



BPA News

Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc.

Mentorship at the Table:

Reflections on a Group Mentorship Session at the Black Psychiatrists of America Annual Meeting

Overview

March 2026, the Black Psychiatrists of America (BPA) welcomes a group mentorship session at its national conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. This event brings together a panel of experts in psychiatry, pediatrics, and family medicine. The audience spans the full career spectrum: undergraduate students, medical students, residents, PhD candidates, fellows, and early career faculty. The session is designed as a round-table discussion to foster open dialogue, introduce mentors, and create a comfortable space for mentees to ask questions. Topics include finding a mentor, asking for sponsorship, navigating professional environments, and building connections that sustain a career in medicine. This reflection considers the role that BPA and other national organizations can play in professional development.



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The 2026 Transcultural Conference will be held in Ghana from November 12-15, 2026.

Mentorship at the Table: Reflections on a Group Mentorship Session at the Black Psychiatrists of America Annual Meeting, *cont.*

What This Session Illustrates

The BPA mentorship session demonstrates that the right conditions can generate cross-career conversations, leading to sustained mentorship opportunities. The group format at a national conference brings together professionals at different stages in their careers and reframes mentorship as a network of accountability, connecting mentees, advisors, and communities of practice and professional possibilities. The conversational structure lowers the barrier to engagement and creates a dynamic experience demonstrating the fluidity of mentorship throughout one's career as guidance can be found in unexpected places and people. The topics of conversation during this session extend beyond traditional career mentorship including identity, belonging, and how to thrive in a variety of professional environments. This round table event illustrates the potential of future meetings to serve as an entry point to long term mentorship relationships to foster growth and development of young professions in this field. Conversations that begin at BPA can seed relationships that continue well beyond the first meeting,

Recommendations

We offer the following recommendations to support the development of future programs that foster growth and development of junior members of professional organizations. First, round-table mentorship meetings are a means to create access to senior colleagues and provide cross-career perspectives and opportunities. A single session can plant the seeds, and the next step is hosting additional opportunities to extend the reach of in-person mentorship programs to include opt-in contact sharing, post-event matching programs, and virtual follow-up sessions.

Next is recognizing that BPA is uniquely positioned to fill a gap as institutions vary in their capacity to provide mentorship. BPA offers a community to Black psychiatrist and trainees across different career stages, specialties, and geographic settings, all gathered around a shared professional identity and purpose. BPA is investing time and effort in mentorship programming with the goal of sustainability and growth of our community. Future opportunities include pre-meeting mentor training that includes identity navigation, bystander intervention, and pressure faced by those who are underrepresented in medication with the goal of proliferating this knowledge to mentees. This addition is valuable for both Black mentors and non-Black mentors to diversity their

Mentorship at the Table: Reflections on a Group Mentorship Session at the Black Psychiatrists of America Annual Meeting, *cont.*

knowledge and understanding of challenges their mentees may face.

Closing Reflection

The BPA mentorship event in New Orleans is a demonstration of the possibilities when a professional community creates intentional space for its members to learn from one another across career stages. BPA serves a conduit to bring Black psychiatrists and trainees from across the country, at every stage of their careers, around a shared sense of purpose and care. The creation of relationships facilitated during the Spring conference's first round-table mentorship activity serves as the foundation for building and growing a network that fosters conversations for all members of our community.

The Black Psychiatrists of America Presents



REGISTER

2026 TRANSCULTURAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 12-15, 2026 | ACCRA, GHANA

From Roots to Restoration: Mental Health, Heritage, and Collective Healing

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



PRE-CONFERENCE
November 10-12
Ashanti Region

POST-CONFERENCE
November 16-18
Volta Region



Introducing the BPA Communications and Social Media Committee's 2026–2027 Interns

By Ifeanyi Olele, DO, MBA, MS, FAPA



Danique Gray, MBBS



Alex Ladd, MD, MS

The Black Psychiatrists of America Communications and Social Media Committee is pleased to welcome two outstanding physicians to our 2026–2027 internship cycle. These emerging leaders bring a compelling combination of clinical training, digital fluency, and a deep commitment to mental health equity.

