

# EDITORIAL OPINION

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## Address racial disparity in mental health



**Your Turn**  
Haris Domond  
Guest columnist

While protests continue to address issues of racial disparity throughout the United States, another important issue has received attention through Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Mental Health Awareness Month in July.

BIPOC mental health shouldn't be relegated to one month of consideration. As our country explores the long-standing impact of racism and bigotry, it's also important that we vigorously explore the mental health needs of traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations.

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality reports that racial and ethnic minority groups in the U.S. are less likely to have access to mental health services, less likely to use community mental health services, more likely to use emergency departments, and more likely to receive lower-quality care. Poor mental health care access and quality of care contribute to poor mental health outcomes, including suicide, among ra-

cial and ethnic minority populations. Traumatic events are often considered to be sexual assault, exposure to violence or war, accidents and natural disasters. But trauma can also be carried through generations from historical adversities, violence and oppression that have a deep impact on the way victims live, speak and think and often translate into socioeconomic disparities and mental health concerns.

Mental Health America, a community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and promoting the overall mental health of all, issued a position statement on healthcare reform. "Mental Health America (MHA) believes that all individuals and families should have access to mental health services that are responsive to their needs. This requires minimizing barriers, providing multiple referral and service pathways, redesigning services that are more culturally and linguistically competent and evidence-based, and expanding access in rural and inner-city areas to community-based systems of mental health and substance use services and supports that are integrated with medical care."

This is what Healthcare Network is about. Since 1977 when it was founded

### Guest commentaries

A guest commentary can be 600 words or less on a topical subject. Authors must have considerable experience, public involvement or expertise in the subject matter. Due to the large number of guest commentaries we receive, these may be returned to the author with a recommendation to resubmit it as a letter to the editor within the guidelines for letters. Submit to [letters@naplesnews.com](mailto:letters@naplesnews.com).

as a nonprofit to tackle the medical issues of migrant farm workers, the rural poor and citizens in Collier County, Healthcare Network has welcomed all patients – insured or uninsured – providing the same high-quality standard of care. This is possible because Healthcare Network offers a Sliding Fee Program that reduces costs to underinsured and uninsured patients based on their income and family size.

Healthcare Network's patient population of approximately 50,000 individuals annually is 63% minority. In addressing healthcare disparities by providing quality care to everyone regardless of income or insurance status, in 2019 we provided \$13.9 million in uncompensated care.

Healthcare Network provides cutting-edge, best-of-class integrated primary care addressing the whole person – both body and mind. This integrated care model blends primary care and mental health into one setting, allowing patients to experience a true team-based approach to healthcare. The model is highly effective because patients often seek medical care for physical symptoms that are related to or caused by behavioral issues. In addition, co-locating services reduces the stigma many patients feel when seeking behavioral health services in a traditional setting.

As I watch the protests and nationwide discussions in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd, I'm encouraged by increased support of Black-owned and minority-owned businesses. In similar fashion, it is increasingly important that the community support nonprofit organizations already in place and working to address healthcare disparities to BIPOC communities.

*Haris Domond is a certified mental health counselor. His nonprofit work includes serving on boards of Healthcare Network, Healthcare Network Foundation, Haitian Community Alliance, Rotary Naples Bay, South Florida Parent Center and Naples Church of Christ.*

### TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, Aug. 9, the 222nd day of 2020. There are 144 days left in the year.

On this date in:

**1814:** The Treaty of Fort Jackson, which ended the Creek War, was signed in Alabama.

**1910:** The U.S. Patent Office granted Alva J. Fisher of the Hurley Machine Co. a patent for an electrically powered washing machine.

**1936:** Jesse Owens won his fourth gold medal at the Berlin Olympics as the United States took first place in the 400-meter relay.

**1942:** British authorities in India arrested nationalist Mohandas K. Gandhi; he was released in 1944.

**1944:** 258 African-American sailors based at Port Chicago, California, refused to load a munitions ship following a cargo vessel explosion that killed 320 men, many of them Black. (Fifty of the sailors were convicted of mutiny, fined and imprisoned.)

### TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS

Actor **Cynthia Harris** ("Mad About You," "L.A. Law") is 86. Jazz drummer **Jack DeJohnette** is 78. Comedian **David Steinberg** is 78. Actor **Sam Elliott** is 76. Singer **Barbara Mason** is 73. Actor **Melanie Griffith** is 63.

