



The American Psychoanalytic Association Announces the Publication of the Final Report of the Holmes Commission on Racial Equality in American Psychoanalysis

June 22, 2023

The American Psychoanalytic Association (APsA) announces the historic publication of the Final Report of the Holmes Commission on Racial Equality in American Psychoanalysis (the Commission). The Commission was created so that APsA and its members might better understand and repair the impediments to equality in the field of psychoanalysis. Funded by APsA, the Commission's study of systemic racism in American psychoanalysis is historic and groundbreaking. The full report—as well as information about the Chair, Cochairs, Commissioners, and the Commission Methodologist—can be found at: www.apsa.org/about-apsa/holmes-commission

In this study the Commission examines what occurs in the lived experience of psychoanalytic training and education across American psychoanalysis. The Report appraises systemic racism in American psychoanalysis, offering recommendations and a path forward to reduce its harmful effects. We encourage reading about and reflecting on these historically significant findings and sharing them far and wide.

The Commission puts its work in context: Formed in August 2020, “the Commission conducted its study at a transformational moment in our country and in the field of psychoanalysis. The reality of structural racism has moved from the margins to the center of public discussions. With that shift, more work is being done to understand structural racism—and psychoanalysis has not been spared from these pressures. Historically, our field has not been diverse, racially and in other ways. The authors of this report have borne witness—as mental health professionals, as psychoanalysts, as citizens in a divided nation, and as individuals with personal histories of their own—to the collective challenges faced in psychoanalysis as the gates of our country (and of our field) open to these diverse voices.”

The Commission studied: how racism is understood in psychoanalysis and its institutions, whether and how systemic racism affects the process of recruitment of analytic candidates as well as their career development (including through teaching and learning in the classroom and supervision), and to what extent systemic racism is enacted and processed across all domains of psychoanalytic experience—on and off the couch.

The Commission encourages readers to engage in the work ahead by: taking the time to read and reflect on the Report, sharing it widely (including within and beyond psychoanalytic organizations and study groups), communicating with peers and leaders about what needs to be done, and committing to doing the difficult work of making psychoanalysis as diverse, equitable, inclusive, open, and vibrant as it can be.

Support from many sources will be necessary and may include establishing cooperatives to promote and protect work towards racial equality. The Report emphasizes group processes to hold the tensions related to this work, to create rituals to sustain these efforts and ideas, and to establish the avenues through which collective and individual work towards equality can proceed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Prezant', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dan Prezant
President, The American Psychoanalytic Association

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