

IMPACTS OF ELECTIONS ON BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR (BIPOC)



A Guide for Faculty, Staff,
& Campus Leaders in
Supporting Students

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RISE Center at UCLA
Heal. Connect. Thrive.

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INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the climate that arises before, during, and after the election has historically presented various harms for marginalized communities. Experiences such as microaggressions, racism, and discrimination have served as barriers to wellness and mental health for many people. Additionally, adjusting to the "new normal" resulting from the onset of COVID-19 has introduced unprecedented threats to our well-being. As a new election season approaches, individuals from marginalized communities may have to relive traumatic experiences, endure stressors others may not understand, and re-energize themselves after social justice discourse.



This guide compiles and analyzes information from the 2016 election to shed light on some of the experiences and emotions UCLA members may be carrying with them this upcoming year. Election season has historically played a crucial role in policies that affect **Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)**, influencing racial climates, and the emotional toll marginalized people experience. Although this time can be emotionally difficult, many do not have the option to disengage from important conversations. This guide will serve as a resource to assist individuals through racial trauma and battle fatigue while promoting sustainable activism.

GUIDING DEFINITIONS & CONTEXT

For the purposes increasing shared understanding of this guide, we have provided definitions that may help to contextualize the information and resources discussed:

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE:

- Acknowledges the citizenships of 500+ federally recognized nations and tribal governments ([French et al., 2020](#))
- Follows guidelines from the American Indian Sovereignty Movement, arguing that referring to Indigenous People as racial minorities erases the history of tribal conquering and loss of national status that came as a consequence of U.S. settler colonialism ([Steinman, 2012](#))

PEOPLE OF COLOR:

- Denotes the social construction of racial groups within the U.S. that are in the minority in terms of political and economic power.
- Highlights the interrelationships among racialized people in the U.S. and replaces terms such as racial and ethnic minorities that could be construed as pathologizing ([French et al., 2020](#))

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color):

- Highlights the unique relationship to Whiteness that Indigenous and Black people have, shaping the experiences of and relationship to White supremacy for all POCs within a U.S. context
- Disrupts calls for “unity” by making explicit dynamics of power across intersectional identities within a racial hierarchy underpinned by Native invisibility, anti-Blackness and White supremacy, and centers BIPOC most at the margins
- Intentionally reframes the Black/White binary to cultivate anti-racist analysis, knowledge, and practice among a wider group of BIPOC, to call us all into racial justice work ([The BIPOC Project](#))

INTERSECTIONALITY

- Intersectionality is a paradigm that addresses the multiple dimensions of identity and social systems as they intersect with one another and relate to inequality, such as racism, genderism, heterosexism, ageism, and classism, among other variables ([APA, 2017b](#)). Thus, individuals are located within a range of social groups whose structural inequalities can result in marginalized identities.

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO POC REPRESENTATION

STRUCTURAL RACISM

Structural racism refers to "a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways, to perpetuate *racial group inequity*. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with 'whiteness' and disadvantages associated with 'color' to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist" ([Aspen Institute, 2016](#)).

Although many of us would like to believe the systems in place are neutral and equitable, there are many examples in which racism and discrimination are embedded in practices and policies. Whether or not the harm these practices have caused are accidental or intentional, the *impact* of structural racism on people of color has been harmful and oppressive. Below we outline some examples of structural racism relating to the election process. While these do not encompass all experiences of structural racism, we encourage readers to critically think of other examples of structural racism and the effects it has on the well-being of POC.



I can't just get over it. It's so hard to get stuff done when so much else is going on.

Politicians always use problems from my community on their platform but never do anything. I'm tired of having my issues used for political gain.

I feel like people here don't get what I go through on a daily basis.

VOTER OUTREACH

A 2018 analysis of Black voters conducted by the African American Research Collaborative revealed that **only 57% of black voters were contacted by an organization to vote**. Voter outreach towards POC, more specifically Black voters, has always been low. This lack of outreach results in a lack of representation, leaving issues important to POC unaddressed since there is little representation of these issues. ([Advancement Project, 2018](#))

Derrick Johnson, NAACP President and CEO suggests that "if America is to become a democracy reflective of its ideals of liberty, opportunity and justice for all – it cannot do so without embracing, engaging and valuing the Black voter and voters of color, particularly Black women. This polls confirms that Black voters and the issues which motivate them can only be ignored at your own peril."



POLLING LOCATIONS

In 2018, 10 counties in Georgia with large black populations closed polling locations after a white election's consultant recommended it to save money ([Norwood, 2018](#)). Voter suppression practices such as these have become common in communities of color. Using economics as a justification for the removal of polling sites suggests that marginalized communities are not worth investing in. Moreover, these harmful practices communicate that the voices and concerns of POC are not unique or valuable. While this is not true, these practices affect engagement in the political process and well-being of marginalized communities.



