



THE ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PSYCHOLOGISTS, INC.

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The American Psychological Association (APA) cannot simply dismiss the full history of Euro-American psychology that is rooted in a legacy of the pathology of Whiteness with a simple apology and questionable claims to now combat racism, oppression, and white hegemony.

The APA, in fact, has played a large hand in the oppression of the Black community in education, health, housing, the media, the work sector, criminal justice, and practically all domains of life necessary to thriving and optimal well-being. Borrowing again from this transformative concept of *Sankofa*, we also know that “the white man will try to satisfy us with symbolic victories rather than economic equity and real justice,” underscoring that while the apology and resolutions may appear genuine, it is far too late for it to mean anything to Black America and sorely lacks several opportunities for real and meaningful apology and atonement, which are inextricably linked to restitution and restoration.

The [APA’s apology and resolution](#) failed to rise to honesty and believability in both semantics and pragmatics in the same way that the Association “failed in its role leading the discipline of psychology, was complicit in contributing to systemic inequities, and hurt many through racism, racial discrimination, and denigration of people of color, thereby falling short on its mission to benefit society and improve lives, pp. 5” by not consulting with the ABPsi and other ethnic Associations on matters which directly and indirectly impact our communities.

In the context of the unjust killings of Black folx across the diaspora, we are morally required to call the names of [George Floyd](#), [Breonna Taylor](#), [Ahmaud Arbery](#), [Emmett Till](#), [Medgar Evers](#), [Malcolm X](#). Too many Black children, women, and men have unknowingly served as martyrs of racial awakening with the most recent serving as a catalyst to move the world to action against global anti-Black racial oppression. Name calling is an African cultural practice which honors our ancestors and sustains their legacy beyond their physical experience. We call this practice of looking back to inform and map an optimal future *Sankofa* and it is also an African cultural practice that fuels our resistance and resilience and ultimately, makes skeptics of Black folx who know when we are being pandered to. We have been calling names out for centuries to remind us of the atrocities we have historically, and contemporarily, endure(d) at the hands of White America and its institutions (e.g., the American Psychological Association).

The APA's history is herein grounded in this reality. It is cancerous. It is evidenced in the exclusion of the first use of psychology to promote a belief in racial hierarchy in the Cummings Center Group's chronology from 1850-1900. Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright (circa 1852) claimed to have discovered or identified two "mental diseases" that afflicted enslaved Africans and justified enslavement. According to Cartwright, "[Drapetomania](#)" caused Black people to have an uncontrollable urge to run away from their masters, and "[Dysaesthesia Aethiopica](#)" was evidenced by disobedience, answering disrespectfully and refusing to work. The psychiatric treatment, psychological cure, or therapeutic intervention for Drapetomania was to "whip the devil out of" the afflicted and for Dysaesthesia Aethiopica, the patient was forced to undertake extremely difficult and hard labor which "sent vitalized blood to the brain to give liberty to the mind" (see "*Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race*"). By choosing to conceal this information the APA is engaging in revisionist historiography by attempting to shape a narrative that is pleasing to, and acceptable by, its constituents.

The APA provides myriad resolves to combat racism and oppression in education, science, health care, work and economic opportunities, criminal and juvenile justice, early childhood development, and government and public policy which pledge to "reaffirm" "advocate" "affirm" and "support" efforts to increase the scholarship, visibility, and success of marginalized trainees and professionals in the field of psychology. While these resolutions are idealistic even for an institution as large as the APA, they should have, and by their own accord have been, implementing these practices in alignment with their [Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct](#) and frequent mention of "cultural competence" throughout the [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition](#). While the APA promotes itself as a "culturally competent" organization that is anti-racist the fact that there are [4% of Black Psychologists](#) in the field compared to 86% of white Psychologists, [white psychology curriculums](#) dominate undergrad and graduate programs, and [Black students make up 7.08% of doctoral students](#) versus the 12.6% they comprise in the population in general emphasize the contrary. Additionally, in failing to acknowledge and own this reality, the APA's endeavor to be anti-racist misses the mark and exemplifies that their resolution and apology is simply a means by which to absolve themselves of white guilt and indeed "[this resolution is in itself necessary but not sufficient.](#)" This apology is at best patronizing and at worst, an intentional act of obfuscation designed to mask the truth.

Oppression is a corollary of racism, white supremacy, and its subsequent hoarding of power. To even begin to make good on its promises, the APA must empower the survivors of its ongoing terrorism. They may accomplish this by abdicating their unjustifiable claim to be the arbiter of universal human functioning and by granting full authority to the Association of Black Psychologists, the Hispanic Psychological Association, the Society of Indian Psychologists, the Association of Asian American Psychologists, and other Ethnic centered Associations to establish their own independent and separate codes of ethics, licensing, certification and education and training.

To accept the APA's apology would be to accept the accuracy of a fabricated historical record and negate the mission and vision of the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi). The Association of Black Psychologists continues its 53-year commitment made by its founding members, to the liberation of the African mind, the empowerment of the African Character, and the enlivenment and illumination of the African Spirit. ABPsi continues to forge ahead in the

reclamation and application of hundreds of years of African deep thought and sacred science - African/Black Psychology, while always countering the APA's destructiveness, revisionist history, and attempts at creating a new narrative. Most importantly, the ABPsi will continue our teaching, research, counseling, advocacy (for our graduate students and "*our way*" of practices), and other work, singularly and unapologetically addressing the restoration of wellness to African persons, families, and communities worldwide. To understand the true meaning of anti-racism, empowerment, and full sovereignty readers may visit or contact the Association of Black Psychologists at: www.abpsi.org.