Danique Gray, MBBS is a physician, medical educator, and entrepreneur navigating the intersection of clinical psychiatry and digital media. A graduate of the University of the West Indies with a Professional Diploma in Digital Marketing, she leverages her unique skill set to bridge the gap between complex clinical concepts and digital engagement. Currently preparing for the 2027 Residency Match, Dr. Gray is pursuing a career in forensic psychiatry to explore the critical relationship between the law and mental health. Her long-term goal is to shape policy that ensures legal and social systems prioritize patient well-being. She joins the BPA with a platform-first mindset, dedicated to using digital storytelling to champion mental health equity.



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

Introducing the BPA Communications and Social Media Committee's 2026–2027 Interns, *cont.*

By Ifeanyi Olele, DO, MBA, MS, FAPA

Alex Ladd, MD, MS is a physician from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, who completed his undergraduate training at Jackson State University before earning his medical degree from Morehouse School of Medicine, two institutions with proud legacies of training physicians committed to underserved communities. Based in Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. Ladd is preparing for the 2027 Match with professional interests spanning Community Psychiatry, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Integrative Medicine. His breadth of clinical interest reflects a whole-person approach to care that aligns well with the BPA's mission. Beyond medicine, Dr. Ladd is a collector of vinyl records, a film photography enthusiast, and a devoted fan of live music, interests that speak to a creative sensibility he brings to his professional work as well.

Together, Drs. Gray and Ladd represent exactly the kind of next-generation talent the BPA Communications and Social Media Committee exists to develop. We are proud to support their growth and look forward to the fresh energy and perspectives they will bring to our work this cycle.

Please join us in welcoming them to the BPA family.



ATTEND A FUTURE BOARD MEETING

2nd Thursday of every month at 8:00 PM eastern

Open to voting members only. You must be receiving “All e-blasts” to automatically obtain an agenda and Zoom link.

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP FOR ALL E-BLASTS](#)

Grégoire Ahongbonon 2022 APA Chester Pierce Recipient Honored

By Jocelyn Bonner

Grégoire Ahongbonon, APA 2022 Chester M. Pierce Human Rights Award recipient, has been honored once again. Grégoire Ahongbonon, president and founder of Association Saint-Camille received the 2025 Ahmadiyya Muslim Prize for the Advancement of Peace on May 20, 2026, in Surrey, England. Association Saint-Camille, an NGO, provides mental and general health services in Benin, Togo, Ivory Coast, and is expanding into Nigeria. ASC continues to erase stigma and restore dignity to people affected by mental illness.



The award was presented by His Holiness Hirzat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, pictured left, of the Ahmadiyya community.



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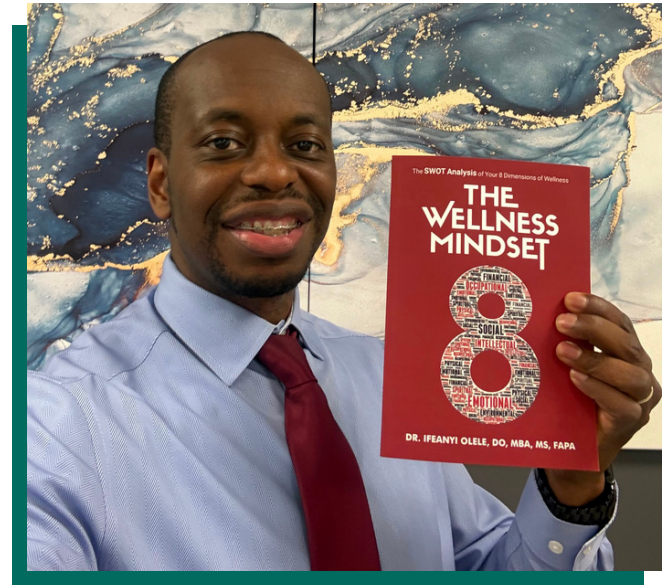


Success Doesn't Always Mean Wellness

By Ifeanyi Olele, DO, MBA, MS, FAPA

Throughout my career as a psychiatrist, I've seen a pattern that rarely gets named directly: high-achieving individuals who appear to have it all, yet feel something is missing. The challenge usually isn't recognizing that something is off. It's identifying which area of life needs attention.

