

Guide

The Aftermath of the
Derek Chauvin Trial:

Helping Employees Through Racial Trauma

SERAMOUNT
WE EMPOWER INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES



Since the 2012 police shooting of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, many companies have recognized the impact race-based incidents, subsequent protests, and intense media coverage have on their employees, especially Black employees.

The death of **Breonna Taylor** by police officers in Kentucky on March 13, 2020, the killing of **George Floyd** by former Minnesota police officer Derek Chauvin May 25, 2020, and the killing of **Daunte Wright** by another Minnesota police officer on April 11, 2021 have raised the level of fear and anxiety for Black Americans to new heights.

The verdict finding Chauvin guilty on all counts may serve as a step against systemic racism, but the path to healing is long and it does not diminish the trauma these deaths have caused. As Seramount CEO Subha Barry stated, "One conviction does not begin to put a dent in the systemic racism that our Black brothers and sisters have endured over the years, but it is a move in the right direction."

While racism has existed for many centuries, these recent experiences have escalated racial-trauma in the Black community. **Mental Health America** defines racial-trauma as the "mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes." When people feel the effects of racial-trauma, they start "paying" emotional tax -- the need to protect oneself from unfair treatment by spending time and energy to prepare for potential acts of bias, exclusion, or discrimination. The current environment has elevated the emotional tax on Black employees in particular, playing out in different interactions such as being hyper-vigilant around coworkers, bracing for uncomfortable conversations, avoiding social interactions, and perhaps calling out of work. This constant stress can be overwhelming, often resulting in the need for some employees to "cover" themselves, which serves as a barrier to creating cultures of inclusion and belonging. Covering is a coping mechanism that can prevent an individual from being their authentic selves and is used to manage or downplay differences.

In this paper, **Diversity Best Practices at Seramount** addresses a number of critical topics:

How can organizations best support their Black employees as well as other employees during these tumultuous times? What lessons can be drawn from the allyship and upstander actions demonstrated during George Floyd's murder and the subsequent Chauvin trial?

We will cover recommendations and considerations to assist you:

- Preparing for a Crisis
- Handling trauma in the workplace
- Leadership Actions In a Trauma-Informed Workplace
 - Empathetic Leadership
 - Social Contracts
 - Being an Upstander
 - Taking Care of Yourself

Handling Trauma In The Workplace

Be Prepared for Crises

Workplaces have contingency plans in place for various crises, such as natural disasters, power outages, and technology failures. As an example, when natural disasters hit, **there are laws that are triggered and kick into effect** to protect workers from any loss of benefits, wages, and employment. Contingency and crisis planning take into account the **long-lasting physical and mental-health impacts** such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Focusing on recovery systems after a traumatic event occurs to mitigate those long-term consequences.

When a community is shocked by yet another egregious, hate-inspired crime or workplace trauma. Organizations should consider creating human crises plans or employee contingency plans similar to other emergencies. Companies should proactively have a **crisis-management task team** in place to address the number of issues that may arise. A crisis-management team is helpful to have established before tragedy strikes to help the organization recover as smoothly as possible, while ensuring the well-being of employees is being respectfully considered. Sample responsibilities of a crisis-management task team are:

- Determining if, when and how to respond to a crisis*
- Expanding or creating policies and plans of support such as expanding time off policies for mental-health recuperation.
- Enacting communication plans internally and externally
- Reinforcing available resources such as EAP and access to mental-health sessions.
- Mobilizing community support resources
- Enlisting and preparing managers to enable support for employees
- Establishing guidelines for creating social contracts among work teams
- Engaging safety protocols if needed

Task teams may be composed of but not limited to, representatives from HR, Communications, Public Relations, Community Affairs, Corporate Social Responsibility, Security, Diversity Champions, Legal, and Business Leaders.

