



**NYASP**  
NY Association of School Psychologists

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release  
June 3, 2020**

### **Statement on Discrimination Against Persons of Color**

The New York Association of School Psychologists (NYASP) represents school psychologists across New York State, for whom advocacy for social justice is a foundational part of our practice. New York State is one of the most diverse states in the country, and many of our members are, and work with, individuals from historically marginalized and oppressed communities. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) practitioners serve students and families with such diligence and compassion, while simultaneously managing and negotiating the trauma that comes from the systemic injustice, oppression, and violence in their own lives.

NYASP stands firmly against discrimination against persons of color. NYASP expresses both outrage and deep despair regarding the recent, unjustified killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Dreasjon (Sean) Reed, and George Floyd. NYASP expresses condolences to the families affected by their killings, and shares in the community's sense of anger, outrage, and pain. We bear witness to their deaths and we share the legitimate anger felt by those who feel helpless against continued systemic injustice and oppression. As our nation is blanketed in the juxtaposition of peaceful protests and riots, we recognize that the most recent deaths only highlight the deep-rooted pain and trauma from a history of injustice that has characterized so much of American history.

NYASP recognizes that systems that perpetuate injustice continue to exist throughout this country and that they directly impact the communities we serve. Without recognizing these systems, and taking concrete actions to dismantle them, school psychologists run the risk of perpetuating oppression on the children and families whose voices have been historically muted.

In 2017, the NASP Board of Directors highlighted the importance of having a social justice lens, noting:

“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).

As a practitioner, trainer, mentor, and colleague, you may be asking yourself what you can do. NASP recently published a document that outlines what we can do at the individual and institutional level to support communities grieving due to this national crisis. Furthermore, it is paramount for us to develop *cultural humility*. Cultural humility demands of us to understand the realities of the other. It is a process approach to developing cultural competency. Waters and Asbill (2013) note that cultural humility is the “ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person].”

It is likely that many of us are in a state of shock which immobilizes us from acting; we may be afraid of saying the wrong things, so we remain quiet. Yet, given the cries of communities who have been muted, whom we serve, we must move beyond immobilization to action. While the journey to allyship is an individual one that may look different for each of us, we offer the following recommendations in the form of concrete suggestions:

1. We must understand the accumulated impact of systemic oppression on communities that have been marginalized. Some resources to help in this area can be found here: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity/social-justice>.
2. We should commit to self-evaluation and self critique. The NASP Social Justice Task Force and Teaching Tolerance both have provided excellent resources to examine such concepts as oppression, privilege, and racism in their work with historically oppressed groups: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity/social-justice/sp4sj-podcast-and-google-hangout-series> or <https://www.tolerance.org/topics/race-ethnicity>.
3. We should review the NASP press release on “NASP calls for action to end racism and violence against people of color.” There are suggestions for allies and non-allies in supporting these communities: <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/media-room/press-releases/nasp-calls-for-action-to-end-racism-and-violence-against-people-of-color>.
4. As we consume the information above, we should explore our feelings and emotions toward what is happening (i.e., indifference, anger, resentment, empathy etc.), and not be afraid to turn inwards.
5. We should be intentional about how we use social media, for example, by following #sp4sj (school psychologists for social justice), #blacklivesmatter, #citeblackwomen, #citeblackscholars, and other hashtags to immerse ourselves in the narratives of the

- “other” whose voices have been muted. We should also follow scholars of color and other scholars from marginalized communities who are talking about social justice.
6. We should be intentional about our summer reading. *How To Be Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, *White Fragility* by Robin Diangelo, and *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad are good places to start.
  7. Parents may ask about how to address these issues with their children. There are many resources for talking about race with children, including <https://www.readbrightly.com/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-race-books-and-resources-that-can-help/>, <https://www.amazon.com/Best-Sellers-Books-Childrens-Prejudice-Racism/zgbs/books/3135> and [https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/beyond\\_golden\\_rule.pdf](https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/beyond_golden_rule.pdf).
  8. We should engage in discussions with our own children about what is happening. Dr. Byron McClure (@SchoolPsychLife on Twitter) provides excellent resources online to help us do this.
  9. We should check in with a BIPOC colleague/friend. If you are struggling with what to say, the youtube video below provides a good example of differentiating empathy from sympathy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HznVuCVQd10&feature=youtu.be>
  10. We should develop partnerships with groups who advocate for communities that have been marginalized and ask them what we can do.
  11. We should reach out to colleagues to talk about ways to support communities who are traumatized by the current climate as we begin to think of re-entry policies.
  12. We should be vigilant for examples of discrimination or bias in the communities and schools in which we work, call them out, and work to remediate them. These include overt, obvious examples of hate speech (e.g. graffiti), as well as microaggressions against persons of color and other historically marginalized and oppressed communities. This also includes individuals of Asian descent, as there has been an increase in anti-Asian sentiment during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  13. In our consultation work with teachers, we should consider ways of integrating these themes into the curriculum. See, for example, the National Council of Teachers of English: There Is No Apolitical Classroom: Resources for Teaching in These Times at <https://ncte.org/blog/2017/08/there-is-no-apolitical-classroom-resources-for-teaching-in-these-times/>.

We may be uncomfortable talking about race, **but we can no longer afford to be silent**. We have chosen a profession that, like parenting, **requires us to put our comforts second** to those of children.

Jamilah Pitts

## References

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