

Honoring Black Contributions to Behavioral Health: Francis Sumner, Ph.D.

Dear Colleagues,

Throughout the month of February, CBHA has honored the contributions of Black psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, doctors, nurses, community leaders, and activists who dedicated their lives to behavioral health and allowed us the opportunity to continue their critical work.

For our last highlight of February, the Black behavioral health pioneer CBHA would like to recognize is Francis Sumner, Ph.D.



Francis Cecil Sumner was born on December 7, 1895, in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He was one of two sons of David Alexander Sumner and Ellen Lillian Sumner, who were believed to have adopted the surname Sumner in honor of Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner, one of the Senate's leading opponents of slavery and a prominent post-Civil War Republican. [1]

Sumner attended elementary schools in Norfolk, Virginia, and Plainfield, New Jersey. [2] His parents were concerned about the poor quality of educational opportunities for African Americans, so they worked particularly hard to provide Francis with books and other materials, and they encouraged him to educate himself as they had done. In 1911, after taking a written exam the school required due to his lack of a high school diploma, the fifteen-year-old Sumner enrolled at Lincoln University.

Sumner graduated from Lincoln in 1915, earning his bachelor's degree magna cum laude. Sumner then went to Clark University in Massachusetts in 1916, and in the fall, he received his second Bachelor's Degree in English. Although he was approved as a Ph.D. candidate, his studies were interrupted by World War I. He served in the U.S. Army in 1918 and into the middle of 1919, a tour of duty that began with basic training in Maryland and included service in France.

Following his discharge, Sumner continued his studies at Clark and was the first African-American to receive his Ph.D. in Psychology in June 1920. Dr. Sumner's first teaching position was at Wilberforce University in Ohio during the 1920-21 academic year, after which he taught at Southern University in Louisiana in the summer of 1921. In 1921, he began working as an instructor of psychology and philosophy at the West Virginia Collegiate Institute.

In 1928, Sumner left West Virginia and accepted a position at Howard University, determined to upgrade the Howard program. At the time, Howard, like most historically Black colleges, included its psychology courses in its education and philosophy departments, and Sumner believed strongly that an independent department was critical to the proper training of Black psychologists. In 1930, with the support of Howard's president, Mordecai Johnson, Sumner established a psychology department. That same year, he was named both a full professor and head of the newly independent department. [3]

Under the leadership of Sumner and his colleagues, Howard University became a major force in the education of African American psychology students, even though the department at Howard did not offer a Ph.D. degree in psychology until 1972. Nevertheless, by 1972 three hundred African Americans had earned PhDs in psychology from U.S. colleges and universities, and 60 of them had previously received a bachelor's or master's degree from the Department of Psychology at Howard. One of Sumner's students, Dr. Kenneth Clark, who CBHA highlighted earlier this month along with his wife Dr. Mamie Clark, would emerge as the most successful and influential African American psychologist of the 20th century. [4]

Francis Sumner, Ph.D. chaired the Psychology Department at Howard University from 1928 until his death in 1954.

CBHA is proud to continue the work of Francis Sumner, Ph.D. and all Black pioneers of behavioral health, in the month of February and beyond.

Please see the announcements below, and reach out to CBHA staff with any questions or concerns.



Le Ondra Clark Harvey, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

CBHA Invited to Participate on a Panel for Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1 on Health and Human Services

March 7th, 2022 | 2:30 PM PST

CBHA is excited to announce that our Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Le Ondra Clark Harvey, will participate on a panel at the Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1 on Health and Human Services next Monday, March 7th, 2022 at 2:30 pm pst.



CBHA is proud to participate in a panel discussion of investments focusing on how we're building a full continuum of care delivery resources that can improve access to health and behavioral health care, prevent homelessness or housing insecurity, improve social determinants of health, and reduce justice involvement.

CBHA will follow up with more information about how you can watch the hearing later this week.

How Can I Engage and Support the Ukrainian Resistance?

