

# Presidential Address

## Spring 2009



First, I want to state how excited I am regarding the Black Psychiatrists of America and our start of the 2009 year. We have seen a dramatic increase in membership. In my last presidential address I stated that we were hoping to have at least 200 members by the end of 2009. At the time of mid-April we have already reached that mark. This clearly shows the interest of you, our membership, in the mission and goals of our organization. I have to admit, that even I did not anticipate your level of interest in the mission of the BPA.

I hope that soon the BPA will be able to do more partnerships with individual members and projects. I know that we have a talented pool of members who are working on various endeavors. I ask that you please contact the BPA if we could be of any help to your cause. We could serve as a resource to contact you with other mental health persons as well as serve as a resource for ideas and information.

### Membership

I quickly noticed the amount of members who renewed their membership early for 2009. Hats off to you for getting the BPA off to a quick start with your financial contribution and participation in the goals of our organization. You represent the back bone of our dearly beloved organization by your love and support to the mental health of African-Americans. Your belief in the organization to hold true to its aims is to be commended. I have received tremendous support from the elders of our organization. It is my goal to attempt to speak to every previous president of the BPA as well as the original founders. For

those I have not contacted, please expect to hear from me soon. I truly want your guidance of where the BPA should focus it's time, attention, vision and direction of the organization. With the state of Black mental health, I know the work of the BPA is not done, but I want to continue the struggle and see that the goals of the organization are met.

Another increase in membership has come from reclaimed members. These are persons who have not paid dues in over 3 years. The BPA is truly reaching out to you and need you to be reengaged in the direction of the BPA. Your participation is truly inspiring to me. You are truly letting me know that the BPA is moving in a direction that causes you to have a renewed interest. Some have stated the reason they have not been involved is due to a lack of contact from the national organization. I want you to know that with your renewed commitment that we are committed to you and we value your participation. Others have stated they have seen the organization being busy and want to be a part of a collective effort to move the issues of Black mental health. To you I say that I hope to lead in this effort and hope that you will help to rejoin in the fight for the mental health of Black America and the diaspora.

The largest increase in membership is with new membership. We have seen increase in membership in all areas, but none has shown the increase as new membership. We are having a large increase in medical students, residents, early and middle career psychiatrists. It is truly moving to see that a new generation of psychiatrists has arrived to the BPA. I have seen genuine excitement of persons wanting to participate in moving the BPA and Black mental health forward.

#### Collaborative Efforts

I am also amazed regarding the amount of interest that we are generating outside the BPA. Other health and mental health organizations are contacting us. The number is too numerous to list. We have truly come under the "radar" of many other like-minded and mental health organizations. It has truly been overwhelming for me and the BPA staff. Others are asking for our involvement and support. I will need help from the membership in order to meet the needs of others. We are getting many hits to our website. The most common question to the BPA through [BPA4info@aol.com](mailto:BPA4info@aol.com) is where can I find a Black psychiatrist. Most questions are from patients from the entire United States. Other inquiries are from universities, residents and students, county and community mental health, school districts, lawyers and movie production companies who are looking for Black psychiatrists. Many are looking for treatment, consultations and wanting to hire Black psychiatrists.

The New Orleans Spring 2009 conference was truly amazing. If you missed it, I hate to tell you that you missed something big and truly remarkable. We had over 100 persons in attendance. We coordinated this year's conference with the Student National Medical Association. We beyond doubt made a huge impact on medical students and residents at the conference. The BPA truly "showed out" and I want to thank everyone who participated. Expect to receive a recap of the conference shortly to give you more specifics. The BPA is doing "big things," and the conference showed our true potential. I hope that all of you will join us in Egypt for our Fall Transcultural, November 6-13, 2009. Please visit [www.blackpsych.org](http://www.blackpsych.org) or [www.newton\\_thoth.com](http://www.newton_thoth.com) for further details.

We have to understand that the BPA has to show that we are worthy of the time and attention of our membership. The BPA is moving forward at a tremendous pace. I have to thank so many persons for the time and their insight to where the direction of the BPA should move. I want to thank the entire Board of Directors for their hard work and time. There are many more that I should mention, but length and time do not allow. I have to thank Gloria Pitts for her nomination of me to the board of the BPA and her involvement of me at such an early time in my membership in the BPA. Her early support of me and my involvement should not go unnoticed. Also I have to thank Gloria Ellis and the finance committee for their hard work. Many do not understand the pressure the finance committee is under. As the organization moves forward, we've had to update our record keeping to keep in line with Pharma guidelines and to increase transparency in all our financial dealings. Gloria Ellis has been working hard in making sure that our financial records are in order especially with multiple streams of income that the BPA is receiving in order to move Black mental health forward. We hope to have our financial standard operating procedures done by this summer. Again, I have to commend Gloria Ellis and the finance committee on their work and continued effort. I have to thank Carl Bell for his insight and straight forward point of view. I truly have to thank Michelle Clark for her hard work as the Conference Committee Chair. I can not express how much I appreciate the time she has put in, support and guidance.

I ask that you will continue your interest and have the BPA to grow. The need for research, care and education regarding the mental health of African-Americans persist. Mental health disparities, lack of care, inadequate resources and poor mental health treatment for our population continues to make BPA relevant. The mass incarceration of the mentally ill causing alarming rates of Racism and the pandemic effects on the mental and physical health issues in African-Americans is persistently undervalued and overlooked.

I charge to our members to be educated about the task at hand;

Be educated regarding the mental health issues facing African-Americans;

Be confident that our organization is strong;

**Be a part of BPA.**

#### **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.**

**[www.blackpsych.org](http://www.blackpsych.org)**