

President's Message

**"Happiness is temporary – Commitment is eternal":
Strengthening the ABPsi through Committed Service**

By

**Taasogle Daryl Rowe, Ph.D.
National President of The ABPsi**

Greetings Members! 2015 marks a critical year in the life of **The Association of Black Psychologists** (ABPsi) – I invite each of you to re-engage in the work of the Association and re-commit yourselves, personally and professionally to the mission and destiny of the ABPsi.

The mission and destiny of the ABPsi is the liberation of the African Mind, empowerment of the African Character, and enlivenment and illumination of the African Spirit. As the first national ethnic psychological association, ABPsi has been a major force in the field of psychology for promoting cultural competence – racial/ethnic identity, social justice, cultural psychology, and multicultural competencies.

Black psychologists have developed an authentic African-centered/Black Psychology that is predictable from and consistent with African American and African cultural wisdom traditions, and redefined the approach to the provision of mental health services to people of African ancestry. ABPsi has created an intellectual discipline with a paradigm and episteme, and a body of theories about behavior that is grounded in those traditions of African peoples.

ABPsi and the Community Healing Network (CHN) have been working together to establish a global network of Emotional Emancipation (EE) Circles--self-help groups focused on emotional emancipation, healing, and wellness for Black people. In partnership with CHN, ABPsi developed the framework and model for implementation of "Emotional Emancipation Circles" (EECs). EECs are designed to help people of African ancestry in the US, and throughout the diaspora, *Defy the Lie of Black Inferiority and Embrace the Truth of Black Humanity*. This project has been gathering momentum both in the United States and around the world, as an example of a global collaborative effort that addresses both the cumulative effects of historical trauma and internalized racism.

Thus far this year, through the tireless efforts of Immediate Past-President Grills, we have conducted EEC trainings in New York, NY – in conjunction with the Institute of the Black World, the All Healers Mental Health Alliance and the NY Chapter of ABPsi; Los Angeles, CA; San Diego, CA; and Washington, DC – where we worked in conjunction with the Association for the Study of African American Life and History and Howard University's School of Divinity. We also have had EEC presentations in Tallahassee, FL – led by Dr. Huberta Jackson-Lowman; and Oakland, CA – led by Dr. Theopia Jackson. At the end of February, Dr. Marva Robinson provided testimony to the US Commission on

Civil Rights on the psychological aspects related to the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO. In addition, during the first weekend of March, the ABPsi along with our partners, the Community Healing Network (CHN), have been invited to participate in the 50th Commemoration of the Selma to Montgomery March.

Finally, as a follow-up to our very successful participation in the 44th Annual Legislative Conference Forum of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), we have been invited to present at the 45th Legislative Conference of the CBC. We have agreed to convene a two-day forum, with CHN, entitled “Valuing Black Lives: The Global Emotional Emancipation Summit, a solutions-focused, action-oriented forum that will bring together leaders of African ancestry from around the world to develop and carry out plans of action to free ourselves, our children, and the world from the lie of Black inferiority: the root cause of the devaluing of the lives of Black people. The Honorable Karen Bass (D, CA) will sponsor this historic event. These are exciting times for the ABPsi – please make plans to attend and contribute to make this Global Summit impactful.

And yet, in the midst of these significant undertakings, our Association continues to confront a range of challenges that threaten our ability to fulfill our destiny. I think it is prudent to provide a broader perspective on the overall management of the operational and financial affairs of the Association.

