

We Cannot be Silent: Using Our Voice to Be Anti-Racist

As I began writing this introduction, a piece typically meant to tie the various *Connect* articles together, I reflected on the stark changes in our country since authors began writing their articles for this issue. First, a pandemic brought substantial change to the overall mental health of the country, including the way that psychiatric services are provided, accessed, and taught. The changes that COVID-19 has brought to the state of mental health in the country and the way that psychiatric services are provided and taught has been a whirlwind that nobody was prepared for. COVID-19 further exposed the racial disparities in services due to systemic racism that have existed long before the pandemic, leading to significant differences in the morbidity and mortality of the illness towards people of color. In addition, the killings of Black men and women exemplified in George Floyd having his breath taken from him, Breonna Taylor shot while sleeping in her home, and Ahmaud Arbery shot while simply jogging, awoke the need to identify the systemic racism that is, and has been killing Black people. As child and adolescent psychiatrists, we see the impact of racism daily in the lack of access to services, the difference in treatment provided to children in school, and the fear and anxiety that Black youth and parents experience doing what should be mundane tasks because of the potential life-changing consequences. We are taking the following initial steps to change our journal.

It is with great humility that we acknowledge our failure as editors in ensuring these issues receive the coverage and discussion they deserve. As editors, writers, and readers, we can no longer be silent bystanders to racism. We must take an active stance to be anti-racist. As an editorial board, we are working with our colleagues at JAACAP and are in the process of identifying the steps we need to take to ensure that our journal is no longer a part of the problem and that we are instead changing the way scientific writing and editing occurs. We acknowledge that this is a work in progress for the foreseeable future.

To start, *JAACAP Connect* is a journal intended to be available for writers at all levels to start the process of writing. The papers and ideas we receive often do not reflect the diversity of our profession and our patient population, so we will actively solicit articles from diverse authors and encourage anyone reading this to reach out to start the process of writing. We also know that to really strive to be anti-racist, we recognize the need to diversify our editorial board, so we ask anyone interested in editing to reach out and we will be actively working to identify editors.

JAACAP Connect will also have 2 upcoming themed issues, the first on COVID-19 and the second on systemic racism, which will include an examination of systemic changes that need to occur to change current practices. For the issue on systemic racism, we will feature a guest lead editor, recognizing the importance of bringing in an expert in the field to ensure that as an editorial board, we are taking steps to be anti-racist in our editorial work. We will also have a continued call for papers on systemic racism, beyond just this specific theme issue.

When writing, authors will be encouraged to think critically about how racism might have had an impact on the topic. For example, when looking at differences in outcomes related to race, we can consider the impact of racism, rather than race, on differing outcomes and what can be done to address this disparity. As editors we will develop guidance questions to improve our approach and our reviews by remaining conscious of racism.

We need to do better, and as writers, editors, child psychiatrists, and physicians, we must use our powerful voice and respond to our duty to actively address racism. And we need your help. We want your feedback, your writing, and your help in editing. We look forward to hearing from you at connect@jaacap.org.

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Editor