

Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) Statement on the American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation (APA CoA) temporarily suspending enforcement of accreditation standards related to diversity in recruitment, admissions, and retention

We are deeply concerned by the decision of the APA Commission on Accreditation (CoA) to temporarily suspend enforcement of specific accreditation standards related to diversity in recruitment, admissions, and retention. While we understand that legal pressures—including federal mandates and the current Administration’s interpretation of the 2023 Supreme Court ruling in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*—have prompted this decision, we are alarmed by the potential consequences for students, faculty, the field of psychology, and our communities. Community psychology is guided by principles of social justice, respect for diversity, accountability to communities, and the pursuit of systemic change. These values are not abstract. They shape how we train students, conduct research, support one another, and respond to moments like this.

Many of our members are based in APA-accredited programs or institutions where APA accreditation of these programs plays a central role in defining and defending the quality of our training. Some of us are based in institutions that are not APA-accredited but are still deeply shaped by the cultural and professional norms APA helps establish. In times like these, APA accreditation standards have offered a crucial counterweight in institutions where diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts face political resistance, budgetary neglect, or outright hostility. To suspend standards related to diversity in recruitment, admissions, and retention, even temporarily, removes a vital protection that many students, faculty, and programs depend on.

We understand that CoA, as a federal contractor, is operating under constraint. However, we must be clear: just because something is written into an executive order or a guidance letter does not make it lawful. Legal scholars and civil rights attorneys have raised serious concerns that the recent federal guidance—particularly the Department of Education’s February 2025 “Dear Colleague” letter—vastly overreaches the scope of the Supreme Court’s decision. The Court’s opinion placed limits on how race can be considered in admissions decisions, but it did not outlaw diversity or diversity-related training as a goal.

The APA’s existing diversity-related competencies and ethical guidelines remain in place and unchanged. Yet, we are witnessing an emerging trend of psychology programs that reflects repressive legalism, where the threat of action changes our behaviors long before any formal requirement exists: data from 70 Directors of APA-accredited programs shows a climate of fear and preemptive withdrawal in anticipation of threats that have not materialized into law. Institutions are removing DEI content from websites, disbanding committees, and adjusting syllabi. Committees are being renamed or dissolved because of uncertainty, intimidation, and risk aversion. We must recognize and collectively resist these actions.

These higher bodies of authority are acquiescing to temporary political pressure and thereby eschewing their responsibility to work for the safety of historically marginalized students and faculty. However, this temporary political pressure does not render us powerless. We must step up and hold each other accountable. All programs can establish channels of accountability that are grounded in principles of equity and justice, drawn from the understanding and wisdom of those most impacted. The field of psychology has long been mired in a crisis of representation, grounded in the experiences of ~5% of the world’s population or less, by some estimates. To

adhere to the promises of statements like the 2021 APA Apology to People of Color, holding ourselves accountable must not fail - now, more than ever. Whatever is rendered invisible, we will lose.

We urge our members to hold their programs and institutions to the values that we share.

- Ensure that work is not quietly dismantled under the false pretense of legal necessity.
- Ask critical questions about how commitments to equity are being upheld in practice.
- Call out efforts to redirect funding from equity-centered initiatives.
- Support structures for historically marginalized members of the university community.
- Advocate for transparency.
- Make certain that your program's values are reflected in actions.
- Create platforms for students to share their perspectives and act on them.
- Form coalitions for accountability measures made up of both faculty and students.
- Resist institutional silencing and the erosion of ethical commitments under pressure.
- Create open and secure channels of communication to voice concerns related to equity, inclusion, and diversity, along with procedures to address them.

In alignment with these calls to action, the Executive Committee of the Society for Community Research and Action commits itself to improving transparency with our membership as a first step towards seeking accountability for our adherence to our values and principles. We advocate for a similar commitment to transparency to come from the APA as a whole. We will increase channels of communication with impacted students and faculty, and facilitate regular opportunities for input and feedback. We will expand our networks, and continue to share the importance of collective efforts towards social justice, respect for diversity, accountability to communities, and the pursuit of systemic change.

The power of this poem captures the urgency for our action, the necessity of defending our values, and the call to resist.

when the wolves came a' circling
the bison didn't run away
they formed a ring
and stood their ground.
if they run
the wolves blood-thirst
and attack.
so predators pace
showing menacing smiles
darting in close
seeking to startle,
and the bison stand.
after awhile
the wolves wander away.
among humans
there are no wolves,
no bison.
that is not our way.
when we run
we escape our humanity
and they escape theirs.

to stand is better
and wait for the blow
as if to say
"I will not escape you
and you will not escape me."

-Emmanuel-Satyha Gray

Like the bison, standing our ground is an important form of resistance. The 1960s southern Black resistance in the United States used the violence of the state as a tool, revealing it to the world. In their assertion of their humanity, they forced those witnessing, the many millions of white Americans and those abroad, to consider whether complacency with state violence did not threaten their humanity too. In our current times, resistance will still include the revelation of harms perpetrated, and for this we all have a role to play in making sure such revelations remain visible. The efforts to eliminate procedural attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion requires greater attention and energy to be directed towards ensuring that those who would reveal the harms perpetrated can hold us and our institutions accountable. Our humanity is what is at stake.

We are heartened by the groundswell of efforts taking place to resist injustice, to recommit to our values, and to protect equity and justice within higher education. We support these efforts. The strength of our field does not come from complacency. It comes from collective action, ethical clarity, and sustained engagement. The principles that guide community psychology were built for moments like this. We call on all of us to do this work together.