That gap inspired me to write *The Wellness Mindset: The SWOT Analysis of Your 8 Dimensions of Wellness*. The book offers a practical framework for honest self-reflection across eight domains: physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, environmental, financial, and occupational wellness. My goal is simple. Give people a structured way to assess where they are, identify what's holding them back, and start conversations that lead to real growth.

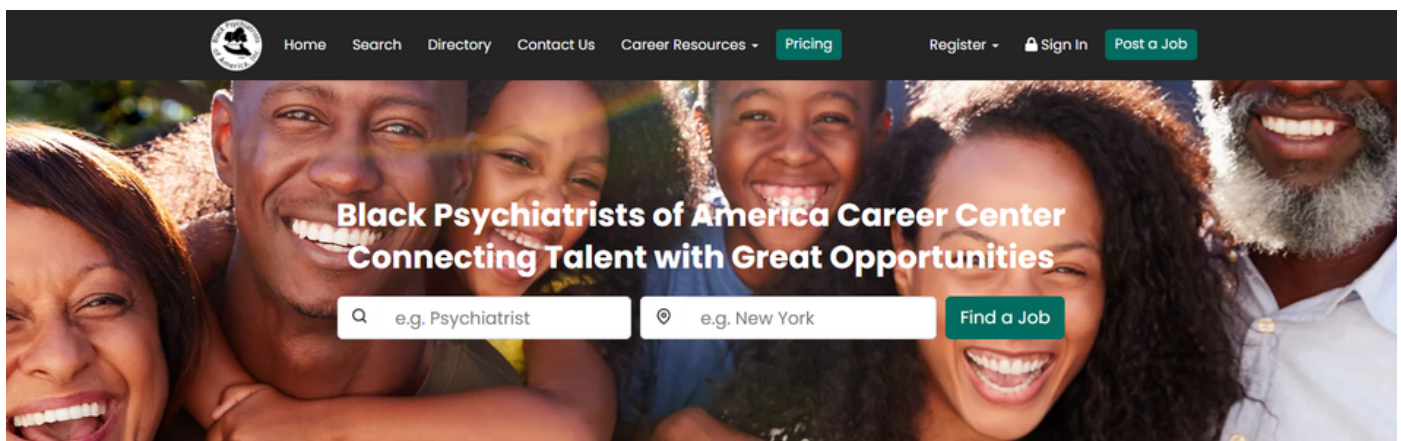


*Ifeanyi Olele, DO, MBA, MS, FAPA, with his newly released book, *The Wellness Mindset: The SWOT Analysis of Your 8 Dimensions of Wellness*. Available now at <https://doctorolele.myshopify.com>*

Success and wellness are not the same thing. But with the right tools, they don't have to be in conflict.

You can learn more and get your copy at <https://doctorolele.myshopify.com>.

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



The Art of Medicine

For Hunter Parker, art and medicine have always been deeply interconnected. Inspired by her brother's struggle with Focal Segmental Glomerulosclerosis (FSGS), a rare kidney disease, her passion for medicine was shaped by childhood experiences accompanying her family to medical appointments.

"Seeing how physicians treated my brother, especially coming from Bridgeport and having to travel to New Haven for care, made me want to become a doctor," said Parker, a rising fourth-year osteopathic medical student at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine–Middletown. "I would draw him pictures, hoping to make him feel better and emulate the kindness and compassion I saw his doctors express."



*Hunter Parker, MS, OMS-IV
(TouroCOM-Middletown)*

While developing her artistic abilities from a young age, Hunter began pursuing professional illustration in 2019 through HunterParkerArt, combining her love of art with her growing interest in medicine. Her depictions of complex concepts—such as the eukaryotic cell, mitochondria, sickle cell disease, and polycystic kidney disease—are both educational tools and artistic expressions. In her hands, medicine becomes striking images.

Aspiring to become a psychiatrist, Parker created the original illustration featured in this issue depicting Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). Using visual storytelling, the piece seeks to capture the often-invisible burden of depression and its impact on daily life. Through her work, she hopes to promote awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage compassionate conversations surrounding mental health.

