



American Cannabis Nurses Association

Advancing excellence in cannabis nursing practice through advocacy, collaboration, education, research and policy development

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June 4, 2020

The killing of George Floyd on May 25th and the events that have occurred over the last week have once again highlighted America's racial prejudices that affect communities of color, Black communities in particular.

Racial disparities in healthcare have been witnessed for some time with the most recent related to the current COVID pandemic, where black Americans are dying at higher rates, 2.5 times higher than white Americans. These disparities are the results of America's structural racism that affects all parts of the lives of marginalized Black, Indigenous, People of Color.

Nurses have long been viewed as the most ethical of all professions, and we are obligated to support the healing of vulnerable populations, including Black Indigenous People of Color who have faced relentless racial discrimination, police violence, mass incarceration, and fear that leads to negative health impacts and serves to widen health disparities.

Police violence, sadly, must now be considered is a public health risk. Black males have a 1 in 1,000 chance of being killed by police over their lifetime. They are more likely to be stopped by police, less likely to receive a fair trial, and often face harsher sentences compared to whites who commit the same crimes. Once a Black Indigenous Person of Color is institutionalized, suicide rates go up, accounting for 34% of all deaths in American jails, nutritional status is compromised through the high calorie, high-fat foods served in jails, and the risk of physical and sexual assault goes up.

The American Cannabis Nurses Association (ACNA) believes that nurses and the nursing profession must focus on addressing systemic racism, police violence, and mass incarceration as public health matters that impact both individuals and the population as a whole. We are, therefore, ethically obligated to address these disparities.

We call for:

- Training for police in how to work from a place of empathy and compassion for lack indigenous people.
- The demilitarization of police forces.
- Equality for all Black Indigenous People of Color.
- The end of discriminatory practices in the judicial, legal, prison, and healthcare systems.
- More nursing and public health research and funding around racism and its related health disparities.
- The building of a cross-disciplinary nursing professional organization alliance that will come together to address these issues politically.
- Mandatory education for all healthcare professionals that address racial disparities with solution-oriented outcomes.

The ACNA also acknowledges that cannabis has long been used as a way to discriminate against Black Indigenous People of Color and incarcerate people who are non-violent drug offenders. As cannabis care nurses, we must stand against racism and discrimination, and commit ourselves to ending racially-based healthcare disparities and violence toward Black Indigenous People of Color.

In the last year, ACNA established a Diversity and Inclusion Committee to address racism and discrimination to build from within our organization and the cannabis industry at large. Additionally, we are actively working with our Government and Affairs Committee to develop a position statement addressing the war on drugs and how that has unfairly affected nurses, particularly Black Indigenous nurses of color and the communities they serve.

We hope you will join us in our call to action. Our goal at ACNA is to be solution-oriented. The root of racism is not an easy conversation, but it is necessary to examine and reflect on our role in this fight. We are listening and learning.

If you would like to learn more, please consider the resources below:

Recommended reading:

- How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi
- White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo, Ph.D. <https://youtu.be/45ey4jgoxeU>
- An Anti-Racist Reading List compiled by Ibram X. Kendi for The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/29/books/review/antiracist-reading-list-ibram-x-kendi.html>

If you would like to do more, please consider the following:

- Call or email your local and state representatives and ask them to take action against police violence and mass incarceration.
- Donate to an organization that address racial disparities like the Last Prison Project
- Listen and learn, be willing to offer solutions instead of focusing on the problem