

THE ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PSYCHOLOGISTS 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 ;	Mexicans: criminals and rapists ⁴ ;
Nigerians: live in huts and want to live in America;	Muslims: evil terrorists;
Haitians: all have AIDS ⁵ ;	Women: treat them like shit and grab them by the pussy; and
Puerto Ricans: lazy;	White supremacists, Alt-right, the Wealthy, and Nazis: VERY FINE PEOPLE.
Black Americans: ingrates;	

Intentional or not, these comments represent psychic terrorism⁶, 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.

In the Spirit of Service,

THE ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PSYCHOLOGISTS, INC.

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Visit our website for more information about the ABPsi & community resources such as, "A Family/Community Self-care Tool Kit" and The Journal of Black Psychology

¹ Blake, A. (2018, January 11). Trump's 'shithole' comment about Haiti lends credence to report he says Haitians 'all have AIDS'. Washington Post. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/01/11/trumps-shithole-comment-about-haiti-lends-credence-to-report-that-he-said-its-residents-all-have-aids/?utm_term=.c77d3a2fff4b

² Shear, M. D. & Davis, J. H. (2017, December 23). Stoking Fears, Trump Defied Bureaucracy to Advance Immigration Agenda. New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/23/us/politics/trump-immigration.html>

³ Ade Ajayi, J. F; International Scientific Committee For The Drafting Of a General History Of Africa, Unesco (July 1, 1998). General History of Africa. pp. 305–15. ISBN 978-0-520-06701-1. via Google Books

⁴ Reilly, K. (2017, August 31). Donald Trump kicked off his presidential bid more than a year ago with harsh words for Mexico. He stated, "They are not our friend, believe me." He added more disparaging comments regarding Mexican immigrants: "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people." Time Magazine. Retrieved from <http://time.com/4473972/donald-trump-mexico-meeting-insult/>

⁵ Dawsey, J. (2018, January 11). Trump derided protections for immigrants from 'shithole' countries. Washington Post. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-attacks-protections-for-immigrants-from-shithole-countries-in-oval-office-meeting/2018/01/11/bfc0725c-f711-11e7-91af-31ac729add94_story.html?utm_term=.08681031c1d0

⁶ Nobles, W. (2015). Cultural Resistance to Psychic Terrorism. The SAGE Encyclopedia of African Cultural Heritage in North America. Thousand Oaks, Ca. SAGE. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483346373.n104>