- HR leaders can start by reviewing relevant HR policies, benefits and ensuring proper communications are distributed to all employees about resources available through the EAP as well as sending any communications from the healthcare distributors used by the company as it pertains to services available during the time of crisis. Additionally, assess the need to pull in additional resources to support employees, such as me
- Communications teams should think about messaging and be mindful of their impact on internal stakeholders (employees) as well as external stakeholders (community, consumers, investors, suppliers). Different messaging for internal and external stakeholders may be needed.
- Diversity champions are often found in ERG leadership. Encourage them to offer their insights, sit on the task team, and/or give direct feedback on public and internal responses. Understanding a perceived precedent, or lack thereof, is an immense value-add to forming successful responses that will land appropriately with staff members, especially employees of color who may feel responses are disingenuous if not properly conveyed.
- Legal team members are essential in analyzing any relevant policies, guidelines, potential risks and vulnerabilities that may hinder or delay an appropriate response. They are necessary during the planning process for communications to stakeholders as well as determining best paths forward for the company post-crisis and review any policy adjustments.

- Business leaders must be involved at both the executive and manager levels. Create leadership toolkits to prepare and educate leaders on their roles and responsibilities. Ensure priorities and objectives are being re-evaluated and executed as needed, obtain necessary resources, such as expert guidance, provide credibility and authenticity, and serve as the team’s spokespeople.

***Questions a company may ask when determining level, scope and scale of their response:**

- Is this something the company is compelled to address given the mission, vision, and values of the organization?
- Does the company have precedence on this topic or is it setting precedence?
- Is this event an issue the organization is already addressing through previous strategies that have been shared to the company’s stakeholders?
- Who are the stakeholders and how are they impacted?
- Is there a way to involve stakeholders in the decision-making process?
- What are the various ramifications of any action or inaction taken?
- What modes of communication (internal, external, or both) are best in this situation?

In the aftermath of a crisis, this team should:

- Evaluate actions taken and reactions to them.
- Revise crisis plan and approaches based on employee and other stakeholder feedback.
- Update any resources on the matter, if needed.
- Communicate all changes to stakeholders to demonstrate transparency.

For examples on how companies responded after the killing of George Floyd, see Diversity Best Practices at Seramount’s Hot Topic: [The Time is Now for Bold Action](#).

Addressing Trauma

Not all employees will experience racial-trauma and most managers are not mental-health experts so it is important to pull in professionals. Trauma can be challenging to recognize so activate systems proactively in times of crises. Workers who are exposed to trauma can have [restlessness, insomnia, anxiety, detachment, poor concentration, and social withdrawal, among other issues](#). These responses to trauma can lead to increased rates of sick leave, missed deadlines, worker conflicts, and declined productivity. There also may be an increase in health and mental-health claims, disability claims, and worker compensation claims. Mental Health America’s [Mind the Workplace 2021](#) report found 9 out of 10 employees report that workplace stress compounds with external stress, impacting their mental-health and ability to be productive, 3 in 5 employees feel they are not receiving adequate support from managers to handle their stress, and 4 in 5 employees feel emotionally drained, causing 56 percent of employees to look for other positions.

According to the [Anxiety & Depression Association of America](#), Black Americans can experience more severe forms of mental-health conditions because of unmet needs and cultural barriers. Black Americans are 20 percent more likely to experience serious mental-health problems than the general population. One reason for this increased likelihood is because of daily encounters with racism or discrimination. [Mental Health America](#) also lists barriers to treatment that many Black Americans experience, such as not being able to find a mental-health provider who is culturally competent, as only 2 percent of the American Psychological Association members are Black or African American. Further, cultural stigmas and judgments can keep Black people from seeking treatment, even when someone culturally competent is available.

Often employees don't know about available support provided by organizations. As a first step, employers should set their crisis protocols/plans in motion. Mobilize communication plans to educate and share all available resources to help employees mitigate their potential trauma including refreshing management personnel on what safeguards the company provides for employees, such as employee-assistance programs (EAP), mental-health resources, and available access to racial-trauma experts. This can be done via emails from the crisis-management team's HR leader or opening communication threads on company messaging platforms by ERG leaders in their respective communities or by an executive leader who highlight their own experience during the crisis as well. By ensuring a broad reach through different modes of communication, employees can have more opportunities to access services they may not otherwise.

