



## Nebraska Psychological Association Statement in Response to the Killing of George Floyd

The Nebraska Psychological Association is outraged by the killing of Black people by law enforcement officers who have violated their oath to “Serve and Protect” by engaging in unprovoked violence.

Throughout 400 years of American history, racist power structures have perpetrated atrocities against Black and Brown people, including slavery, discrimination, and violence. This abuse of power and privilege is embedded in our institutions, policies, and laws which creates the climate, both for egregious and obvious crimes against people of color as well as for the corrosive injuries inflicted by discrimination and racial profiling.

The videos that captured a Minneapolis police officer murdering George Floyd while his colleagues stood by have distilled the essence of this history into a single moment and spurred an unprecedented visceral reaction from many Americans who simply cannot sit by and accept the continuation of such racist brutality.

Abuse of power and force is not news to the people who have endured and suffered from racism in our society. It is not new in America. Many people have taught their children to fear and disparage those who look different from themselves and to treat them differently. This systemic racism poisons individual relationships and is mirrored in policies and procedures which have created an enduring climate of separateness and inequality in our society.

It is time to transform the political and legislative structures that perpetuate discrimination. It is time to promote equality, freedom, opportunity, and tolerance to honor the true diversity in our society. Our strength lies in recognizing the common ground we have as human beings, and in putting an end to vilifying each other based on racial or ethnic differences.

Change needs to occur in all aspects of American life, including electing leaders at all levels who will foster and support a richly diverse society; removing authority figures who support policies and procedures that perpetuate inequality; advocating for evidence-based reforms; and promoting critical thinking and informed decision-making. This change will require legal and political action that we hope all of us will support at this critical time in our history.

We believe psychologists have a specific role and responsibility in this call to action. Respect for individual differences and support for equality are deeply embedded in our field. Our training is directly applicable, not just for treating those injured by the physical and emotional consequences of racist actions and policies, but also for understanding the ways in which the rifts in our society can be healed and individuals can be unified. Psychology is a science that focuses on all aspects of human behavior.

The path forward will include expanding the scientific basis for making needed change, working with other disciplines to deepen this understanding, and helping create specific recommendations that will protect vulnerable members of our community and so enhance the wellbeing of our entire society. This includes participating in and facilitating the tough conversations about race; hearing all sides and finding the common ground to move everyone forward to end discrimination and violence. While parts of the journey make good use of our professional training, this journey includes examining our personal biases, making personal changes, being willing to talk about those biases, and providing opportunities to others to do the same.

One of the essential challenges of this endeavor is to hold ourselves and others accountable for indifference or harm based on race in a way that creates paths for change rather than shame and defensiveness, much like the kind of balance we strive for in working with individuals who seek our professional help. Now is the time to actively challenge the abuse so many in our country have endured for hundreds of years. Let us join those who strive for justice and equality. Let us work together to make ours a truly multi-cultural, life-affirming, and tolerant country, where all people live with the freedom, dignity, and respect they inherently deserve.

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