President’s Letter

Mentoring brings us together – across generation, class, and often race – in a manner that forces us to acknowledge our interdependence, to appreciate, in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s words, that “we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny.” In this way, mentoring enables us to participate in the essential but unfinished drama of reinventing community, while reaffirming that there is an important role for each of us in it.
-- Marc Freedman

Hello Maryland Counseling Association!

I am excited to announce that we have had so much activity at this point of the fiscal year term from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. Our team has been working hard to prepare the MCA 2016 Annual Conference in Baltimore, MD from November 3-5. I am excited to share that we are getting bigger and better with an exciting conference planned with many high-quality education sessions, roundtable sessions, and poster sessions. There is a phenomenal team ready to continue their service to ensure the conference stands proudly as our flagship event, and it is inspiring to hear from so many registrants about their enthusiasm for the conference and its relevant topics. We will have an Awards Program this year during our luncheon at the conference! We are also continuing to build on committees that had been virtually nonexistent, and we are proud to continue the operations of the committees for the future of MCA. If there is anything the MCA team and I can do to assist you, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

I mention the above quote not only because it is one of my favorite quotes, but also because it speaks closely to the vision I have for both the conference and for my presidential year. As an individual who has a deep interest in promoting multiculturalism and social justice, I recognize how embedded the values of multiculturalism and social justice are written into our ACA Code of Ethics (2014), the history of counseling philosophy, and our counselor professional identity. Thus, I see our profession as developmental, strengths-based, contextual, and focused on wellness, empowerment, multiculturalism, and social justice. We incur this philosophy most prominently in our practices within the community, especially by empowering members of marginalized and oppressed communities to become change agents. As we continue the philosophical tenets of counseling, this philosophy cuts across to our members and our profession. In a multiplicity of contexts, we have so much to offer intergenerationally to the future of our profession. In one capacity, I see mentoring as a method to ensure the growth of our profession, as we capture ourselves in this unfinished drama of a profession that continues to develop across time and history. We create this unique distinction of our profession while creating potential pathways to build upon opportunities for marginalized and oppressed populations, even in our own leadership. We transmit so much of our institutional knowledge and process to the next generation, so my hope for you is that you take some time to think about who you mentor in your life, who have been instrumental mentors to you, and who you would like to mentor for the future. If we expect to see the changes we need for our profession, we can certainly empower the next group of future counselors with our zest and energy. I look forward to seeing you at such an enjoyable time to network, connect, and organize our community for future endeavors and initiatives within MCA, especially as we continue a path towards diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice within our profession! See you at the conference!

Always in your service,
Christian D. Chan, MA, NCC
President, Maryland Counseling Association

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To register for MCA or any of our events, please go to www.mdcounseling.org

Find us on Facebook (@mdcounseling) and Twitter (@md_counseling)

Don’t miss out! We’ll publish the next newsletter in January. Check your email for upcoming deadlines.

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MCA Annual Conference

Maryland Counseling Association 2016 Annual Conference will be held Nov 3-5 at Embassy Suites BWI in Linthicum Heights MD. This year’s theme is Multiculturalism and Social Justice at the Crossroads: Creating a Multidimensional Intersectionality Lens with Keynote Speaker Dr. Courtland Lee. Go to http://www.mdcounseling.org/event-2193807 to register. Conference includes Supervision Continuing Education & Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Fundamentals Training.

Check out our weekly digest for other upcoming events!

Call for applications

The Maryland Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists is seeking applicants to fill upcoming board vacancies. To apply for appointment consideration, please submit an application via the Governor's Appointments Office (GAO) site at http://govappointments.maryland.gov/ by Monday, April 3, 2017. Be on the lookout for more detailed information from MCA regarding specified vacancies, eligibility requirements and board member duties.
With the upcoming Presidential election, the purpose of this piece is to inform and educate Maryland Counseling Association members and affiliates on the mental health platforms of the two major party candidates. All material has been directly attained from the official websites of both Democratic and Republican campaigns, and does not reflect the political views of the authors or MCA.

**Hillary R. Clinton | Democratic Party Candidate**

Hillary Clinton has released comprehensive agendas to address mental health, autism, and addiction. The following information has been gathered from her official campaign website.

