



CMGMH CONNECTION



Black Mental Health: A Global Necessity

By

Wade W. Nobles, Ph.D.

Ifagbemi Sangodare, Nana Kwaku Berko I, Bejana, Onebunne

It is worth noting that as we enter this Black History Month, we are just one month away from the end of the Presidency of Barack Hussein Obama, the first Black President of the United States, and one month into the beginning of the Presidency of Donald J. Trump, a billionaire businessman, who some believe has fanned and unleashed white privilege/supremacy, hatred, divisiveness, misogyny, inequality, and xenophobia which are buried in the American psyche. Without question, now is a critical time to support, examine, guide, and monitor the issues of social justice, the healing of trauma and disenfranchisement, and the ultimate advancement of mental health and human wellness.

In the early 19th century, the German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1956) asserted that:

"At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit... What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History." (p. 99)

As representative of the age, Hegel's thinking fed an emerging Western Grand Narrative that supported the belief in White (European) superiority and Black (African) inferiority. What was (is) essential to this narrative is the idea of a "linear hierarchical oppositional structure" that is the implicit legacy of the Western mindset as having epistemic certainty (Domper, 2006).

Epistemicide and the Western Grand Narrative

This Western Grand Narrative is the foundation for almost all the knowing frameworks in the development of American and European social behavioral sciences, especially psychology and anthropology. The resultant paradigm for understanding has been the actual dehumanization of African people; the devaluation and disenfranchisement of African life processes; the denigration and denial of African culture; and the disregard and disrespect for African and African American intellectual contributions. It is important to note that hegemonic imposition of the Western Grand Narrative as universal equals "Epistemicide" for most of the World's peoples and the inability to ever achieve a fair, true, and just worldwide community.

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Black History Month

In privileging this time of Black History Month and the above stated context, I would like to draw attention to the question of Black Mental Health as a global necessity. As counter to Hegel's directive to leave Africa, not to mention it again, the father of Negro History Week (later to become Black History Month), Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1935), noted that:

"If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated." (p. 2)

While reclaiming our history is critical, Cheikh Anta Diop (1974) noted that Africa (and African people) can only be understood by examining the domains of history, language, and psyche. It is the psyche or psychological domain that I, for obvious reasons, believe to be the most important. It is also important to note that given the Western legacy of anti-Africanness, there is a need for a particular authentic Black Psychology, ergo Skh Djr, which requires one to think deeply and profoundly about African meanings and understandings about being human wherein one engages in deep, profound, and penetrating search, study, and mastery of the process of "illuminating" the human spirit or essence, as well as all human experience and phenomena (Nobles, 2013).

Global Black Mental Health

It must be noted that the unaddressed trauma of enslavement and colonization have left a legacy of psychic damage to both continental and diasporan Africans that necessitates the need for a global healing of the African mind. Black people are a world people. Hence, Black Mental Health has to be a worldwide proposition. This is best understood within the construct of "Pan African Humanness" wherein African humanity worldwide and its intellectual and cultural developments have greater commonality (than difference) and are seen as a "particular" state of being (Nobles, 2006). Accordingly, Black Mental Health must involve the study of the psycho-cultural, geopolitical, intellectual, and artistic history of African peoples in both its historical unfoldings and contemporary expressions worldwide across time and place. Black Mental Health in its global context requires engagement with all forms of African intellectual, literary, and artistic production across time and space and in relationship to the differing realms of reality.

