

APAF Chester M. Pierce Human Rights Award Recipients

1992-2025

In 1990, the APA established the APA Human Rights Award with the first recipient being awarded in 1992. In 2020, the award was renamed after Chester M. Pierce with the first recipient of the APA Chester M. Pierce Human Rights Award being awarded in 2021. In 2021, the award was endowed and transferred to the APA Foundation (APAF) with the first recipient of the APAF Chester M. Pierce Human Rights Award being awarded in 2022.

Year	Recipient(s)	Description
2025	Charles C. Dike, M.D., M.P.H.	Charles C. Dike is Professor of Psychiatry at Yale University, and Chief Medical Officer, Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. He is also immediate past president of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law (AAPL). He is a DFAPA and Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists of England. He is past Chair of the Ethics Committees of APA and AAPL, and author of Ethics Corner in Psychiatric News. He is a Special Government Employee, National Advisory Council, SAMHSA. AAPL established the Charles Dike Scholarship Award for his tireless work on Diversity and Inclusion and other initiatives.
2024	Pamela Collins, M.D., M.P.H.	Pamela Collins, M.D., M.P.H., is Bloomberg Centennial Professor and Chair of the Department of Mental Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Formerly holding faculty and leadership positions at Columbia University, the University of Washington, and the National Institute of Mental Health, her vision has led to the launch of global health educational programs and of research initiatives to extend mental health services in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, as well as research to reduce mental health disparities among diverse racial and ethnic groups and Indigenous communities in the United States.
2023	Ezra Griffith, MD	Dr. Ezra Griffith is Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and African American Studies, Yale University. The Morehouse School of Medicine conferred on him the honorary degree, Doctor of Science. He published "Belonging, Therapeutic Landscapes, and Networks" in 2018. From 1989 to 1996 he was Director of the Connecticut Mental Health Center at Yale. He served as Deputy Chairman of Yale's Department of Psychiatry (1996-2016). He is editor emeritus of the <i>Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law</i> and a regular columnist for <i>Psychiatric News</i> .
2022	Grégoire Ahongbonon	Grégoire Ahongbonon is the founder of Association Saint-Camille-de-Lellis (ASC) which helps people in West Africa suffering from mental illness. ASC is composed of clinics and centers offering affordable and adapted neuropsychiatric inpatient, outpatient, and rehabilitation care in Ivory Coast, Benin, and Togo. These centers form a comprehensive mental health care system, approved by the World Health Organization (WHO), supporting 130,000 patients. Grégoire is the recipient of the WHO Geneva Prize for Human Rights, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative "Awakening Humanity" Prize, and the Dr. Guislain "Breaking the Chains of Stigma" Award recognizing his contributions to reduce stigma associated with mental illness.

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2021	Patrisse Cullors Alicia Garza Opal Tometi	Patrisse Cullors is an author, educator, artist, and abolitionist who has led multiple organizations such as Dignity and Power Now, Justice LA, and Reform LA Jails. Alicia Garza is an innovator, strategist, and organizer who serves as the Strategy & Partnerships Director for the National Domestic Workers Alliance, the nation's leading voice for dignity and fairness for U.S. domestic workers. Opal Tometi is an award-winning advocate, strategist, writer and human rights leader who uses her voice to ensure that race, immigration, and gender justice remain at the forefront of global conversations. Cullors, Garza, and Tometi, are the co-founders of the global network, Black Lives Matter, dedicated to intervening in violence inflicted on Black communities impacted by systematic racism, supporting the development of Black leaders, and creating a network where Black people feel empowered.
2020	Global Press Institute	Global Press creates a more just and informed world by employing local female journalists to produce ethical, accurate news coverage from the world's least-covered places. By training local women to become world-class journalists, Global Press reframes global narratives, revitalizes communities and repairs the lack of gender and racial diversity in newsrooms. Their industry-leading Duty of Care program is revolutionizing security and wellness for local journalists across the world.
2019	Catholic Charities Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services International Rescue Committee	Catholic Charities provides assistance to immigrants and refugees throughout the U.S. including offering social and legal services to help immigrants and refugees settle in new communities. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services provides advocacy and social services for refugees and migrants from around the world. The International Rescue Committee provides critical services to crisis-affected families in different parts of the world and have played a major role in assisting refugees resettle in the U.S.
2018	Validity Foundation	International non-governmental organization, formerly the Mental Disability Advocacy Center (MDAC), which uses the law to advance the human rights of people with mental health issues and intellectual disabilities worldwide.
2017	National Consortium of Torture Treatment Programs	U.S. based network of programs which exists to advance the knowledge, technical capacities and resources devoted to the care of torture survivors living in the United States and acts collectively to prevent torture worldwide.

