



## RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE DELEGATES DURING THE 108TH ANNUAL NAACP CONVENTION 2017

### **9. *Protecting Individuals from Electroshock Treatment***

**California/Hawaii State Conference NAACP, #1021-SC and  
Inglewood/South Bay California Branch, #1043**

**WHEREAS**, Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a controversial mental health treatment that involves as much as 450 volts of electricity being forced randomly through the brain, overwhelming delicate brain circuitry and function, and

**WHEREAS**, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reports the following adverse effects of ECT: cardiovascular (heart) complications; cognition and memory impairment; death; dental/oral trauma; medical device malfunction; manic symptoms; pain/discomfort; physical trauma; prolonged or tardive (latent) seizures; pulmonary (lung) complications; skin burns; and potential worsening of psychiatric symptoms, and

**WHEREAS**, in more than 40 years, the FDA has never required the manufacturers of the ECT device to provide clinical studies proving that the devices are safe and effective; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2009, the FDA sought public comment on reducing the high-risk classification that the ECT device currently has, which would make ECT more widely available despite its risks, and the FDA received more than 3,000 comments, most of which (79%) opposed reclassifying ECT devices; and

**WHEREAS**, the FDA, federal and state governments do not maintain a record of how many Americans, including children, are given electroshock, with the FDA relying instead upon a 1995 study estimating 100,000 Americans receive it annually; and

**WHEREAS**, state-by-state requests for the number of people receiving ECT under Medicaid generated documents showing that children five or younger are being administered electroshock; and

**WHEREAS**, four U.S. states—California, Colorado, Texas and Tennessee—have already banned the use of electroshock on children; and the February, 2013 United Nations Special report on Torture also describes ECT without consent as "torture" and recommended "an absolute ban on all forced and non-consensual" use of electroshock; and

**WHEREAS**, the World Health Organization's Resource Book on Mental Health, Human Rights and Legislation 2005, states: "There are no indications for the use of ECT on minors, and hence this should be prohibited through legislation;" and

**WHEREAS**, professor Herb Kutchins notes in the 2008 publication *Creating Racism: Psychiatry's Betrayal*: "Defenders of slavery, proponents of racial segregation...have consistently attempted to justify oppression by inventing new mental illnesses and by reporting higher rates of abnormality among African Americans or other minorities;" and

**WHEREAS**, psychiatrists now diagnose African-American men in mental hospitals as having a serious mental disorder at rates up to 1,500 percent higher than white men, and classify more than twice as many African Americans than whites as mentally retarded; African Americans are given significantly higher doses of neuroleptic (nerve-seizing) drugs than are whites; and African Americans are at risk of receiving electroshock when labeled with a serious mental disorder.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NAACP vehemently opposes any attempt by the FDA to reduce the risk classification of the ECT device, to allow its continuance when there are no clinical trials submitted by the ECT device manufacturers to the FDA proving safety and efficacy, and therefore, as the treatment constitutes "torture" without consent, we support a ban on the use of ECT in the treatment of children and young adults up to the age of 21, and the indiscriminate use on adults.