

1 Draft APA Resolution

2 Apology for Psychology's Role in Promoting Racism, Discrimination, and Human Hierarchy

3 As the United States strengthens its focus on addressing the destructive, longstanding impacts of  
4 societal racism, the field of psychology must also grapple with its own role in promoting racism,  
5 discrimination and human hierarchy. This resolution focuses on acknowledging psychology's role in  
6 creating, perpetuating, and failing to challenge racism and the harms that have been inflicted on  
7 communities of color as a result. In offering an apology for these harms, APA acknowledges that this  
8 action signifies only the beginning of a long-term process of reconciliation and repair for past harms and  
9 ongoing inequities in the field.

10 WHEREAS, in February 2021, APA "reaffirm[ed] its denunciation of racism in all forms for its destructive  
11 psychological, social, educational, and economic effects on human rights and human welfare throughout  
12 the lifespan;" committed to "undertake an analysis of psychology's history, with the goal of  
13 understanding the harms that marginalized racial groups have experienced and the actions necessary to  
14 create a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive association, discipline, and society going forward;" and  
15 established a standard definition of racism and a framework for understanding the following four levels  
16 of racism in designing and implementing antiracist research, education, training, policy, and clinical  
17 applications through the lens of intersectionality: structural racism, institutional racism, interpersonal  
18 racism, and internalized racism (APA, 2021c);

19 WHEREAS, this framework for understanding the four levels of racism recognizes that racism is woven  
20 into the fabric of the historical origins of the United States (APA, 2021c).

21 WHEREAS psychologists understand that racial inequities result from laws, systems, policies, practices,  
22 and cultural narratives that reflect racial bias and White supremacist ideology, and that psychology has  
23 an important role and responsibility to disarm and dismantle racism in all its forms (APA, 2021c; Yearby  
24 et al., 2020).

25 WHEREAS, psychologists know that racism harms all people and infects their beliefs, ways of  
26 understanding the world, and interpersonal interactions (C.P. Jones, 2003).

27 WHEREAS, APA observes that racist behaviors and ideologies are evidenced in the disproportionate  
28 health impacts of pandemics and disease on Indigenous people (such as the Anishinabe, Diné,  
29 Haudenosaunee, Lakota, and Tsalagi), Black/African American, Asian-American/Pacific Islander, Latina/o  
30 and Latinx, and American Arab, Middle Eastern/North African peoples and communities (collectively  
31 referred to as communities of color); the tragic killings of Black people at the hands of law enforcement;  
32 the surge in hate crimes against Asian-Americans; and the inhumane treatment of Latina/o and Latinx  
33 migrants at the U.S. border (APA, 2019; APA, 2020a; APA, 2020b; APA, 2021a; APA 2021b).

34 WHEREAS, these and so many other events have exposed long-simmering racial inequities and injustices  
35 and have prompted a national conversation about systemic racism (APA, 2020a; APA, 2021c).

36 WHEREAS, APA acknowledges that American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African individuals have  
37 often been excluded from statements regarding the impact of racism and discrimination and makes an  
38 affirmative statement regarding their inclusion in this resolution (Awad, Kia-Keating, & Amer, 2019).

39 WHEREAS, APA recognizes that psychology cannot harness its potential to disarm and dismantle racism  
40 without addressing its own history of racism and its involvement in White supremacy (APA, 2021c).  
41 Since its origins as a scientific discipline in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, psychology has, through acts of  
42 commission and omission, caused great harm to communities of color. These harms are part of a larger  
43 problematic culture in psychology, rooted in hegemonic psychological science and practice. This culture,  
44 evident from the very beginnings of the field, is inseparable from the social and political landscape of  
45 the U.S. at that time. Psychology developed under these conditions, helped to create, express, and  
46 sustain them, and continues to bear their indelible imprint ( Adams, Kurtiş, Gómez, Molina, & Dobles,  
47 2018).

48 WHEREAS, to catalogue the long history of harms to communities of color and to inform an apology and  
49 a path forward toward healing and reconciliation, APA commissioned historical research by the  
50 Cummings Center for the History of Psychology at the University of Akron (Cummings Center, 2021).  
51 Recognizing that existing historical records and narratives have been centered in Whiteness, it was also  
52 imperative to capture oral history and the lived experiences of communities of color through a series of  
53 listening sessions and surveys.

