



AMERICAN GROUP
PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION
GROUP FOUNDATION
FOR ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH
INTERNATIONAL BOARD FOR
CERTIFICATION OF GROUP
PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

212.297.2190
E: info@agpa.org
www.agpa.org

Media Contact:

Diane C. Feirman, CAE

(212) 297-2143

dfeirman@agpa.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL BOARD FOR CERTIFICATION OF GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPISTS PRESENTS 2026 HAROLD S. BERNARD GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY TRAINING AWARD TO SHEMIKA BROOKS-WOODS PSYD, CGP, AGPA-F, AND THE PROCESS GROUP IMMERSION PROGRAM (PGI)

NEW YORK, March 3, 2026– The International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists will be presenting the 2026 Harold S. Bernard Group Psychotherapy Training Award to Shemika Brooks-Woods PsyD, CGP, AGPA-F, and the Process Group Immersion program (PGI). The presentation will take place during AGPA Connect 2026 in New York City at the Sheraton New York Times Square on Wednesday, March 4, during the Annual Tri-Organizational Awards Ceremony, 6:00 – 7:30 PM.

This award was established in 2001 and is given annually to an individual or organization whose work in group training and/or education contributes to excellence in the practice of group psychotherapy. It was renamed through a legacy gift provided to the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health by Dr. Bernard for the purpose of endowing the award. Throughout his lifetime, training in group psychotherapy was near and dear to Dr. Bernard's heart. His legacy bequest and this award ensure that individuals and programs meeting a high standard of training quality be identified and honored for their contributions to the field in developing the next generation of clinicians who use group psychotherapy to help people.

Dr. Brooks-Woods is being recognized with this award for the breadth and depth of her innovative and creative contributions to group therapy training. She has been engaged in the development of group psychotherapy professionals for many years, as staff at the John Hopkins University Homewood Counseling Center, Baltimore MD since 2017 where she currently serves as Associate Director of Training, as a promoter of group psychotherapy within that setting and beyond, and as a teacher, trainer and mentor for over a decade. She also has an extensive history as a practitioner in the field of group psychotherapy, is an author and has presented at conferences at university centers, AGPA Connect and other AGPA affiliate societies conferences throughout the years.

Her commitment to group psychotherapy and quality training are manifested in the creation of the Process Group Immersion program (PGI). PGI is an initiative that was established to engage trainees from similar work environments (college/university counseling centers primarily across the east coast) in a shared professional development experience, held remotely through Zoom. It is a consortium program which invites clinical training programs across disciplines to include their trainees in a shared experiential group therapy training. It is a unique

structure that expands access to group therapy training, at a time when it has been removed from many doctoral training programs.

The scope of her impact was clearly conveyed through the comments received from those who recommended her for the award, with just a few examples being: “the goal of PGI directly addresses a significant gap in doctoral level training;” “the PGI aligns with the Harold Bernard Training Award through its foundational commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion; and “the PGI framework intentionally attends to cultural identities and systemic factors within both group dynamics and the learning environment...the structure allows trainees to observe and practice navigating conflict, addressing microaggressions, and bearing witness to difference in ways that foster genuine learning and growth, rather than performative or checklist-based engagement.”

“Dr. Brooks-Woods is a respected and generous teacher whose dedication to supporting and growing the field of group psychotherapy personifies this award,” said Steve Van Wagoner, PhD, CGP, AGPA-F, Certification Board Chair. “Her work has had an impact on innumerable trainees and practitioners, benefitting the profession and the public.”

The past few years’ recipients of the award are as follows; the full list can be found [here](#).

2025: Seth Aronson, PsyD, CGP, Thomas Hurster, MSS, LCSW, CGP, AGPA-F, and Andy Pojman, EdD, CGP, AGPA-F; Jeanne Bunker LCSW, CGP, AGPA-F and Michael P. Frank, MA, LMFT, CGP, AGPA-LF

2024: Aaron Black, PhD, CGP, AGPA-F

2023: Toronto Institute of Group Studies (TIGS)

2022: Howard University Counseling Service

2021: Farooq Mohyuddin, MD, CGP, AGPA-F

This award presentation is a highlight of AGPA Connect 2026 in New York City. Entitled “*Group Life: Holding Space For Deeper Connection in Complex Times*” this meeting attracts 1,000 group therapists, researchers, and scientists from around the world. Group therapists of all disciplines gather to learn the most effective techniques in working with a variety of populations in groups, an increasingly utilized modality due to its effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.

For more information, contact AGPA at (212) 297-2190 or visit www.agpa.org.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Media are invited to attend select sessions of AGPA Connect 2026. To register, please send an e-mail request to dfeirman@agpa.org or call (212) 297-2190.

About the International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists

The International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists is a standard setting and certifying body. This multidisciplinary credentialing body has over 1,000 certified clinicians, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, clinical mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, pastoral counselors and creative arts therapists who are recognized as group specialists through the Certified Group Psychotherapist credential.

About AGPA

The American Group Psychotherapy Association (AGPA) is the foremost professional association dedicated to the field of group psychotherapy, operating through a multi-organizational structure: AGPA, a professional and educational organization; the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health, a philanthropic arm; the

International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists, a standard setting and certifying body; and the Affiliate Societies Assembly representing 21 local and regional affiliate societies providing continuing education, consultation, and support for group therapists across the country. AGPA represents over 2,000 mental health professional members, including clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, and psychiatrists, as well as mental health, family, school, and pastoral counselors, many of whom have been recognized as specialists through the International Board for Certification of Group Psychotherapists. AGPA members are experienced licensed mental health professionals who lead psychotherapy groups and/or various non-clinical groups. Many members are organizational specialists who work within the corporate world, non-for-profit organizations, and other groups to help them improve their functioning and delivery of services.

AGPA is committed to supporting the dignity and psychological safety of every individual without discrimination regarding race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, or disability. Central to our mission is a belief in the power of groups to treat mental illness, heal the scars from traumatic events, and enhance the well-being of adults and children in their families, schools, corporate settings, and communities.

#