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BPA MISSION

The mission of the BPA is to address issues affecting the Mental Health of African-Americans and to provide a forum for continuing education for those who provide psychiatric care.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The International Year for People of African Descent

Washington, DC, 24 January 2011 - The United Nations has proclaimed 2011 as the “International Year for People of African Descent” citing the need to strengthen national actions and international cooperation to ensure that people of African descent fully enjoy economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights. Many worldwide activities are being planned that honor this mandate, which coincides with the “Mission” of our own organization, the Black Psychiatrists of America (BPA) and served as one of the major underlying reasons for calling for and creating this organization in the first place some forty-two years ago.

At a recent seminar entitled “The Fight Against Discrimination Based On Racial, Ethnic, Religious or Other Bias” convened on January 10, 2011 in Ankara, Turkey hosted by the Government of Turkey, the Council of Europe, and the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, it was clearly stated that “Overcoming racism will require addressing both public and private attitudes which comfort, justify and perpetuate racism at all levels and in all areas of life.”

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ivan Simonovic, says, “The International Year offers a unique opportunity to redouble efforts to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance that affect Afro-descendants in all parts of the world.” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated in his December 10, 2010 speech on the UN’s Human Rights Day that people of African descent are among those most affected by racism, steeped in a long and terrible history of “fundamental wrongs” and the denial of basic rights. “The International community has affirmed that the transatlantic slave trade was an appalling tragedy not only because of its barbarism but also because of its magnitude, organized nature and negation of the essential humanity of the victims”, he said. “Even today, Africans and people of African descent continue to suffer the consequences of these acts.” He further called for the full integration of people of African descent into social, economic, and political life at all levels of decision-making. “The international community cannot accept that whole communities are marginalized because of the color of their skin”, says the Secretary-General.

The Black Psychiatrists of America sends a resounding ovation to the United Nations, its “Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent”, and to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for taking such a pro-active and vital global stand for persons of African descent. As mental health providers to underserved populations in the United States of America, the Caribbean, South America and Africa, we are all too painfully aware of the chronic and devastating effects that racism has played on the mental, physical, emotional, economic, legal, political and spiritual well-being of African people worldwide. Since 1969, the BPA has been on the forefront of providing services to such population groups often standing alone in the field of psychiatry for the rights and dignity of the people we serve who are largely those of African descent and heritage.

At a time in the world when there is so much economic uncertainty and threats to world peace through terrorism and violence, having the United Nations declare this year as the “International Year for People of African Descent” makes a powerful statement with respect to helping eliminate the tides of racial tension and violence that always seem to increase and target persons of African descent when stress and economic challenges arise from the fear of not being able to meet basic survival needs in society as is the case in much of the world today.

There are still many hurdles to overcome for persons of African descent and heritage. Our organization, the BPA, stands ready today as it has done for so many years in the past, to assist and facilitate the process of healing and restoration of African people internationally. A committed worldwide effort towards the eradication of the chronic and devastating effects of centuries of racial discrimination and negation of the humanity of Africans and those persons of African descent is a great beginning.

To the United Nations, on behalf of the Board of Directors and the entire membership of the Black Psychiatrists of America, a resounding Thank You for caring about the entire global family!

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