Her artwork has been recognized both within her institution and nationally, with publications in the Student National Medical Association Journal and the Student Osteopathic Medical Association The Future D.O. Magazine. "Medical school is stressful, but keeping up with my art helps me manage my time and passions. Whether it is medicine or artistic expression, I hope to make an impact by educating, advocating, having meaningful conversations, and connecting with people through shared human experiences."



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MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER

ILLUSTRATION BY HUNTER PARKER, MS, OMS-3

A MOOD DISORDER CHARACTERIZED BY 5 OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS FOR 2 WEEKS (WITH AT LEAST ONE OF THE SYMPTOMS BEING DEPRESSED MOOD AND/OR LOSS OF INTEREST OR PLEASURE) CAUSING IMPAIRMENT.

SIGECAPS
MNEMONIC
TO REMEMBER SYMPTOMS



SOURCES:
DSM-5-TR, UPTODATE

SLEEP CHANGES
INTEREST DECREASE
GUILT (OR FEELINGS OF WORTHLESSNESS)
ENERGY DECREASE
CONCENTRATION DIFFICULTIES
APPETITE CHANGES (OR WEIGHT CHANGES)
PSYCHOMOTOR AGITATION & SLOWING
SUICIDAL IDEATION



Major Depressive Disorder, an Illustration by Hunter Parker, MS, OMS-IV



BPA Lights Up San Francisco: A Night to Remember at APA 2026

By Napoleon B. Higgins, Jr., MD

The Black Psychiatrists of America (BPA) hosted one of its most memorable events yet on Monday, May 18th, at the Hawthorne Lounge during the APA Annual Meeting in San Francisco. Running from 6:30 to 11:30 p.m., the evening drew nearly 350 attendees, making it one of the largest evening gatherings of the entire conference — and quite possibly the single largest evening event at APA this spring.

This year, BPA revived a beloved concept: sponsorship not just from major organizations, but from individual members and their companies as well. Our title sponsor was SCLA Management, with Acadia Pharmaceuticals and Global Health Psychiatry serving as Platinum sponsors, and PRMS as our Gold sponsor. We were also grateful for multiple members who stepped up with Silver sponsorships — you know who you are, and we thank you for your generosity above and beyond the standard ticket price. To everyone who contributed through regular donations as well, thank you for helping make this event such a success.

As always, the evening featured spirited discussion on advocacy and updates on BPA's activities, followed by the fellowship and connection that has become a BPA signature. Proceeds will help fund scholarships for residents and students to attend future conferences, while strengthening BPA's visibility and membership growth.

Attendees consistently say this gathering is a highlight of their APA experience — a chance to set down the weight of demanding careers and recharge among colleagues who understand the work. Thank you to all who made this night unforgettable.



*BPA Executive Director,
Dr. Napoleon Higgins*

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Strong Mind, Soft Life with Dr. Topaz Launches to Center Women's Mental Wellness Through Honest Conversations

By Topaz Sampson-Mills, MD

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — Launched in February 2026, Strong Mind, Soft Life with Dr. Topaz is a podcast dedicated to centering women by creating meaningful conversations about mental health, resilience, and living well. Hosted by double board-certified adult and forensic psychiatrist Dr. Topaz Sampson-Mills, the podcast blends expert insight with authentic storytelling to make mental wellness approachable, empowering, and actionable.

Each episode explores the intersection of emotional well-being, relationships, career, family, identity, and personal growth, providing listeners with practical tools and thoughtful discussions that inspire healthier minds and softer lives.

The podcast debuted with an engaging conversation featuring renowned psychiatrist Dr. Danielle Hairston, whose expertise and perspective set the tone for the show's mission: to normalize conversations about mental health while amplifying the voices of leading experts and changemakers.

Strong Mind, Soft Life with Dr. Topaz is available on major podcast platforms, with new episodes coming out weekly featuring physicians, psychologists, therapists, researchers, and other thought leaders committed to helping women prioritize their mental health and thrive.

Because a strong mind makes room for a soft life.

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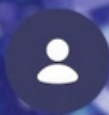
strong mind,



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NEW PODCAST
HOSTED BY DR. TOPAZ
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solution for
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...that will
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