

School Psychology Unified Anti-Racism Statement and Call to Action

Dear School Psychology Community,

*“Psychologists aspire to **recognize** and understand historical and contemporary experiences with power, privilege, and oppression. As such, they **seek to address** institutional barriers and related inequities, disproportionalities, and disparities of law enforcement, administration of criminal justice, educational, mental health, and other systems as they seek to promote justice, human rights, and access to quality and equitable mental and behavioral health services” (APA Multicultural Guidelines)*

We **recognize**, are outraged by, and mourn the deaths of Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Tante Parker, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Tony McDade, and countless other victims of police brutality and racist violence. We recognize that current protests are a response to long-standing systemic injustices that target and disproportionately impact the Black community. These injustices include mass incarceration, inadequate access to quality health care and educational resources, and inequitable access to stable sources of food, safe and affordable housing, and gainful employment.

As school psychologists, we have an **ethical responsibility** to engage in **social justice and anti-racist action**. School psychology organizations and graduate education programs play an important role in shaping future generations of school psychologists to lead the mental health, educational and research, and advocacy initiatives that promote equity for school personnel, students, families and communities they serve. This is only possible if our field acknowledges, evaluates, and works to reconstruct existing systems, structures, and policies that lead to inequitable outcomes for some groups and not others. “How can the school psychology community serve the diverse society in which we live without explicit and intentional education and growth in this area?” To help answer this question, APA Division 16, Trainers of School Psychologists, Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs, Society for the Study of School Psychology, the American Board of School Psychology, and the National Association of School Psychologists have come together to reaffirm our commitment to ensure current and future school psychologists are empowered to be anti-racist agents of change.

A DECLARATION OF UNDERSTANDING

How can we, as school psychologists, respond to the horrific displays of racism in recent days and weeks, specifically the recent deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd?

- **Acknowledge** the need for action and healing. we are disheartened by the loss of more Black lives at the hands of the police.
- **Acknowledge** that these murders are grounded in our country’s 400+ year history of systemic racism, oppression, and over policing of Black individuals and persons of color.
- **Recognize** that colleagues of color have been put in the unfair position of having to shoulder and take on the undue burden of work related to racism, inequities, bias, and bigotry and this can no longer continue.
- **Recognize** direct traumatic stress that many of us experience daily and in response to the death of George Floyd and others.

- **Stand in solidarity** with our Black community members, colleagues, friends, and neighbors, and pledge to do all in our power to call out, address, and dismantle the systemic inequities in our society that we may knowingly or unknowingly perpetuate as scholars, practitioners, and friends.
- **Acknowledge** that we must confront our own *internalized racism* and *implicit biases*, and learn to think and act in ways that affirm and support our students, staff, faculty and community members identifying as Black, African American, Native-American, American Indian/Indigenous, Latinx, Asian-American, and Pacific Islander.
- **Acknowledge** that we must confront *explicit biases* in preK-12 schools and university training programs, and learn to think and act in ways that affirm and support our students, staff, faculty and community members identifying as Black, African American, Latinx, Asian-American and Native-American, American Indian/Indigenous.
- **Promise** to support and protect our children of color who are disproportionately targeted in our schools and communities.
- **Recognize** that these incidents unfolded while the nation is still reeling from a health pandemic that further exemplifies the disparate health and economic impacts of COVID-19 on communities of color; requiring us to address the long-standing racial inequities people of color experience on a daily basis.
- **Call out** those within our profession who act in ways that are antithetical to the values we espouse in our declaration of understanding.
- **Join** our voices to the statements issued by Sandra L. Shullman, PhD, the President of the American Psychological Association, naming this as a racism pandemic and “As always, APA stands against racism and hate in all its forms, and supports the efforts of researchers, law enforcement, clinicians, teachers and policymakers to eliminate hate crimes and police brutality,” and NASP’s definition of social justice.
- **Recognize** that social justice is both a process and a goal that requires action. “School psychologists work to ensure the protection of the educational rights, opportunities, and well-being of all children, especially those whose voices have been muted, identities obscured, or needs ignored. Social justice requires promoting non-discriminatory practices and the empowerment of families and communities. School psychologists enact social justice through culturally-responsive professional practice and advocacy to create schools, communities, and systems that ensure equity and fairness for all children and youth”, (Adopted by the NASP Board of Directors, April 2017).

OUR ACTION PLAN AS A COMMUNITY

We recognize that statements are not enough and that it is imperative for us, individually and collectively, to work proactively to influence and enact change. Therefore, we provide some suggestions for direct action steps to stand in solidarity with our Black community members, colleagues, friends, and students.

School Psychology’s commitment and mission to advance research, practice, policy and advocacy for education continues. In light of this tragedy, we have a sharpened focus to reduce systemic racism and inequities in schools and communities across our nation. We must take affirmative action through active anti-racist work.

- We will create a library of resources for trainers and programs on social justice, equity and inclusion to begin establishing a general body of literature.
- We will establish a mentoring program to provide early career psychologists and students, especially those of color, with increased opportunities for collaboration and support.
- We reaffirm our support of our student school psychology organizations with financial support, collaboration, and guidance with their own mentoring programs and professional development.
- We will actively recruit diverse voices for leadership positions within our professional organizations and committees.
- We commit to ensuring that diverse voices are engaged and represented across issues before the field.
- We commit to ensuring that our scholarly outlets (e.g., journals, newsletters) regularly include science and research inclusive of voices and perspectives of scholars and communities of color.
- We commit to using psychological science to combat systemic racism and implicit bias at all levels to foster change including:
 - training, supporting and collaborating with school personnel, parents and other community stakeholders in advancing safe schools that are inclusive of policies addressing racism and other forms of discrimination and actions that embody these policies;
 - preparing decision makers to collect information that includes representation from all relevant groups, informed by sources that are fair, and to deliver responses that are culturally sensitive;
 - preparing current and future school psychologists to engage in public policy advocacy, even when politically difficult, to combat systemic racism and implicit bias at all levels to foster change; and
 - mentoring and supporting researchers of color in research publications.
- We recommit to addressing these structural and pervasive challenges in our training programs, research, and service activities addressing decision making, representation, sensitivity and fairness.

In solidarity,

APA Division 16 School Psychology
 Trainers of School Psychologists
 Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs
 Society for the Study of School Psychology
 American Board of School Psychology
 National Association of School Psychologists

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