



October 21, 2020

As a scholarly society dedicated to higher education as a field of study and to serving the public good, we are compelled to respond to efforts by President Trump to “cease and desist” federal funding for training on “critical race theory,” (CRT) “White privilege,” or any training that suggests that the United States or any race is “inherently racist.” We are deeply troubled by this directive and the Executive Order that followed on September 22 because they censor and suppress scholarship. The Trump administration disagrees with these ideas based on a blatant mischaracterization of a body of peer-reviewed scholarship that includes key contributions from our Association members.

The empirical research of our members has consistently shown that race is deeply woven into the fabric of our current educational system, facilitating racial subordination reproduced through normal operations, often without regard to intent. The same body of research has also revealed a consistent pattern whereby the educational system, shaped by political, economic, and social forces privileges White people at the expense of racially minoritized groups. Our members confronted difficulty making sense of the full body of research until they began to draw from critical race theory. This theory enabled researchers to link their findings to more deeply rooted problems associated with historical subordination and subsequently, to provide a transformative vision of the long civil rights movement to advance institutional change in keeping with our most cherished American values of equality and fairness.

As a scholarly society, we are committed to open inquiry and diversity in point of view and perspective in scholarly deliberation so our members have considered seriously a wide range of other theories and conceptual frameworks. To this end, the literature in our field has also shown that competing explanations that rely on a narrative of color-evasiveness and racial progress simply fail to illuminate the totality of the empirically documented patterns, which continues to mount in our field’s top peer-reviewed journals. Instead, color-evasiveness has led to the conclusion that

racism is solely the product of individual attitudes or decisions that distort ostensible race-neutral processes and institutions. Certainly, such a flawed narrative and perspective also fail to anticipate and adequately explain the epic failures we witnessed this past spring and summer and that continue as more lives are unnecessarily lost. Such failures include the administrative mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic and global health crisis which has had disproportionate impacts on Indigenous, Black, and Latinx communities, as well as the systemic use of lethal force by police and criminalization of Black bodies in educational institutions and the public sphere.

Since our scholarship is intentionally designed to inform practice, the insights gained through our research naturally make their way into developing training to remedy racism. We agree with [AERA's Statement in Support of Anti-Racist Education](#) issued on September 24, 2020 that we need more and better education about race and racism without the imposition of a federal government to censor, distort, or otherwise deliberately miscommunicate in ways that undermine our capacity to openly and honestly share and apply our scholarship.

Accordingly, ASHE will continue to:

1. support and protect the First Amendment rights to engage in discourse
2. support the academic freedom of our members
3. support scholars who use CRT, teach about white privilege and advance our understanding of ways in which our universities must change to be anti-racist

Our nation is at a critical juncture in addressing the present impact of the longstanding history of racial subordination and white supremacy. Decision-making based on a shallow and politically driven analysis of a serious body of scholarship that has been rigorously examined threatens true racial progress. Findings from our research unequivocally support taking consequential steps to affirmatively undo the well-documented history of state sponsored racial discrimination and violence. Moving the needle toward ending racism will require national leadership to engage meaningfully with not only empirical evidence but also with recognized experts in our field as partners instead of as adversaries whose scholarship and ideas the administration is dangerously seeking to ban. As an Association, we have members who have and are currently supporting these efforts and will continue to do so.

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Thank you to Mitchell Chang (UCLA) for drafting this statement, Liliانا Garces (UT Austin) and Lori Patton Davis (Ohio State) for providing feedback, as well as to the ASHE Position Taking Committee for their review and recommendation of this statement. The [ASHE Board of Directors](#) unanimously approved this statement at the October 20, 2020 meeting.

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### **About ASHE's Position Taking Policy and Process**

The [ASHE Position Taking Policy](#) was adopted in July 2013.

Members of the Position Taking Committee committee are:

- Joy Blanchard (Chair), Louisiana State University
- Michael Brick, Institute for Higher Education Policy
- Deborah Carter, Claremont Graduate University
- Susan Marine, Merrimack College
- D-L Stewart, Colorado State University

Questions about the ASHE Position Taking process can be directed to ASHE Executive Director Jason P. Guilbeau at [jason@ashe.ws](mailto:jason@ashe.ws).

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