

Dear Psychiatry and Semel Institute Communities,

We condemn the police brutality that resulted in the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and the killing of Ahmaud Arbery. These events have again brought to light and exacerbated the ongoing racism, stress, trauma and violence in our society against Black, indigenous and people of color. These horrifying acts of violence occur at the same time that COVID-19 is ravaging communities of color.

This is a time to work together to eliminate the causes and consequences of structural racism and to be intentional to address this as a public health issue. We support the activities and plans of the David Geffen School of Medicine, as described below. It is incumbent on us as a premier mental health organization to respond with our research, teaching and clinical resources to address inequities and injustices. This includes accountably reinforcing our commitment to justice, inclusion, and equity for all, and to the elimination of healthcare disparities. At the Department of Psychiatry and the Semel Institute, we have a special responsibility to find innovative and humble ways to engage California communities and public sectors to address these pressing, vital issues and begin a process of healing.

We are committed to reflecting on our own organizations, increasing representation and diversity of our faculty and trainees, and developing our capacity in anti-bias and anti-racism scholarship and training. We look forward to learning from your ideas on how we can accelerate our progress towards a better, more equitable future. We are grateful for those in our organization who are already working to address these issues, and we challenge everyone to do more.

Sincerely,

Alexander Young, MD, MSHS
Professor and Interim Chair
Department of Psychiatry and
Biobehavioral Sciences
Interim Director, Semel Institute for
Neuroscience & Human Behavior

Andrew Leuchter, MD
Professor and Executive Vice Chair
Department of Psychiatry and
Biobehavioral Sciences
Associate Director, Semel Institute for
Neuroscience & Human Behavior

Thomas B. Strouse, MD
Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs
Medical Director of the
Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital

Eraka Bath, MD
Vice Chair for Equity, Diversity and
Inclusion

Michael R. Irwin, MD
Vice Chair for Research

Patricia Lester, MD
Vice Chair for Community Engagement
Director, Division of Population Behavioral Health

Stephen R. Marder, MD
Vice Chair for Education

James T. McCracken, MD
Director, Division of Child and Adolescent
Psychiatry

Michael Gitlin, MD
Director, Division of Adult Psychiatry

Gary W. Small, MD
Director, Division of Geriatric Psychiatry

Robert M. Bilder, PhD, ABPP-CN
Director, Division of Psychology