54 WHEREAS psychologists established and participated in scientific models and approaches rooted in  
55 scientific racism in place societally when the discipline was first founded (Winston, 2020);

56 WHEREAS psychologists created, sustained, and promulgated ideas of human hierarchy through the  
57 construction, study, and interpretation of racial difference ( Guthrie, 2004; Jackson & Weidman, 2004;  
58 Richards, 1997);

59 WHEREAS psychologists promoted eugenics defined as the idea that racial differences are biologically  
60 based and fixed (Tucker, 1994; Yakushko, 2019);

61 WHEREAS psychologists used psychological science and practice to support segregated and subpar  
62 education for many children of color (Jackson, 2005; Kazembe, 2021; Richards, 1997);

63 WHEREAS psychologists created and promoted widespread use of psychological tests and instruments  
64 that discriminated against many communities of color (Fass, 1980; Kaestle, 2013; Kevles, 1968);

65 WHEREAS psychologists failed to take concerted action in response to calls for an end to biased testing  
66 and psychometric racism (Pickren & Tomes, 2002; Williams & Mitchell, 1978);

67 WHEREAS psychologists supported the widespread use of educational assessments and interventions  
68 that harmed many communities of color (Garcia, 2015; Gonzales, 2013; Kaestle, 2013);

69 WHEREAS psychologists provided ideological support for and failed to speak out against the colonial  
70 framework of the government-sponsored industrial (boarding) and day school systems for Indigenous  
71 youth (Cross, 1999; Garth, 1927);

72 WHEREAS psychologists created, sustained, and promoted a view of communities of color as deficient or  
73 damaged (Jones, 1991; Richards, 1997; White, 1984);

74 WHEREAS psychologists embraced and used eugenics to promote applied psychological science and  
75 practice to support its aims, including segregation, sterilization, and anti-marriage laws (Jackson, 2005;  
76 Yakushko, 2019; Winston, 1998);

77 WHEREAS psychology has minimized, marginalized, and exploited psychologists from communities of  
78 color and their contributions to the field (Guthrie, 2004),

79 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA sincerely and formally acknowledges, takes responsibility for, and  
80 apologizes to communities of color for these actions and inactions;

81 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA reaffirms its rejection of racism and racist ideologies and its  
82 commitment to dismantling racism in all forms, including within the discipline itself;

83 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA rejects hegemonic science and will continue to oppose it through  
84 equity-focused approaches to training, peer review, and publication.

85 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA reaffirms that race is a social construct with no genetic or  
86 biological basis, that physical characteristics are not linked to psychological characteristics, and debunks  
87 the notion that different groups can be ranked hierarchically on the basis of psychological qualities.

88 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, consistent with the 2012 Final Report of the APA Presidential Task  
89 Force on Preventing Discrimination and Promoting Diversity, the 2017 APA Multicultural Guidelines, the  
90 2019 Race and Ethnicity Guidelines, and the 2021 Resolution on Human Rights, APA will encourage  
91 psychologists and trainees to question the appropriateness of Western-oriented clinical practice for  
92 diverse populations, gain awareness of other healing approaches emanating from Indigenous and other  
93 non-Western traditions, and continue to learn and update new information on racism in clinical practice  
94 and on the pursuit of equity, diversity, and inclusion in health service psychology.

95 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA commits to developing future policy based on a broad definition  
96 of research that appropriately includes knowledge by, for, and about communities of color, and reflects  
97 this knowledge in policy recommendations.

98 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA will continue to work to identify psychology's significant potential  
99 to dismantle racism in important systems and sectors of American life.

100 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA encourages scientific research that is based on the lived  
101 experiences and perspectives of communities of color (and approved by them) in order to develop  
102 needed interventions created for diverse populations and delivered by diverse providers.

103 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA will examine, review, and permanently revise the use of  
104 derogatory terminology when addressing communities of color (e.g. use of the word "minority") from its  
105 journals, correspondence, titles, etc.

106 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that APA acknowledges that an apology *absent ameliorative action* is  
107 without impact, and thus commits to the following immediate actions of remedy and repair, in addition  
108 to long terms actions specified above:

- 109 (1) Pursue additional group-specific processes that will result, not later than August 2022, in  
110 proposed Council action that will benefit those members of communities of color, including  
111 those who are students in psychology programs, psychologists on faculty in academia,  
112 health services psychologists, and other psychology professionals and providers.
- 113 (2) As developed by these group-specific processes, recommendations for action should focus  
114 on improving psychology-related outcomes in communities of color to meet the following

115 outcomes: (a) mechanisms for mentorship of communities of color; (b) Indigenous  
116 territorial acknowledgments at APA conventions and events; (c) improve representation of  
117 communities of color throughout APA's elected and appointed leadership; (d) greater  
118 exchanges among leaders of APA and psychologist of color associations including, but not  
119 limited to, attendance at each other's respective conferences and meetings; and (e)  
120 mechanisms to increase participation and success rates for psychologists of color in  
121 academia, publishing, and governmental licensing.

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