



## Hogg Foundation *for Mental Health*

### **The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health Declaration of Racism as a Mental Health Crisis**

The COVID-19 pandemic and the economic recession have [hit communities of color the hardest](#). The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and numerous other BIPOC (Black, indigenous and people of color) Americans in 2020 has sparked a global outcry against racism and police brutality. This long-standing history of violence against communities of color, including [the high-profile murders of Black trans women](#), has led local and state leaders across the country to [declare racism a public health crisis or emergency](#). Declarations like this are an important first step toward racial equity and justice. The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health declares that not only is racism a public health crisis, but it is also a mental health crisis, and it is about time we named it.

To make a declaration like this is to wield a power and a privilege that few possess. Those who are positioned to declare racism as a crisis – [city councils, hospitals, school districts, medical journals, professional networks, universities](#) – are positioned to do so because they have been historically [complicit in perpetuating the racism crisis in the first place](#). It is thus our responsibility to use our voices to call out these wrongs and start correcting them as institutions, communities, and individuals.

This declaration exposes nothing new or previously unknown. On the contrary, racism as a mental health issue has been well-documented, and the extent of its impact is far reaching. Racism is a mental health issue because [racism causes trauma](#). Racial trauma accumulates throughout a person's life, leading to activation of stress responses and hormonal adaptations, [increasing the risk of non-communicable diseases and biological ageing](#). This trauma is also [transmitted intergenerationally](#) and affects the offspring of those initially affected through complex biopsychosocial pathways.

People of color in Texas are [more likely to be uninsured](#) than White Texans, which limits their access to mental health services. BIPOC are also [less likely to seek out treatment and more likely to end treatment prematurely](#). This is largely [a result of financial and healthcare restraints](#) caused by systemic racial oppression, long-held stigmas against seeking help within the community, and the inability of some healthcare providers to establish themselves as credible and reliable sources of support. [Current data](#) indicates that suicide is among the leading causes of death for BIPOC youth. Additionally, given our knowledge of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), the impact of racism increases the risk of health and social problems across the lifespan. Young people of color with behavioral health issues are [more readily referred to the juvenile justice system than to specialty primary care](#), compared with White youth. Encounters with the police for young persons of color can cause [serious psychological harm](#), and can even have [spillover effects on the mental health of people not directly involved](#).

With so much evidence supporting the reality of this crisis, it is incredible that it has taken all of us until now to name it. Still, the power of explicitly naming a crisis, especially in

public health literature, should not be understated. It lays a foundation for [future researchers studying inequities](#), and it validates the threat racism poses to society by equating it with [other threats to public health and mental health](#), like the opioid crisis, foodborne outbreaks, and the COVID-19 pandemic. As a mental health community, we must do more than name these threats in silos – we must act to dismantle the systems that perpetuate these crises and rebuild our systems of care in ways that seek to undo historic injustices and inequities. Here are some key first steps:

- The establishment of an Office of Health Equity, within the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, would be an initial step towards addressing mental health and racial disparities in Texas.
- The Hogg Foundation will use this declaration of racism to guide our mental health policy priorities going forward, which will identify ways to undo the institutional racism embedded into existing policy structures. We encourage those who co-sign this letter to follow suit.
- By more effectively [addressing mental health in schools](#), we can close off the “school-to-prison pipeline” that is a significant driver of racial disparities.
- We should be looking to incorporate mental health supports in all of the places where BIPOC live, learn, work, play and pray—these include coffee shops, barbershops, gyms, parks, schools, places of worship, and workplaces.
- Behavioral health professionals should take it upon themselves to learn about [historical and cultural trauma](#) and the impact legacies of oppression have on the present-day mental health of BIPOC.

Someday, the pandemic and the recession will be over. When will we be able to declare the same about the racism crisis, and its threat to mental health? It is our responsibility to envision this future and work towards it – a future in which all people can thrive in communities that support mental health and well-being.

Regards,

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Executive Director, Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

Co-signed,

Academicians for Equity  
Anchor Counseling & Associates  
Activate Care  
ADJ10CONSULTANT  
Alliance for Greater Works  
Amaryah Journey  
Amma Empowerment Services  
Art Spark Texas  
ASHwell  
Asian American Health Coalition  
Austin Asian Community Health Initiative  
Austin Child Guidance Center  
Austin Clubhouse

