



## **Diversity at the American Psychiatric Association Growth and Expansion to Address Changing Needs**

The US population is increasingly diverse—people of racial and ethnic minority groups now make up slightly more than one-third of the population. The U.S. Surgeon General’s 2001 Report on Mental Health notes striking disparities in mental health Care for African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and Native Americans. Members of ethnic and racial minorities are 50 percent less likely to receive services than Whites; receive poorer quality of care; and carry a greater disability burden. These underserved populations are also under-represented in the mental health profession.

As the country’s population has become more diverse, APA’s membership and activities have grown and expanded in a number of ways. Since it was established in 1974, APA’s Office of Minority and National Affairs (OMNA) has been the central point of APA’s diversity efforts and activities. APA structure of components dealing with minority issues has evolved over the years with expanding representation of ethnic/racial groups and other minority groups.

The primary component is the Council on Minority Mental Health and Health Disparities which has been instrumental in increasing minority membership in the APA. In part because of the activism of this council and its minority and underrepresented group committees, the APA has over the past several decades taken formal positions on numerous issues of concern to diverse and underserved populations and related matters (e.g., racial discrimination, same sex marriage, and discrimination against international medical graduates). The Council has fostered the development of future minority leaders through its nurturing and mentoring of fellows in the Minority Fellowships Program and other young psychiatrists. Council leaders have also helped to develop policy positions and legislative advocacy on timely issues related to diversity.

The Council on Minority Mental Health and its components have undertaken important public education efforts, produced culturally tailored products and were key in developing culturally tailored minority mental health information for APA’s public information web site ([www.healthyminds.org](http://www.healthyminds.org)). The existence of APA’s minority and underrepresented group components has made possible the depth and breadth of efforts focused on specific federally recognized ethnic and racial minority groups as well as other identity groups historically marginalized in the APA and in organized medicine.

## APA and Diversity: Key Milestones

- 1964 Committee on Transcultural Psychiatry formed
- 1969 Position Statement: Delineation of Transcultural Psychiatry as a Specialized Field of Study
- 1970 First Black APA Vice President (Charles Prudhomme MD)
- 1971 First Black Woman APA Vice President (Mildred Mitchell-Batemann, MD)  
Council on National Affairs established (later becomes Council on Minority Mental Health and Mental Health Disparities)
- 1973 Position Statement: Homosexuality and Civil Rights
- 1974 Office of Minority and National Affairs (OMNA) established  
Minority Fellowship Program established (APA/SAMHSA)
- 1977 Position Statement: Affirmative Action
- 1978 Minority and Underrepresented (MUR) groups gained representation in the Assembly – American Indian, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Homosexual-identified, and women (IMG 1994)
- 1985 First APA woman president (Carol Nadelson MD)
- 1989 First Hispanic APA president (Rod Munoz MD, also IMG)
- 1990 Position Statement: Homosexuality and the Armed Services
- 1990s MUR Residency Curricula
- 1993 Position Statement: Domestic Violence Against Women
- 1999 Position Statement: Diversity  
First Black/female Assembly speaker (Donna Norris MD)
- 2000 Position Statement: Sexual Orientation, Therapies Focused on Attempts to Change (reparative or conversion therapies)
- 2002 Major component reorganization; MUR untouched
- 2004 APA Action Plan to Reduce Disparities
- 2005 Roundtable on Mental Health Disparities  
Position Statement: Support of Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Civil marriages  
First *OMNA on Tour* (Washington DC)
- 2007 Women’s Mental Health Roundtable and Leadership Summit
- 2009 DVD: “Mental Health: A Guide for Latino Patients and Families”  
MUR Roundtable (meeting of psychiatry “identity groups,” Society of Hispanic Psychiatry, Black Psychiatrists of America, etc.)