Elder justice intersects closely with racial justice. Systemic racism permeates all aspects of U.S. society and influences later-life experiences, including elder abuse (New York City Elder Abuse Center [NYCEAC] at Weill Cornell Medicine, 2020). Consequently, racism contributes to the devaluing of human beings that enables elder abuse and other forms of mistreatment.

The following occurrences and concerns offer a small window into the overlap of elder justice and racial justice:

- Lack of culturally and linguistically competent service provision
- Underrepresentation of people of color in many disciplines (including the social work profession), roles, and settings that serve older adults
- Perceptions within specific cultural communities regarding how abuse is defined and how and when help for any concern within a family or community is sought or welcomed
- Connection between lack of financial resources (income inequality, often rooted in government policies that historically favored white people) and perceptions of elder neglect
- Disproportionate impact of homelessness on older adults of color (especially those who are Black), which increases the likelihood of experiencing crime (Mars, 2020)
- Lack of broadband access in numerous parts of the country, especially in the rural and frontier areas where many people of color live
- Discrimination and violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander older adults because of stereotypes about COVID-19
- Disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on older adults of color (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021) and on nursing homes that serve primarily people of color (Gebeloff et al., 2020)
- Disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on young and middle-aged people of color who work in health care and other high-risk environments, often with low pay, few benefits, and difficult working conditions (such as lack of personal protective equipment, unmanageable caseloads, and long hours)
- Assaults and killings of older people of color (especially Black people) by police
Systemic racism contributes to the devaluing of human beings that enables elder abuse and other forms of mistreatment.

- assaults and killings of older people of various races and ethnicities during racial justice protests
- demonstration of immigrants, including older adults
- lack of trust within communities of color toward many systems—such as law enforcement, social service organizations, and health care systems (including mental health and substance use)—because of past and present discrimination
- mistrust within communities of color regarding collaboration between law enforcement and service providers, such as Adult Protective Services (APS)
- the movement to shift resources from police departments to the social services sector
- requests from elders of any race or ethnicity for service providers (such as a home health aide, APS worker, or law enforcement officer) of a specific race or ethnicity.

This short list illustrates the necessity of an intersectional approach to elder justice work. Initiatives and resources to foster such an approach are increasingly available; some brief descriptions follow.

- The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) has published fact sheets about mistreatment of African American and Latino older adults, key research findings about abuse in Mexican American and Puerto Rican communities, and a guide to communicating with people with low English proficiency (https://ncea.acl.gov/Resources/Publicaati ns.aspx#cultural_issues).
- The National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (NIEJI) has published an article entitled Help for Southeast Asian American Caregivers Facing PTSD, Trauma, Racism and Language Barriers for the American Society on Aging (Sam et al., 2021).
- In 2015, the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCAI)—an initiative of the Department of Justice (DOJ) Office on Violence Against Women—published hearing sessions with Red Wind Consulting and other Tribal leaders, leading to the creation of the tool kit Reclaiming What is Sacred: Addressing Harm to Indigenous Elders and Developing a Tribal Response to Abuse in Later Life (Brandl, Davis, & Ybanez, 2016, Liton & Ybanez, 2015, NCAI, n.d.b). In 2020, NCAI and the National Resource Center for Elder Abuse Victims released the tool kit Increasing Access to Healing Services and Just Outcomes for Older African American Crime Survivors (Davis & Block, 2020). That same year, NCAI collaborated with NIEJI, the USC Family Caregiver Support Center (part of the School of Gerontology), and the National Center on Law and Elder Rights to present the Webinar Intersectional and Multi-Disciplinary Look at Elder Mistreatment and the African American Community: Sharing New Resources and Strategies for Impact (Benton et al., 2020). Most recently, NCAI, in partnership with Aisha (another initiative of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin), sought and received a funding from the DOJ Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) for its Ensuring Services to Older African American Victims of Abuse and Financial Exploitation project (NCAI, n.d.a; OVC, 2020). The project strives to increase access for Milwaukee-based African Americans who have experienced abuse in later life to culturally responsive, age-relevant, and trauma-informed direct services and advocacy within the justice system, social services agencies, and community organizations. The project is also developing resources to enhance access to culturally specific providers throughout the field. These projects were all conducted under the leadership of the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life, and many efforts contribute to the foundation upon which intersectional elder justice work can be done.