RACIAL-TRAUMA EXPERTS TO BRING TO YOUR COMPANY

ORGANIZATIONS

BEAM (Black Emotional and Mental Health) is a nonprofit organization that offers a mix of services to suit an organization's needs, including executive support, team coaching, peer support training, and supporting Black masculinity.

Black Executive Men is an organization established by Jewel Love, LMFT, a psychotherapist with a mission to provide mental and emotional health services for Black men in corporate America. By offering one-on-one client sessions, Love is positioned to help each individual uniquely and aid in developing plans for optimal health.

Champions Mental Health is an organization with culturally intelligent facilitators that will help in creating a mentally healthy environment to improve workforce engagement and perceptions of safety and well-being. They offer workshops tailored to each company they serve and have proven improvements through their partnerships.

Council for Relationships is a nonprofit mental-health organization that seeks to help people improve important relationships through therapy, education, and research. They provide talks, workshops, and programs for any type of client, and with more than 70 staff therapists they deliver an extensive list of specialties, including combatting and healing from **racial-trauma**.

StirFry Seminars & Consulting is a company recognized by many corporations as having one of the most outstanding cross-cultural and communications training programs for managers, HR professionals, and top executives. They have revolutionized the field of diversity through documentary films and seminars.

Disclaimer: These are suggestions, Diversity Best Practices at Seramount cannot be held liable for any subsequent outcomes.

RACIAL-TRAUMA EXPERTS TO BRING TO YOUR COMPANY

SPEAKERS

Dr. Joy DeGruy, Ph.D. has 20 years of experience in social work and is a consultant to private and public organizations. She examines racism and repression through her knowledge of racial-trauma in order to build adaptive behaviors in the workplace.

Dr. Tara Doaty, Ph.D. has developed curriculum on equity, trauma-informed care, and one for agency supervisors aimed at increasing productivity, skill, supporting staff and silence, and increasing agency motivation.

Dr. Kristee Haggins, Ph.D. is a Black psychologist who specializes in racial-trauma. She is trying to address the issues associated with racial-trauma through Safe Black Space, an organization that coordinates monthly health circles by and for African Americans, as well as Safe Ally Space learning environments, Brave Space Cross-Racial Healing Circles for everyone to discuss their experiences with racism, and Creating Racial Healing Circles that provides professional learning and training to those who want to design and implement their own racial healing circles.

Kamyala Howard MSW, LCSW is the founder, president and lead consultant of WE'RE DIVINE LLC. She creates experienced-based, innovative models that assess one's readiness for change, increase personal accountability, dismantle barriers, create mutually inclusive environments and build intercultural relations.

Dr. Andrew Jolivéte, Ph.D. is professor and chair of the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California, San Diego as well as the inaugural founding Director of Native American and Indigenous Studies at UCSD. He is an internationally-recognized researcher, educator, author, poet, speaker, and socio-cultural critic. He has spoken to the private and nonprofit sectors over the past decade on topics related to racial-trauma.

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RESOURCES ON RACIAL-TRAUMA AND RACISM IN THE US

Racial Reconciliation and Racial Healing is a racial equity tool designed to support groups working to achieve racial equity. Offered here are tools, research, and tips to increase understanding and help those committed work toward justice at every level.

SELF's **Mental-Health Resources for Black People Trying to Survive in this Country** provides resources to solidarity and support, including people to follow on Instagram who aid in mental-health recovery, groups and organizations that can do the same, and directories and networks for finding a Black mental-health practitioner.

Mental Health America provides a **resource list for Hispanic/Latinx communities** that includes Spanish language materials, culturally competent strategies to improve mental-health within the community, and a guide to find Latinx providers.

Podcasts that discuss race and racism include: **Checkbox Outreach**, **Code Switch**, **Seeing White**, **Intersectionality Matters!**, **It's Been a Minute with Sam Sanders**, **Asian Enough**, **Identity Politics**, and **Pod Save the People**.

SUPPORT FROM SENIOR LEADERS

Empathetic Leadership

According to Jennifer Battle, the program director of the Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program at The Harris Center for Mental Health, a **trauma-informed workplace** is defined as one that has a balance between wellness habits and work expectations. Company leaders should regularly get a pulse check from their employees using honest conversations by hosting roundtables and informal meetings between leadership and employees to foster better understanding and address the state of well-being. Newer practices include anonymous on-line discussions such as Diversity Best Practices at Seramount's **Employee Voice Sessions** to ensure openness.

