practices (e.g., prayer, meditation, etc.). Other strategies include taking classes or read books that focus on the historical experiences of marginalized cultural groups or becoming involved in groups and organizations that affirm the importance of equality and social justice.

We also need to make sure that Black/African American community on-campus does not bear the burden of recovery alone. As a community, we need to not only initiate but also maintain these discussions about the harmful effects of racism and discrimination. Simply put, don't let hate tear our community apart by sitting on the sidelines. We need to hold campus meetings that include students, faculty, staff, alumni, community leaders, and even national organizations, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center, NAACP, the Anti-Defamation league aimed at forming alliances to address systematic racism, and encourage broad participation and commitment to change. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "You must be the change that you want to see in the world". This is our chance to rise above intolerance, hate, and violence.