

A Message from  
The Office of Race, Equity, & Inclusion  
Massachusetts Department of Mental Health



On April 20, 2021, former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin was convicted on all charges in the death of George Floyd. For nearly 9 ½ minutes, Chauvin knelt on George Floyd's neck as he pleaded and screamed "I can't breathe". This incident spiked international outrage and conversations about racism and police brutality. In the ensuing protests, a reinvigorated fight for equity was ignited, leading to a head-on examination of the issues. However, while the verdict enforces accountability, much more needs to be accomplished before we achieve true justice.

Even as the significance of this verdict is sinking in, police encounters continue to result in tragedies. In the past year, hate crimes against the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities have been on the rise, and mass shootings remain an everyday occurrence. Justice will only be achieved when we collectively root out and dismantle systemic racism to ensure these kinds of incidents never happen again.

Still, this verdict is important. It signals clearly that no one is above the law, that Black lives do in fact matter, and that there is a reason to be hopeful for a better tomorrow. But we must continue to push for true equity and justice. As you go into the weekend, please remember to take care of yourselves because we need you to bring all your energy to our shared goal of creating a society that truly reflects our values of justice, equality and equity. We need you to show up. We need you to do the work. This was a great step, but it cannot be our last.

Sincerely,  
OREI

*The metaphor of Sankofa - depicted as a bird with its feet firmly forward and head reaching back - represents the importance of gaining knowledge from the past and bringing it into the present to make positive progress.*