### Autism
- Expand insurance coverage for services to increase access.
- Create a nationwide campaign to increase early diagnosis and treatment.
- Ensure students with autism and disabilities are protected from bullying at school.
- Launch the Autism Works Initiative to increase employment opportunities for individuals with autism by a post-graduation transition plan and vocational services.
- Increase funding for autism-related research, including a national study on adult autism.
- Provide new and more support to families and caregivers of individuals with autism.

### Drug and Alcohol Addiction
- Implement preventative programs to teach adolescents about drug use and addiction.
- Ensure comprehensive, ongoing treatment for recovery by expanding inpatient and outpatient services, increasing trained providers and peer recovery coaches, and enforcing laws to ensure that insurance practices are not a barrier to treatment.
- Provide all first responders with naloxone to reduce death from opioid overdose.
- Require licensed prescribers to meet training standards and undergo a prescription drug monitoring program before being able to prescribe controlled medications.
- Prioritize rehabilitation and treatment for low-level and nonviolent drug offenses instead of imprisonment and incarceration.

### Early Diagnosis and Intervention
- Raise awareness about maternal depression, infant mental health, and toxic stress.
- Increase screenings and make them a standard practice with Medicaid.
- Increase the annual budget for the Mental Health Block to train physicians, school counselors, service providers, and teachers in screening and providing interventions for mental health and behavioral concerns among children.
- Support efforts like the Early Psychosis Intervention Network that aid mental health practitioners in sharing best practices.
- Improve coordination of care and modify mental health policies at college campuses. Encourage universities to incorporate preventive services, provide comprehensive treatment and coverage of services, and utilize an interdisciplinary team.

### Suicide Prevention
- Create a national initiative to reach the goal of “Zero Suicide” by having federal agencies develop suicide prevention plans, utilizing a citizen input and feedback mechanism, and exploring the use of technology for aid of those in need.
- Increase evidence-based suicide prevention and mental health programs in high schools, and improve mental health literacy within middle and high schools.
- Collaborate with colleges and researchers to provide adequate mental health coverage to LGBT students, and provide federal support to college campuses to enhance suicide prevention efforts by increasing counseling and training personnel.
- Develop policies about leave of absence for mental health.

### Integrate Healthcare Systems and Community-Based Treatment
- Increase availability of behavioral health treatment in general health care settings by integrating medical and behavioral health care systems. Create comprehensive community health centers in every state that provide physical and mental health services.
- Encourage best practices for same-day billing and reimbursement systems.
- Promote the use of health information technology to improve coordination of care.
- Encourage peer support specialists in clinical care teams.
- Launch a nationwide initiative to recruit more mental health professionals, increase resources for training, provide telehealth systems to work with underserved populations, and increase training in cultural competency.
Criminal Justice System
- Increase allocation of resources to train law enforcement officers in crisis intervention.
- Foster greater collaboration between law enforcement and mental health professionals.
- Increase investments into local programs that provide treatment and rehabilitation instead of imprisonment, as well as ensure continuity of care by strengthening mental health services for incarcerated individuals.

Mental Health Parity
- Ensure the Department of Labor and Health and Human Services have the authority to conduct random audits of insurers to determine compliance with the parity law, and take appropriate enforcement actions against insurers who are found to not be in compliance.
- Direct the DOL and HHS to enforce disclosure requirements, i.e. requiring that plans disclose key information on the medical management decisions restricting coverage.
- Ensure that insurers provide the most up-to-date and accurate lists on mental health provider networks to patients.
- Provide clear guidelines to patients on where and how to report parity complaints, and ensure that this data is published and easily available to the public.

Housing and Job Opportunities
- Create a joint initiative between the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, and Agriculture to expand community-based housing opportunities for individuals with mental illness, who either currently reside in or are at risk of being placed into institutional settings.
- Work with private employers, state, and local mental health authorities, to expand job opportunities for individuals with mental illness via supported employment services.
- Increase support and funding for the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) program that meet a critical need in housing, employment, and other advocacy and support services for those with mental health conditions.

