

## THE ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PSYCHOLOGISTS

### ETHICAL STANDARDS OF BLACK PSYCHOLOGISTS

#### PREAMBLE

We hold to be true that only persons of African Descent and who are completely committed to no less than the absolute liberation of the Black mind shall be recognized as legitimate Black Psychologists. We also hold to be true that the commitment process simultaneously recognizes:

1. that the shackles of slavery and centuries of racial oppression still restrict the mental freedom of people of African descent.
2. the continued retentions and residuals of our African Cultural Heritage inform and direct the creative mental powers of people of African descent.

Black Psychologists, as scientists of the mind, are committed to research, theory, and practice which is designed to build from the core of our African spiritual and physical being. Black Psychologists are also committed to research, theory, and practice geared towards the unmasking of the nefarious influences of racism and the internalized destructiveness of the racist.

The objective of a Black Psychologist is to restore the Black mind to its original form, prior to the intrusion of slavery, by cultivating the integrity, the dignity, the collective awareness and the unified movement of Black people towards their social, political, economic, psychological and spiritual liberation. The parameter of values of Black Psychologists is defined by this objective. With the freedom for inquiry and formulation, the Black Psychologist accepts the responsibility for the welfare of all Black people and respect for all human beings who are in the conduct of respectable human affairs, and not in conflict with the survival and progress of African people.

#### THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF CONSUBSTANTIATION

The essential guiding principle for the ethical conduct of Black Psychologists is informed by the ontological principle of “consubstantiation,” i.e., “we are one people, we are of the same essence.” This principle requires an adherence to the structural recognition that, “I am because we are and because we are, therefore I am,” as well as to the functional acceptance of the African principle of identity which recognizes that “who you are is who you are connected to” (and value base of collective responsibility). The fundamental principles derived of consubstantiation result in the set of guiding principles derived by Collective Responsibility.

## THE ETHICAL STANDARDS

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| I. Responsibility | V. Commitment        |
| II. Restraint     | VI. Cooperation      |
| III. Respect      | VII. Courage         |
| IV. Reciprocity   | VIII. Accountability |

### **Standard I: RESPONSIBILITY**

The ethical standard of responsibility recognizes that Black Psychologists, while committed to the understanding of the human mind in general in the service of all humanity, hold a value and commitment to addressing the unique problems and propensities of the African mind (throughout the Diaspora). Black Psychologists are first and foremost responsible for the understanding of the African mind and for the application and knowledge to the alleviation of problems which have been fostered by the historical oppression of Black people.

#### Principle I-1:

Black Psychologists believe that their skills should most appropriately be dedicated to the improvement of the lives of Black people. Though there are related activities which may be of high priority to non-Black people, the choice of priority involvements by Black Psychologists must first be toward those which will expedite the improvement of the life situation of Black people.

#### Principle 1-2:

Black Psychologists engage in research that will improve the quality of life of Black people. This research should be reflective of the psychological strength of Black people and/or should be focused on the cultivation of strengths which will foster such improvement. Black Psychologists object to and refuse to support theoretical or empirical positions which accept the innate or irremediable deficiency of Black people.

#### Principle I-3:

For Black Psychologists to engage in any research, theory, or practice which in any way endangers the development of Black people, shall be recognized as highly unethical. Any Black Psychologist so involved, directly or indirectly, shall be publicly exposed as being in violation of and irresponsible to the well being of Black people, and shall be formally disassociated from this body. The judgment of such misconduct shall be determined by the Standing Committee on Ethical Standards.

Principle 1-4:

As teachers, Black Psychologists recognize their responsibility to foster self-knowledge. If that teaching involves non-Black people, then the Black Psychologist's responsibility is to offer knowledge of the non-Black self as it impacts on the life and circumstance of Black people.

Principle 1-5:

As providers of services to suffering people, Black Psychologists recognize that their initial responsibility is to the suffering of Black people. In whatever setting Black Psychologists find themselves awkward, they always extend their efforts to offering the best and highest quality of service to Black people. When a choice is available, Black Psychologists see their responsibility as primarily a resource to improve the life situation of Black people.

**Standard II: RESTRAINT**

The ethical standard of restraint recognizes that Black Psychologists understand that the "rights" of any single individual are always balanced against the responsibility to and requirement of the group. Black Psychologists are governed by principled conduct and restraints which are designed to judge actions in relation to the welfare of the group and the larger good.

Principle II-1:

Black Psychologists avoid the use of their professional identity as a vehicle to exploit or take personal advantage of the Black community.

