

## Discussing Community Trauma in Response to Killings and Mistreatment of Black and Brown Americans

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**Scenario A: You have a patient who brings up the subject of rioting, or police killings, or mentions any of the common names of black and brown people seen in the media (i.e. George Floyd, Christian Cooper, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery).**

Provider recommended talking points:

- Tell me how you feel about it? What you've seen or heard about the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor or Ahmaud Arbery? Or the video of Christian Cooper and how he was treated?
- Does this bring up any feelings related to what our community experienced with Michael Brown in 2014?
- Do you have any family or friends who you are also able to talk to about this?
- Most individuals will have a range of emotions from anger, sadness, hopelessness, and fear. This is normal and completely expected. Have you had any of those emotions?
  - o How can I help?
  - o How can the VA help?
  - o What can we do?
- Offer available resources at your VA. If available offer referral to a group that focuses on race related stressors by saying "We have a group here dedicated to supporting Veteran experiencing stressors related to what you have mentioned. Would you be interested in learning more or a referral to that group(s)?"

**Scenario B: You are on the phone with a vet and they do not bring up the subject of the recent community traumas.**

Provider recommended talking points:

- Before we end our conversation, I did want to check in with you to see if you wanted to talk about the recent community unrest over the recent shooting deaths of black and brown people?
- Before we end, I just wanted to see if there was anything else weighing on you that you'd like to discuss? Some of the vets have been pretty upset by the recent shootings of unarmed black and brown people and I wanted to give you the space to talk about that if you'd like?
- Before we end our conversation, I wanted to check in with you regarding reports in the news? Anything specific you would like to talk about? (this is the more neutral opening)

- **If there is a cross-racial provider** – If you would like to discuss how it feels being in the space with a white provider while unrest is taking place related to recent shootings of unarmed black and brown people, I am open to having that discussion.
- Given the historical/intergenerational trauma in the African American community it is understandable how the killings of unarmed black people could also trigger emotions related to slavery, Jim crow, and continued racial systemic and institutional racism. Would you like to explore this a bit?  
I want to acknowledge the happenings in our country right now are impactful – yes, the pandemic, but more so this week with the horrific murder of George Floyd/the ongoing police brutality against African Americans.

Offer available resources at your VA. If available offer referral to a group that focuses on race related stressors by saying “We have a group here dedicated to supporting Veteran experiencing stressors related to what you have mentioned. Would you be interested in learning more or a referral to that group(s)?”

### Things to be mindful of

Use words such as- killings or murders or death of an unarmed black person. To use words such as- incident, event, or misunderstanding, can come across as victim blaming.

It is okay if you have a different position than your patient. Our goal is to build relationships and give them space to talk while we listen.

Be aware of the facts of each of the case, so you are prepared if your patient does want to talk. You can find more information here:

*Breonna Taylor*- 26 yo, AA, female, shot in her home by 3 Louisville, Kentucky police officers <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/black-woman-shot-killed-after-kentucky-police-entered-her-home-n1205651>

*Ahmaud Arbery*- 25 yo, AA, male, chased and killed by 3 white men while jogging in Brunswick, Georgia. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/video-appears-show-georgia-man-shot-while-jogging-lawyers-call-n1201301>

*George Floyd*- 46 yo, AA, male, killed on camera while in restraints on 5/25/2020 by Minneapolis Police Officer. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/man-dies-after-pleading-i-can-t-breathe-during-arrest-n1214586>

*Christian Cooper*- 43 yo, AA, male who was bird watching, when a white woman called police to say “an AA man was threatening her” because he asked her to leash her dog. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/white-woman-calls-nypd-after-black-man-asks-her-put-n1214531>