



# BPA News

Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc.

## FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### *BPA Celebrates a Banner Year of Partnerships and Community in 2025*

In 2025, the Black Psychiatrists of America (BPA) proudly hosted events at both the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) annual meetings, marking a milestone year of collaboration, connection, and celebration.



*BPA Executive Director,  
Dr. Napoleon Higgins*

BPA held its annual reception during the May APA meeting on May 19, 2025, in Los Angeles at the Continental Club. With the generous support of our sponsors, SCLA Management and PRMS, the evening brought together 250 plus attendees for an unforgettable night of food, fun, fellowship, and dancing. The energy carried late into the night and served as a reminder that when the community gathers with purpose, the joy is unmistakable.



***The 2026 Spring Conference will be held in New Orleans from March 26-29.***

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*Vacant*

## From the Desk of the Executive Director, *cont.*

This year also marked BPA's first combined event at the AACAP conference. The reception was held on Thursday, October 23, 2025, at the Swissôtel. The programming was co-sponsored by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, PRMS, BPA, and AACAP. We extend a special shout-out and sincere thank you to Carmen Thornton, Chief, Workforce Development and Health Equity, for facilitating such a meaningful and truly inaugural event. Her leadership and commitment were central to its success.



*Dr. Higgins with attendees at AACAP*

At both events, attendance reached 250 or more, reflecting the strong overlap and shared commitment among members of BPA, APA, and AACAP. Each gathering was a celebration of connection, culture, and community, filled with great food, music, dancing, and fellowship. By every measure, these were evenings well enjoyed.

In addition to these successful collaborations, BPA has been asked to partner with many other mental health organizations and events where there is a shared purpose centered on supporting Black mental health professionals and the patients and communities we serve. This growing interest reflects the continued relevance and impact of BPA's mission.



*Audience at APA Reception*

We are grateful to our partners, sponsors, and members who made these events possible, and we look forward to continuing and strengthening these partnerships in 2026 and beyond.

Napoleon B. Higgins, Jr., MD  
Executive Director

The Black Psychiatrists of America Presents



# 2026 SPRING CONFERENCE

NEW ORLEANS, LA | MARCH 26-29, 2026

*Ancestral Echoes and Neurobiological Resilience: Confronting Historical Trauma to Advance Black Mental Health*



**NOPSI Hotel**  
317 Baronne St  
New Orleans, LA 70112



**The Chicory**  
610 S. Peters Street  
New Orleans, LA 70130

<https://blackpsychiatrists.org/bpa-spring-conference>

# BPA's 2025 Transcultural Conference: A Transformative Experience on the Spice Island

*By Napoleon B. Higgins, Jr., MD*

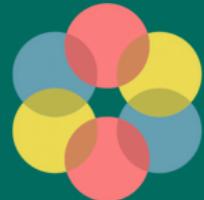
The Black Psychiatrists of America (BPA) proudly hosted its 2025 Transcultural Conference on the beautiful island of Grenada, affectionately known as "The Spice Island." Held from November 6–10, 2025, the conference brought together more than 140 attendees for an unforgettable blend of clinical education, cultural immersion, and global connection.

Participants enjoyed residential accommodations at the Royalton Grenada, while the didactic and scientific programming took place at St. George's University. The conference officially began on Thursday with a robust training for mental health professionals, primary care physicians, other clinicians, staff, and mental health advocates at Mount Gay, the island's main teaching hospital.

What followed were three dynamic days of scientific exchange and rich cultural experiences. Attendees participated in outstanding presentations, meaningful dialogue, and intentional networking, complemented by curated excursions—including a boat ride, countryside tours, shopping, and exceptional local cuisine. The experience fostered team building, collaboration, and deepened global perspectives on mental health care.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all BPA members who participated and to our Grenadian partners and colleagues whose hospitality, coordination, and local expertise made this conference truly special. From recommendations on places to visit to introductions to people and institutions, their support was invaluable.

Looking ahead, BPA is excited to announce that our next Transcultural Conference is tentatively planned for Ghana, in West Africa. Please be on the lookout over the next month for more details—we look forward to continuing this powerful tradition of global engagement, learning, and fellowship.



