

Lillian Comas-Diaz

By: Carolina Cornejo Ayala

Is an American psychologist and researcher of multiethnic and multicultural communities. She was originally born in Chicago, Illinois, but at six, Diaz and her family moved to Puerto Rico where she attended primary and secondary school. After completing her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Psychology in Puerto Rico, she proceeded with higher education. She obtained her doctorate degree at the University of Massachusetts also in Clinical Psychology. Upon receiving her PhD in 1979 she began working at Yale University's Psychiatry department. At Yale, she became the director of the Hispanic Clinic playing a vital role in helping bring mental health awareness to the Hispanic community. In 1986 she became a Clinical professor at George Washington University Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Currently, she holds her own private practice and continues to teach at George Washington University.

Many of her major contributions and accomplishments include developing a mental health center for the Latin community in Connecticut, co-founding the Transcultural Mental Health Institute, and having played a key part in investigations of human rights abuse in South Africa, South America, and the Soviet Union. As you can tell, she is an incredible pioneer in incorporating culturally competent components into mental health care. In terms of research and academia, she is the founding editor of Psychological Association Division 45's official journal, and her work on the interactions between culture, gender, ethnicity, and race in mental health has gained her notoriety. Moreover, she has been given the honor of APA's Distinguished Contribution to Psychology in the public interest, the Award from Association for Women in Psychology Distinguished Publication, and the American Foundation Rosalee G. Weiss Award for Contributions to Professional Psychology. Although she has won many awards, all of these do not limit the impact she has had on society and the community at large.

Lillian also happens to be an author. One of her most important works, *"Racial Trauma: Theory, Research, and Healing: Introduction to the Special Issue,"* encapsulates a form of race-based stress and how it has affected the BIPOC community. Racial Trauma refers explicitly to "reactions to dangerous events and real or perceived experiences of racial discrimination." Moreover, it involves "ongoing individual and collective injuries due to exposure and reexposure to race-based stress." In this article, new conceptual approaches, research, and healing models are introduced in order to combat the issue of racial trauma that is so prevalent, especially in the U.S. Some of the effective approaches to help recover from this kind of trauma include psychotherapy, group counseling, and community methods. However, this kind of trauma carries psychological and physiological effects which give off other threats, such as nightmares, suspiciousness, PTSD symptoms, and much more. This makes healing racial trauma a lot more difficult because it is much harder to be able to relate to someone without having the necessary cultural background and similarities. With this article, mental health practitioners are better able

to help their clients combat these racial-based traumatic experiences with hopes of increasing overall psychological well-being.

Sources:

- <https://psychology.okstate.edu/museum/hispanic/people.html>
- <https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/ethnicity-health/psychologists/comas-diaz>
- <https://feministvoices.com/profiles/lillian-comas-diaz>
- <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2019-01033-001.html>