### BIBLE QUOTE

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

— Galatians 3:28

### LETTERS POLICY

**Note to readers:** The Naples Daily News has revised its guidelines for letters to the editor. Letters can be 220 words or less. We might edit them for accuracy, clarity and taste, to eliminate personal attacks and prevent libel. We might reject letters or return them to senders, who can rewrite them for resubmission. The sources of statistics or assertions of facts that aren't common knowledge must be cited in the same sentences. No poetry, letter-writing campaigns or airing of personal grievances or complaints about businesses will be considered. Submissions must be made online via the form at [naplesnews.com](https://www.naplesnews.com) or by email to [letters@naplesnews.com](mailto:letters@naplesnews.com). Publication is limited to one letter per writer per month. For verification, letter writers must provide a home address and phone number, but only the community name will be published with the letter writer's name. The Daily News strives to print as many letters as possible, but not all letters will be published. Shorter letters are preferred so that more writers can be included. Priority also is given to letters about local events and issues.

## Affordable energy from coal needed during pandemic, summer heatwave



**Your Turn**  
Matthew Kandrach  
Guest columnist

As the coronavirus continues to upend the country, Americans are facing unique challenges. Millions are out of work and struggling to make ends meet. If that isn't bad enough, electricity bills are also rising right now during peak summer demand. That means staying cool has suddenly become an unaffordable luxury for many.

Plenty of Americans don't worry about paying for electricity, though. But back in 2015, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) found that one in three U.S. households was struggling to pay for monthly energy bills. Now, in 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to hammer the U.S. economy, the everyday challenge of paying for lighting, refrigeration, and air-conditioning has suddenly become a more widespread problem.

If that seems hard to imagine, National Public Radio (NPR) just reported exactly this scenario. Families that have been hit hardest by the coronavirus – particularly those that have lost jobs – are now facing difficult, unexpected choices on where to spend their money. Do they pay for air conditioning or groceries? Or, do they spend limited income on prescription medications and other medical needs?

This mirrors recent polling by Morning Consult that found nearly half of Americans saying the current pandemic has left them worrying more about paying for household bills, including electricity.

Complicating things is that electric-



According to a recent study, nearly half of Americans say the current pandemic has left them worrying more about paying for household bills, including electricity. GETTY IMAGES

ity prices are becoming more volatile. Twenty-nine states have adopted renewable energy standards that mandate a costly transition toward more expensive forms of electricity. That's putting an added burden on families.

Americans aren't happy about this. The same polling by Morning Consult also revealed that 56 percent of voters say they're unwilling to pay more for electricity in order to support a pivot away from traditional sources of power, even though such policies are being pushed in Washington and on the campaign trail.

Some states are managing to hold the line on energy prices, since they've taken a measured approach to energy transition that favors a more balanced electricity mix. In fact, states that haven't rushed to retire or replace reliable coal plants still have some of the least ex-

pensive retail electricity. But electricity prices in New England and California, for example, are twice what they are in Indiana or Kentucky.

These are not ordinary times, and elected officials must take stock. While there's still time, policymakers should recognize the need for affordable electricity. As summer heat simmers across the country, and with so many at home and unemployed, it's imperative to keep families safe and healthy. It's time to re-appraise the crucial importance of reliable, affordable baseload power – particularly from modern U.S. coal plants – and refocus energy policy on affordability as the top energy concern for consumers.

*Matthew Kandrach is the president of Consumer Action for a Strong Economy (CASE), a free-market oriented consumer advocacy organization.*

## A handful of strategies to guide you on managing your mental health during these stressful times

**Your Turn**  
Stan Popovich  
Guest columnist

Do you know a friend or loved one who suffers from fear, anxiety, and depression and do not know what to do?

If so, here are six ways on how to help the person you care about in these kinds of situations.

**1 – Learn as much as you can in managing anxiety and depression:** There are many books and information that will educate you on how to deal with fear and anxiety. Share this information with the person who is struggling with their mental health.

**2 – Be understanding and patient with the person struggling:** Dealing with depression and anxiety can be difficult for the person so do not add more problems than what is already there. Do

not get into arguments with the person whose having a difficult time with their anxieties.

**3 – Talk to the person instead of talking at them:** It is important not to lecture the person who is struggling with anxiety and depression. Talk to the person about their issues without being rude. Most people will listen if you approach them in the right manner.

**4 – Talk to a counselor:** Seek help from a professional who can help your friend or relative with their mental health struggles. A counselor can give you advice and ideas on how to overcome anxiety, fear, and depression. Getting help from a professional is the number one priority in helping your loved one deal with fear and anxiety.

**5 – Remind the person the importance of getting help:** One way to convince the person who is struggling with

fear and depression is to tell them what may happen if they don't get some assistance. Anxiety and depression can be difficult to manage and usually these mental health issues won't go away by themselves.

**6 – Find out why the person won't seek assistance:** Address the issues on why the person will not get the necessary help. Many people who are struggling are fearful and frustrated. Try to find out the reasons why he or she won't get the help they need and then try to find ways that will overcome their resistance of seeking assistance.

*Stan Popovich is the author of the popular management fear book, "A Layman's Guide To Managing Fear". For more information about Stan's book and to get some free mental health advice, please visit Stan's website at [www.managingfear.com](http://www.managingfear.com)*