Polling places are consistently used as political tools to shape the outcome of elections, often with the intention to reduce participation in key neighborhoods, ie. suppressing African American vote by making the poll location too far or not economically accessible.

OUT-OF-PRECINCT VOTING

In early 2020, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in Arizona invalidated a law prohibiting out-of-precinct voting “that was plainly designed to stop Native American, Hispanic, and Black voters from casting a ballot” ([Tufts Circle, 2020](#)). Many argue that policies such as these are racially motivated because studies show a significant correlation between votes casted by minorities and non-English-speaking people and the usage of provisional ballots ([Center for American Progress](#)).

Provisional ballots allow people to vote in a precinct that they are unregistered in, allowing people who are displaced or unable to reach their assigned voting destination on time. Many college students rely on this alternative when they are unable to re-register to vote in their college town before the deadline. Policies that prohibit provisional ballots for this purpose ignore real and perceived barriers marginalized communities face during election season.



IDENTIFICATION

Many states are adopting restrictive voter identification laws requiring photo ID or two forms of non-photo ID in order to cast a ballot. According to the [ACLU](#), "Many Americans do not have one of the forms of identification states acceptable for voting. These voters are disproportionately low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Such voters more frequently have difficulty obtaining ID, because they cannot afford or cannot obtain the underlying documents that are a prerequisite to obtaining government-issued photo ID card."

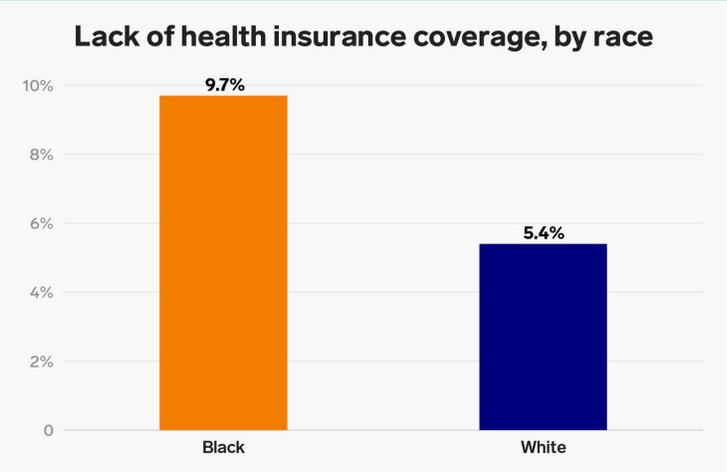
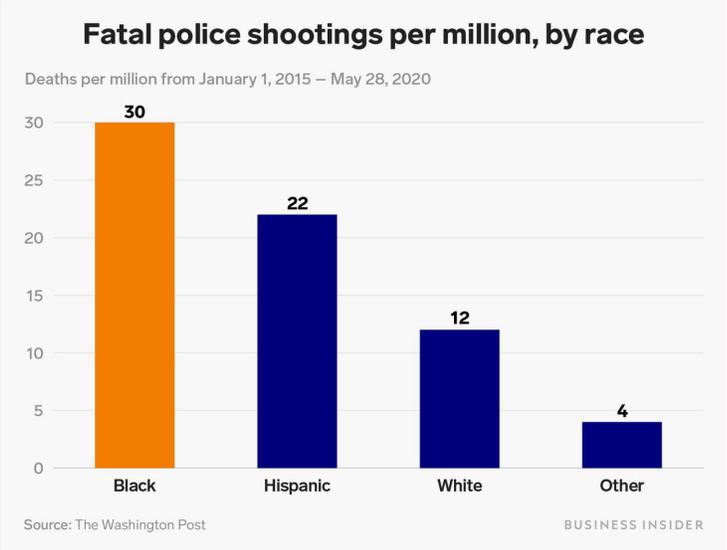
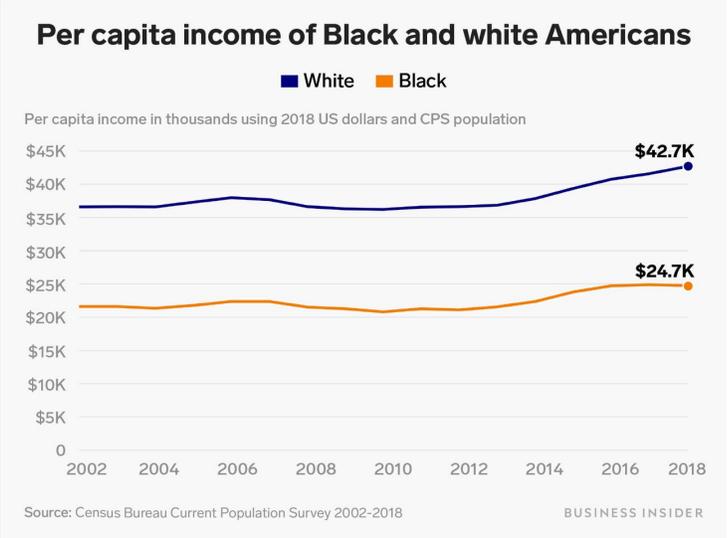
Policies such as these aim to fix a problem that doesn't exist. Voter fraud rarely occurs in person, and these policies do not function as a fail-safe. With the consistent surveillance of POC, the requirement of ID photos creates an implication of suspicion. Minority voters are more often required to identify themselves compared to their white counterparts when voting, which is why many believe these laws are a racially motivated form of voter suppression.



