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Subject: Justice in Aging on Racial Justice

While recent census data show that safety net programs are improving the lives of low-income Americans, racial disparities in poverty and wealth continue. In recognition of the structural racism that contributes to these disparities and to multiple police-involved shootings of Black people and other people of color this year and every year, we want to share a statement on racial justice from Justice in Aging.

For 44 years, we've used the power of law to fight for the rights of poor older adults to have sufficient income to meet their basic needs and access high quality, affordable health care, without life-threatening disruptions.

In doing so, we recognize that—because of systemic racism, bias, and discrimination—older adults of color, LGBT older adults, older adults with limited proficiency in English, women, and older adults with disabilities are especially in need of access to legal expertise and advocacy.

In particular, many Black older adults have lived through a lifetime of deeply embedded structural discrimination in housing, employment, education, and lending. This structural racism has kept generations of Black Americans from having some of the things that many white Americans take for granted, including the ability to gain wealth through property ownership, live in a neighborhood with good schools, breathe clean air and drink clean water, and have access to healthy foods. Disproportionate violence and discrimination by police against Black men and women are also a product of this systemic discrimination.

Structural racism, and the resulting inequality in wealth, health, safety, and quality of life, is directly related to the high numbers of Black older adults who are living in poverty. By even the most conservative measures, Black older adults experience over twice the rate of poverty as their white counterparts: 17% of Black older men and 21% of Black older women live in poverty today compared with 5% and 10% of non-Hispanic white older

men and women, respectively. Structural racism has also contributed to a massive racial wealth gap among older adults. The median household wealth of Black older adults is just \$55,000 compared to \$280,900 for white older adults.

In order to address this disparity in economic well-being, it is important that we at Justice in Aging explicitly identify the role structural racism has played in creating that disparity. As we continue the work we have always done using the power of law to fight senior poverty, we pledge to do more to name and dismantle the systematized racism that got us to this point. As a member of the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA), we join our sister organizations in saying, unequivocally, “Black Lives Matter”, and pledge to join with other partners in the legal advocacy community to develop and implement an Action Plan for Racial Justice. [Read more](#). You can also [read this statement](#) on our website.

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