

## SCRA CALL TO ACTION ON ANTI-BLACKNESS

Please sign off in support of our [call to action!](#)

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## LETTER OF LOVE AND SUPPORT TO BLACK MEMBERS OF SCRA

Dear Community,

**We are African, Caribbean, and Black psychologists, community practitioners, activists, and members of the global community of people of African descent.** We write to express our solidarity, love, and prayers for safety to all Black people during this time. It is hard to reconcile that in the midst of the [United Nations declared Decade for People of African Descent](#) (2015 - 2024), our communities are still left to fight for our humanity, our lives, and some semblance of peace in white settler states such as the United States and Canada.

The most recent acts of brutal police violence that resulted in the filmed death of yet another Black person comes over 300 years after South Carolina created the first publicly funded police force - the slave patrols, “which were intended to 1) chase down, apprehend, and return runaway slaves to their owners; (2) provide a form of organized terror to deter slave revolts; and, (3) maintain a form of discipline for slave-workers who violated rules” ([Harriot, 2020](#)).

To understand our present, we must understand our past and the systemic nature of the racism Black people are confronted with daily in North America, and around the world. Racism is wrought into the foundations and the fabric of America, and anti-Black racism is quite possibly one of its most violent forms. In this, we want to acknowledge and memorialize all of the Black people lost to vigilante violence, lynching, police brutality, enslavement, and other forms of anti-Black violence over the centuries since contact with white colonists. They are our ancestors now and they walk with us as the battle for our lives and freedom from unjust persecution wages on.

We know from our daily interactions with White establishments and institutions that this violence has been rooted in colonial structures, white settler culture and ways of thinking that are deeply ingrained. The issues and the pain are not new for us, they are part of our intergenerational and community trauma. In this moment, we are joined in protest against anti-Black violence by Black communities beyond North America, including but not limited to, Germany, England, Ireland, Australia, and South Africa. For

that is the power of our movement. It is global in scale, both historically and contemporarily.

To everyone feeling stress, anger, sadness, and grief, we share your feelings and pain. The rage over the disrespect, devaluation, and disregard for Black life is valid, legitimate, understandable, human, and justified. There is no “right” way to protest a system that loots our communities and our lives every day ([Noah, 2020](#)). Our collective mourning and our collective rage are revolutionary acts, as they make us truly and unapologetically human.

While the inability to mourn and grieve communally due to COVID-19 lockdown and social distancing measures make this time exceptionally challenging. Know that our thoughts are with you.

May the Creator and the ancestors guide you and keep you in these times.

In solidarity.

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**We, a group of non-Black people of colour and White people in SCRA,** acknowledge the grief, pain and emotional heaviness of heart and suffering that our Black communities are experiencing. We will not place the burden of responsibility on our Black peers to educate us, to call us in, or to hold our hand in the undoing of racial violence, racism and anti-Blackness that is rooted in colonialism and the coloniality power that continues to other and dehumanize people. Therefore, we focus the remainder of this letter on shifting the emotional and actual labor of this work to non-Black people within SCRA and Community Psychology. Non-Black members of SCRA must step up to fight white supremacy and anti-Blackness within our organization. There is no other option. Below we have outlined a number of ways we can begin working on our ingrained white supremacist logic within ourselves and our organization.

*\*NOTE\* the language we are using around black and non-black people (including non-black people of colour and white people) may not translate to or feel representative of contexts and communities around the globe, that said anti-blackness is global and we are fighting to address it in all of its manifestations.*

## LETTER OF ACTION TO NON-BLACK PEOPLE OF COLOUR IN SCRA

**We are a group of non-Black POC who are members of SCRA.** We know that in our hearts, we are passionately dedicated to working with the aims to empower communities and the people that we love. Racism is not new to us. Many of us have faced the brutality at the hands of the police. Many of our children have been separated from their families and dehumanized in cages. Many of us have been brutalized by border patrols and ICE officers. We know we have shared trauma, generational trauma. We know that many of the countries that we have come from have been ensued and incited with the violence caused by the hands of U.S. imperialism. We know racism. We know white supremacy. We understand that white people have taken our lands and looted our resources in the name of colonization. **Yet, this does not mean we do not share the responsibility of perpetuating white supremacy. We are not absolved from the horrors of anti-Blackness. As much as we should acknowledge our pain, we also must acknowledge how we continue to cause pain to our Black siblings.** As non-Black POC, many of whom are white-passing, we commit ourselves to doing the work of interrogating whiteness, colorism, and the pigmentocracy in our communities of color

