



## **ASCA Condemns Violence and Institutional Racism**

(May 2020) The American School Counselor Association condemns violence and the systemic and institutional racism that marginalizes African Americans. ASCA calls on all Americans to end the cycle of racism and on leaders to enact and enforce laws protecting members of the Black community and give them the same opportunities to lead successful and productive lives that other Americans enjoy.

The recent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd did not occur in schools or involve students; however, these and other violent acts can indirectly cause long-term harm to students. Witnessing brutality or experiencing the death of a family member or friend constitutes an adverse childhood experience, which can affect students well into adulthood. More broadly, systemic racism perpetuates discrimination, bigotry and prejudice that has relegated African Americans to generations of poverty, underemployment, substandard housing, poor health care and second-class citizenship.

Black students face [disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion](#) and arrest compared with their white classmates. African Americans are 20% more likely to suffer from [serious mental health issues](#) than non-Hispanic white Americans. [Suicide attempts by Black adolescents rose by 73% from 1991 to 2017](#). The [disproportionate incidence of COVID-19 among the African American community](#) is a startling reminder of the consequences of institutional racism.

Educators have long believed education is the path toward breaking the cycle of racism. Schools can provide every student with opportunities for success after high school graduation and advocate for social justice by ensuring equity and access to high-quality and rigorous courses, by providing safe and supportive learning

environments and by recognizing the intrinsic value of every student, regardless of race, culture, sexual identity or economic status. Schools can and should do better to combat racism and systemic oppression.

School counselors help students cultivate self-confidence in their ability to succeed, understand the importance of life-long learning and develop a balance of mental, social/emotional and physical health. They help students develop learning strategies, self-management skills and social skills such as empathy, social responsibility and ethical decision-making. By helping every individual student develop these qualities, educators help build a society based on equity, tolerance and social justice for all.

ASCA maintains many resources to help school counselors and other educators work with students to help them cope with the current crises and bring about systemic change and has gathered resources from other organizations as well. These resources are available at [www.schoolcounselor.org/anti-racism](http://www.schoolcounselor.org/anti-racism) and are open to all.

“We must work together to ensure African Americans are treated with respect and dignity. We must recognize that all of us have equal rights as humans and have a responsibility to challenge injustice, to stand up, to speak up,” said Katherine Pastor, chair of the ASCA Board of Directors. “The ASCA board of directors and staff are committed to being a part of the solution through systemic change and will announce additional initiatives in the coming weeks.”