ABPsi's Pan African (Black) Psychology Initiative

The thrust for multicultural understanding and diversity in psychology must allow for and support the "particular" in the multicultural world. Black Psychology, Asian Psychology, Hispanic Psychology, etc. must all stand and evolve within their own integrity. The *raison d'être* of the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) was (is) to build a psychology that respects and reflects African human authenticity. In this regard, in 2013 the Association of Black Psychologists established a joint ABPsi and FAP (Forum for African Psychology) educational task force. The charge and challenge of this coming together is to further build a psychology congruent with the culture, context, and humanity of African peoples. In the context of Black Mental Health as a global initiative, the intent is for continental African Psychologists (South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, etc.) and Diasporan African psychologists (USA, Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, England, Canada, etc.) to forge working relationships to critically examine the assumptions and paradigms concerning the understanding, development and emergence of Black/African peoples; commit to developing a culturally grounded discipline and practice of African/Black Psychology; and endorse and adopt the development and utilization of Black/African Psychology for understanding, analyses, treatment, and restoration of Black/African spirit wellness worldwide.

This is an on-going and unfolding endeavor and African (Black) psychologists, whom I classify as Skh Djaerists (Nobles, 2015), must continue to invite each other (as practitioners, academicians, students, and professionals) to join together in exploring, defining, and understanding Black Mental Health as a global necessity supportive of the full participation in wellness, freedom, and unity for African people.

References

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- Woodson, C. G. (1935, August 14). Opposition and indifference to racial history is explained. *Atlanta Daily World*, p. 2.



Dr. Nobles is Professor Emeritus, Africana Studies and Black Psychology, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, California. He is the Founding Member and Past President of the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) and the Founding Executive Director (Retired) of the Institute for the Advanced Study of Black Family Life and Culture, Inc. in Oakland, CA.

Celebrating Black History Month

Students and faculty reflect on what Black History Month means to them as mental health providers and as members of the WJC community.



"A few weeks ago, a 14-year-old African-American boy at my practicum asked about the relevance of celebrating Black History Month. My initial response was to highlight the importance of recognizing individuals in history whose contributions had been strategically omitted from U.S. history. I wanted him to recognize and appreciate the four hundred years of untold stories that aren't even referenced in classrooms. I wanted to restore a sense of pride in his blackness that had been deconstructed by well-intended educators, whose goal to create a color-blind society came at the expense of his cultural identity. Before responding, I paused, realizing there is an entire generation of children that have only known black excellence. To this young man, Black history is history. It represents a struggle that, in his mind, no longer exists. He has never experienced an America in which he felt voiceless. After a long hesitation, I responded, 'You are the reason Black History is and always will be relevant.'"

- Samuel Kwame Dance, First Year Clinical Psy.D. Student

"I've come to realize that being a Black woman is the introduction I give prior to opening my mouth to formally introduce myself, so I've decided to make it the best introduction I give. I wear my Blackness with pride and courage, ensuring that my skin introduces me more beautifully than words ever could."



- Adetutu Ajibose, Second Year Clinical Psy.D. Student

"Black History Month provides us with the opportunity to reflect on the contributions of Black school psychologists who have been educational and professional leaders, such as Dr. Albert Beckham and Dr. Deborah Crockett. It serves as a reminder that we need to continue to fight for social and educational justice in all underrepresented communities, including communities of color, and to ensure that we train a diverse field of school psychologists who are highly competent and culturally responsive."



- Elana Wolkoff, Assistant Professor, School Psychology Department



"Black History Month reminds me of the opportunity I have as a Black man. I think about my grandfather who participated in the sit-ins at Woolworth counters, and who needed to drop out of college to help raise his younger siblings. I appreciate the privilege I have to receive advanced degrees, let alone the responsibility I have because of it. Black History Month is about celebrating the pioneers who fought for us to have mere civil rights. The right to have people treat us in a "courteous and polite" way - not fairly, but just courteous and polite. When I think of Black History Month in terms of what it means to me as a future Black male psychologist, I think about the responsibility I have to not just advance the social rights of dark-skinned people, but to make health care, specifically mental health care, more accessible for the "darker brother [and sister]". Black History Month for me is a celebration of my past, an appreciation of my present, and a dedication and obligation to the future of my people and the world."

- Damon Pryor, First Year Clinical Psy.D. Student

"Black History Month is a time to celebrate and pay tribute to brave Black leaders in this country and around the world who have risked their lives to fight for equality. As a White woman, I feel it is also a time to reflect on how to be an ally to people of color. I am reminded of this quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 'In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.'"