Principle II-2:

Black Psychologists avoid making public statements which may be construed as reflective of the collective sentiments of the Black community unless they are duly appointed by a representative group of the community as their spokesperson.

Principle II-3:

Black Psychologists are cautious in communicating their research findings as representing observations in a limited sphere, thus avoiding making global pronouncements about the state of the race.

Principle II-4:

Black Psychologists represent themselves as servants to the community and lead only as they have been so appointed.

### **Standard III: RESPECT**

The ethical standard of respect recognizes that Black Psychologists shall at all times give deference to the will and intent of Black people. As reflected in behavior, attitudes, etc., Black Psychologists submit to excellence, and righteousness in themselves and in each other.

#### **Principle III-1:**

Black Psychologists shall avoid misrepresenting their professional qualifications, affiliations, commitments and/or contributions to the field. Black Psychologists do not claim, directly or indirectly to possess professional qualifications or skills which they do not have. Neither do they permit people to assume and/or represent them as having qualifications or skills which they do not have.

#### **Principle III-2:**

Because of the explicit commitments of Black Psychologists to address the specific and unique concerns of Black people, anyone who does not share in this commitment should not affiliate themselves or represent themselves with this organization.

#### **Principle III-3:**

Black Psychologists do not identify themselves either explicitly or by implication as affiliated with The Association of Black Psychologists, for the purpose of obtaining benefits, without being an official member of the organization.

### **Standard IV: RECIPROCITY**

The ethical standard of reciprocity recognizes that Black Psychologists understand the mutual dependence between the welfare of Black people and their personal well-being. In no instance shall Black Psychologists place their personal gain in opposition to the advancement of the Black community.

#### **Principle IV-1:**

Black Psychologists are first of all concerned about providing the best and highest quality services. Financial consideration should never restrict their ability to serve the Black community.

#### **Principle IV-2:**

Black Psychologists' fees for services to the Black community should be commensurate with the community's ability to pay.

Principle IV-3:

Black Psychologists recognize the economic oppression and destitution of the Black community. Thus, they responsibly return a portion of their earnings to the Black community.

**Standard V: COMMITMENT**

Black Psychologists will often be enticed by power, prestige, and position to compromise their agreement to serve the vested self-interest of the Black community. In light of this, the ethical standard of commitment recognizes the need for Black Psychologists to acknowledge their devotion to protect and affirm the integrity and welfare of the Black community.

Principle V-1:

Black Psychologists accept and advocate in all of their professional affairs a oneness of being between themselves and the collective reality of the community of Black people. Their conduct recognizes that they cannot discredit the Black community without discrediting themselves nor discredit themselves without discrediting the Black community.

Principle V-2:

Black Psychologists recognize that they are committed to protecting the minds of Black people from the overt and subliminal influences which rob the Black community of dignity, integrity and ultimate mental liberation.

Principle V-3:

When there is a conflict among races or social groups, Black Psychologists are primarily committed to and concerned with the welfare of the Black collective and only secondarily with the interest of their professional group.

Principle V-4:

Black Psychologists are committed to protect the confidentiality and secrecy of information obtained through professional inquiry or personal trust. Release of such information may occur only after permission is explicitly given and/or consultation is held with respected colleagues and legal representatives of the Black community.

**Standard VI: COOPERATIVENESS**

The ethical standard of cooperativeness recognizes that Black Psychologists will at all times respect the integrity, expertise and contributions of colleagues in Black Psychology, within the field of general psychology and other fields. As long as these

professionals and/or their work/contributions are not in violation of the vested self-interest of Black people, Black Psychologists can and will find collaborative relationships acceptable.

Principle VI-1:

Black Psychologists respect the ethnic, racial, and cultural integrity of other groups insofar as the integrity of those groups is not predicated on the oppression, exploitation or destruction of the Black race or other groups of human beings.

Principle VI-2:

Black Psychologists condemn any research or intervention, collaborative or otherwise, conducted in Black communities without an explicit service intent, or other direct benefit, to the Black community.

Principle VI-3:

With the exception of a student, tutorial or trainee position, Black Psychologists entering into interracial research or service to Black people shall do so only when the direction and governance of the research and service (particularly its purpose, direction, interpretation and use), are under the control of Black people.

Principle VI-4:

Black Psychologists view with caution the efforts to research, theorize or otherwise define the needs, goals or directions of Black communities by non-Black investigators without extensive and intensive consultation with relevant Black professionals. Research done under such conditions should be identified as such and should be carefully scrutinized before providing any forum for such ideas.

Principle VI-5:

In order to secure the collective development of Black theory program/service development, Black Psychologists actively seek out consultation and colleague collaboration with other Black Psychologists and like-minded persons.

