

CCHR & Racism Task Force Agrees American Psychiatry Has a Lot to Apologize For

During Mental Health Awareness Month & APA Annual Congress, head of Task Force Against Racism and NAACP Chapter President, warns against psychiatric treatment

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, May 4, 2021 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Mental Health Awareness Month started with a national psychiatric congress devoting three days to a discussion about the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) recent apology for its 176-year pivotal role in reinforcing racism. But in response, Citizens Commission on Human Rights' Task Force Against Racism and Modern-Day Eugenics has launched a campaign to better educate African-, Hispanic- and Indigenous



During Mental Health Awareness Month & APA Annual Congress, Rev. Shaw, head of the Task Force Against Racism & Modern-Day Eugenics and NAACP Chapter President, warns against psychiatric treatment offered as “amends” for perpetuating racism to minorities.

Americans about the risk of accepting “amends” offered in the form of equal access to and more psychiatric treatments. CCHR and the Task Force applauded a New York Times article published on April 30, 2021 that also said the APA had a “lot to apologize for,” but wants far greater disclosure of abusive mental health and genocidal practices, so that minorities are given full transparency.[1]

The NYT discussed the APA's recent admission that psychiatrists stereotyped African Americans as “primitive,” “savage,” and aggressive. The author noted, “White psychiatrists have pathologized Black behavior for hundreds of years, wrapping up racist beliefs in the mantle of scientific certainty....” The article was headlined “Psychiatry Confronts Its Racist Past, and Tries to Make Amends: But there is a lot to apologize for—from Reconstruction to today.” It said the APA is now “confronting” and “trying to make an amends” and had pledged to institute “anti-racist practices” aimed at ending the inequities of the past in care, which includes access to more psychiatric treatment.

“That was a red flag to a bull,” stated Task Force founder and spokesperson, Rev. Frederick Shaw,



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Rev. Frederick Shaw

the president of the NAACP Inglewood-South Bay chapter and a spokesperson on racism and children’s rights for CCHR International for nearly three decades. He said that the priorities that are being spelled out with this apology read more like psychiatrists wanting access to more insurance coverage and to eliminate diagnostic biases as though this is going to give African Americans and other minorities access to better diagnosing. “There is no discussion of how unscientific diagnoses already given to whites could lead to an even greater overrepresentation of minorities being subjected to mental health treatment that

potentially harms more than help,” he said.

Shaw said he is borrowing from a statement from Dr. Johannes Meyer-Lindenberg, former president of the German Society of Psychiatrists, Psychotherapists and Neurologists (DGPPN), who, in 1990, issued a moderate admission of German psychiatry’s role in euthanasia in psychiatric hospitals and concentration camps during WWII. With this role kept secret at war’s end, following the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal, German psychiatrists were put in charge of caring for war-ravaged people to determine the degree of their “psychic damage.” Meyer-Lindenberg said this was “very painful to the victims, who often had to encounter the very people who once inflicted their tortures; the grim phrase the ‘second road to sacrifice’ was coined.”[2]

The same thing is happening now in the wake of psychiatric racism in America, Shaw insists.

In 2010, the DGPPN issued a stronger admission that Nazi psychiatrists invented the ideas to “scientifically” justify euthanasia—based on eugenics—and they had condemned people, betrayed the patients entrusted to them, lied to them, forcibly sterilized and killed them. At least 250,000 to 300,000 mentally and physically ill people were victims of this and killings occurred even weeks after the end of the war. The association also named key psychiatrists involved, including former presidents of the organization, that they denounced and stripped them of their titles.[3] It produced its own traveling exhibit about the horrors Nazi psychiatrists had perpetuated, although Rev. Shaw said CCHR had produced a traveling exhibition long before this that had raised awareness to hundreds of thousands of people.

Shaw says there’s no evidence of this level of apology with the APA. “Amends means making up the damage, compensating for that damage and putting responsible heads on the block—stripping them of their presidential status—dating back to the father of American psychiatry, Benjamin Rush, a slave owner who signed the Declaration of Independence while pathologizing African Americans as mentally diseased to justify their segregation. Mental health month and current public outrage over racism should not be used to forward an agenda that will use African American trauma to increase profits,” he said.

The Times said psychiatry has a “history of pathologizing Black people — to regard Black communities as seething cauldrons of psychopathology,” as three reform-minded authors put it in 1970 in the American Journal of Psychiatry — and has deterred some Black medical students from entering the profession. “This should remain,” Rev. Shaw said. “We don’t need more Black or minority medical students studying psychiatry as a specialty. They need to study workable medical methods to provide the best medical care possible.” he said.

He recommended that all medical trainees and families read the [Mental Health Human Rights Declaration](#) on his group’s website that was developed to cover the rights that all should be given, regardless of race, political ideology, religious, cultural or social beliefs, and to fight the systemic abuse of African Americans and people of color.

Quoting from this, Rev. Shaw summed up, “Racism is a public crisis and inflicted racial trauma on mental health is real, and may lead to deleterious health outcomes, but in and of itself, it is not a physical disease or illness. There are no scientific/medical tests to confirm any diagnoses of psychiatric or mental disorder, as there are for medical illnesses and diseases. You have the right to question any psychiatric diagnosis and demand scientific evidence and physical tests to substantiate it.”

[1] Cheriss May, “Psychiatry Confronts Its Racist Past, and Tries to Make Amends: But there is a lot to apologize for — from Reconstruction to today,” The New York Times, 30 Apr. 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/30/health/psychiatry-racism-black-americans.html>

[2] Meyer-Lindenberg, J., “The Holocaust and German Psychiatry,” British Journal of Psychiatry, 159(01), 1991, 7–12. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.159.1.7>

[3] <https://www.cchrnt.org/2021/01/26/american-psychiatric-associations-apology-for-harming-african-americans-rejected/>, citing: “Psychiatry under National Socialism – Remembrance and Responsibility,” Speech by Prof. Frank Schneider, Nov. 2020, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00406-011-0243-1>

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