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2016	David Satcher, MD	Recognized for releasing the first U.S. Surgeon General's report on mental health, Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon, addressing the vital importance of mental health in the U.S. and efforts to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities.
2015	Chester M. Pierce, MD	Recognized for his vision for an international psychiatry effort at the Massachusetts General Hospital as a senior psychiatrist and as the founding president of the Black Psychiatrists of America Association and the National Chairperson of the Child Development Associate Consortium.
2014	Jeffrey Geller, MD, MPH	Recognized for a career focusing on the delivery of psychiatric care and treatment to those with the greatest needs and the fewest resources by serving as a consultant to state governments, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
2012	Bryan A. Stevenson	Recognized as the Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) has won major legal challenges eliminating excessive and unfair sentencing, exonerating innocent death row prisoners, confronting abuse of the incarcerated and the mentally ill and aiding children prosecuted as adults.
2009	Robert Okin, MD Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI)	Dr. Okin is recognized for fighting for human rights of mentally ill people as the primary psychiatric consultant with Mental Disability Rights International examining international mental health systems. MDRI is recognized for promoting the human rights and full participation in society of people with mental disabilities worldwide through the documentation of human rights abuses and promotion of international awareness and oversight of the rights of people with disabilities.
2008	Alfred Freedman, MD	Recognized for championing human rights through the APA Board of Trustees to declare that homosexuality is not a mental illness and for leading an APA delegation to the Soviet Union to confront Soviet psychiatry with their abuse of psychiatry by placing political dissidents in psychiatric hospitals.
2007	Steven Sharfstein, MD	Recognized for service as the President and CEO of the Sheppard Pratt Health System, work with the National Institute of Mental Health, and his research and writing on the economics of practice and public mental health policy.

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2006	President Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter* The Carter Center	President Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter are jointly recognized for significant foreign policy accomplishments during administration as President of the United States of America and working with wife Rosalyn Carter to advocate for mental health, human rights and conflict resolution and founding The Carter Center. The Carter Center is recognized for efforts to resolve conflict, promote democracy, protect human rights, and prevent diseases and other afflictions.
2005	Dr. David Lozovsky** Drs. Leon and Carola Eisenberg*	Dr. Lozovsky is recognized for work in reforming Russian psychiatry to destigmatize the profession, raise its scientific standards, and integrate into mainstream medical care. Drs. Leon and Carola Eisenberg are recognized for their work at the Division of Mental Health at the World Health Organization and the organization Physicians for Human Rights
2004	Walter Reich, MD	Recognized for work on the protection of human rights around the world, lecturing and wrting on the Holocaust and genocide, terrorism, human rights, national memory, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; psychiatry, medical ethics and national and international affairs.
2003	Senator Paul Wellstone** Senator Pete Domenici	Senator Wellstone is recognized for passionately and effectively advocating for the mentally ill and working with Senator Pete Domenici for efforts on the 1996 Mental Health Parity Act, calling upon insurance companies to treat mental illness the same as other medical illnesses. Senator Domenici is recognized for efforts working with Sentaor Paul Wellstone on the 1996 Mental Health Parity Act, calling upon insurance companies to treat mental illness the same as other medical illnesses.
2002	Dr. Gro Bruntland National Association for Multicultural Mental Health (NAMMH)	Dr. Bruntland is recognized for raising and helping to resolve the issues of stigma, discrimination, and lack of acess to mental health treatment world wide through work as the Director-General of the World Health Organization. NAMMH is recognized for meeting the cirtical need for practical, effective, and culturally appropriate mental health training with service providers working with refugees.
2001	Dr. Semyon Gluzman	Recognized for dedicated efforts to investigating and publicizing human rights violations.
2000	Abraham Halpern, MD Prof. Lars Jacobsson	Recognized for his work on the Medical Committee for Human Rights, the New York League to Abolish Capital Punishment, the APA's Committee on International Abuse of Psychiatry and Psychiatrists, working for the release of non-mentally ill dissidents held in maximum security forensic hospitals in the Soviet Union, and his tireless opposition against the death penalty and the insanity defense while fighting for the rights of the mentally ill. Prof. Jacobsson is Professor Emeritus at Department of Clinical Sciences, Umea Unviersity.

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1999	Eugene Brody, MD	Recognized for early advocacy for the rights of mentally ill persons by pioneering psychotherapy with people classified as schizophrenic and in his active role in desegregating the Maryland public mental hospitals while serving as an advocate for the rights of refugees and other minorities and for women's reproductive rights.
1998	Jack Weinberg, MD**	Recognized for major international contributions especially in the areas of human rights and understanding, strongly speaking out against the use of psychiatry for political purposes in the former USSR, working towards increased equality in the treatment of mental patients in apartheid-era South Africa, and fostering communication between Israelis and Egyptians following the peace treaty between these two countries.
1997	Justice Richard Goldstone	Recognized for service as the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (1991-1994) and Rwanda (1994-1996) and the recipient of national and international awards, related to law and human rights.
1996	Inge Kemp Genefke, MD Lawrence Hartmann, MD Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (RCTV)	Dr. Genefke is a Danish physician and pioneer in the world in the fight against torture. Dr. Hartmann is recognized for serving as a strong advocate for human rights within the APA and around the world and being an ongoing conscience of American psychiatry counted on to ensure that the APA doesn't lose sight of the human rights implications of its actions nationally and internationally. RCTV is an independent, international health organization supporting the rehabilitation of torture victims and working for the prevention of torture worldwide.
1995	Physicians for Human Rights	Recognized for exposing human rights violations through documentary and physical evidence and holding governments accountable for their actions.
1994	Geneva Initiative on Psychiatry	Recognized for organizing campaigns against the political abuse of psychiatry whenever it occurred, supported the victims of such abuses, and campaigned for the release of both victims and opponents of abuse.
1993	Richard Mollica, MD	Dr. Mollica is the Director of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma (HPRT) of Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School and a faculty member in the Counseling Psychology and Global Mental Health program at William James College.

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1992	American Association for the Advancement of Science’s (AAAS) Committee and Staff on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility	AAAS component charged with formulating and recommending principles and procedures on issues that affect scientific freedom and scientific responsibility, monitoring actions and policies of the U.S. government, other nationas, and private organizations that circumscribe or restrict freedom of scientists, and encouraging and assisting affiliates.

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