Brain and Behavioral Science Research
- Significantly increase funding for National Institutes of Health, and integrate research portfolios with pioneering work on conditions like PTSD and traumatic brain injury between agencies like the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and HHS.
- Develop new links with the private and nonprofit sectors by ensuring federal government efforts align with research being done at other sectors.
- Ensure that data and findings are publicly shared by working with leaders in the research community to restructure grants for timely results and preservation of patient privacy.

To view Hillary Clinton’s entire plan for addressing mental health, or for more information on other policies and platforms, visit https://www.hillaryclinton.com/issues.

Donald J. Trump | Republican Party Candidate

Donald Trump has not presented a specific agenda to address mental health. The following points are attained explicitly from his Constitution and Second Amendment, Healthcare, and Veterans Affairs reform plans, based on applicability to this topic.

Second Amendment
- Reintroduce programs to eliminate gang members and drug dealers from the streets in order to reduce crime and increase neighborhood safety. Prosecute violent criminals, and encourage law-abiding gun owners to defend themselves.
- Expand treatment programs and reform laws to encourage preventative action.

Healthcare
- Replace Obamacare with Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), create a patient-centered health care system, and allow insurance purchase across state lines.
- Identify high-risk pools of individuals without consistent healthcare to ensure access to coverage, and enable local leaders to design Medicaid programs to serve low-income citizens in their communities.

Veterans’ Affairs
- Appoint a Veterans Affairs Secretary, and create a private White House hotline for veterans, which will allow for 24/7 reporting of fraudulent and inappropriate behavior by staff and providers at the VA.
- Increase the number of mental health care professionals, allow veterans to seek mental health services both at the VA and with private providers, and ensure that veterans receive priority when seeking services.

To learn more about Donald Trump’s platforms, visit https://www.donaldjtrump.com/policies/.

The authors strongly encourage all members and affiliates of Maryland Counseling Association to keep mental health in mind when voting for the next President of the United States. Please remember that your vote will impact not only your personal and professional lives, but also the lives of your clients and the counseling profession.

Most importantly, we encourage everyone to make an informed decision and exercise your right to advocate for yourself. Please VOTE on November 8, 2016!
Racial Microaggressions: Consequences of Assumption of Criminality on African American Men

Written by Chioma Anah, Ed.D., LCPC

Tragic events such as the killing of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Philando Castile, and many other young African American men, tend to illuminate racial and social inequality and biases, and bring them to public consciousness. These moments also remind all of us just how vulnerable African American men and boys are in our society, and exposes our awkward and often acrimonious attempts at dialogue about race and the consequences of implicit or unconscious racism. If we, as a nation, are to rid ourselves from such tragic events in the future, it is important to examine the detrimental impact of racial microaggressions and the theme of “assumption of criminality” on African American men. Equally important, is to highlight strategies for counselors to reduce racial disparities in cross-racial dialogue within the therapeutic process.

What are Racial Microaggressions?

Racial microaggressions (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007) and other subtle and contemporary forms of racism have been conceptualized in various ways, including aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000), implicit racism (Devine, 1989; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), and modern racism (McConahay, 1986). All these manifestations of contemporary forms of racism have the common goal of ambiguous, often unconscious bias and discrimination towards African Americans by well-intentioned White individuals who profess equality (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). Racial microaggression is defined as, “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007, p. 273). Racial microaggressions are quick, sometimes unconscious, everyday interactions that send hurtful, denigrating messages to African Americans and other people of color that implies that: They do not matter; they are not valued or respected; they are lazy; they are unintelligent; they are invisible; they are always aggressive and angry; they are criminals and should be feared at all times; they are dangerous and a threat to society; they are all the same; and they are second-class citizens (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, 2010).

Assumption of Criminality of African American Men and its Consequences

All racial microaggressions directed towards African Americans are hurtful and damaging and are a part of their everyday life experiences (Sue, 2010). For many African American men, however, the manifestations of racial microaggression theme of the assumption of criminality, has been the one they complain about the most because it has been the most detrimental, often costing them their lives (Sue, 2015). Society seems to have constructed an image of African American men as thugs and dangerous to society, and they continue to be portrayed as aggressive, unintelligent, and criminal by the media, which helps to reinforce racial di

In a landmark moment in American history, President Barack Obama gave a speech on July 19, 2013, following the acquittal of George Zimmerman. It read, in part:

There are very few African American men who have not had the experience of being followed when they were shopping in the department store. That includes me. And there are very few African American men who haven’t had the experience of walking across the street and hearing the locks click on the doors of cars. It happens to me, at least before I was a senator. There are very few African Americans who haven’t had the experience of getting on the elevator and a woman clutching her purse nervously and holding her breath until she had a chance to get off. That happens often (Obama, 2013).