Empathetic leadership is crucial during traumatic crises. One-on-one time with team members, using check-in conversations that focus on the manager listening to staff members' feelings and expectations send messages to the team that they are valued and supported. This time may also be used to redistribute and realign expectations and discuss needed

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—JENNIFER BATTLE
Program Director,
Harris Center for Mental
Health Comprehensive
Psychiatric Emergency
Program

resources. Having strong, trusting relationships and being transparent are also necessary to have successful trauma-informed campaigns.

Employees benefit most from sustained practices that lead to building a culture of openness and trust, such as short and frequent conversations with managers that address goals and instill hope. Leaders speaking up when times of crisis arise demonstrate their support and validate an individual's experience.

Leaders can make bold public statements in times of crisis as well, but the modes through which these statements are made can make or break a hoped for response. If senior leaders make statements of advocacy that demonstrate they and their companies are committed to leading the way rather than following others, align mission and vision statements with external branding, and create a legacy of support for social justice, they can be envisioned as social leaders seeking to make needed changes; social leaders serving as upstanders.

Leaders as Upstanders

An upstander is a person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, particularly someone who intervenes on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied. The world stood witness to [Darnella Frazier](#), the 17-year-old upstander who recorded the murder of George Floyd by Derek Chauvin with her cellphone. Her actions were the catalyst that helped spark an international outcry for justice and accountability. Frazier demonstrated upstander actions by performing this task, and was subsequently called to the stand during Chauvin's trial in an off-camera testimony that was crucial to justice being served for George Floyd and his family.

Championship of diversity, equity and inclusion requires proactive and intentional commitment to understand how to react in tense racial situations. Upstander actions can not only help protect a victim but can also create a stronger work culture as people become more connected with cultural experiences that are not their own. Leaders who provide themselves and their workplaces with the knowledge and skills to serve as upstanders create a sense of safety and respect.

DIVERSITY BEST PRACTICES AT SERAMOUNT: HOW TO BE AN UPSTANDER

Does your organization know the difference between being a bystander and an upstander? Are there programs in your workplace that encourage and teach employees to become upstanders during times of racial tension? Allow DBP at Seramount to aid you and your employees on your journey to becoming a more just and equitable workplace through our workshop: How to Be an Upstander.

In this workshop our expert advisors will:

- Teach employees and leadership what it means to be an upstander through defining key actions they take during tough encounters.
- How to be safe while being an upstander, and what steps they can take once comfortable with the uncomfortable.
- Challenge those in attendance to speak and act from their discomfort while giving resources to help mitigate barriers to being upstanders.

CREATING A TRAUMA-INFORMED WORKSPACE

According to **Farah Harris MA, LCPC**, a psychotherapist and workplace wellness champion, employers should:

- Acknowledge that racism exists. Leadership, especially if they identify as White and allies, should be reassured that taking this first step has a positive gain on workplace culture.
- Encourage employees of color to voice their experiences and call out racial injustice.
- Create psychologically safe environments by elevating the **emotional intelligence quotient** of leadership and staff.
- Have culturally appropriate mental-health care on the company's EAP referral list, when possible.
- Check-in with employees of color. Make sure that if making a statement it is written with integrity, intent, and includes voices of the group you are intending to support. It should be transparent about what the company is committing to and outline timed high-level goals.
- Be a company dedicated to all it takes to be an anti-racist organization through the creation and support of **holistic equity in the workplace**.

A LEADER'S ROLE IN AMPLIFYING TRAUMA-INFORMED WORKSPACES

Providing time and space for employees to process, heal and find balance must be an intentional act by leaders during tumultuous times. Changes in the workplace environment at an individual and team-level can be incorporated to support a trauma-informed workplace that promotes well-being for employees. These tactics can include:

- Reallocating work to remove work burdens during times of crisis and pushing deadlines when times of national racial-trauma occur, allowing employees, especially employees of color, time away from the office to tend to their mental well-being.
- Creating social contracts that embody the needs of employees. Some examples are giving greater flexibility to employees across all roles and job levels, giving proactive health care support with an emphasis on mental-health care, and explicitly stating the company's stance on DE&I.
- Check-in often with employees of color, through one-on-one sessions with managers and group sessions for employees to find communal support. Having senior leaders attend some of these sessions sends a strong message of support.
- Enabling allies to take on work for employees of color who may not be able to have deadlines pushed, but need the time off to recuperate.