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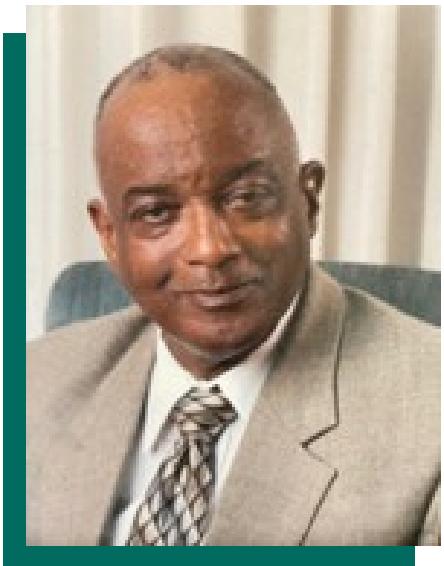




## Street Renamed in Honor of Dr. Harold W. Jordan

On December 4, 2025, the Nashville Metro Council approved an ordinance designating a portion of Morena Street near Meharry Medical College as "Dr. Harold W. Jordan Way." The honorary street name recognizes the extraordinary legacy of Dr. Harold W. Jordan, a nationally respected psychiatrist and Tennessee's first Black Commissioner of Mental Health.

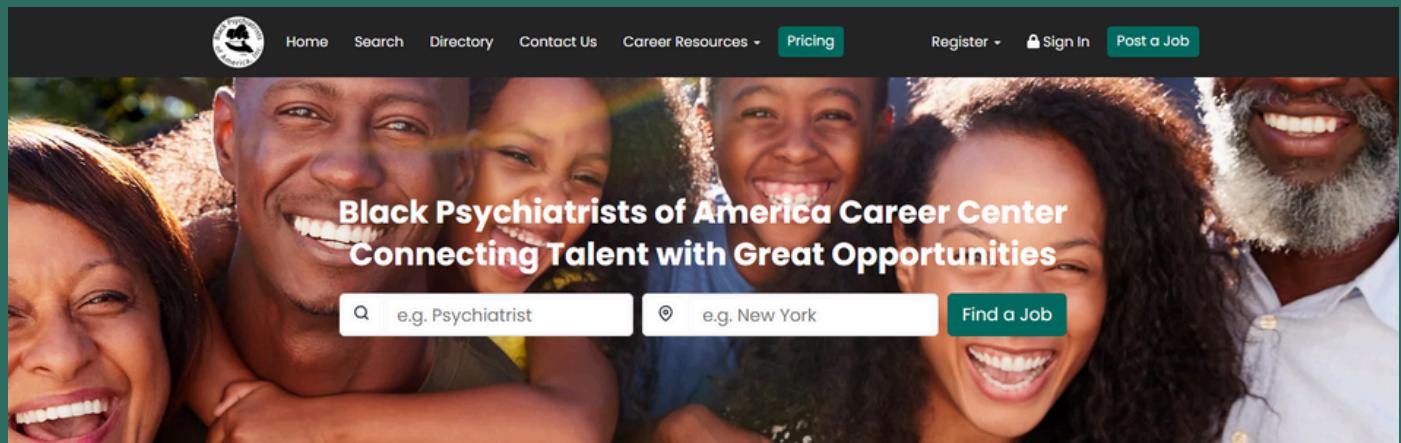
A graduate of Meharry Medical College, Dr. Jordan served as longtime chair of its Department of Psychiatry and later as interim dean of the School of Medicine. He made history in 1964 as the first Black resident at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, just one day before the Civil Rights Act was signed. Vanderbilt now honors his impact through an annual lecture series in his name.



As Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health, Dr. Jordan led all state inpatient hospitals to accreditation, an achievement that continues today. His contributions have been widely recognized, including a congressional resolution, state proclamations, and the naming of the Harold W. Jordan Habilitation Center.

Dr. Jordan's connection to Meharry spans generations, following in the footsteps of his grandfather and great-grandfather, both pioneering Black physicians. The new street designation stands as a lasting tribute to his leadership, service, and enduring influence on medicine and mental health care.

