

American Psychological Association Apology for Harming People of Color Does Not Go Far Enough, Human Rights Group Says

Psychologists' history of systemic racism is still ingrained in current practices, which continue to harm and dehumanize people of color.

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, November 18, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The American Psychological Association (APA) has issued a public apology for the "racism, racial discrimination, and denigration of people of color" committed by psychologists, after compiling what it called "a stunning chronology" of psychology's history of racism since the organization's founding in 1892.

[The apology](#), issued October 29, acknowledges "the roles of psychology and APA in promoting, perpetuating, and failing to challenge racism, and the harms that have been inflicted on communities of color as a result."



The American Psychological Association has admitted that from its founding in 1892, psychologists established, participated in, and disseminated scientific models and approaches rooted in racism.

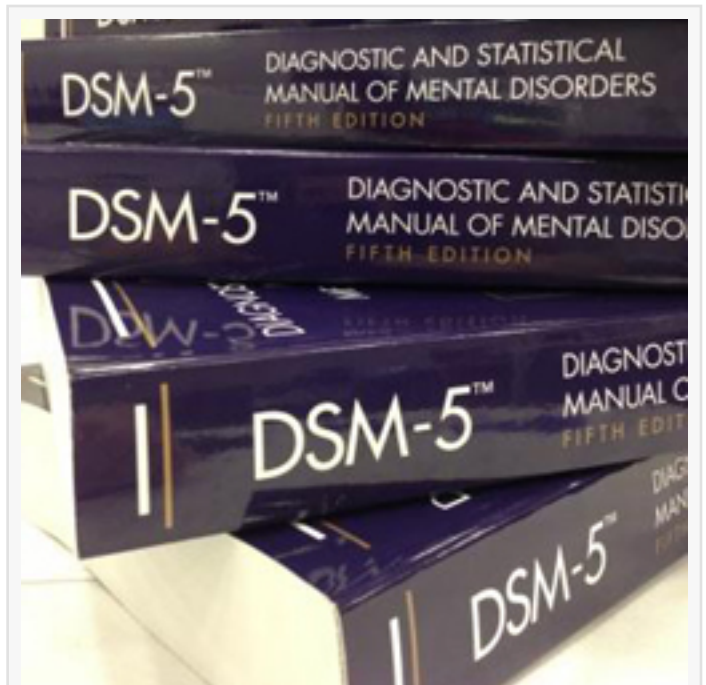
The admission comes 10 months after the American Psychiatric Association issued [its apology](#) for psychiatry's "contributions to the structural racism in our nation," stating that "these appalling past actions, as well as their harmful effects, are ingrained in the structure of psychiatric practice."

For more than 50 years, the Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) has investigated and exposed the sordid history of U.S. psychiatry and psychology in instigating and perpetuating systemic racism, facts which these psychological member organizations are now admitting. CCHR further intensified its efforts in June 2020 by forming the Task Force Against Psychiatric

Racism and Modern-Day Eugenics to inform and empower people of color with facts about the racism and eugenics still present in mental health diagnosis and treatment today.

The APA's "historical chronology," an adjunct to its apology, details how, from the time the organization was founded, "psychologists established, participated in, and disseminated scientific models and approaches rooted in scientific racism." That "scientific racism" was in the form of eugenics, a pseudo-scientific theory that some races are biologically inferior to others.

Psychologists in the American mental health movement from the 1890s on adopted and actively promoted eugenics. Many psychologists fueled the movement by conducting studies that purportedly found some sort of racial inferiority in people of color, thereby providing ideological support for segregation, sterilization of people of color, laws against interracial marriage, and race-based immigration. The residual effects of eugenics are still found in the institutional racism that the American psychology and psychiatry associations are now admitting infects their ranks.



The "diagnoses" in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders used by psychologists have the stigmatizing, dehumanizing effect of labeling an individual as mentally defective, but the diagnoses have no objective, verifiable, scientific basis.

“

Labeling conduct as sick merely because it differs from our own is nothing more than a discriminatory act disguised as a medical judgment”

*The late Thomas Szasz, M.D.,
professor of psychiatry and
humanitarian*

The APA's chronology reveals that “from the 1950s on, psychologists received money from the Pioneer Fund, created in the 1930s to promote racial homogeneity, ‘repatriation’ of Black Americans to Africa, and segregation,” and that “from the 1960s on, psychologists gave explicit assistance to and participated in racial extremist, White nationalist, and neo-Nazi groups.”

The last American psychologist the APA singles out in its recounting of its racist history is Arthur Jensen, professor of educational psychology at the University of California,

Berkeley, who in 1969 published research claiming to show racial differences in IQ scores. His work was widely used by racist and neo-Nazi groups.