Here, President Obama highlights racial microaggressive behaviors towards African Americans and the hidden messages of them being seen as criminals, dangerous, suspicious, and untrustworthy. George Zimmerman perceived Trayvon Martin as a criminal and threat who did not belong. Similarly, 29-year old White Officer Darren Wilson describes his encounter and the reason he shot and killed 18-year old Michael Brown on August 9, 2014:

I felt like a five-year old holding onto Hulk Hogan… Hulk Hogan, that's just how big he felt and how small I felt just from grasping his arm… The only way I can describe it, it looks like a demon, that's how angry he looked. He comes back towards me again with his hands up… At this point it looked like he was almost bulking up to run through the shots, like it was making him mad that I'm shooting at him. And then when [the bullet] went into him, the demeanor on his face went blank, the aggression was gone, it was gone, I mean I knew he stopped, the threat was stopped (Wilson, 2014).

Officer Wilson describes manifestations of microaggressive behaviors directed towards African American men: They are subhuman, bad and dangerous, angry, aggressive, and ultimately criminal, and they need to be stopped. Officer Wilson’s assumption of Michael Brown as a possible threat that needed to be stopped cost Michael Brown his life. As with the case of Philando Castile and many other African American men, the officers involved saw their victims as implicit criminal threats.
Implications for Counselors and Call to Action

In 2010, there was a 32% increase in the multicultural population of the United States since 2000, and it is projected that by 2050, African Americans will constitute 15% of the nation’s population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Like with other interactions, racial microaggressions are equally likely to occur in the therapeutic relationship (Sue, Capodilupo et al., 2007; Constantine, 2007). Here are a few things counselors should consider when working with African American clients:

- Racism is real and race still matters in America. With these facts in mind, it is important for counselors to acquire cultural competency as it pertains to understanding a client’s core beliefs, values and racially charged problems. More than ever, it is critically important for counselors to be firmly rooted in social justice and multicultural issues, and incorporate social justice advocacy in their work with clients. Counselors should empower African American clients with addressing issues of racial and social equality and its damaging consequences.
- Due to the unconscious and sometimes unintentional nature of racial microaggressions, counselors need to be aware of their own harmful personal biases, values and beliefs, colorblindness, and ethnocentric lens. No racial microagression is insignificant, as they have detrimental consequences for the recipients, and are harmful to the therapeutic process.
- Many facets of American society tend to criminalize the African American male image, resulting in lethal consequences. Counselors should work to dispel racial stereotypes and biases, and expose the hidden messages and contradictions of racial microaggressions within the therapeutic process.
- Avoiding conversations about race because you are uncomfortable or naïve about the subject matter is not an excuse to be silent or ambivalent. Foster open and honest dialogue about race, without fear, within the therapeutic relationship. Discuss “the elephant in the room” because race is a function of all of us. Empower clients by listening to their stories and validating their racial realities.
- Be compassionate, empathic, and appreciate and respect our client’s differences. Don’t blame your clients for their problems, nor impose your own cultural values and worldview while devaluing and pathologizing the cultural values of your clients. All these are racial microaggressions and harmful to the therapeutic process.

Conclusion

All racial microaggressions are devastating to African American men and can sometimes lead to harmful consequences. However, the assumption of criminality of African American men is the most dangerous, leading to detrimental outcomes. Counselors can be part of changing the racial discourse by working to understand their own implicit biases, incorporating social justice advocacy in their work with clients, rejecting rhetoric that perpetuates racial stereotypes, and validating their client’s own racial realities. Silence, ambivalence and colorblindness only perpetuate the status quo of society’s current race relations, and ultimately impedes our therapeutic ability for cross-racial dialogue and connectedness with our African American clients.

References


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