***Have you visited BPA's Career Center? [Click here!](#)***



# 2025 Climate Health Equity Fellow Graduate

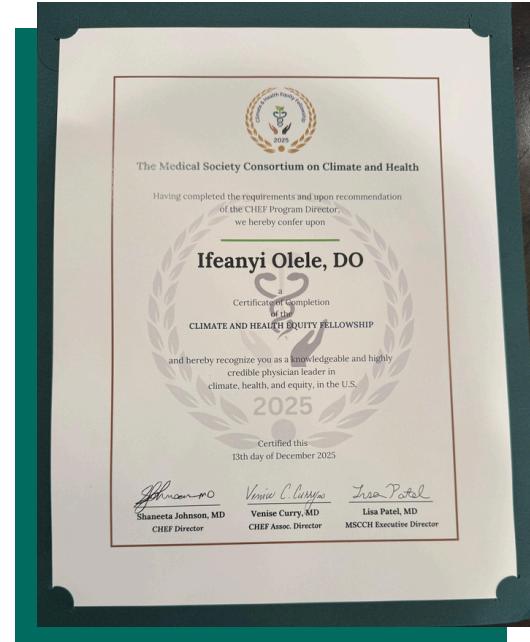
By Ifeanyi Olele, DO

I am grateful to share that I have graduated from the Climate & Health Equity Fellowship (CHEF), Class of 2025, sponsored by the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health in partnership with the National Medical Association. Our graduation ceremony was held at Howard University Hospital on December 13, 2025.

This fellowship strengthened my understanding of how climate, health, and equity intersect in everyday clinical care. Beyond policy discussions, the program emphasized how environmental exposures, structural inequities, and social conditions directly influence patient outcomes and community resilience. As a psychiatrist, it reinforced that climate-related stressors often surface as anxiety, depression, trauma, and burnout long before they are labeled as environmental issues.

One of the most meaningful aspects of CHEF was learning in community with physicians from a wide range of specialties, including family medicine, pediatrics, pulmonology, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology, infectious disease, addiction medicine, obesity medicine, otolaryngology, and pediatric subspecialties. Seeing climate and equity challenges through different clinical lenses highlighted how pervasive and interconnected these issues truly are.

I am thankful for the opportunity to grow, reflect, and better align my clinical work with the realities facing the communities we serve. I look forward to continuing this work with humility, curiosity, and a commitment to patient-centered, equity-driven care.



We want to feature **YOU** in our next newsletter! Share your wins so we can celebrate you. [Submit your highlight or article](#) by April 2, 2026.

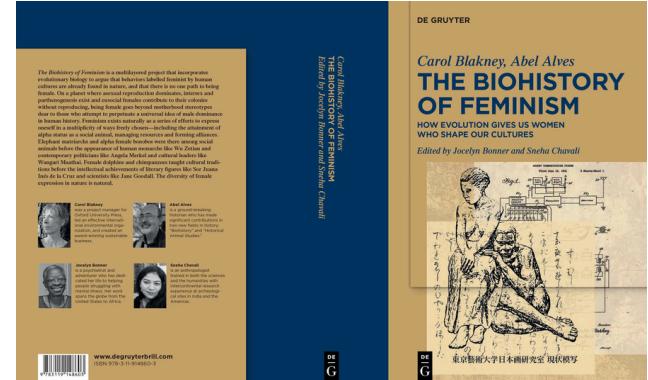
# Biohistory of Feminism: New Release in February 2026 from De Gruyter

By Jocelyn W. Bonner, MD, LFAPA, Volunteer Psychiatry Consultant, [www.treatmentnotchains.org](http://www.treatmentnotchains.org)

I am pleased to announce the upcoming publication of Biohistory of Feminism. I was honored to be asked by Blakney and Alves to lend my expertise on the manuscript and was given editor status. My suggestions primarily consisted of adding a broader diversity of content and scientific review. The intended audience is universities. Here is the synopsis from the publisher:

The Biohistory of Feminism is a multilayered project that incorporates evolutionary biology to argue that behaviors labelled feminist by human cultures are already found in nature, and that there is no one path to being female. On a planet where asexual reproduction dominates, intersex and

parthenogenesis exist and eusocial females contribute to their colonies without reproducing, being female goes beyond motherhood stereotypes dear to those who attempt to perpetuate a universal idea of male dominance in human history. Feminism exists naturally as a series of efforts to express oneself in a multiplicity of ways freely chosen—including the attainment of alpha status as a social animal, managing resources and forming alliances. Elephant matriarchs and alpha female bonobos were there among social animals before the appearance of human monarchs like Wu Zetian and contemporary politicians like Angela Merkel and cultural leaders like Wangari Maathai. Female dolphins and chimpanzees taught cultural traditions before the intellectual achievements of literary figures like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and scientists like Jane Goodall. The diversity of female expression in nature is natural.



## Author / Editor information

Carol Blakney, Artist, Activist, Independent Scholar, Muncie, United States; Abel Alves, Ball State University, Muncie, United States; Jocelyn Bonner, Treatment Not Chains, Eugene, United States; Sneha Chavali, University of Wisconsin, Madison, United States.