Principle VI-6:

As an act of principled conduct and to the best of their ability, Black Psychologists contribute time, money, energy, resources and/or other elements of value to the preservation and advancement of The Association of Black Psychologists.

## **Standard VII: COURAGE**

The ethical standard of courage recognizes that Black Psychologists be of sufficient spirit and purpose to openly address and honestly confront any issue, persons, or events which are in opposition to the well-being and vested self-interest of Black people.

### **Principle VII-1:**

Black Psychologists condemn by exposure any political operations geared towards the destruction of Black community life, family life and effective psychological functioning.

### **Principle VII-2:**

Black Psychologists offer no support to anti-Black positions – political, scientific, or professional.

### **Principle VII-3:**

To the best of their ability, Black Psychologists offer honest reflections and/or clarification of the conditions (whether positive/strength or negative/weakness) of Black people.

## **Standard VIII: ACCOUNTABILITY**

The ethical standard of accountability recognizes that Black Psychologists in accepting the ethical standards of The Association of Black Psychologists as well as certain social conventions which foster effective living for people in general, will hold their own conduct and that of their colleagues accountable to the criteria of racial redemption and cultural reclamation.

### **Principle VIII-1:**

In recognition that self-destructive activities are currently in the vanguard of contemporary moral principles and ethical conduct, Black Psychologist strongly adhere to the idea that any activity directed toward the destruction or injury of Black people shall be viewed and judged as highly reprehensible and indefensible.

### **Principle VIII-2:**

Black Psychologists hold themselves accountable to their Black colleagues and to the power of the Black community for the highest standards of performance.

Principle VIII-3:

We recognize that there are traditional advisors/healers in Black communities, i.e., spiritual advisors, Elders and religious counselors. Hence, we recognize the legitimacy of many such resources, to the degree that they are accountable for their services to a body of Black practitioners and lay members of the Black community. Professional competence is best adjudged by moral responsibility and social accountability. We submit this code as a criterion by which such competence may be evaluated.

Principle VIII-4:

Black Psychologists realize that their allegiance to and ability to service Black people is compromised by certain personal and/or professional relationships with non-Black people. Any Black Psychologist so involved should recognize their limitations in being accountable to Black people and should decline to engage in activities which may directly affect the lives of Black people. In questionable situations, recommendations for appropriate behavior should be made by the Standing Committee of Ethical Standards.

Principle VIII-5:

Black Psychologists should discourage the practice of psychology by Black people who do not understand and are not committed to the principles contained in this code of behavior.

#### SUMMARY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Black men and women who ascribe to the above principles are recognized as the legitimate scientists for the liberation and advancement of the African mind. Sanction against those who seek to practice in Black communities or represent themselves as legitimate Black Psychologists without ascribing to these principles, shall be the public exposure of such persons as in violation of and irresponsible to the well-being of Black people.

The ultimate judgment for such sanctions shall be based upon a review by the Standing Committee on Ethical Standards and the committee's recommendation to the ABPsi Board of Directors. Ultimate action regarding the use of the organization's publications and other means for public sanction must be determined by the Board.

Prepared by Naim Akbar, Ph. D. and Wade W. Nobles, Ph. D.

June 11, 1983

**The Standing Committee on Ethical Standards has provided this 2008 update:**

**A. THE ETHICAL STANDARDS**

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| 4. Reciprocity    | 8. Accountability  |

**B. SOURCES OF VIOLATIONS (3 Levels)**

1. Personal involvement
2. Organizational or institutional
3. Community opposition

**C. ACTION STEPS**

Note that issues of ethical concern may be dismissed at any step of the process. An appeal process is available if sanctions are the resultant action. For accurate documentation and to verify required timelines, communications should be written and sent by a form of registered mail with return receipt.

**[I. INFORMAL LEVEL]**

1. Any ABPsi member who becomes aware that another ABPsi member may be involved in an unethical act is required to seek collegial communication with that person, prior to reporting. If there are extenuating circumstances that make this step of **Collegial Communication**, a problem, this is to be explained on the report form referred to in Step 2. If there are violations of abuse or law, each State's legal requirements for reporting to the appropriate agencies must be followed prior to reporting to ABPsi and a copy of the documentation attached to the complaint form.
2. If the alleged violation continues, the ***ABPsi Report of Ethical Standards Violation Form***, available from the ABPsi National Office, should be completed and returned (marked "Confidential") to the ABPsi National Office, addressed to the Ethics Committee. The report form contains sections for the person to state the Standard/Principle from the ABPsi Ethical Standards against which the allegation is being made and **must** include the following: **a)** the nature of the alleged unethical conduct; **b)** supporting documentation; **c)** how the knowledge of or information was acquired; **d)** the attempted remedies; and **e)** any additional comments.
3. The National Office then sends the unopened letter/packet to the Ethics Committee Chair or designated Co-Chair within 5 days of receipt.