As the world grapples with the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many wonder how we can lend a hand to the people suffering from this senseless violence. Based on information obtained from psychologists and organizations who are engaging others to assist during this crisis, CBHA has listed ten ways that you can provide support to the Ukrainian people.



1. Consume information from reliable sources, and spread the word. A lot of people are either unaware or poorly informed about the current conflict and decades leading up to it. Please vet your news source and share information that is likely to be of help. If you'd like to read from local news sources in Ukraine, here are a few independent options: **The Kyiv Independent** has been a leading voice on the front lines, covering a timeline of ongoing events since the beginning and highlighting those who have been most impacted by the violent attack. **The New Voice of Ukraine** covers the news in three different languages (English, Ukrainian, and Russian) and has released informative analyses on the situation that detail how the situation led to this point, and is continuously publishing op-eds by Ukrainian scholars and experts that give a view of the tone of the situation. **Ukrainian World's** independent journalists on the front lines have gathered first-hand footage that followers can refer to in order to stay up to date. **Here** is an article from Rutgers with steps and tools for evaluating news resources and another helpful **article** from NPR with practical suggestions.
2. Donate. We've compiled a **list** of organizations you can consider donating to. Please feel free to send CBHA suggestions of any organizations that are not listed. Human suffering also continues in Syria, Haiti, Afghanistan, and many other places around the world. Help as you can.
3. Contact your local and state policy makers and encourage them to take strong action, including accepting Ukrainian refugees. The American Psychological Association has crafted some helpful resources about how to contact your representatives **here** and **here**.
4. You will be hearing about various economic impacts of this conflict (rising prices of gas, supply chain disruptions, etc.). Please consider donating locally to offset any disparate impacts of these downstream effects.
5. Help spread resources regarding refugee options and embassy phone numbers so that those seeking

asylum can be easily helped. For example, [here](#) is the Office of Refugee Resettlement, and [here](#) is the website for the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine.

6. Learn more about the situation. If this is the first you're hearing about the crisis in Ukraine and you want to learn more about the background to the situation, read this [Kyiv Post](#) article: 10 popular misconceptions about Ukraine debunked.

7. Support the LGBTQ+ community in Ukraine. LGBTQ+ members are often even more marginalized and exposed to vulnerability than usual during times like these. OutRight Action International is helping to support LGBTQ+ groups and organizations on the ground who are setting up shelters and providing safety for citizens. If you'd like to donate, you can do so [here](#), and if you are unable to donate, or would like to do more to support LGBTQ+ citizens, you can sign up to OutRight's newsletter [here](#) to stay informed on the crisis and how it is impacting LGBTQ+ Ukrainians.

8. Consider joining a protest. Many Russian citizens are protesting, knowing that they are likely to be arrested and harshly punished. We can stand in solidarity with them and with Ukrainians. Many protests are underway in the US.

9. Report any suspicious cyber activity. Cyber attacks might include disinformation campaigns to divide us in the US. Steer clear of typical propaganda sites (including Facebook), be aware that this is a strategy to divide us, don't repost content that you have not fact-checked. Information about cyber crimes can be found on the FBI's [website](#), and you can report cyber attacks on the FBI tip line [here](#). [Here's](#) an article on common scams and how to spot them.

10. Consider sending a supportive message to your colleagues, coworkers, and others in your cohort. We've been conditioned to continue business as usual, despite the world around us falling apart. It's okay to postpone deadlines and to show up authentically. Reactions to colonialism should not be pathologized or minimized. Many of us are or have family members who were once refugees. The events of the past few weeks are triggering. Be gentle with yourselves and with others.

CBHA stands with all those affected by the violence in Ukraine, please know that CBHA always is here as a partner and resource.

*We appreciate UST, long-time **Affinity Member**, for their partnerships that both provide our members exceptional services and sponsor our advocacy efforts.*



*We appreciate our **Business Associates** for their partnerships that both provide our members exceptional services and sponsor our advocacy efforts.*





California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies

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