

June 4, 2020

Dear School Psychology Program Graduate Students,

We know that overwhelming feelings of uncertainty, frustration, sadness, and anxiety are likely reactions for you in light of current events; we have them as well and have struggled with finding the best words to share with you. As core faculty, we specifically acknowledge the emotional experiences for our students of color, particularly Black students.

We want to make you aware as to how our profession of school psychology is responding. Please attend to the recent [NASP Press Release](#), a calling for action to end racism and violence against people of color:

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) joins with other organizations and individuals calling for action to end racism and violence against people of color, especially Black individuals, in this country. We also urge nonviolent, peaceful approaches that maintain both peoples' safety and First Amendment rights. The recent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd are horrific. They lay bare—again—the reality of continued systemic racism and our nation's deeply embedded inequities and prejudice that far too often end in unjustifiable, heartbreaking tragedy for a Black individual, their family, and their community. We must stop this, and each of us has a role in doing so.

We affirm our agreement with the NASP position statement, and encourage you to explore your role in contributing to reversing systemic racism and inequities in our nation. This role is especially critical given our roles and responsibilities as professionals who are charged with shaping future generations. This point is clearly articulated through the following excerpt from a recent [EdWeek](#) article, by Madeline Will, which details an interview with a 6-7th grade teacher from Detroit about the role for teachers in showing up for Black students:

Harris, the Detroit teacher, said it's the responsibility of all educators to "adopt an anti-racist approach" and amplify the voices of the marginalized in their classrooms. To start the conversation, he said, teachers should ask their students, from kindergarten on up, two basic questions: Is this fair? And how does this make you feel?

"Teachers cannot be silent during this time," Harris said. "Teachers have to take a stand. Students are absorbing this, [and] they're going to ask themselves later on in life or even now, 'What was my teacher doing during this time?'"

Further, we know that many resources are circulating to facilitate your personal commitment to being anti-racist as well as your obligation to facilitating an anti-racist education for the students and staff in the schools in which you work. In searching through the many resources, we have selected two curated lists that are being shared via google drive, both of which undergo frequent updating. The first is a toolkit offered by the Chicago Public Schools; it contains resources ready for use in classroom teaching and reflection. The second offers a wide variety of options for us all to learn about and engage in anti-racism. We hope that you find them useful, and welcome your recommendations to add to our suggestions.

In closing, be assured that our school psychology program and the entire Neag School of Education is committed to an active role in combating inequities. We will work together to foster an emotionally and physically safe environment to engage in critical learning from and discussion with each other, and look forward to the opportunity to connect on recommendations going forward. We welcome any and all thoughts for engaging in this essential work for ourselves, our program, and our university.

Right now, please take care of yourselves and each other during this time. The [statement](#) by APA President Sandra L. Shullman aptly summarizes the critical need for self-care and connection during this time: *“The American Psychological Association urges those who are experiencing trauma in the aftermath of these tragedies to practice self-care. Connect with family, friends and other community support people, talk about your feelings and limit your exposure and that of your children to news media and viral videos. Seek professional help if you need it.”*

Please know that we are here for you as needed – just reach out to let us know how we can connect with you.

Most Sincerely,

Melissa, Sandy, Tamika, and Lisa

Resources:

“Say Their Names” Toolkit

Curated by Chicago Public Schools Department of Social Science and Civic Engagement to help foster productive conversations about race and civil disobedience, materials include “suggestions and strategies for educators and parents on having conversations with young people in school and at home about race, racism, racial violence, understanding biases, and how to take action for racial justice.”

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eNpj8hR7q_XZljgcC8XM5oZVUA72_h51HmNH0FCLO14/preview?pru=AAABcpk6TOU*CT8K3g_krTOH1S3aTjyoRw#

Anti-Racist Resource Guide

Curated by Victoria Alexander, a doctoral student in higher education and student affairs at the University of Maryland, the guide is intended to be shared widely “as a resource for anyone looking to broaden their understanding of anti-racism and get involved to combat racism, specifically as it relates to anti-Blackness and police violence. Within this guide, please find a variety of resources to explore practical ways to understand, explain, and solve seemingly intractable problems of racial inequity, white supremacy, police violence, and injustice.”

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1a-lzdtxOIWuzYNGqwlYwxMWADtZ6vJGCpKhtJHHrS54/mobilebasic>

6/5 White Fragility - Starting Conversations on Racism

12:00pm - 1:--pm

Are you struggling with how to start conversations on racism? Are you looking for ways to be part of the solution? Join us for a discussion on exploring whiteness and how to begin to take action as a white person in response to the calls from people of color to make meaningful change.

Meeting Link:

<https://uconn-cmr.webex.com/uconn-cmr/j.php?MTID=mc77b9caf3c0449cd1f8199e770bd6435>

Password: hEuvaWw6n52

Join by phone: 415-655-0002

Access Code: 161 512 0375

Co-sponsored with the Rainbow Center, Asian American Cultural Center, African American Cultural Center, and the Puerto Rican Latin American Cultural Center.