



**Association of School
Psychologists of Pennsylvania**

Promoting best practices in school psychology

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ASPP Position on the Incident at the Hyatt at the NASP 2023 Convention

The Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania (ASPP) acknowledges the racial trauma caused by the Hyatt staff during a National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Presidential event worthy of much celebration. ASPP wants to directly highlight the safe space that NASP President Dr. Celeste Malone created for Black school psychologists, with the highest number of Black school psychologists ever attending a NASP conference. This joy, community, and sense of belonging would not have occurred without her transformative leadership.

A harmful incident occurred during the annual NASP convention that directly affected Dr. Celeste Malone, her friends, her family, and the Black community, including our own ASPP President Dr. Amber M. Sessoms. To those who experienced the racial trauma directly and indirectly, and to our Black colleagues, ASPP is committing to naming the anti-Blackness that occurred at the convention, as well as naming and reflecting on the anti-Blackness that has occurred in our own state association. Moving forward, we are dedicated to centering Black voices and valuing your wisdom to ensure the changes we make actually have lasting positive impact on your safety, belonging, and joy. You deserve to be your full authentic selves at ASPP, and we acknowledge that we must do a better job of creating inclusive spaces that prioritize your needs.

NASP has detailed the events that occurred on Wednesday, February 8, 2023, at the Hyatt Regency Denver at the Colorado Convention Center. That evening, as is customary for the NASP President at the annual convention, Dr. Malone was hosting a gathering for her Howard University colleagues and students, as well as close friends and family. Before the start of the hotel's quiet hours, two White hotel security staff entered Dr. Malone's Presidential Suite. Without issuing a warning, the security staff instructed all guests to leave, demanded ID of the guests, and stayed to ensure all guests left the suite. Dr. Malone and her guests did nothing wrong. The inexcusable, racially intimidating, and dehumanizing acts of the Hyatt Regency Denver are blatant racist behaviors.

ASPP condemns the anti-Black actions of the Hyatt Regency Denver. ASPP is committed to social justice, and we have supported the following four NASP requests, as well as a fifth and sixth request from our Pennsylvania association. We asked that the Hyatt:

1. Give a public, genuine apology to Dr. Malone;
2. Refund all room charges and fees to Dr. Malone's invited guests to the party;

3. Provide direct compensation to Dr. Malone;
4. Give substantive donations to the NASP Minority Scholarship Program, Howard University (to be determined by Dr. Malone), the Black School Psychology Network, and [School Psych Sistahs];
5. Fund Black school psychologists to attend the Black School Psychology Network Summit this April; and
6. Endow a free social justice series for NASP conferences to pay for speakers to be ever-present at our conferences.

As a community of school psychologists, and under the leadership of our Black president, Dr. Sessoms, we pledge to engage in social justice advocacy to address racial biases that affect our students, our students' families, our colleagues, and our communities. We recognize our own organization's need to be better social actors in advancing social justice, which is why we have been restructuring our executive offices and committees to align with the organizational priorities informed by Dr. Malone's work on Multicultural Organizational Development (MCO) within our field. We will also continue to gather input on the consciousness-raising and system readiness we need to support our "Champions for Change" and the indicators needed to evaluate our successes and failures. As we continue our journey of ensuring all school psychologists are safe, feel supported, and can thrive, we will hold space for our Black colleagues and our colleagues of other minoritized groups to voice their needs. We will critically reflect on our own implicit biases and acknowledge the micro- and macroaggressions in our professional and personal lives that we overlook or inadvertently perpetuate. We commit to social justice, and calling out anti-Blackness whenever we see it. We will also provide more intentional opportunities to promote Black school psychologists as professionals and scholars and to support their well-being as colleagues. To meet this goal, we are exploring ways in which we can make it safe and affirming for colleagues and students to attend the annual ASPP conference. This will include member feedback about conference location, multiculturally-competent and socially-just content, and the development of a fund to enable students and colleagues of minoritized groups to attend both state and national conferences.

We are inspired by the resilience of the Black community, especially our Black school psychologist colleagues, and we respect and share in your anger following this incident at the Hyatt and the continual racial trauma you unfairly endure. You are so much more than your trauma. Your lived experiences and wisdom are what we need to create a liberatory community committed to imagining a world that affirms everyone's inherent dignity and belonging. We issue the following calls to action to school psychologists, educators, and the broader community:

1. Email Hyatt (tyronne.stoudemire@hyatt.com, consumeraffairs@hyatt.com) to urge them to fulfill the requests of NASP and Dr. Malone. (The public apology was just the first act of reparative action.) Please use the [template issued by ASPP](#) to send this email.
2. Share your concerns on social media and tag the following: @hyatt, @HyattDenver, #NASP2023, #NASPadvocates, #SP4SJ
3. Reflect on your own biases and actions that may be displayed in micro and macro-aggressions that perpetuate discriminatory practices and learn to center the

voices of historically minoritized groups to honor their wisdom to make meaningful, systemic change.

4. Ask yourself: "How am I working towards building a world focused on holistic healing that fosters a culture of connectedness, inclusivity, and belonging?" View Dr. Malone's NASP 2023 Convention [presidential remarks](#) on *Radical Hope, Authentic Healing* to help you begin to answer this question.

We as an organization will be working toward this call to action by identifying the root causes preventing ASPP from being an organization committed to social justice, and we look forward to taking this journey with you to increase Black school psychologist safety, voice, and joy.