- Amanda Zurick, Psy.D., Assistant Professor, Clinical Psychology Department

"History is not only what exists in the past, but what we bear on our present. There is nothing invisible in our history, certainly not our diversity. Black History Month is not only a reminder of how far we have come as a society but also how hard we need to continue fighting for social equality in an unequal world. Embracing the richness of diversity and acknowledging how different we are, yet how we come to work for the same purposes, inspires me to continue to work hard for social justice."



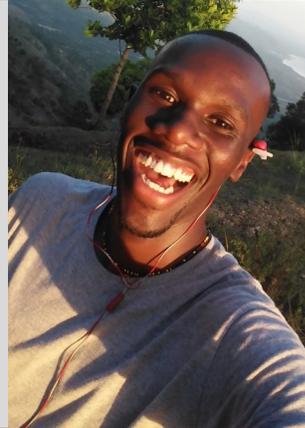
- Zully Lizarazo, Third Year Clinical Psy.D. Student

Celebrating Black History Month (cont.)



"What Black History Month means to me as a mental health clinician, is a time to reflect and celebrate the progress that has been made in the journey for equality. This is also a time to reflect and recommit to the continued action needed because we still have a great deal of work to do to make the world a safer and more peaceful place for everyone."

- Ashley White, Third Year Clinical Psy.D. Student



"To me, Black History Month is about honoring those who instilled the spirit to fight through adversity and persevere with love, to recall roots and have a chance to celebrate, and to be proud to be Black."

- Philip Ndegwa, Second Year Clinical Mental Health Counseling Student

"Black History Month should be a time for reflection and action, a time to acknowledge the sacrifices made by our ancestors, and a time to be thankful for our blessings and freedom. It is a time to motivate and inspire the next generation, to give them a platform where they will find their voice and continue the journey so that the future will be bright and filled with hope. Black History Month means a time to continue the fight for social justice and equality. It is about dreaming of a better tomorrow, building bridges that will allow others to cross to the other side, and collaborating and making connections. Black History Month is about integrity and leadership. It reminds us that we must be agents of change in our family, community and society at large."

- Marie Berthonia Antoine, Second Year Organizational and Leadership Psychology Psy.D. Student



Guyana Service Learning & Cultural Immersion 2017

In July 2017, William James College (WJC) students and faculty will travel to Guyana for a *Service Learning & Cultural Immersion Program*. In partnership with The Guyana Foundation, the National Library of Guyana, Sherjoy Daycare and Playgroup, and the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, the group will provide psychoeducation to physicians and work with at-risk youth.

"The Guyana Immersion Program is an opportunity for students to immerse themselves in the cultural traditions, belief systems, values and practices of Guyanese society to better understand their mental health needs," explained Dr. Natalie Cort, Director of the Guyana Cultural Immersion Program. "The work that students will do in Guyana will inform their future practice as mental health professionals, leading them to better address mental health disparities and provide culturally-informed care to their clients."

In the summer of 2016, WJC students who were enrolled in an *Introduction to Global Mental Health* course taught by Dr. Jill Bloom, Co-Director of the Center for Multicultural and Global Mental Health, developed a community-based intervention aimed at addressing the high rate of suicide in Guyana, particularly among the Indo-Guyanese population. Research and proposals from this project will inform the work that WJC students and faculty will do in collaboration with The Guyana Foundation during the upcoming cultural immersion program.



For more information about CMGMH Service Learning & Cultural Immersion Programs, visit www.williamjames.edu/cmgmh.

Wawa No Cidal - Film Screening

Thursday, February 9th, 6pm, William James College

Wawa No Cidal, a film about indigenous family struggles against capitalist property developers on ancestral lands in Taiwan, will be shown at WJC at 6PM on Thursday, February 9th, 2017 in Rooms 334/335/336.