BUILDING A SOCIAL CONTRACT

Social contracts are an impactful way for teams to come together to design how work will get done in a way that works for everyone. Social contracts are a set of “ground” rules based on the need to recalibrate and establish expectations between employees and the workplace. They are negotiated and agreed upon by the team.

Examples of measures to consider for such contracts include:

- Create intentional opportunities for regular check-ins with employees
- Work coverage/rotation coverage if needed, e.g. time off for recuperation such as “No meeting Fridays”, no disturbance times
- Identify “non- negotiable”/“negotiable” policies, procedures (e.g work hours were no time off is allowed v times where time off is flexible)
- Establish cadence and methods by which every employee receives timely and credible information about situations and their impact on the organization (e.g. dedicated group chats)
- Create support groups (e.g. encourage employees to video call with one another for support)

To read more on social contracts and building a better work environment, see the Diversity Best Practices at Seramount resource [Making Mental Health & Wellness a Priority During COVID-19](#)

Don't forget to take care of yourself

When employees see leaders taking care of themselves they are more likely to do the same. By paying attention to their own well-being in addition to their employees, leaders demonstrate resilience building, especially when racial-trauma is at play. When executives articulate the importance of mental-health at their company, and when they can share their own well-being, challenges, and journeys, experiences are seen as more genuine and meaningful. Ways to ensure your oxygen mask is on first are:

- Acknowledge and own any mental-health challenges you may be experiencing personally
- Find ways to decompress, destress, and celebrate success
- Take breaks from watching the news and checking social media
- Explore new ways to get exercise and remain physically active
- Pay attention to your health, diet, and nutrition

Cognizance of the new virtual work environment, with many working from home right now, is also important in identifying unhealthy work habits. Leaders should be conscious of sending after hour emails or working more than necessary and normal due to ease of access to the home office. Ensure work is balanced to prevent unhealthy practices and damage to mental well-being at worst. Setting boundaries, establishing social contracts, and having leadership actively follow them is important to place leaders in a position to support and guide staff members through difficult times. By ensuring you, as the company's leader, are taking appropriate steps to safeguard your well-being, you act as a role model for employees, and especially their managers, to do the same.

DIVERSITY BEST PRACTICES @ SERAMOUNT CAN HELP

Employee Voice Sessions

- Moderated by our expert DE&I facilitators, these convenings guide change by developing deep, nuanced assessments of a company's culture through an anonymous platform that captures qualitative and quantitative data at scale. Our experts then deliver an analysis, insights, and recommendations to guide cultural change.

Listening Sessions for BIPOC Employees

- Let our DE&I engagement experts guide sessions for your company's BIPOC employees and/or allies to get a gauge on where your company could best lean-in to support this community during this ongoing crisis. Our experts foster a safe environment creating a forum for your employees to share openly and deeply. Facilitators and participants will share challenges, experiences, and identify opportunities for supportive solutions.

Learning Workshops with Expert-Staff

- How to Be an Inclusive Colleague: Staff will leave the session understanding what it takes to be a true ally, how to identify different allyship behaviors, how to overcome barriers such as unconscious bias, and includes best practices, tools, and actions for inclusive behaviors.
- How to Be an Upstander: This session provides an easy to use technique to address racism actively, how to de-escalate in the moment both in and out of the workplace, and review strategies to mitigate barriers to action.
- Leading Essential Conversations: Participants will learn how to check-in with AAPI employees by being culturally considerate of what they may be encountering outside of the workplace; they will learn best practices around how to navigate difficult conversations and how to create safe space for their colleagues; and how to be nimble and socially responsible during times of crisis.

Contact Donnice Peterson, donnice.peterson@seramount.com to learn more!

