



## **Position Statement on the Reinstatement of the Military Ban Against Transgender Service Persons**

### **The Association of Black Psychologists**

**May 2, 2019**

The Association of Black Psychologists is in solidarity with other professional and social justice organizations who are outraged by the ban of transgender persons from serving in the military. This ban was originally proposed by Donald J. Trump via a Tweet on his Twitter account in July 2017, later allowed to progress by the Supreme Court in January 2019, and went into effect in April 2019. This ban strips transgender troops of their right to serve openly and to receive medical care for gender reassignment services. This decision, supposedly based on the “tremendous medical costs and disruption” of transgender service members, was made without consultation with the Secretary of Defense or Congressional leadership. This backward step ironically fell on the 69th anniversary of former President Truman’s executive order abolishing racial discrimination in the U.S. Armed Forces.

According to the NAACP, “The justifications the Trump administration cited to re-impose the ban on transgender soldiers are “almost identical to the justifications the military used to discriminate against Black soldiers more than half a century ago.” Black transmen and transwomen are particularly vulnerable to this ban. Black people make up 29.7% of the U.S. military, according to Statista, and a small but significant proportion of these Black people are also transgender. Black transmen and transwomen already experience discrimination and trauma related to the intersection of transphobia and anti-Black discrimination, and for this reason are higher at-risk for depression, PTSD, violence, and suicide. This ban has the potential to exacerbate already existing psychosocial stressors and to contribute to new negative mental, physical, and social health outcomes for transgender service people who are already members of a highly marginalized and stigmatized group.

The mission of The Association of Black Psychologists is the liberation of the African Mind, empowerment of the African Character, and enlivenment and illumination of the African Spirit. Related to this mission, we understand all life to be imbued with an interconnecting life-force. A threat to the well-being of this life-force enacted upon any member of our community is a threat to all members of the community. Thus, we stand in support of transgender service members who choose to defend the United States. Our views resonate with associations that have spoken out against this atrocious discriminatory act including the American Psychological Association, National Association of Social Workers, Human Rights Campaign, The National Black Justice Coalition, The NAACP, National Center for

Transgender Equality, American Counseling Association, Gaylesta: The Psychotherapist Association for Gender & Sexual Diversity, The World Professional Association for Transgender Health, American Medical Association, as well as former Surgeons General M. Joycelyn Elders and David Satcher, and a list that is continually growing.

There is a substantial body of credible, peer-reviewed research demonstrating that there is no medical or practical reason to reject transgender individuals from military service. We concur with the AMA, the APA, and the Surgeons General that the US Department of Defense has distorted the available scientific proof related to gender dysphoria in order to stigmatize and pathologize transgender adults and restrict their ability to serve in the military. The science distinctly shows that transgender individuals whose gender dysphoria is adequately addressed are not mentally unstable, and that there is no reason to believe that such treatment would undermine their military readiness or capacity to serve openly as transgender. In addition, the cost of providing medical care to transgender troops would be miniscule, according to the RAND Corporation study commissioned by the Department of Defense.

Transgender people have served, and continue to serve this country with honor, and we believe they should continue to do so. We urge the Defense Department and President Trump to withdraw this ill-advised mandate. Polling shows that the majority of Americans in every state and the District of Columbia oppose the Trump-Pence discriminatory ban and support transgender people serving openly in the military. We will persist in fighting against injustice and this administration's dangerous anti-transgender bias, anti-Black bias, and general maliciousness through our continued work toward liberation and institution-building for historically oppressed people.

Amorie Robinson, Ph.D. (pronouns she/her/hers) is a Clinical Psychologist at the Third Circuit Court (Juvenile/Family Division) Clinic for Child Study in Detroit, a psychotherapist at Northland Clinic, a practicum supervisor for the Michigan School of Psychology, and a trainer with the Michigan Department of Education. Dr. Robinson co-founded the Ruth Ellis Center for homeless LGBT+ youth in Michigan and is a member of the Association of Black Psychologists and the Association for Women in Psychology.

Jonathan Lassiter, Ph.D. is founder/director of Lassiter Health Initiatives, co-founder and resident choreographer at Psychosomatic Dance, co-editor of the award-winning book, *Black LGBT Health in the United States: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Muhlenberg College, and Visiting Assistant Professor of Medicine at UCSF. A public speaker and licensed clinical psychologist, his major area of expertise is health psychology with a focus on Black LGBT health, Afrocentric psychology, and intersectionality.

## **References:**

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***This statement was prepared by Dr. Amorie Robinson on behalf of the Association of Black Psychologists.***