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Austin Professional Counseling  
Austin Texas Musicians  
Austin Trauma Therapy Center  
Authenticity Movement  
Bastrop County Cares  
Batton, Counseling, Consulting and Wellness, LLC  
Be Well Victoria  
Bexar County AIM Peer Mediation Program  
Black Family Business, LLC  
Brazos Valley Psychological Association (BVPA)  
Breakwater Light  
Building Community Capacity, LLC  
Building Promise USA  
Center for Violence Prevention, University of Texas Medical Branch  
CentrePath Counseling, PLLC  
Centro de Mi Salud, LLC  
Choices Interlinking Alliance  
Christi Center  
Clarity Child Guidance Center  
Clear Language Group  
Clover Educational Consulting Group  
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD)  
College of Pharmacy, The University of Texas at Austin  
Combined Arms  
Community Advocate  
Consult Us Now  
Contigo Wellness  
Council of Families for Children  
Crisis Intervention of Houston, Inc.  
DEI Consultants, LLC  
Dr. Calvin Kelly & Associates  
Dripping Springs Therapy  
Emotional CPR  
Empower Fort Worth  
Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities International, Inc  
Excellence and Advancement Foundation  
Family Houston  
Family Learning Solutions, Inc.  
Family Service Center of Galveston County  
Family Service of El Paso  
Fanfare! Lutheran Music Academy  
Festival of Arts & Culture-USA  
Hakomi Institute Southwest  
Heart of Courage  
Hearts2Heal  
Hesed House of Wharton  
Hill Country Parenting  
Hope & Wellness Rising  
HOPE Houston Organization of Public Employees  
HUG ME Ink  
Human Service Collaborative  
Humble Beginnings  
Indieflix

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InnerAlly Inc  
Inner Explorer  
Institute for Psychological Services  
Institute of Chicana/o Psychology  
ISHIDA Dance Company  
J. Henderson Education Services  
Kingdom Counseling Services  
Lane County Mental Health  
Leadership ISD  
LifeworkClarity Career Counseling  
Longevity Wellness Group INC  
Lynfro Consulting, LLC  
McCabe Roberts UMC  
Meadowcrest Books  
Mental Health America of Greater Dallas  
Mental Health Match  
Mental Health Peer Services of Greater Fort Worth  
Mia Roldan Austin Therapy PLLC  
MindLinx  
Momentum Behavioral Health Concepts  
Mufasa's Pride Rites of Passage  
Multicultural Recovery Center Inc  
NAMI Central Texas  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Texas  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Latino Behavioral Health Association  
National Network of Intercessory Pray-ers  
New Hope Housing, Inc.  
New Mount Rose Missionary Baptist Church  
Nia Cultural Center  
Ola Wellness  
Olive Branch - Muslim Family Services  
OneSeventeen Media, PBC  
Pam C. Lyons, PLLC  
Prelude Clubhouse  
Presence Wellness  
Prevention Institute  
Project GRAD Houston  
Project MALES/Texas Education Consortium at The University of Texas at Austin  
Prosumers International  
Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurses of Austin (PAPNA)  
Pyramid Consultation Services  
Quality Systems Consulting  
Real Urban Counselors  
RecoveryPeople  
Religious Sisters of Mercy  
Samaritan Center for Counseling and Pastoral Care, Inc.  
San Antonio Clubhouse  
Satcher Health Leadership Institute  
Serendipity Alliance Healthcare Consultants

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Serenity Solutions, LLC  
Set Supper Club  
SIMS Foundation  
Skillful Living Center, Inc.  
Social Responsibility Corporation  
South Asian International Volunteer Association  
Spirit Reins  
TAN Healthcare  
Teens Grounded Inc.  
Texas A&M University-Kingsville  
Texas After Violence Project  
Texas Appleseed  
Texas Council of Community Centers  
Texas Counseling Association  
Texas Criminal Justice Coalition  
Texas Familias Council  
Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health  
Texas Jail Project  
Texas Network of Youth Services  
Texas Pediatric Society, the Texas Chapter of the AAP  
Texas Psychological Association  
Texas Society for Clinical Social Work  
The ACEs to Assets Collaborative  
The Arc of Texas  
The Austin Center for Grief & Loss  
The Center for Relationships  
The Future is US  
The SAFE Alliance  
The Walk for Mental Health Awareness – Houston  
Therapy Place Services LLC  
Third Coast Research & Development, Inc  
Transitions and Decisions  
Trust for America's Health  
University of Texas at Arlington School of Social Work  
University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work  
University of Texas Health Science Center  
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley  
Urban Affairs  
Valeria E. Milstead-Benabdallah, LCSW, PC dba VEMB Psychotherapy Services  
VASA (Voices Against Substance Abuse) Coalition a program of VOICE  
Via Hope  
WhatsintheMirror?  
Williamson County and Cities Health District  
WMS and Associates LLC  
Workers Assistance Program, Inc.  
Yashael Consulting Inc  
YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas  
Young Invincibles  
YWCA Greater Austin

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