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# **Insights from the 2025 Transcultural Conference in Grenada: Fostering Global Mental Health through Workforce Growth, Strategic Alliances, and Equity Promotion**

*By Esiri Gbenedio and Rahn Kennedy Bailey, MD.*

The Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc. Annual Transcultural Conference took place in St. George's, Grenada, November 6-10, 2025. The Royalton, as well as St. George's University, was named as the conference headquarters for the week. This year's theme, "Roots of Resilience: Confronting the Legacy of Racism and Advancing Mental Health in the Diaspora," resonated strongly throughout discussions, reminding us that our needs are necessary and relevant. It is a call to action to remind us of the dire state of Black people's experiences in both historical and present times across the Global Community. Psychiatrists, residents in training, educators, researchers, and community leaders worked hard this week. Boldly. Passionately. They took on their role and purpose of advocating for the truths that must have the power to influence the conversation in the space of "mental health inequity".

The conference showed an elevated attention to the topic of those with primary brain disorders who are left undeniably short by lack of resources, access to care, and strikingly absent expertise. Attendees were candid about the implications of this fact. Schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, epilepsy, and neurocognitive disorders remain undiagnosed or untreated entirely. Diagnostic delays and variable access to therapeutics, insufficiencies in the provision of psychiatric care, and disjointed care pathways are life-threatening. Critically, it is not simply a clinical failure: the impact of primary brain disorder extends beyond this, with examples of homelessness, imprisonment, family separation, and economic disempowerment. This was arguably the most powerful message: we cannot allow ourselves to treat primary brain disorders as a secondary issue in the global health agenda.

Additionally, a recurring theme at the conference was how gaps in major U.S. urban centers mirror those of the Caribbean and other disadvantaged regions worldwide. Although circumstances may vary, these communities face common barriers: a shortage of mental health professionals, deteriorating public healthcare systems, exclusionary insurance policies, transportation obstacles, societal stigma, and more. The issue is not relative wealth; rather, these challenges are interconnected and universal. To address them, collective effort across borders is essential to drive investment in robust mental healthcare infrastructure and accessibility. Only a unified approach can close persistent gaps and guarantee equitable care for all.

# Insights from the 2025 Transcultural Conference in Grenada: Fostering Global Mental Health through Workforce Growth, Strategic Alliances, and Equity Promotion, cont.

The group showed great enthusiasm to discuss the future generation. Future breakthroughs depend on educating young scientists, clinicians, and leaders. Therefore, we must actively invest in students' education at every stage, from their first interest in mental health through medical school and into their careers. Overcoming hurdles, such as financial burdens, a lack of role models, limited research experience, and professional impostor syndrome, requires decisive action. The BPA stressed that recruiting the best minds and hands alone is insufficient; we must establish long-term mentoring, sincere sponsorship, leadership opportunities, and consistent institutional support. Let us take decisive steps together to build a supportive environment that nurtures and retains the next generation in this field.

Real partnership is essential. BPA reaffirmed its commitment to collaborating with organizations advancing Global Mental Health at the global and national levels. During the meetings, participants emphasized the need to proactively build equitable partnerships with universities, government agencies, NGOs, and grassroots organizations. They urged all stakeholders to foster, encourage, and develop these partnerships across training, research, clinical work, advocacy, and policy—always acting with humility, respecting established foundations, and focusing on long-term impact.

The 2025 Annual Transcultural Conference in Grenada posed a bold critique and a bold challenge. It reviewed the status of global imbalances in addressing equality around mental illness and challenged the delegates to take concrete action. We must tackle primary brain disease, develop and maintain a diverse, skilled, knowledgeable, and resilient workforce, and build active, collaborative partnerships to enhance mental health worldwide. These are not separate agendas but united aspects of the same fight for equality and decent mental health treatment for Black people, families, and communities everywhere. The time to act is now. Let us commit to advancing these goals together.

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## **Lifting Minds in 2026: Questions for BPA**

*By Cynthia Turner-Graham, M.D., DLFAPA*

In 1969, a delegation of ~100 Black psychiatrists, led by our founder, Dr. Chester Pierce, challenged the APA Board of Trustees with a 9-point platform. Contrasting the APA's administrative structure with that of 57 years ago, there is clear evidence of a modicum of change. However, BPA must ask, "Is this enough?" Are sufficient resources allocated to address the challenges facing Black psychiatrists in 2026? Do APA's priorities reflect the appropriate urgency in addressing Black mental health issues as those of the broader community? If we were to develop a platform listing BPA's organizational priorities, what would we see? How many of the 1969 issues remain alive and well? What new challenges have presented themselves in the interim?