Discussion will be moderated by Dr. Mengchun Chiang and led by Ado Kaliting Pacidal (the film's lead actress), and DJ Hatfield (an Associate Professor at Berklee College of Music).

To register, email cmgmh@williamjames.edu or visit <https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07edpajuq00d69f85c&oseq=&c=&ch=>

In addition to the film screening, Ado Kaliting Pacidal will be presenting at two other community events sponsored by the Center for Multicultural and Global Mental Health:

1. On Friday, 2/10, Ado Kaliting Pacidal will be hosting a workshop at Berklee College of Music from 2-4 pm at David Friend Recital Hall. This workshop will focus on the relationship between songwriting and indigenous social movements. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1387078748000422/>
2. On Saturday, 2/11 at 3pm at Harvard University, Ado Kaliting Pacidal will share an Amis style "Pangcah" and invite the audience to join her in music and dance: <https://www.facebook.com/events/938854646246359/> Co-hosted by Dudley World Music Ensemble at Harvard, Cafe Philo @ Boston, and Harvard Taiwanese Student Association.



One Wells Avenue Newton, MA 02459

FEBRUARY 9TH 2017 @ 6PM

Rooms 334/335/336



WILLIAM JAMES COLLEGE
Center for Multicultural & Global Mental Health

DR. MENGCHUN CHIANG &
BLACK MENTAL HEALTH
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MODERNITY

Sacred Lands

Current Events Corner

Mental Health in the News

- “Can behavioral science help in Flint.” **The New Yorker**. The Social and Behavioral Science Team, including economists and psychologists, works within federal agencies to improve public policy from a behavioral health perspective. [http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/23/can-behavioral-science-help-in-flint?mbid=nl_January%2016th%202017%20\(3\)&CNDID=38893369&spMailingID=10237765&spUserID=MTMzMTgONTMxODE2So&spJobID=1081304492&spReportID=MTA4MTMwNDQ5MgS2](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/23/can-behavioral-science-help-in-flint?mbid=nl_January%2016th%202017%20(3)&CNDID=38893369&spMailingID=10237765&spUserID=MTMzMTgONTMxODE2So&spJobID=1081304492&spReportID=MTA4MTMwNDQ5MgS2)
- “We have to do more’: Defense Secretary Carter on PTSD in wake of airport shooting.” **NBC News**. Veterans’ mental health and medical care drawing national attention after the shooting at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. <http://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/we-have-do-more-defense-secretary-carter-ptsd-wake-airport-n704416>
- “Mass. mentally ill wait longer in ER, study says.” **The Boston Globe**. Patients with mental illness routinely wait 12 to 14 hours longer for treatment in an emergency room than other patients. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/01/04/mentally-ill-patients-massachusetts-wait-longer-study-says/oSAQ9qpe6AXzAxKECELjdN/story.html>
- “Retraining your brain with a zap.” **NBC Boston**. WJC professor, Dr. Robin Deutsch, provided tips on how to achieve New Year’s resolutions through positive replacement. <http://www.nbcoston.com/news/local/Re-Training-Your-Brain-With-a-Zap-408859105.html>
- “Children left behind.” **ADDitude Magazine**. WJC professor, Dr. Natalie Cort, discusses the negative impacts of under-diagnosis and under-treatment of ADHD for racial and ethnic minorities. <http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/12315.html>