However, a glaring omission in the APA's chronology is the late Richard Herrnstein, Harvard

professor of psychology and co-author of the highly controversial book, *The Bell Curve*, published as recently as 1994, in which he claimed that Blacks performed worse on intelligence tests than Whites and are “genetically disabled.” He advocated selective breeding to limit the black population.

Concerning intelligence tests and other psychological testing and diagnosis, the APA admits “psychologists created and promoted...psychological tests and instruments that have been used to disadvantage many communities of color,” leading to the overdiagnosis and misdiagnosis still prevalent today.

The APA did not provide details on the impact of that false diagnosing, such as the facts that African Americans are disproportionately diagnosed with mental illness and disproportionately admitted to psychiatric facilities. They are more likely to be diagnosed as having a psychotic disorder, especially schizophrenia, more often diagnosed with a conduct disorder, and overly prescribed antipsychotic drugs.

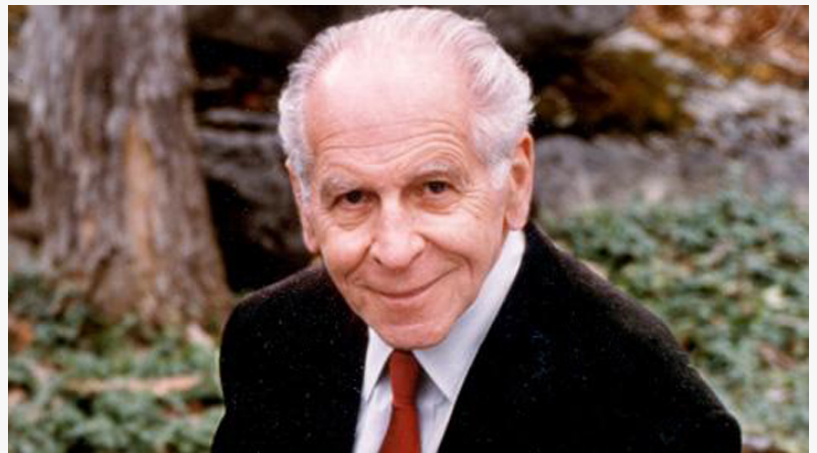
The legacy of eugenics is found in today's education system. Students of color are [disproportionately labeled](#) with learning disabilities and emotional disabilities and placed in special education classes, which are more likely to be in substantially separate settings. Conversely, African American students are under-represented in gifted and talented programs.

For all its self-reproach for the litany of racist harms perpetrated by psychologists against people of color, the APA still fails to address the most egregious abuse of all: psychologists' use of the “diagnostic” labels found in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), ever since it was first published in 1952.

The APA resolution reaffirms that “race is a social construct with no underlying genetic or biological basis.” The same can be said about the DSM's “diagnoses,” which also have no



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Dr. Thomas Szasz, co-founder of Citizens Commission on Human Rights, advocated an end to forced psychiatric treatment.

underlying genetic or biological basis, but are merely labels given individuals as the result of subjective assessments of their behavior – a construct readily employed to racist ends.

Those labels of “mental disorders” have consequences, typically leading to “treatment” with powerful, mind-altering drugs which are known to carry serious physical and emotional risks when being taken and being discontinued.

Worst of all is the stigmatizing, dehumanizing effect of labeling an individual as mentally defective with no objective, verifiable, scientific evidence – a human rights abuse CCHR has been fighting for the past five decades.



By using psychiatry’s DSM labels, the profession of psychology can be considered included in the indictment of psychiatry by CCHR’s co-founder, the late professor of psychiatry and humanitarian Thomas Szasz, M.D.: “The psychiatric profession’s most distinguishing feature is the deliberate, systematic dehumanization of man, in the name of mental health.”

“Labeling conduct as sick merely because it differs from our own is nothing more than a discriminatory act disguised as a medical judgment,” he wrote.

The APA states that “traditional diagnostic methods and standards do not always capture the contextual and lived experiences of people of color.” However, until psychologists completely abandon their “diagnostic methods,” they will not have gone to the root of the systemic racism plaguing their profession and, more broadly, they will fail to truly respect and live up to the affirmation in their recent resolution that “human rights are universal and inalienable.” They will remain the instigators and peddlers of racism, not the help for it.

CCHR was founded in 1969 as a human rights organization and mental health industry watchdog by members of the Church of Scientology and Dr. Szasz, considered by many scholars as psychiatry’s most authoritative critic. CCHR has exposed and campaigned against racism and racial abuse in the mental health system since its inception. It has worked with the NAACP since 2003 in exposing the stigmatizing labeling and drugging of African American children and in obtaining three national NAACP resolutions in that regard.

The CCHR National Affairs Office in Washington, DC, has advocated for mental health rights at the state and federal level. The CCHR traveling exhibit, which has toured 441 major cities worldwide and educated over 800,000 people on the history of abusive psychiatric practices up to the present time, has been displayed in Washington, DC, at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Caucus and other locations.

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