

January 9, 2021

Dear colleagues,

This week we witnessed violence against our communities and fellow citizens. People have lost their lives and many others have been injured, threatened, or suffered emotional pain as a result of the behaviors of a group of extremists. In our representative democracy, violence directed towards our elected leaders and our democratic processes is a hostile gesture against all of us. We are heartbroken and frightened by the acts of insurrection and anti-democratic rhetoric we witnessed. As psychologists and mental health professionals, we know the effects of trauma. We experience this ongoing trauma collectively and we must continue to work to become more trauma informed and more trauma responsive. In the strongest possible terms, we denounce the violent actions that occurred on Wednesday at the Capitol.

Future history lessons will be taught about the recent events that culminated in Wednesday's acts of violence at the Capitol. As mental health providers and Delaware Psychological Association members, we are deeply rooted in the lived experiences of the communities we serve. The compounded effects of an unchecked pandemic, rampant racial injustice, vast economic disparities, and challenges to our way of governing as Americans has created immense pain for us and our communities.

The contrast in the reactions to and language around the protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and this week's predominantly white mob entering the Capitol and forcefully disrupting our peaceful transition of power are stark. We are struck by how this week's domestic terrorists were protected by their privilege. This summer, we watched largely peaceful protests confronted by rubber bullets, chemical irritants, and other shows of government force and unprovoked violence against our citizens. We see the repeated trauma our Black and Brown colleagues and clients are enduring. Those of us who are white mental health providers have so much more work to do as agents of anti-racist change, as scientists of human behavior, and as advocates for the communities and fellow humans that we serve.

Much of the research on political polarization shows us that fostering unity, respect, and mutual understanding is possible through education, creating opportunities for understanding our similarities (and not just our differences), and working towards common goals. As clinicians, researchers, advocates, and members of DPA, our skillset is needed now more than ever to hold and help heal the pain in our communities and to foster advocacy and committed action towards a better future for everyone we serve. We encourage you to deepen your involvement with DPA or join a committee of interest in order to continue working towards this common goal together. We need everyone's voices in our work towards a better future; we can do this, if we commit to doing it together.

Warmly,

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