Upcoming Events & Conferences

- February 2-16: **A Community Responds: Three Award-Winning Films on the Refugee Crisis.** Presented by Belmont Public Library, Belmont World Film, Beth El Temple Center, and First Church of Belmont Unitarian Universalist. Film screenings of *Sonita*, *After Spring*, and *All of Me*. For more information visit <http://www.westnewtoncinema.com/> and to reserve tickets, go to <https://www.ticketor.com/belmontworldfilm/upcomingevents?PageId=1426>
- February 6: **Trauma and Race: A Discussion of Racial Identity and Lacanian Psychoanalytic Theory.** 7pm-8:30pm. Boston College Brighton Campus, Simboli Hall Room 100, 9 Lake Street Brighton MA 02135. Co-sponsored by Psychosocial Work Group at the Psychology and the Other Institute, Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis, and Psychoanalytic Studies Program at Boston College. <http://files.constantcontact.com/dbfc7977001/d70094df-2293-4b4d-bf0c-46c2616a4edc.pdf>
- February 9: Film Screening-**Wawa No Cidal.** An indigenous Taiwanese family's struggles against capitalist property developers on ancestral lands. 7PM at WJC. Hosted by Dr. Mengchun Chiang, the Black Mental Health Graduate Academy, and CMGMH. Free and open to the public. RSVP to CMGMH@williamjames.edu or register at <http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07edpaju00d69f85c&llr=66tpz8bab>
- February 12: **Rhythm and Brunch.** 11am-5pm. NYA.Boston Foundation hosts a monthly fundraising brunch. For more information and to RSVP, visit <https://rnbrunchbos.splashthat.com/>
- February 14 & 16: **Brown Bag Discussions: Black Excellence in Psychology and Mental Health Counseling.** Sponsored by the Office of the Dean of Students, CMGMH, and the Black Mental Health Graduate Academy. WJC, Room 335, 12PM.
- February 22. **Bright Star Touring Theater - Black History Hall of Fame.** JFK Library. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM. A fast-paced performance honoring Black History Month with a chance to meet over a dozen groundbreakers and hall-of-famers who have contributed to shaping our nation's past, present, and future. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Events-and-Awards/Celebrate.aspx>
- March 4: **Culture Camp: The Creative Culture Conference for Educators.** For Pre-K—8 educators. City Year Headquarters of Idealism, Boston. 9:30am-4:30pm. For more information, visit <http://www.psculturecamp.com/>
- April 7: **Transgender Children and Youth: Cultivating Pride and Joy with Families in Transition.** The Multicultural Family Institute. Presenter - Elijah C. Nealy, PhD, M.Div., LCSW. 328 Denison Street, Highland Park, NJ 08904. 9am-4pm. Register at <http://multiculturalfamily.org/transgender-children-and-youth/>
- April 22-23: **14th Annual Global Health & Innovation Conference (GHIC)** at Yale University. For more information, visit <http://www.uniteforsight.org/conference/>
- April 27-29: Society for the Study of Psychiatry and Culture's 18th Annual Meeting - **Culture and Mental Health: Family Matters.** Princeton, New Jersey. For more information please visit psychiatryandculture.org or email your questions to sspculture@gmail.com
- May 20: **Re-Envisioning the Brilliance of Boys of Color: Inspiring Professionals Dedicated to Empowering the Social-Emotional and Academic Development of Our Youth.** 9am-4pm at WJC. Conference sponsored by the Center for Multicultural and Global Mental Health, the Concentration on Children and Families of Adversity and Resilience, the Department of Community Engagement, and the School Psychology Department at William James College. **Register** at https://netforum.avectra.com/eWeb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=MSPP&WebCode=EventDetail&evt_key=faa94f7e-4c8b-4d27-90d3-f2bf945ba1bb

ALANAA at William James College

The ALANAA (African/Caribbean American, Latino, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Native American/Native Alaskan, and Arab American) student group is dedicated to celebrating diversity at William James College. ALANAA aims to promote greater diversity within the student body by bringing together students of all backgrounds and fostering connections between students whose interests include diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice.

This group is a promoting agent for academic and research affairs as well as a medium for social networking and social events. Past events have included game nights, networking opportunities at conferences and multicultural events with professionals within the field (locally and nationally), potluck gatherings, collaborations with other agencies for social change, charity events, and the WJC Student Social for the student body. *All students are encouraged and welcome to join.*

For more information, email alanaa@williamjames.edu or visit ALANAA's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/WilliamJamesCollegeALANAA>

