

# Black Excellence in Psychology: Past and Present



## Pioneers in Psychology

### **ALBERT SIDNEY BECKHAM (1897-1964)**

**Dr. Beckham is considered to be the first African American school psychologist practicing in the Chicago Public Schools. He founded the first psychological laboratory at Howard University and published over 20 articles on the effect of counseling on high school students, childhood behavioral problems, intelligence testing and life satisfaction. Dr. Beckham brought together ministers whose parishes included families of students he was working with, allowing for the first time a church-neighborhood-school relationship in the community that benefited African American youth. Learn more about Dr. Beckham [here](#)**

### **FRANCIS CECIL SUMNER (1895-1954)**

**Dr. Sumner was the first African American to receive his Ph.D. in Psychology. He helped establish the psychology department at Howard University to train African American psychologists. Dr. Sumner completed a vast amount of research that counteracted racism and bias in psychological studies of African Americans. Some of his students went on to become leading psychologists, including Dr. Kenneth Clark. Learn more about Dr. Sumner [here](#)**

### **INEZ BEVERLY PROSSER (1891-1934)**

**Dr. Prosser was the first African American woman to receive her Ph.D. and the first black female psychologist. Her dissertation examined the academic development of African American children in mixed and segregated schools. Her findings showed that African American children fared better socially and academically in segregated schools. Specifically, Dr. Prosser found that African American children from integrated schools experienced more social maladjustment and felt less secure, a barrier to their learning, reaching controversial conclusions in the decades leading to the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision in 1954. She spent the last seven years of her life teaching at historical Black colleges. Learn more about Dr. Prosser [here](#)**

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## HERMAN GEORGE CANADY (1901-1970)

Dr. Canady was the first psychologist to examine the role of the race of the examiner as a bias factor in intelligence testing. His master's thesis discussed the role of race of the examiner in establishing testing rapport and provided suggestions for establishing an adequate testing environment in which African American students could thrive. Dr. Canady was instrumental in founding the West Virginia Psychological Association, the West Virginia State Board of Psychological Examiners, and the Charleston Guidance Clinic. Learn more about Dr. Canady [here](#)

## KENNETH BANCROFT CLARK (1914-2005)

The Clarks were the first African Americans to obtain doctoral degrees in psychology from Columbia University. Dr. Clark's work is considered essential in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. In the famous "Doll Study," he studied the responses of more than 200 Black children who were given a choice of white or brown dolls. His findings illustrated that children showed preference for white dolls from as early as three years old. Thus, he concluded that segregation was psychologically damaging, which played a role in the Supreme Court decision in outlawing segregation. Additionally, Dr. Clark was the first black president of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1966. Learn more about Dr. Kenneth Clark [here](#)

## MAMIE PHIPPS CLARK (1917-1983)

Dr. Clark's work with children showed that African American children became aware of their racial identity at about three years old. Many of these children began to see, reflect, and internalize the views that society held about them. She also found that many African American children who were tested and informed they had a learning disability or disabled were diagnosed incorrectly due to biased psychological testing. Her master's thesis, "The Development of Consciousness of Self in Negro Pre-school Children," centered on racial identity and self-esteem. This was also the foundation of the Clarks' famous doll studies. As co-founder (with Dr. Kenneth Clark) of the Northside Center for Child Development, Dr. Clark was an early advocate of taking a holistic, psychosocial approach to child and adolescent mental health. Learn more about Dr. Mamie Phipps Clark [here](#)

## ROBERT LEE WILLIAMS II (1930-2020)

Dr. Williams was a founding member of the Association of Black Psychologists and served as its second president. He created the Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity by utilizing African American vernacular and personal experience. This test showed that African Americans were not intellectually inferior to European

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Americans, but that the differences in speech and experience can skew IQ results. Also, Dr. Williams created the term Ebonics to refer to the African American vernacular English (AAVE). Learn more about Dr. Williams [here](#)