- As a primarily a membership organization; most of how we operate is based on membership dues, especially professional membership dues. The other significant source of income has come through Sage Publications.
 - In fact, as the calendar year changes and membership renewals come in, we manage our affairs through a combination of Sage monies and Convention registration monies. So unfortunately, by the time of convention, we have spent parts of those monies to sustain ourselves. When the convention doesn’t turn a profit *and* we conduct business on a cash basis, we end up in the red.
- Over the last 15 years, we have experienced a significant decline in professional membership, while maintaining and building a solid growth spurt with student members. Unfortunately, the student member fee doesn’t cover operational costs of membership. The result is that we run a deficit on each student member. As an ever-changing Board, we have maintained our steadfast commitment to our student members and have valiantly tried to increase funding for student programs, without looking closely at the attendant costs.
- During this same span, we have had difficulty identifying and maintaining consistency with the Psych Discourse (PD) Editor. PD had been a reliable source of revenue for many years to the Association. Although Editor consistency has been a problem, it has not been the only challenge with PD – the market also changed. Much more of the advertising revenue has come through online ads, across multiple platforms. Since we haven’t had consistent leadership in this position, we have been slow in adapting to the changing business model.

- We have significantly enhanced the support for and operations of the PD
 - Hired an Associate Editor
 - Hired a Copy Editor (contributes articles, reviews articles for grammar, syntax and format)
 - Walk-On serves only as Publisher (limited to production: graphic design, lay-out and printing)
 - Executive Director (limited to development of house ads and oversight management of the production process)
- Our contract with Job Target is designed to help us catch up with the shifting marketplace and it is beginning to yield benefits, in terms of revenue streams
- Similarly, for the first time since the position was created, we have a member willing to serve as Chair of our Public Relations/Marketing Board Committee – part of the effort we need to help in the solicitation of sponsors
- In the latter part of the first decade of the 2000s, Benson Cooke, and his Board, developed a plan to become self-sufficient – to hire, again, our own Executive Director and Office staff. The Calvert Fund was tapped to provide the necessary financial resources because a plan had not been developed to insure that the organization could sustain its staff and operations independently. The Calvert Fund, as best I understand, is intended to be a future fund to preserve the Association. In my opinion, becoming self-sufficient again is consistent with those aims – the illusion has been that these are increases when they are simply the costs of doing business. We are still not operating at full capacity regarding office expenses, i.e., we don't have contracted technology support, janitorial services and employee benefits (full medical coverage, retirement and insurance).
- As we have moved to become more autonomous, through the massive economic recession and membership loss, we have done a number of things to protect and preserve the Association. We have re-created our website, are responsible for our own leases/fees (office space, equipment, insurances, etc.) reconciled our financial affairs (Dun & Bradstreet, current with audits/990s; stabilized accounting services, etc.). Unfortunately, we have done these things without significantly altering the structural problems in our revenue stream.
 - Recently, we have secured two separate lines of credit, the culmination of efforts that have been part of the last four ABPsi administrations. Dr. Holmes first began the process of establishing credit for the ABPsi, through cleaning up missing audits and establishing clearer fiscal accountability. Dr. Cooke continued that effort through continued refinement of our fiscal management, completing Dun & Bradstreet rating and re-establishing an Executive Director(ED). Dr. Grills worked to continue to refine fiscal accountability insuring that 990s were current and establishing processes to maintain timely submissions, and working with the ED to rehabilitate operational and fiscal management. Each of

us understands acutely, the various costs of trying to maintain an independent national organization - these are NOT new issues in the management of the ABPsi.

- ABPsi has always had to guarantee all of our business on a cash-only basis; and this has been a huge challenge for many years. Especially since the major sources of income comes from membership dues. We have always struggled with adequate cash flow as one membership year concludes and another commences; this is why the attrition charges from the 2014 mid-year meeting were so devastating. Because the room nights were guaranteed by debit card, the hotel debited our accounts immediately when we did not fulfill our contracted room nights. We had no option to spread that charge over time, consistent with how our membership renewals come in.
- In today's marketplace, credit allows the organization to manage the long-standing ebbs and flows in our operational budget. We simply don't have the margins to continue to operate on a cash-only basis.
- As a volunteer organization (1 FTE - membership/administrator, 1 PTE - accountant, 2 contract workers - Exec. Dir. and Webmaster), we are dependent on professional volunteers to manage the Association's affairs. Since we have stabilized the functioning of the National Office, more and more members (general and Board) have come to rely more and more on our limited National Office resources. When that happens, a never-ending series of administrative tasks consumes the working hours that should be engaged in growing and strengthening the organization.
 - When Board Committee reports arrive late or not at all, there is a significant negative impact on the planning and managing of our reduced time together: we are less informed, less prepared and it becomes much more difficult to diligently conduct the business of the Association.