Our predecessors were strategic in their approach, bold and unflinching in their confrontation. Apart from APA, what are the issues that should command our collective attention? How will BPA show up and make a difference in 2026?

## **Honoring Dr. Bill Lawson, Our Delgado Award Winner**

*By Napoleon B. Higgins, Jr., MD*

Dr. William B. Lawson, M.D., Ph.D., DLFAPA was honored with the *Andrea Delgado, MD Memorial Lecturer Award* at the Annual Transcultural Conference Meeting of the Black Psychiatrists of America in Grenada. During his memorial lecture, he addressed the risks and benefits of emerging information technologies — particularly artificial intelligence — for the African American community, with a focus on ethical implementation and equity-centered impact.

Dr. Lawson has a new book available now for purchase, *Beyond the Pandemic: Race, Mental Health, and America's Reckoning*. In this timely work, Dr. Lawson explores how COVID-19 magnified longstanding inequities and what clinicians, institutions, and communities can do to build a more culturally responsive and just mental health system. The book will be available for purchase this weekend. Beyond the Pandemic examines the lasting psychological and social effects of COVID-19 through the lens of race and mental health equity in America. Drawing on decades of clinical leadership and scholarship, Dr. Lawson highlights how structural disparities shape outcomes, access, and quality of care — and offers a clear, practical path forward for strengthening trust, improving culturally informed practice, and advancing equitable systems of mental health support.

# Psychiatry, Gun Violence, and the Power of Storytelling

By Esiri Gbenedio, MS American University of Antigua College of Medicine

In “[Dr. Rahn K. Bailey: Psychiatry, Purpose, and the Power of Storytelling](#),” Georgina Dhillon shares that Dr. Rahn K. Bailey sees psychiatry as an essential, proactive force for addressing the social roots of mental health crises. Bailey advocates for treating more than just symptoms. Dhillon highlights his core belief: psychiatry has a moral duty, especially amid soaring gun violence, to confront the social determinants of suffering in marginalized communities. This frames psychiatry not only as a response to mental health issues but as a leader equipped to disrupt cycles of violence affecting entire communities.



Expanding upon Dr. Bailey's holistic approach, his narrative method builds on his focus on community. He defines storytelling as both a professional task and a part of his Creole heritage. Storytelling helps maintain collective memory, recognize suffering, and give communities strength through shared experience. According to Dhillon, trauma cannot be understood without a narrative. This narrative approach connects clinicians to lived experience beyond statistics or politics. In psychiatry, it provides insight into how people facing constant violence construct identity, behavior, and affect regulation, especially among youth who live with instability and loss.

At the core of Dr. Bailey's approach is his belief that gun violence is primarily a systemic problem caused by untreated trauma, limited access to care, and long-standing community neglect, not just by individual mental illness. He contends that psychiatry must interrupt the cycle where structural neglect creates trauma and breeds further violence. This view reimagines psychiatry's purpose: not only to provide clinical care but to lead public health efforts and address violence systemically.

Dr. Bailey exemplifies this in Louisiana, where he has professional ties and gun-related deaths remain high. Firearm violence drives homicide and suicide, creating repeating patterns. Such violence causes widespread trauma and lasting mental health problems affecting groups, not just individuals. Aside from statewide statistics, Acadiana and Central Louisiana also underscore the impact of regional gun violence on public health and mental well-being. The Acadiana region, characterized by its Francophone and Creole population and centered around Lafayette, as well as

## Purpose, Psychiatry & the Power of Storytelling, cont.

rural and surrounding communities of Central Louisiana, notably shares an overexposure to gun violence akin to statewide data. Gun Violence Archive statistics in June of 2023 from the CDC indicated that Louisiana had over 1,200 deaths attributed to firearms, with firearms as the leading cause of death for people ages 1-17. Further, most deaths resulting from gun violence were homicides, with males and Black Louisianans overrepresented in the data. Such gun violence statistics underscore the overwhelming gun violence burden in Acadiana and Central Louisiana, not only due to the economic state but also due to limited access to mental health services and historical government neglect that compounded the physical and psychological effects of gun violence on families and young people.

This theme of overlooked trauma resonates with my own experience. Similarly, Riverside and the Inland Empire, a region in California, are often left out of national gun violence discussions. Even though California is seen as having strong firearm laws, my community demonstrates that lower state gun death rates do not erase local

psychological harm. Gun deaths in Riverside County, regardless of cause, affect neighborhoods even in the absence of national media coverage. Families, schools, and social networks feel the aftermath, further highlighting the critical need for accessible, trauma-informed mental health care.