## JOSEPH L. WHITE (1932-2017)

Dr. White is sometimes referred to as “the godfather of Black psychology.” He helped found the Association of Black Psychologists and establish the first Black Studies Program during the 1968 strike at San Francisco State University. He wrote “Toward a Black Psychology” and argued that whatever the future of race relations and the destiny of Black people, the creation of a Black Psychology was necessary because psychology created by white people could never adequately apply to define African Americans. Dr. White pointed out that the application of white psychology to African Americans often led researchers to incorrectly conclude that African Americans were lacking and less than. Learn more about Dr. White [here](#)

## KOBI KAMBON (AKA JOSEPH A. BALDWIN; 1943-2018)

Dr. Kambon served as the president of the Association of Black Psychologists from 1982-1983. He conducted research in the areas of African American mental health and psychological outcomes of racial-cultural oppression of African Americans in American society. Dr. Kambon developed several measures of African-centered worldviews and philosophies. His works examined how deviations from African-centered worldviews can have detrimental effects for African Americans in the US. Learn more about Dr. Kambon [here](#)

## BEVERLY DANIEL TATUM (1954-PRESENT)

Dr. Tatum is widely recognized as a race relations expert and leader in higher education. Her areas of research include racial identity development and the role of race in the classroom. Her book, “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” examines the development of racial identity. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of that book became a New York Times Bestseller in 2020. Dr. Tatum argues racial identity is essential to the development of children, and she has provided schools and school leaders with professional development on how to discuss race and racism throughout her career. Learn more about Dr. Tatum [here](#)

Source: <https://www.activeminds.org/blog/10-african-african-american-psychologists-you-should-know/>

# Black Excellence in Psychology: Past and Present

## Early Leaders and Pioneers in School Psychology

According to Miranda & Miller (2019),

**“Few minority groups were in school psychology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (French, 1984). Albert Sidney Beckham was the first Black individual to hold the title of school psychologist, making significant contributions to the field as a clinician, researcher, and visionary for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Graves, 2009). Other ethnic minorities that made contributions were Leon Hall, the first Black school psychologist in Michigan, and John Jackson and Howard Cameron, who were both active in APA. Howard Cameron also directed the school psychology program at Howard University for many years. Those who worked in local schools included Ada Izcoa (Puerto Rico), Eugene Peniston (Colorado), Addison Somerville (Sacramento, CA), Lionel A. Williams (Cincinnati, OH), and Vinoo Bawaa (Arlington, VA), and Laura Hines was a professor at the Ferkauf Graduate School of Yeshiva University in New York (French, 1984). Needless to say, there were few minorities engaged in school psychology in its early development, and like many of the women, they tended to be practitioners in large urban areas (p. 20).”**



### **REGINALD JONES (1931-2005)**

**Dr. Jones was one of the most prolific Black psychologists that gave voice to a generation. He was also one of the psychologists who testified in the Larry P. v. Riles case in 1979 (Franklin, 2007). He was an eminent professor at UC Berkley who joined the faculty in 1973 as professor of African American Studies and adjunct professor of Education. “His groundbreaking work pushed the field of educational psychology, challenging and debunking ideas held particularly with regard to minorities and disabled children. He was committed to cultivating an arena for Black scholars and scholarship in the field of psychology. To this end, he edited a seminal anthology, founded a publishing house, and chose to finish his career at Hampton University, a historically Black university, with the aim of developing and nurturing future scholars (Wilmot, 2003, p. i).”**

**Learn more about Dr. Jones [here](#)**



# Black Excellence in Psychology: Past and Present

## Contemporary Leaders in School Psychology



**Deborah Peek Crockett, PhD, NCSP, served as the first African American president of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) in 1997-1998.**

**Dr. Crockett is a retired school psychologist residing in Atlanta, GA. She has supported social justice, multiculturalism, diversity, and equity issues throughout her career. Dr. Crockett has lectured at local, national, and international conferences and universities on issues of culture, diversity and tolerance, cultural perspectives of crisis intervention, as well as consultation and culturally appropriate student assessment. In July 1998, she served on President Clinton's expert panel that developed *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*. In 2000, she was invited by the Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, to respond to the first school shooting in New Orleans, LA. In February 2009, she published a chapter (with J. Brown), "Multicultural Practices and Response to Intervention," in *The Psychology of Multiculturalism in the Schools: A Primer for Practice, Training and Research*. She is the founder of the NASP Minority Scholarship Program, which supports the graduate training of traditionally underrepresented groups pursuing careers in school psychology, while seeking to lower financial barriers to training and to highlight the accomplishments of promising future professionals. In 2021, she received the NASP Lifetime Achievement Award, the organization's most prestigious award that recognizes school psychologists who have made significant and lasting contributions to the field of school psychology.**

