



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Minority Fellowship Program
American Nurses Association

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Greetings MFP Family,

The rise in Anti-Asian violence, including the scourge of *any* acts of racism against the Asian community, is heartbreaking. The recent murders in Atlanta are devastating—particularly the deliberate acts of violence against women—as are the numerous accounts of Asian elders and others being brutally attacked, including as they simply walk through their neighborhoods. To be clear, such violence against Asians and Asian Americans is not new in this country. Members of these groups are all too familiar with the decades, and even *centuries* of injustice, they have experienced (e.g., forced imprisonment in concentration camp). We are just now being given a front row seat to such atrocities with the rapid dissemination of information in the digital age. I stated this during our Virtual Intensive Training Institute, but also wanted to issue a written statement so that the world is clear on where we stand as a racial and ethnic minority-focused organization:

We do not condone, accept, justify or tolerate injustice of any kind. The ways minoritized communities continue to be targeted, victimized and dehumanized is unacceptable. The MFP will continue to decry racism, hate crimes, discriminatory acts and other forms of wrongdoing for what they are: deplorable actions that cannot be accepted or minimized.

So much about the Atlanta murders doesn't sit well with me. However, the rush to justify the perpetrator's acts under the powers of "addiction" truly strikes a nerve. More than anyone else, our illustrious network of behavioral health clinicians, researchers, educators, scholars, policy makers and leaders knows too well the true struggles associated with addiction and mental health challenges. For anyone to use such experiences to justify the heinous acts that resulted in the loss of eight...eight precious souls...is a slap in the face to those who truly struggle and are incapable of controlling their thoughts and behaviors. Further, it perpetuates fear, stigma and misinformation that people who suffer with addiction and mental illness are violent and dangerous. We have strong evidence to prove that those experiencing behavioral health challenges are not more violent or "criminally" involved than those who aren't, and we must keep this at the forefront of the public's eye.

With so much happening in the world we have our work cut out for us. To advocate for and provide culturally and contextually relevant care to those in need; to generate, evaluate and translate new knowledge to revamp behavioral health treatment; to adequately support the victims of such traumatic events (whether experienced personally, witnessed, or traumatized

vicariously); to hold our elected officials and judicial system accountable to seek justice for the victimized; to take good care of ourselves as we engage in this laborious yet lifegiving work; and so much more...

Again, our collective trauma from the constant bombardment of racism and discrimination against any individuals or groups wears the soul. It is truly a blessing that we have our MFP Family to be a shoulder to cry on, but also the shoulders of giants to stand on and blaze trails to ensure that things are different as we move forward. We continue to stand for equity and justice. Please be sure to prioritize your wellness as you engage in the fight:

- Avoid (as much as possible) re-traumatizing images, videos, posts and other mediums
- Engage in daily, weekly, and monthly activities to center and recharge (e.g., prayer, meditation, walks in nature, adult coloring)
- Spend time with the people and things that bring you joy and lighten your load
- If you are seeing patients, make sure that you supplement your practice with care of your own (e.g., personal therapist, debriefing group of trusted friends/advisors)
- Continue to be selective with your yes; we are not living in normal times, so you may not be able to do, participate in or accomplish all that you would like to

We are here for anyone who needs additional supports. I am happy to coordinate time to hold space for those who would like to process these events in community with others.

With Love,

Dr. Brawner

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