Becoming Leaner

- We have been diligently working to alter the way we do business by travelling less and transitioning to virtual platforms to conduct our business. Thus, where we used to spend upwards of \$15K on quarterly meetings, with most of those costs absorbed by individual Board members and creating *significant* obstacles to service, we've lowered those costs to more closely reflect what we can reimburse.
 - A typical Board meeting required a commitment of a minimum of 72 hours away from home and often upwards of 16 hours in meetings. Now it is difficult to get Board members to commit to more than 3 hours on a conference call – 3 hours is simply not enough time to conduct our business. I need additional ideas for how to institute necessary cost-savings, while preserving adequate time to conduct our affairs.

- We now have the capacity to conduct webinars through our contract with **Fuze.com** – we simply need efforts to create CEU training opportunities to begin to generate revenue.
- We eliminated the Mid-year meeting, temporarily, since it was the attrition charges from 2014 mid-year that significantly affected our current financial strain. The shift to a mid-year gathering that committed National Office resources was not something we could afford; thus we need to critically evaluate the feasibility of this gathering in a fiscally responsible manner.
- We are implementing significant changes to the Annual Convention – shortening the length of the convention, changing meal services, negotiating a smaller contract for room rates, etc.
 - Currently, we spend almost all of the monies we collect on Convention expenses, i.e., our 2014 budget was approximately \$100K, we had about 300 attendees, so the per-head expenses came to about \$333.00. Our professional registration fees are from \$300 - \$350.00. There is NO profit built into our planning. This is a structural problem; I think we need to plan for \$150-\$175.00 per head expenses, and then seek sponsors to increase services to attendees.
- Increased attention devoted to the Annual Campaign, and provided benchmarks for what level of giving might be helpful.
- Focused more attention on Life Membership and its benefits.
- Working with Education and Training Committee to enhance and improve CE opportunities.
- Working to resuscitate the LCPP, another potential revenue stream.
- Populated the Fiscal Affairs Committee, long dormant as a functioning Board Committee.
- Created and appointed Chair of Ad-Hoc Development Committee to devise short, intermediate and long-term plans for generating additional revenue streams to the Association
- With the ED, Treasurer and Fiscal Affairs Chair, developed plan to create line of credit and other non-cash methods for managing our affairs.
- A pressing issue for us is to determine from whom we seek sponsorship for our Association. It is extremely difficult, in this economic climate, and with the various costs of conducting business along the “super-highway”, for us to maintain relevance operating from a member dues-only revenue stream. We attempted to hire a commission-based fundraiser, but were rebuffed because potential candidates didn’t feel they could receive a reasonable return on investment, given our fundraising limitations.
- As a membership organization, it is and has always been critical to keep a steady stream of new and renewing members, especially professional members, so along with the more mundane issues connected to preserving the operational and fiscal integrity of the Association, it is always important to enhance the

organization's reputation, consistent with our mission. Thus, we keep working to: 1) develop member benefits and develop programming that might entice professionals to join/rejoin; 2) continually refine and develop our organizational infrastructure; 3) enhance our local, regional and national relevance, consistent with our mission; and 4) increase operating and programming capital.

Lastly, I want to take a moment to share my clear recognition that ***"we are the ABPsi"*** – nothing happens without ***all*** of our commitments and service. As I understand my role, it is to seek to inspire you to serve more, so that the ABPsi more and more reflects our individual and combined visions for it ... I continue to serve at your pleasure.

Please contact our President-Elect, Dr. Mwata Kevin Washington (washingtonkev@yahoo.com) for Board service or Dr. Jennifer Jones (jennyjones@gmail.com) for opportunities to serve in the General Assembly.

Taasogle Daryl Rowe, Ph.D., is President of The ABPsi and can be reached at darylrowephd@gmail.com.