Learn more about Dr. Crockett [here](#)

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**Frank C. Worrell, PhD served as the first Black president of APA Division 16 in 2007 and is serving as the 2021 president-elect of the American Psychological Association. He will serve as the second Black male (and fifth Black) president of APA in 2022.**

**Dr. Worrell is a Professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley, where he serves as Faculty Director of the School Psychology Program, the Academic Talent Development Program, and the California College Preparatory Academy. He also holds an affiliate appointment in the Social and Personality Area in the Department of Psychology. His areas of expertise include at-risk youth, Black education, cultural identities, gifted education and talent development, scale development, time perspective, and the translation of psychological research findings into school-based practice. He served as Co-Editor of *Review of Educational Research* from 2012 to 2014 and as Editor of that journal from 2015 to 2016 and was a Member at Large on the Board of Directors of the American Psychological Association from 2016 to 2018. Dr. Worrell is a Fellow of the American Educational Research Association, the Association for Psychological Science, and five divisions of the APA. He is an elected member of the Society for the Study of School Psychology and the National Academy of Education. In 2013, Dr. Worrell was a recipient of the Distinguished Scholar Award from the National Association for Gifted Children. He was also a 2015 recipient of the Distinguished Contributions to Research Award from the Division 45 (the Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race) of APA, a 2018 recipient of the Outstanding International Psychologist Award from Division 52 (International Psychology) of APA, and the 2019 recipient of the Palmarium Award in Gifted Education from the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver. Dr. Worrell has international collaborators in China, Ethiopia, Germany, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay.**

**Learn more about Dr. Worrell [here](#)**

# Black Excellence in Psychology: Past and Present



**Celeste Malone, PhD, MA was recently elected president-elect of NASP and will serve as the second Black president of NASP in 2022-23.**

**Dr. Malone is an associate professor and coordinator of the school psychology program at Howard University. She received her MS in school counseling from Johns Hopkins University, her PhD in school psychology from Temple University, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in child clinical and pediatric psychology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Her primary research interest relates to multicultural and diversity issues embedded in the training and practice of school psychology. Specifically, Dr. Malone addresses development of multicultural competence through education and training, diversification of the profession of school psychology, and the relationship between culturally responsive practice and PK-12 student outcomes. Dr. Malone serves on the National Association of School Psychologists Board of Directors as the strategic liaison for the social justice strategic goal and is an elected member of the American Psychological Association Board of Educational Affairs.**

**Learn more about Dr. Malone [here](#)**

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## Additional Resources

APA Public Interest Celebrates Black History Month -

<https://www.apa.org/pi/about/black-history>

APA Ethnicity and Health in America Series: Featured Psychologists -

<https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/ethnicity-health/psychologists>

## References

Franklin A. J. (2007). Reginald L. Jones (1931-2005). *The American psychologist*, 62(6), 601. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.6.601>

French, J. L. (1984). On the conceptualization, birth, and the early development of school psychology: With special reference to Pennsylvania. *American Psychologist*, 39, 976 – 987.

Graves, S. (2009). Albert Sidney Beckham: The first African American school psychologist. *School Psychology International*, 30, 5 – 23.

Miranda, A. & Miller, L. (2019). History of school psychology: An overview. In S. Y. Song, A. H. Miranda, K. M. Radliff, & D. Shriberg (Eds.), *School psychology in a global society: Roles and functions* (pp. 17-35). National Association of School Psychologists.

Reginald Lanier Jones, “An Oral History with Reginald Lanier Jones,” an oral history conducted in 2003 by Nadine Wilmot, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2005

**For more information about this project, please visit:**

[https://yeshiva.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_7Wmi4SiiLQN9o6G](https://yeshiva.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7Wmi4SiiLQN9o6G)