## LETTER OF ACTION TO WHITE PEOPLE IN SCRA

**We are white community psychologists, community practitioners, activists, and allies in the racial justice movement.** We are writing this letter based on our witness of anti-Blackness, and from experiences shared from our Black colleagues in SCRA about their own experiences of anti-Blackness. It serves as an alibi for anti-Blackness. White silence is both an act of compliance and violence in the face of the every day, ongoing, and intergenerational trauma experienced by Black communities. It is upon the builders of this racial system (white people) to dismantle the system of racial violence. We will not be silent and we will work actively, intentionally, and in solidarity with our black colleagues to acknowledge, educate ourselves and other white people, and dismantle the anti-Blackness in Community Psychology and SCRA. Community Psychology is in a state of emergency, we are becoming in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King in his 1968 speech to the American Psychological Association, a discipline that is “maladjusted” to the witnessing of recurring racial violence and the institutional apathy in acknowledging its impact on communities of color, especially Black communities. If we do not attend to this state of emergency we will watch the disappearing of future generations of Black scholars in a field that has not made

institutional, scholarly, and intentional space for these voices, experiences, knowledge and realities.

White supremacy plays out in the ways that we continue to do an appalling job of attracting and retaining Black students, scholars, and practitioners in Community Psychology programs and SCRA, while over-researching Black communities. We cannot continue to exist as a field if this is how we operate. In this way, we continue to maintain systems of anti-Black racism that deter and push out Black scholars from training in, and identifying with the field of Community Psychology. White Community Psychologists have a role to play in the labour required to dismantle anti-Blackness to make SCRA an anti-racist organization and Community Psychology an anti-racist field.

**THEREFORE, AS NON-BLACK POC AND WHITE PEOPLE IN SCRA, WE PLEDGE TO:**

1. *Acknowledge that we perpetuate white supremacy when we do not interrogate and actively work to challenge whiteness and our proximity to racial privilege.*
2. *Hold our own accountable when we observe anti-Blackness within our circles. We must be outspoken and condemn these toxic behaviors. **To be complacent in this means you are complacent in anti-Blackness and a co-conspirator for white supremacy.***
3. *Teach our brown and white colleagues about what it means to fight anti-Blackness in our organization. Black people cannot be the only ones who speak out at the risk of jeopardizing their careers and financial wellbeing. We also must take that risk.*
4. *Create and re-orient opportunities and financial resources for Black people to advance within the field and in their community work. We will do all that we can to ensure that our Black members have financial support. It's not enough to say that we support our Black colleagues and that we care about diversity. They must feel supported. They must feel empowered and we must do everything we can to move forward in Black liberation.*

Above all, we shouldn't expect our Black siblings to do all the labor of racial justice. We must also do our part. We must center Black voices and ensure that they are heard and supported at every level of our professional, political, and personal lives. Being anti-racist must be action and not vague words of support.

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## OUR [DEMANDS](#) TO SCRA AND SCRA MEMBERS:

We have split our extensive demands into four different categories that name tangible ways SCRA can develop and advance an anti-racist agenda and make contributions to Black communities with tangible material implications. We want to reiterate that it is integral that **\*the labour required to meet these demands NOT be put on Black people in SCRA. Non-black POC and White people need to step up\***

### 1) **Put tangible resources back into Black communities:**

- Explicitly partner with and support Black led racial justice/community organizations. For any and all racial justice oriented work that solicits the expertise of a professional engaged in racial justice and anti-racist work *that professional will be compensated financially for their time and labor* (and any other consulting or "guidance/help" the organization needs);
- Fund critical race work done by Black scholars and scholars of colour in CP.
- Develop and fund a taskforce to find, support, and promote the work of Black CPs. In addition, we ask for a commitment to ensuring that the flagship journal AJCP publish at least one special issue on racial justice and anti-racist scholarship.
- Direct funds and resources to Black communities through mutual aid collectives, bail funds for incarcerated Black people and to Black communities hit hard by COVID-19; and
- Explicitly denounce police brutality, police violence, and all other forms of state-sanctioned control and executions of Black people globally.

