



Statement of West Virginia State Medical Association Regarding Racial Violence

West Virginia State Medical Association, through its diverse membership, recognizes racial violence is a critical determinant of health.

Violence, particularly racial violence, must be understood in relation to larger social and economic arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way and lead to premature illness and death.

Racial violence is an injustice, but its harm is elevated amidst the remarkable stress people are facing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The disparate impact of racial violence against Black and Brown people and their communities is insidiously viral-like in its frequency and deeply demoralizing, irrespective of race/ethnicity, age, LGBTQ, or gender.

Racial violence causes harmful health impacts. Research demonstrates that racially marginalized communities are disproportionately subject to police force. There is a correlation between policing and adverse health outcomes.

The trauma of violence in a person's life is associated with chronic stress, higher rates of comorbidities and lower life expectancy, all of which place extensive care requirements and economic burdens on our health care system while sapping the strength of affected families and communities.

Structural and political forces create these deep-seated problems. It is widely understood in medicine and public health that structural racism manifests in differential access by race to opportunities, resources, conditions, and systemic power.

WVSMA urges other leading health organizations to take up the mantle of intolerance for racial violence.

We urge health institutions and physician organizations to explicitly denounce racial violence, particularly in times of COVID-19 and during other public health crises.

We call for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and other such parties to study the public health effects of physical and verbal violence, particularly within racially marginalized communities. We call for uniform training, transparency in reporting and accountability by law enforcement.

Communal violence drives unnecessary and costly injury and premature morbidity and death. West Virginia—our society—demands more.