

**Remarks Honoring the 25th Anniversary of the
APA Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs (OEMA)
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Some things are just right. Establishing an Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs at APA was right. Celebrating, not just the endurance (although there's nothing wrong with enduring!), but OEMA's many accomplishments over its 25 year history is also right.

As many of you know, or even remember from your direct participation, OEMA was established as a result of the landmark National Conference for Increasing Roles of Culturally Diverse Peoples in Psychology, better known as the Dulles Conference.

From its inception OEMA has served as a vital link between APA and ethnic minority psychologists and psychological associations. This was not an easy task in 1979, given the trust issues and memories of past failures that needed addressing. We should all probably think about our roles in continuing to make that task easier today. It doesn't detract from OEMA's accomplishments to note that we still have a long way to go as an organization, never mind a society, and to remember that OEMA should not be facing its tasks alone.

In reading the reminiscences of the five incredible psychologists who have served as Director of the Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs and the vision for the future offered by Anthony Castro, chair of APAGS Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs, I was struck by two things. First, the number of concrete accomplishments to which OEMA has been central. These include the establishment of the Board of Ethnic Minority Affairs, the creation and publication of the Directory of Ethnic Minority Professionals in Psychology, edited by Dr. Lillian Comas-Diaz, supporting the Task Force on Delivery of Services to Ethnic Minority Populations, the development and publication of the Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Linguistic, and Culturally Diverse Populations, facilitating the establishment of and staffing the National Psychological Association for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests – with the catchy acronym CNPAAEMI, successfully advocating for the inclusion of a principle and ethical standards related to cultural and individual diversity in the 1992 revision of APA’s Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, supporting the very valuable work of the Commission on Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention and Training in Psychology (CEMRRAT – another catchy acronym) established in 1994 and chaired by Dr. Richard Suinn and CEMRRAT 2 created in 1999 to implement the recommendations of the original commission, receiving a \$750,000

National Institute of General Medical Sciences grant to begin the APA/NIGMS Project in 1996 (they must be doing something right, the grant was renewed in 2000 for \$1.43 million), organizing a miniconvention on “Psychology and Racism” that kicked-off APA’s National Conversation on Psychology and Racism, establishing the Psychology in Ethnic Minority Serving Institutions Initiative (PEMSI – I’m not saying a word!), and collaborating with the APA Minority Fellowship Program and Science Directorate to establish the Promoting Psychological Research and Training on Health Disparities Issues grants program which is targeted to early career faculty at ethnic minority-serving post-secondary institutions. To name but a few.

What is also extraordinary about this list and the numerous items not mentioned is the breadth and range of OEMA’s collaborations over the past 25 years. The office has worked successfully with other offices within APA, with the full range of governance groups, with divisions and state associations, with federal agencies, and with educational institutions across the country. Again, to name a few.

The second thing that struck me in reading descriptions of OEMA’s history by those who made it and the vision for the future by one who will live it, was the

themes that are repeated across the year: Increasing ethnic minority representation among our membership and leadership, ensuring culturally competent service providers, improving access to services, providing appropriate training and training opportunities, and fostering authentic respect for individual and cultural diversity in the association and in our society.

OEMA has accomplished so much in 25 years that it is almost startling to have to acknowledge how much remains to be done. I'd like to close with the thought that OEMA's anniversary is something that all psychology should celebrate and that the best way to honor this occasion is for all of us here to work for the goals and vision that OEMA embodies.

And now it is my great pleasure to introduce the first chair of the Board of Ethnic Minority Affairs and the current APA Executive Director for Public Interest, Dr. Henry Tomes.