**References**

- Benton, D., Davis, J., Black, K., & Miklov, V. (2020). MPA was informed by a 13-month stakeholder engagement process (CA DOA, n.d.-d). Input submitted by the California Elder Justice Center (CEJC) during this period addressed, among other topics, the intersection of elder justice and racial justice (CEJC, 2019).

The preceding list is by no means comprehensive. Furthermore, many other organizations have redoubled their racial justice efforts—although without an elder justice focus—over the past year and a half. Visit NASW’s racial equity microsite at www.socialworkers.org/RacialEquity to learn more about NASW resources and advocacy, for example. These efforts contribute to the foundation upon which intersectional elder justice work can be done.

**Initiatives and resources to foster an intersectional approach to elder justice work are increasingly available.**

- **The Bureau of Indian Affairs has developed a handbook for APS personnel working with Indigenous Elders (www.ibe.org/assets/1289-S1653/2013/Awards/protective-services-handbook.pdf).**
- **NCAI has developed many of its publications in multiple languages, including Armenian, Chinese, Farsi, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese (https://ncea.acl.gov/Resources/Publications.aspx). This process involved not only professional translation, but also content review and revision for cultural relevance.**
- **The National Hispanic Council on Aging has published an article on helping Latinos address Medicare fraud (www.nhca.org/tag/cultural-competency/).**
- **The Southeast Asian Resource Action Center (SEARAC) and the Diverse Elders Coalition (to which SEARAC belongs) wrote a 2021 article entitled Help for Southeast Asian American Caregivers Facing PTSD, Trauma, Racism and Language Barriers for the American Society on Aging (Sam et al., 2021).**

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The National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (NIEJI), NCEA, and the University of Southern California (USC) Keck School of Medicine have collaborated on multiple fact sheets on elder justice in Indian Country (www.nieji.org/publications). NCEA also has a Web page dedicated to Tribal resources (https://ncea.acl.gov/Resources/Publications/tribal.asp). NCEA offers a tool kit for Tribal multidisciplinary teams focused on elder abuse, sometimes known as Elder protection teams (www.nieji.org/tribalelder-protection-team), online interactive educational modules (www.nieji.org/training), and a map of Tribal hotlines (www.nieji.org/hotlines).

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has developed a handbook for APS personnel working with Indigenous Elders (www.nieji.org/assets/1289-5165/2013%20adult%20protective%20services-handbook.pdf).

NCEA has developed many of its publications in multiple languages, including Armenian, Chinese, Farsi, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese (https://ncea.acl.gov/Resources/Publications/tribal.asp). This process has involved not only professional translation, but also content review and revision for cultural relevance.

The National Hispanic Council on Aging has published an article on helping Latinos address Medicare fraud (www.nhcoa.org/tag/cultural-competency/).

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NYCEAC at Weill Cornell Medicine has launched a racial equity initiative (https://nyceac.org/racial-equity/).

Activities to date include a statement against racism on June 23, 2020 (NYCEAC, 2020b), biweekly internal discussions addressing the intersection of elder justice and racial justice for service providers (such as a home health aide, APS worker, or law enforcement officer) of a specific race or ethnicity.

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References
Organizations whose work demonstrates the intersectionality of elder justice and racial justice include the National Center on Elder Abuse, National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative, National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life, and NYC Elder Abuse Center at Weill Cornell Medicine.


New York City Elder Abuse Center at Weill Cornell Medicine. (2020b, June 19). Racial Equity Project: NYCEAC@WCM stands against racism. https://nyceac.org/racialequity/


The author thanks NASW members Georgina Anetzberger (Ohio Chapter), Bonnie Brandl (Colorado Chapter), and Risa Breckman (New York City Chapter), whose collaboration and expertise enriched this publication.
Elder Justice Intersects Closely With Racial Justice

Systemic racism permeates all aspects of U.S. society and influences later-life experiences, including elder abuse (New York City Elder Abuse Center [NYCEAC] at Weill Cornell Medicine, 2020). Consequently, racism contributes to the devaluing of human beings that enables elder abuse and other forms of mistreatment.

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