



Maryland Counseling Association Statement of Solidarity

August 14, 2020

On behalf of the Maryland Counseling Association (MCA), we on the Advocacy committee, Human Rights committee, and Maryland Counselors for Social Justice (MCSJ) present this statement of solidarity in support of the NAACP's virtual March on Washington, being held on August 27-28, 2020. This march is intentionally held on the 57th anniversary of the historic March on Washington, where Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his prominent and powerful speech, "I Have a Dream."

We believe that Black Lives Matter. As a diverse group of counselors, educators, coaches, and mental health professionals serving communities in Maryland and DC, we believe in advocating to eliminate racial and systemic injustices. We stand with the NAACP to call for reforms regarding the "systems, structures, policies, and attitudes that enable police brutality and racial discrimination." As professionals, we are appalled by the police brutality and racial discrimination endured by Black and African American individuals in this country, and we understand the severe and negative consequences these experiences have on mental health and wellness.

When the police misuse authority and commit brutality on citizens, it breaks trust, inflicts trauma, and increases anxiety and fear, and perpetuates racism and intolerance. These symptoms of unjust actions challenge communities, impose family stress, and present a variety of psychological dilemmas for individuals. We encourage policy makers and elected officials to work with the NAACP, mental health professionals, professional organizations, and criminal justice reform organizations towards reform that will reflect equal treatment under the law, accountability, and justice.

Racial discrimination has plagued the United States of America from its inception. We encourage and support the work to dismantle the structures and policies that perpetuate acts of racial discrimination. The psychological effects of racial discrimination and systemic injustice can include anger, depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other traumatic responses. These consequences are costly to physical, emotional, and mental health, as well as occupational, social, relational, and financial domains of wellness. As such, we stand with the NAACP on its efforts to reform existing barriers to racial equality.

Additionally, we support the NAACP's action plan to encourage Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to take a stand by making their voices heard in local, state, and national levels of policy and governing. In accordance with the NAACP, we encourage Black and African American individuals to: 1) register to vote for every election; 2) volunteer to mobilize Black voters; 3) complete the US Census 2020; and 4) become a poll worker at their local polling station.

The Maryland Counseling Association, the Advocacy committee, the Human Rights committee, and Maryland Counselors for Social Justice are marching with the NAACP on August 27-28, 2020.
#MCA4BlackLives #NonstoptoNovember

*For more information about NAACP's Virtual March on Washington, please visit: <https://2020march.com/>
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