IMPACT

There are many other barriers that exist for people of color when it comes to representation during the election season; this is just a glimpse of the difficulty many people experience in getting true representation for their community. Various aspects of the election process create environments in which the concerns and experiences of marginalized communities are invalidated and ignored. The voices of these communities are often silenced, leaving many issues unique to POC inadequately addressed or unaddressed completely.

Here are some statistics presented by [Business Insider](#). Take a moment to consider what these numbers mean in action. What relationships do you notice. How does this information impact your understanding of voting barriers and experiences of POC? How may this impact our well-being?



THE EFFECTS OF HATE SPEECH

HATE SPEECH

Hate speech is understood as "any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are" (United Nations, 2017). Hate speech can be geared towards people of a certain religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factors. As stated by the UN, "***It is often rooted in, and generates intolerance and hatred and, in certain contexts, can be demeaning and divisive.***" In the months leading up to the 2016 election, hate speech became more prevalent as a result of the harmful rhetoric perpetuated by President Donald Trump. Such speech has normalized harmful and inaccurate beliefs regarding POC, resulting in blatant acts of discrimination, harassment, and racism.

This portion of the guide is meant to inform readers of the effects hate speech has had on marginalized communities. This section will not recount specific instances of hate speech as that rhetoric is harmful and not a valid representation of the people it attacks. While reading, take time to reflect on how you can apply more empathetic and respectful language in your community.

FREQUENCY OF HATE SPEECH INCREASES DURING ELECTIONS

Since the 2016 election, hate speech has seen a massive rise and affected members from countless communities.

- Journalists covering Republican candidates have been the target of various anti-semitic comments and harassment.
- The Trump administration played a role in normalizing Islamophobia with discriminatory travel ban policies and the promotion of hateful rhetoric.
- The Latinx community has endured more instances of dehumanization, violence, and discrimination as a result of the Trump administration depicting immigration as the reason for multiple problems in the U.S.
- The Black community has experienced an increase in hate crimes committed against them, often denoted by the hashtag #LivingWhileBlack.

Hate speech is more than just harmful language because of the consequences it has the ability to incite. Derrick Johnson, NAACP President, says "From campaign to election, this president has spewed the language of division and hate and it has manifested in not only racist policies but in racist acts against people of color and other groups."

Current data has shown a 12% rise in hate crimes over 2016 in 38 of our nation's largest cities. However at least 90 of the largest cities in the nation failed to report any hate crimes, meaning the numbers may actually be higher. (NAACP, 2018)



IMPACT ON MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

INVISIBILITY

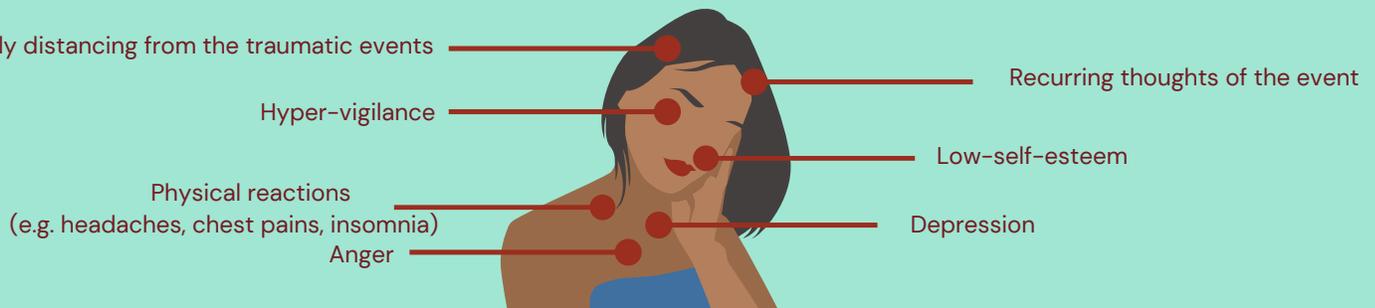
Constantly facing discrimination and exclusion can have detrimental effects on one's engagement and sense of control/impact. People are less inclined to participate in spaces they are actively excluded of, undervalued in, or harmed by.

