

The Association of Black Psychologists, Inc.

Official Statement

January 28, 2018

We Can No Longer Be Silent: Psychological Damage by President Trump

"There comes a time when silence is betrayal.
Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter"
Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Association of Black Psychologists, Inc. can no longer be silent. As professional and licensed psychologists and mental health practitioners, we are deeply troubled by the recent statements of President Donald Trump in reference to Haiti, African countries, and El Salvador. It has been widely reported that he has referred to Haiti, El Salvador, and nations in Africa as "shithole countries."¹ Earlier, in response to a document listing how many immigrants had received visas to enter the United States in 2017, it was reported that the President complained that more than 2,500 were from Afghanistan, a terrorist haven; Haiti had sent 15,000 people and they "all have AIDS"² ; and that forty thousand had come from Nigeria, to which Mr. Trump added, "Once they have seen the United States, they would never go back to their huts in Africa."² It should also be noted that the DNA for literally every Black American, now and in the past, are traceable to Africa and the West Indies, especially Haiti.³ Not only do these statements denigrate the humanity of the citizens of these countries, they are psychological assaults to our sense of wholeness and wellbeing.

This President fans hatred and division with tweets and statements that can be summarized as:

- Africa: an array of shithole countries,¹²⁴;
- Nigerians: live in huts and want to live in America;
- Haitians: all have AIDS⁵;
- Puerto Ricans: lazy;
- African Americans: ingrates;
- Mexicans: criminals and rapists⁴;
- Muslims: evil terrorists;
- Women: treat them like shit and grab them by the pussy;
- White supremacists, Alt-right, the Wealthy, and Nazis: *very fine people*.

Intentional or not, these comments represent psychic terrorism, which is “the systematic use of terror to immobilize and/or destabilize a person’s fundamental sense of security and safety by assaulting his or her consciousness and identity.”

We are deeply disturbed by these statements and recognize their significance in diminishing the sense of human value for African Americans, as well as African people worldwide. They dangerously set the stage for acts of violence directed toward these populations, just as Hitler’s denigration of the Jews in Germany contributed to the environment that allowed the Jewish Holocaust to occur.

While we fully recognize that President Trump does not have the courage or character to apologize for these inflammatory remarks, which is a behavioral stance similar to a psychopath, our continued silence would be enabling and complicit in the psychological damage historically associated with African dehumanization and destruction. On behalf of African and African American people everywhere, we refuse to die.

Therefore, we ask that all people, organizations, and institutions of good conscience join together to publicly denounce Trump’s language and behavior toward all those he denigrates, protect the moral and social wellbeing of the very fabric of this country, and take efforts to restore these countries and peoples that have been exploited for centuries.

References

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The Association of Black Psychologists was founded in San Francisco in 1968 by a number of Black psychologists from across the country. They united to actively address the serious problems facing Black psychologists and the larger Black community. Guided by the principle of self determination, these psychologists set about building an institution through which they could address the long neglected needs of Black professionals. Their goal was to have a positive impact upon the mental health of the national Black community by means of planning, programs, services, training, and advocacy. Their objectives were: to organize their skills and abilities to influence necessary change, and to address themselves to significant social problems affecting the Black community and other segments of the population whose needs society has not fulfilled.

The Association of Black Psychologists has grown from a handful of concerned professionals into an independent, autonomous organization of over 1400 members.

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