



CANADIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (CPA) STATEMENT ON RACISM

Ottawa, ON (June 10, 2020)

The Canadian Psychological Association rests on a foundation of policy and principle of anti-discrimination and respect for the dignity of persons. These policies and principles are embedded in the Code of Ethics which guides the science, practice and education of psychology in Canada.

2020 has challenged Canadians, and citizens of the world, to be brave; to overcome stresses to our health and welfare and to do it with kindness, respect, and compassion. Anti-Black racism jeopardizes our success as individuals, families, communities, workplaces and societies. Our success depends on our willingness and ability to look after ourselves and each other and to work together. There is no room for racism, prejudice or systemic discrimination in a just society.

A just society enables all its members to contribute, to thrive, and to make a positive difference when facing fortune and when facing adversity. The CPA invites people to stand together, to stand up and to stand close against anti-Black racism and discrimination of all kinds.

Psychology has a lot to contribute to the discussion, and a lot of work we can do as a profession.

Quote from Dr. Helen Ofosu, Work and Business Psychologist, I/O Advisory:

“Although systemic racism and injustice are not new to Black people, until recently, this crisis has been hiding in plain sight for many non-Blacks. The tragic consequences of racism and injustice include fear, worry, insomnia, grief, trauma, frustration, stalled careers, lost income, and countless missed opportunities for Black people.

The dual crises of COVID-19 and anti-Black racism are also highlighting the need for more Black Psychologists. I was the only Black student in my graduate program and since graduating in 1999 I have encountered very few other Black or racialized Psychologists. As a profession, we need to do better. The social and psychological problems that we’re facing demand input from the rigour of psychology but in a much more representative manner.”

Quote from Dr. Ben C. H. Kuo, Professor, Clinical Psychology, University of Windsor:

“To challenge systemic racism faced by immigrants and refugees, we need cultural humility and courage to honestly self reflect, introspect, and act. Striving towards social justice starts with changes in us, individually and collectively, in a meaningful and enduring way!”

Quotes from Dr. Anusha Kassan, Associate Professor, The University of British Columbia:

“There are many steps that psychology can take to continue to decolonize itself as a profession and address systemic and institutional racism.

This could include increasing racial (and other) representation in leadership positions, decision-making roles, policy development, etc. This representation could come from scholars who



have conducted research on these topics, but also from people who have lived experiences of racialization (and other minoritized identities).

Moreover, psychology training programmes could make efforts to increase representation among their student body, to include more individuals who have been racialized and minoritized. This type of diversity would enrich the training experiences of all students and ensure that there are sufficient psychologists across the country who can ethically and competently work with racialized and minoritized communities.

Also, psychology as a profession could continue to acknowledge its colonial, racist, and discriminatory roots and histories, and ensure that such perspectives are infused into the psychology curriculum in multiple ways and places (e.g., history of psychology courses, diversity-type courses, etc.).”

And...

“Feminist, multicultural, cross-cultural, and social justice scholars in psychology have long studied the psychological impact that oppression and discrimination can have on individuals, families, and communities. These impacts can include, but are not limited to, mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance misuse, etc. To address these challenges, the profession of psychology can begin to reposition and reframe these psychological symptoms as chronic effects of racism, as opposed to internal psychopathology. By doing so, the onus turns to the problematic systems, instead of the individual's ability (or inability) to cope with racism. Relatedly, it is important to consider that the contributions (lived and scholarly) of Black, Indigenous, and other feminist, multicultural, cross-cultural, and social justice researchers have often been overlooked or ignored in dominant discourses pertaining to psychological health and wellbeing.”

About the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA):

The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) is the national association for the science, practice and education of psychology in Canada. With over 7,000 members and affiliates, CPA is Canada's largest association for psychology. To learn more, visit www.cpa.ca.

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