As seen in the 2016 election, the Black voter turnout rate decreased by 7 points during the election cycle, which was the first decline observed in 20 years (Pew Research Center). Factors such as voting barriers, absence of candidates that understood the issues and values of marginalized communities, and increased hate speech/crimes served as additional barriers for POC. With so many intentional obstacles to overcome, it is understandable that POC felt disengaged from the political process. These barriers can cause individuals to disengage for emotional/mental health reasons or because they feel that their efforts cannot cause significant change.



RACIAL TRAUMA

Racial trauma, or race-based traumatic stress (RBTS), "refers to the mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes" ([Mental Health America](#)). Any individual that has experienced an emotionally painful, sudden, or uncontrollable racist encounter is at risk of suffering from a race-based traumatic stress injury. Racial trauma can manifest itself in many ways, such as:



A research study conducted by San Francisco State University found that the 2016 election had a severe impact, causing symptoms often seen in those with post-traumatic stress disorder

- Throughout the 2016 election, **25%** of young adults suffered through symptoms typically seen in PTSD
- Average stress score of students at Arizona State University was comparable to witnesses to a mass shooting
- Black and Hispanic students scored higher on the assessment compared to their white classmates

Why was the election so stressful for students? According to Professor Hagan "There was a lot of discourse around race, identity and what makes a valuable American. I think that really heightened stress for a lot of people" ([Science Daily, 2018](#)).

BATTLE FATIGUE

Activist burnout describes the accumulation of long-term stressors related to participation in activism (which any activist can experience). People of color, however, can experience **battle fatigue** which describes the "physiological and psychological strain exacted on racially marginalized groups and the amount of energy spent dedicated to coping with racial micro-aggressions and racism" ([Gorski, 2018](#)). Experiencing racial battle fatigue encompasses the accumulation of *long-term stressors* associated with being a target of racism as a person of color.

William Smith, a professor from the University of Utah, explored the effects of racial battle fatigue in Black men at historically white universities and found that Black men who experience "chronic racial micro- and macro-aggressions **will perceive their environment as extremely stressful, exhausting and diminishing to their sense of control, comfort and meaning while eliciting feelings of loss, ambiguity, strain, frustration and injustice**" (Adams, 2020).



THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA

TRAUMA

Trauma describes a response to a "deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, causes feelings of helplessness, diminishes their sense of self and their ability to feel the full range of emotions and experiences" (Integrated Listening). Trauma can be so intense that it "**may affect one's beliefs about the future through loss of hope, limited expectations about life, fear that life will end abruptly or early, or anticipation that normal life events won't occur** (e.g., access to education, ability to have a significant and committed relationship, good opportunities for work, etc.)" (SAMHSA). This foreshortened future mentality can make it difficult for individuals to live in the present. People of color who are experiencing trauma will often not have access to resources that address their experiences from a culturally conscious lens.

- 
- Trauma can cause:
- exhaustion
 - confusion
 - sadness
 - anxiety
 - agitation
 - numbness
 - blunted affect
 - continuous distress
 - nightmares



I can't focus on my assignments. I'm so tired. What's the point? I'm going to fail no matter what I do.

NEWS CAN BE TRAUMATIC

Being an informed voter is valuable for making important decisions on voting ballots. However, staying informed means one must constantly be exposed to very traumatic news events. **Vicarious traumatization** describes how witnessing traumatic events, or even just having knowledge of the events, can have negative consequences on our mental health (Turmaud, 2020). With the onset of COVID-19, many people are now at home being bombarded with traumatic news stories and video coverage. For a person of color it can be especially damaging to their well-being when the traumatic events depict people that look like them or are from similar communities.



I'm scared to go outside. Asians are being blamed for the pandemic and some people are being attacked.



So many injustices are happening in ICE detention centers. I need to protect my family but I feel like there's so much out of my control.



What do I do if I need help? I can't call the police; it'll just get worse. How do I protect myself?

SELF-CARE

What IS self-care?

