



Dear Members, Friends and Concerned Citizens,

The Association of Black Cardiologists and our cardiovascular partners know that these are difficult and disturbing times for you, your families, patients and our communities. We know that at the forefront of your distress are concerns about preventable causes of death, illness and disease. Like cardiovascular disease, acts of violence and racism are core causes of psychosocial stress that promote poor well-being and cardiovascular health, especially for communities of color. Given that heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death for communities of color, particularly African-Americans who have the lowest life-expectancy of all racial/ethnic groups living in the United States, we are extremely disturbed by violent acts that cut to the core of the lives of our community. Therefore, along with other leading health organizations, we DENOUNCE incidents of racism and violence that continue to ravage our communities.

Health equity is our mission. George Floyd and other black men and women who remain nameless and faceless are "At the Heart of the Matter" for the ABC and our cardiovascular partners. Mr. Floyd's death comes on the heels of other recent incidents caught on camera. In another 2020 incident, Ahmaud Arbery was shot and killed while jogging in his hometown of Brunswick, Georgia. Christian Cooper is fortunately alive and well to speak to the Memorial Day incident in New York's Central Park where he was accused of threatening the life of a woman while bird watching. Although the woman apologized for calling 911 to make this false claim, justice does not always follow these filmed incidents. Another senseless death involves officers entering the Louisville, Kentucky home of emergency medical technician Breonna Taylor.

The profound grief and stress triggered by these events, as well as the consequences for black lives, contribute significantly to cardiovascular risk. Each episode has emotional and physiological effects on individuals and all communities. ABC and our partners have been at the forefront of addressing cardiovascular disparities in our communities for decades and it is crucial, now more than ever, that our efforts help to mitigate the unacceptable disparities among our most vulnerable populations. We have the unprecedented opportunity to address these issues through policy and by working with affected communities and the healthcare providers who serve them.

Thus, we stand and link arms in solidarity with efforts to dismantle systems that maintain excess morbidity and mortality, especially among vulnerable populations and those historically oppressed. Indeed, our collective vast membership, many of whom are at the frontlines of clinical healthcare, has taken an oath to decisively and with kindness, compassion and grace act to relieve suffering related to "***I can't breathe***" in order to preserve life.

Stay safe, healthy and connected,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle A. Albert".

Michelle A. Albert, MD, MPH
President, Association of Black Cardiologists

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert A. Harrington".

Robert A. Harrington, MD
President, American Heart Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Athena Poppas".

Athena Poppas, MD
President, American College of Cardiology