4. The designated Ethics Committee Chair/Co-Chair sends the Complaining Member a Letter of Acknowledgement of Receipt of the Complaint within 30 days of receiving it.
5. The Ethics Committee convenes as the Standing Committee on Ethical Standards (SCES) by having the designated Ethics Committee Chair/Co-Chair contact the Ethics Committee Members and forwards the complaint to them for review within 30 days of receipt of the complaint.
6. The SCES sends a Letter of Acknowledgement of Complaint to the Respondent that an allegation of a breach of ABPsi Ethical Standards has been filed against him/her, and requesting a response in defense of the allegations within 30 days of receipt of the letter (first level inquiry).
7. The SCES examines the response to the complaint and determines by a simple majority vote, to be held within 30 days of receipt of all materials, whether the complaint can be resolved at the Informal Level, or if the process needs to move to the Formal Level that requires an in-person Hearing/Inquiry.
8. If the SCES votes to dismiss the allegation at the Informal Level, both the Complainant and Respondent will be notified of the decision within 15 days following the Committee's determination.

## **[II. FORMAL LEVEL]**

1. A hearing/Inquiry is set with a letter sent to the Respondent and Complainant members within 15 days of the decision to appear at a date and time occurring during the next annual meeting of ABPsi. On a case by case determination, the SCES may appoint an additional non-voting person knowledgeable in the area of the alleged violation.
2. Upon hearing any additional information presented at the Hearing/Inquiry, the SCES, by a simple majority vote, makes a decision, within 30 days, to: **a) dismiss** the allegation of unethical conduct or **b) uphold** the allegation of unethical conduct.
3. If the allegation of unethical conduct is upheld, the SCES may also level sanctions. Depending on the severity of the offense, sanctions may include: activities to be completed, probation, cancellation of membership, or suspension of membership for a specified period of time with a report back date. .
4. The Ethics Committee Chair/Co-Chairs disseminate(s) notification of the actions to the Respondent Member within 30 days of the Inquiry. The Respondent has **30days** following the dated letter within which to file an appeal of the decision and/or the imposed sanctions.

5. The findings and sanctions are not to be made public or published until at least 90 days after the decision to allow for the filing and dispositioning of an appeal. If a change in membership status is included, this must be listed in the official organization publication.

#### **D. APPEAL PROCESS**

1. Appeal of the SCES decision must be filed within thirty (30) days of the date of the **notification of the outcome** of the formal Hearing/Inquiry. The appeal should be marked “Confidential” and addressed to the current ABPsi President at the National Office.
2. The ABPsi President is to forward the appeal to the Ethics Committee Chair/Co-Chairs within 30 days of receipt.
3. The Ethics Committee Chair/Co-Chairs will contact The Elder of Elders to request the formation of the Appeal Subcommittee within 5 days and forward the necessary information to the Elder of Elders.
4. The Appeal Subcommittee of the SCES will consist of five (5) Elders selected by the Council of Elders. Decision(s) on the appeal require(s) a simple majority vote of the five Elders and are to be made within 30 days of the assignment of the Appeal.
5. Notification of the final decision is sent to the Ethics Committee Chair/Co-Chairs who will send written notification to the Respondent Member of the success or denial of the appeal.
6. Persons dropped from membership can apply for re-instatement after two (2) years has passed. The request should be directed to the current ABPsi President at the National Office. The Re-instatement Subcommittee of the SCES will consist of the members of the SCES that made the finding of unethical conduct and the five Elders who denied the Appeal. Consideration will be given based on: **a)** the initial offense, **b)** efforts to rehabilitate, and **c)** letters of recommendation.

#### **E. SANCTIONS**

Sanctions for non-adherence to each of the Ethical Standards of The Association of Black Psychologists include a progressive range of actions, unless otherwise specified by the particular ethical standard:

1. Letter of Admonition requesting that the behavior cease;
2. Letter of Correction requiring rehabilitation and/or submit to supervision or monitoring;
3. Imposition of Sanction with notification to The Respondent;
4. Public Disclosure and suspension of membership and its privileges, including listing affiliation with ABPsi and listing LCPP Certification for a stated period of

- from one (1) to five (5) years. The person is also prohibited from publishing in ABPsi products and presenting in ABPsi forums;
5. Public Disclosure and Revocation of Membership.