Self-care is any activity that **we do deliberately** in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. Good self-care can improve mood, reduce anxiety, and help foster a stronger relationship with oneself and others. When planning our self-care routines it is important to:

- **Start simply.** Address what's most important to you in this moment and remember that you can always modify your plans.
- **Actively plan.** Self-care doesn't just happen. Add your activities to your schedule and let your friends know to keep yourself accountable
- **Act consciously.** Ask yourself what you want to do, why you want to, how it feels, and what the outcomes are.

"Caring for myself is **not** self-indulgence. It is self-preservation, and that is an **act of political warfare.**"



Audre Lorde

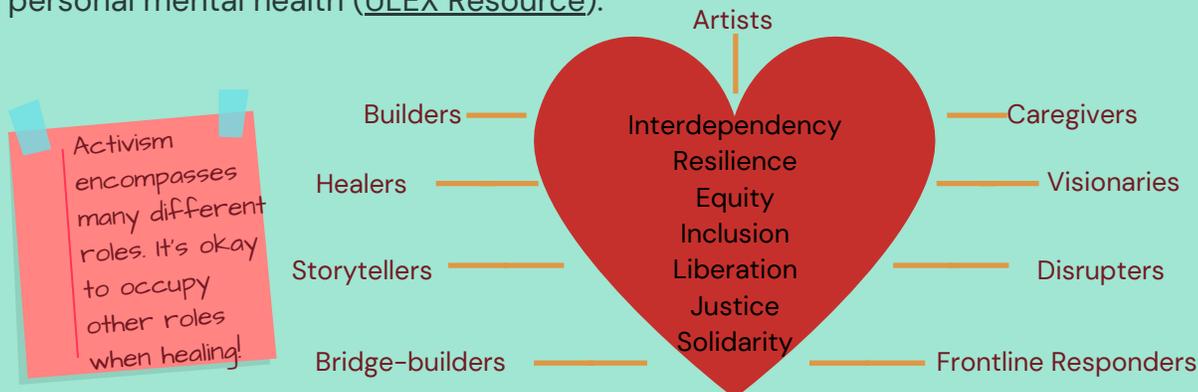
What ISN'T self-care?

Self-care is not something that we force ourselves to do. Self-care is **"something that refuels us, rather than takes from us"** (Michael, 2018). It is about knowing what we need to do in order to take care of ourselves before we begin taking care of others. This is a very personalized form of self-love. It is important to remember that what works for one person may not work for you. That's okay! We all have unique needs to address.

For more information, refer to the 'Self-Care' guide on the RISE website

ENGAGING IN SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM

Sustainable activism seeks to address social justice fatigue and burnout by finding ways to renew and revitalize the individual. This form of self-care allows advocates to step back if they need to take care of themselves, or find a healthier compromise between social justice and personal mental health ([ULEX Resource](#)).



RESOURCES

- **Bias Reporting Form**
<https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Report-an-Incident-of-BIAS>
- **Bruin Resource Center**
Student Activities Center (SAC) Suite B44220 | 310.825.3945 | brc@saonet.ucla.edu |
<https://www.brc.ucla.edu>
- **CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services)**
John Wooden Center West | 310-825-0768 (24/7)
www.counseling.ucla.edu
- **CARE Advocate – Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender Based Violence and Misconduct**
Murphy A Level, Room 233 | 310-206-2465 | CAREadvocate@careprogram.ucla.edu
<https://www.careprogram.ucla.edu/>
- **Center for Accessible Education (CAE)**
Live Q&A on Fridays 11am-12pm | nkehdi@saonet.ucla.edu
<https://www.cae.ucla.edu>
- **Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars**
Schedule appointment: oissassi@saonet.ucla.edu | Virtual front desk Monday-Friday 9am-4pm
<https://www.internationalcenter.ucla.edu/contact-us>
- **Economic Crisis Response & COVID - 19**
310-794-4146 | COVID Support Line: 310-825-3894 | Monday-Friday 9am-7pm
<https://www.studentincrisis.ucla.edu/Economic-Crisis-Response>
- **Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Campus Resource Center**
Student Activities Center (SAC) Suite B36 | (310) 206-3628 | lgbt@lgbt.ucla.edu
<https://www.lgbt.ucla.edu>
- **UCLA RISE Center: Resilience In Student Experience (RISE)**
Monday-Thursday 9am-5pm | RISECenteratUCLA@gmail.com
<https://risecenter.ucla.edu>
- **Student Legal Services**
A239 Murphy Hall | 310-825-9894 | slegal@saonet.ucla.edu
www.studentlegal.ucla.edu
- **UCLA Staff and Faculty Counseling Center**
10920 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 380 | Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8AM-5PM | 310-794-0245
www.chr.ucla.edu/employee-counseling