



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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APA APOLOGIZES FOR LONGSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SYSTEMIC RACISM

Acknowledges failures, accepts responsibility, pledges change for psychology

WASHINGTON – As part of the nation’s historic reckoning on racism, the American Psychological Association has apologized to communities of color for its role – and the role of the discipline of psychology – in contributing to systemic racism.

The association’s governing Council of Representatives [adopted an apology](#) at its meeting Oct. 29, acknowledging that APA “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 communities of color, thereby falling short on its mission to benefit society and improve lives.”

“APA is profoundly sorry, accepts responsibility for, and owns the actions and inactions of APA itself, the discipline of psychology, and individual psychologists who stood as leaders for the organization and field,” the apology states.

The resolution, which passed unanimously, acknowledges that “the governing body within APA should have apologized to people of color before today. APA, and many in psychology, have long considered such an apology, but failed to accept responsibility.”

The apology credits a broad cross-section of APA’s members, including elected and appointed leaders, for bringing the apology to communities of color to fruition. The effort included soliciting public comments and conducting listening sessions and surveys. The work was spearheaded by the APA Task Force on Strategies to Eradicate Racism, Discrimination, and Hate and its five-member Apology Advisory Subcommittee, composed of eminent psychologists who were chosen for their knowledge and expertise.

At the same meeting, the Council of Representatives adopted two additional resolutions, one [delineating APA’s and psychology’s role going forward in dismantling systemic racism in the United States](#) and the other [pledging to work to advance health equity in psychology](#). The former directs APA’s CEO to develop a long-term plan to prioritize, operationalize and ensure

accountability for achieving the goals identified in the resolution. This is to be presented to the Council by August 2022.

“For the first time, APA and American psychology are systematically and intentionally examining, acknowledging and charting a path forward to address their roles in perpetuating racism,” said APA President Jennifer F. Kelly, PhD. “These resolutions are just the first steps in a long process of reconciliation and healing. This important work will set the path for us to make real change and guide the association and psychology moving forward.”

In offering the apology for the harms committed, “APA acknowledges that recognition and apology only ring true when accompanied by action; by not only bringing awareness of the past into the present but in acting to ensure reconciliation, repair, and renewal,” the resolution states. “We stand committed to purposeful intervention, and to ensuring that APA, the field of psychology, and individual psychologists are leaders in benefiting society and improving lives.”

The three resolutions just adopted all build on [Harnessing Psychology to Combat Racism: Adopting a Uniform Definition and Understanding](#), a resolution the Council passed in February 2021. That was a definitional resolution on racism that provided guidance to psychologists and APA to consider four levels of racism – internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural – in their efforts to counter racism within individuals and across societal systems. It also instructed APA to “undertake an analysis of psychology’s history, with the goal of understanding the harms that marginalized racial groups have experienced and the actions necessary to create a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive association, discipline, and society going forward.”

The three resolutions were accompanied by a [chronology of the long history of psychology’s and APA’s harms to communities of color](#), which served as a resource to inform APA’s work on the apology and the path forward.



The [American Psychological Association](#), in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA’s membership includes nearly 122,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people’s lives.