Continuing with Riverside County, a recent case further highlights these systemic issues. In 2025, a federal jury awarded \$13.1 million to Jeffrey Alexander Monroy's family after a deputy fatally shot Monroy during a mental health crisis in 2020. The court found that Monroy had sought care and did not pose an immediate threat. While legal accountability played a role, the system failed to address Monroy's distress before it escalated. Ultimately, this case supports Dr. Bailey's view: failures in mental health care, early intervention, and support often lead to gun violence and cause lasting grief and trauma.

### Did you know?

*Dr. Bailey has received the following awards:*

- *2026 Distinguished Service Award from the APA*
- *2025 Presidential Commendation Award from APA President, Ramaswamy Viswanathan, MD*
- *2024 APA Solomon Carter Fuller, MD Award from the APA Black Caucus*

## Purpose, Psychiatry & the Power of Storytelling, cont.

To address such systemic failures, Dhillon also highlights Dr. Bailey's leadership in organized psychiatry. As a candidate for President-Elect of the American Psychiatric Association, he emphasizes psychiatry's duty to shape policy, prevent violence, and push for mental health equity. He insists that psychiatrists must not be bystanders in social crises; they must advocate and bring their expertise into public policy and conversations.

Overall, the narrative in Psychiatry, Purpose, and the Power of Storytelling argues that psychiatry must take a leading role in treating gun violence as a systemic health and social problem. This call to action resonates with me as an aspiring psychiatrist from Riverside. Dr. Bailey's view, that psychiatrists must do more than treat trauma and must also actively advocate for communities and challenge the forces that perpetuate violence, is powerful to me.

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# Congratulations!

**From the President**  
**DrLade Smith CBE**



9April 2025

DrA Stewart  
 66North Pauline Street  
 Suite #205  
 Memphis, Shelby 38103  
 United States of America

Dear Altha,

Iam writing to let you know that at its meeting on 25 October 2024, the Nominations Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists elected you to the Honorary Fellowship ofthe College.

This is the highest award which we can give, and only five Honorary Fellowships are awarded each year.

The Nominations Committee made this election in recognition of your outstanding contribution to the profession and to those with or affected by mental illness.

You were nominated in recognition of your commitment to your commitment to child and adolescent psychiatry.

I hope very much that you will accept this honour. We will invite you to a ceremony later this year to celebrate and we will update you about this in due course.

I should be very grateful if you would let me know whether you will be willing to accept this nomination to Honorary Fellowship of the College.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Very best wishes,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lade Smith'.

**Dr Lade Smith CBE**  
 President, Royal College of Psychiatrists

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NO HEALTH WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH

## BPA Panel at APA Annual Meeting



**Title:** Enhancing Care for Serious Mental Illness in Incarcerated Populations

**Abstract:** People with serious mental illness (SMI), often characterized as “a danger to society,” have a longstanding history of criminalization in the United States (1). Activists such as Dorothea Dix recognized how social conditions contribute to the development of mental illness and subsequent incarceration, advocating for more humane treatment of the mentally ill. Current estimates suggest there are ten times as many people with SMI in jails or prisons compared to psychiatric hospitals (2). Although Black Americans are overrepresented both in prison populations and community diagnoses of SMI, Black Americans who are incarcerated are significantly less likely to report a history of mental illness or psychiatric medication use compared to White prisoners (3).

In May 2025, we presented an initial session focused on individuals transitioning from limited access to mental health services in the community to receiving care within prison facilities. In 2026, we will address the next level of engagement: enhancing care for individuals incarcerated with SMI. From a total health perspective, SMI arises from systemic barriers, disparities, and discriminatory experiences, creating distinct challenges for diagnosis, treatment, and management in correctional settings. Dr. Rahn K. Bailey, forensic psychiatrist and president-elect of the Black Psychiatrists of America (BPA), will provide an overview of violence, victimization, and social determinants of health for individuals with SMI, with attention to how mental illness shapes interactions within the prison system and implications for institutional safety. Dr. Stephen McLeod-Bryant, administrative psychiatrist and current BPA president, will examine psychosis among individuals discharged from prison, including misdiagnosis, medication adherence, and the effects of the prison environment on symptoms. Dr. Napoleon Higgins, child and adolescent psychiatrist and Executive Director of the BPA, will discuss juvenile SMI in correctional settings, highlighting the increasing placement of juveniles in adult facilities and the long-term mental health consequences of incarceration.