



Dear Community Members,

A Minnesota jury found former Minneapolis Police Officer, Derek Chauvin guilty on all three counts in the killing of George Floyd and in doing so, many of us recognize the accountability of excessive force in law enforcement against a Black American marks a new day in American History. Many Black and Brown Americans are dealing with the trauma of systemic racism in communities all across our nation.

Why was this verdict different from what we have seen in our American history previously? President Biden answered that very question during a press conference after the verdict was read, "...it took a unique and extraordinary convergence of factors: a brave young woman with a smartphone camera; a crowd that was traumatized — traumatized witnesses; a murder that lasts almost 10 minutes in broad daylight for, ultimately, the whole world to see; officers standing up and testifying against a fellow officer instead of just closing ranks, which should be commended; a jury who heard the evidence, carried out their civic duty in the midst of an extraordinary moment, under extraordinary pressure." It took a community to say in many ways, this is not the community we desire to live within. We too recognize as President Biden pointed out, "[Racism] is a trauma on top of the fear so many people of color live with every day when they go to sleep at night and pray for the safety of themselves and their loved ones." We acknowledge the severe effects racism has in our community and our nation.

The Mental Health Association of Rochester/Monroe Inc. and our affiliates are dedicated and committed to addressing the trauma and lived experience in our Mental Health Community. We recognize the impact that acts of racism and violence have on mental health, especially members of the Black community who have been systemically marginalized. Mental Health Association of Rochester/Monroe agrees with Vice President Harris as she stated, "This work is long overdue. America has a long history of systemic racism. Black Americans and Black men in particular have been treated throughout the course of history as less than human...Their lives must be valued in our education system, in our health care system, in our housing system, in our economic system, in our criminal justice system, in our nation. Full stop."

We welcome you to join conversations with us via our Facebook page on the third Friday of each month as we bring leaders and diverse voices together to discuss topics of suicide awareness, mental health in men, mental health equity and dealing with anxiety. We continue to offer mental health services virtually and have made mental health resources available on our website: www.mharochester.org.

If you're experiencing emotional distress, you can call 1-800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746. Crisis counselors are available 24/7, 365 days/year. Additionally, Mental Health America has made a free mental health screening available here: <https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools>.

Take care and be well,

*Mary Russo,
President & CEO*