Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc.
EIN: 13-3082899
1629 K. Street, NW #300
Washington, DC 20006
info@blackpsychs.org
www.blackpsychs.org

October 15, 2026

STATEMENT: Black Psychiatrists of America (BPA) Calls for Investigation into Alarming Deaths of African Americans by Hanging

Washington, D.C. — A number of recent hanging deaths involving African Americans has shaken our community. Several of these deaths have been classified locally as suicides, raising serious questions among African American psychiatrists about whether these cases have received the level of independent forensic scrutiny they warrant.

In response, Rahn Kennedy Bailey, MD, President of the BPA, issued the following statement:

> We are deeply alarmed by recent reports of multiple deaths by hanging involving African American individuals across the Southern United States. These events are a painful reminder of past atrocities against the African American community following Reconstruction, including the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and the Jim Crow era, when legal protections for African American citizens were absent or unenforced.
>
> Each of these recent hanging deaths must be investigated. Research consistently demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of suicides occur in familiar, private settings. Because most suicide deaths occur in private settings, deaths involving hanging in public, unfamiliar spaces warrant careful consideration of the circumstances surrounding the method of death. The reported circumstances in several of these cases raise significant concerns about whether local investigators exercised sufficient rigor.
>
> The African American community's concern surrounding these deaths is real and visceral. Our patients have expressed fears for their own safety and for the safety of their families, friends, neighbors, and communities. These concerns exist within the historical context of significant and sustained racial terror. History has shown that racial violence in the United States has been neither sufficiently investigated nor accurately classified.
>
> Today, we call for:
>
> - Independent investigation of each reported African American hanging death involving unusual circumstances.
> - Reopening and reviewing previously closed cases where suicide deaths were not afforded comprehensive forensic examination.
> - Appropriate state and federal oversight where warranted.
>
> Until these steps are taken, our patients will continue to carry deep-seated apprehension, ongoing fearfulness, and a sense of unease about whether they are safe. The lack of

independent investigation in these cases delivers the harrowing message that our lives are not valued equally under the law. These negative impacts contribute to diminished emotional stability and elevate the risk of psychiatric disorders within our communities.

As psychiatrists and members of the BPA, we advocate for the health, safety, and dignity of all persons, particularly African Americans who have historically been denied equitable access to adequate psychiatric care. Every unusual death that impacts the African American mental health community deserves thorough examination.

An annotated list of sources supporting the comments made in this statement is available at: https://blackpsychiatrists.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Annotated-References_BPA-Calls-for-Investigation-into-Alarming-Deaths-of-Black-Americans-by-Hanging.pdf

For more information or to speak with an expert, contact BPA's Media Team at media@blackpsychs.org.