RESOURCES

American Counseling Association: [Racism](#)

Asian American Racial Justice Toolkit: [Toolkit](#)

Aspen Institute: [Resources to Combat Structural Racism in America](#)

Catalyst: [Day-to-Day Experiences of Emotional Tax Among Women and Men of Color in the Workplace](#)

Diversity Best Practices: [Making Mental Health & Wellness a Priority During COVID-19](#)

Diversity Best Practices: [ERGs: A Vital Resource in Times of Disruption and Crisis](#)

Diversity Best Practices: [Turbulent Times Call for Bold Actions](#)

Gallup: [10 Ways Leaders Can Improve Engagement and Wellbeing](#)

GLAAD: [Here Are Ways You Can Support the Black Community and the Fight to Combat Racism, Discrimination, and Police Brutality](#)

Guide to Allyship: [Guide To Allyship](#)

Harvard Business Review: [Restructure Your Organization to Actually Advance Racial Justice](#)

Heal Our Communities: [National Day of Racial Healing Conversation Guide](#)

Huffpost: [5 Self-Care Practices Black People Can Use While Coping with Trauma](#)

Kaiser Permanente: [The New Workplace is Trauma-Informed](#)

Manya Chylinski: [Recognizing Trauma in Workplace Colleagues](#)

Medium: [The Four Bodies: A Holistic Toolkit for Coping with Racial-Trauma](#)

Mental Health America: [How to be an Ally in the Fight Against Racial Injustice and for Better Mental Health for All](#)

NAACP: [#WeAreDoneDying](#)

National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare: [Trauma Resource Center Websites](#)

Psychotherapy.net: [Whiteness Matters: Exploring White Privilege, Color Blindness, and Racism in Psychotherapy](#)

Stay Woke: [Learn Build Resist](#)

The Root: [Tips for Self-Care: When Police Brutality Has You Questioning Humanity and Social Media is Enough](#)

TimeOut: [How to Support Black Lives Matter, Wherever You Are](#)

Trauma Informed Oregon: [7 Trauma-Informed Workplace Wellness Practices to Strengthen Your Team](#)

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health: [Trauma in Organizations](#)

More Resources for Therapy

Asian Mental Health Collective: It is the mission of the collective to normalize and destigmatize mental-health within the Asian community by making mental-health resources easily available, approachable, and accessible.

Black Mental Wellness: A company dedicated to providing access to evidence-based information and resources about mental-health and behavioral health topics from a Black perspective, to highlight and increase the diversity of mental-health professionals, and to decrease the mental-health stigma in the Black community.

Inclusive Therapists: An organization that centers the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and the LGBTQ2+ community, honors the full neurodiversity spectrum, and advocates for people with disabilities/ disabled people.

Institute for Muslim Mental Health: This organization is committed to optimizing the Muslim community's emotional health and well-being by mobilizing a network of mental-health professionals to ensure all American Muslims have access to high-quality resources.

Melanin & Mental Health: A company born to serve Black and Latinx/Hispanic communities to promote the growth and healing of these communities through resources on the website, an online directory to therapists of color, and monthly events about mental-health and well-being.

National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network: A healing justice organization committed to transforming mental-health for queer and trans people of color (QTPoC).

NOPCAS: The National Organization for People of Color Against Suicide is a nonprofit dedicated to suicide prevention and awareness by providing training services, support services, and grief recovery services.

One Sky Center: The American Indian/Alaska Native National Resource Center provides resources dedicated to indigenous health care across Indian Country.

Sista Afya: A community wellness company that believes in the power of a village. Through building networks between Black women across the African Diaspora and providing low-cost mental wellness services, they are making access to well-being centered around Black women's experiences.

Therapy for Black Men: Born from the idea that Black men and boys face unique challenges and stigmatizations, this dedicated space for seeking and finding mental-health support was founded. Through targeted resources and a database filled with professionals equipped to support ment of color, users can obtain the help they need and deserve.

Therapy for Latinx: With the belief that access to mental-health is a human right and the dream of a future where therapy is normalized, this company strives to provide therapy options for Latinx and Black communities.