### 2) **Acknowledge our complicity and maintenance of [white supremacy](#) and white supremacy culture in SCRA:**

- Develop an actionable statement from SCRA EC leadership, including the Executive Director, that addresses anti-Black racism and **how they, as a body who represents SCRA, are going lead and support its members in dismantling it;**
- Attend to the language in CP as 'marginalized in Psychology and acknowledge the power and privilege many of us hold; and
- Believe our Black peers - believing their experiences of racism within our field, in our programs, in their interactions with us - center these voices and BELIEVE THEM. If our colleagues talk about harm they have

experienced within SCRA and CP, value that testimony as legitimate and valid evidence that we must self-correct and do the intentional work necessary to address the harms we have caused.

**3) Develop a deep and critical understanding of anti-Blackness and White supremacy:**

- Actively reading about anti-Black racism and citing Black scholars, theorists, poets, activists, etc. for their intellectual contributions;
- Develop our CP programs, curriculums, and funding to build towards anti-racist practice. Actively dismantle structures of anti-Blackness in each of our programs (develop tools that can be used across programs to build capacities of faculties and students to actively do this);
- Integrate critical race & ethnic studies, Black feminist theory, and decolonial perspectives as part of the core Community Psychology curricula. Theories of empowerment, sense of community etc., do not speak to BIPOC and are rooted in whiteness; and
- Develop and share training on white privilege and White supremacy.

**4) Engage in collective action to dismantle anti-Blackness and white supremacy in SCRA and Community Psychology:**

- Actively cultivating an anti-racist praxis in SCRA by revising the Strategic Plan to make explicit the importance of racial justice, anti-racist practice/training and work to deconstruct whiteness and anti-Blackness. This is not to be lumped into "diversity and inclusion" work (diversity is not a metaphor for anti-racism and work centered on dismantling whiteness and anti-Blackness within systems), and needs to address anti-racist practice in terms of leadership, policies, decisions, labour, and the voices centered;
- This also means revising the Community Psychology Core Competencies (Dalton & Wolf, 2012) to reflect the importance of developing racial consciousness, racial literacy and a critical structural analysis of race/institutional racism and anti-Blackness. Anti-racist practice needs to be a core competency of our field;
- Create a tangible process for holding the association (and our relationship to APA) accountable when complicit in anti-Black racism;
- Give up power. Step down and away from leadership as white people. We do not need to take up space and be centered in all spaces. Make space for Black people and people of colour to assume leadership roles;

- Nurture and support Black scholars and Black scholarship - Intentionally build Black scholars' theories, voices, and cite Black scholars' work as CP knowledge;
- Hire, promote, acknowledge, award, and reward Black scholars and Black scholarship;
- Critically think about structures of power and how we put the burden of research on poor Black communities that we do not work to invest time or resources into;
- Seriously question and consider whether or not SCRA should be a part of APA, if APA as an organization is itself rooted in white supremacy. Have a broad and intentional conversation with our membership about being a part of APA.
- Continue to build this list through your own labour and critical development as anti-racist scholars and practitioners.

We ask that the SCRA EC respond to our open letter by June 19th, 2020 with a timeline proposed to address the outlined demands. Please send to the full listserv. We await your response.

**IF SCRA WANTS THE CONTINUED SUPPORT AND MEMBERSHIP OF RACIAL JUSTICE-MINDED BLACK AND NON-BLACK FOLKS, THE ORGANIZATION NEEDS TO STEP UP AND THERE IS NO TIME LIKE THE CURRENT MOMENT.**

**If you would like to add your name to this open letter** and wish to hold SCRA leadership accountable to meeting these demands, **please click [here](#).**

**In Solidarity (a living list),**

Dominique Thomas  
Ciann Wilson  
Debbie Ojeda-Leitner  
Susie Paterson  
Natalie Kivell  
Geri Palmer  
Jessica Fernandez  
Nellie Tran  
Sara Ojeda-Leitner  
Ramy Barhouche  
Leigh Rauk

Christopher Sonn  
Scot Evans  
Julia Siwierka  
Keyondra Brooks  
Brittany Spadafore  
Samson Tse  
Nicole Burns  
Charlie Davis  
Kimberly Jewers-Dailey  
Ceilidh Harrison  
Sarah Ranco  
Kai Reimer-Watts  
Kirstie Taylor  
Katie Cook  
Hana Shahin  
Allana Zuckerman  
Megan Strazds-Esenbergs  
Brianna Hunt  
Kaylagh Vanwyck  
Ann Marie Beals  
Rajni Sharma  
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Vernita Perkins  
Sharmalene Mendis-Millard  
Lauren Munro  
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