



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

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Dear Ms. Ashwini, K.P.,

On behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA), this letter serves as a comprehensive response to the United Nations' Call for Input on Intersectionality from a Racial Justice Perspective. As a leading scientific and professional organization representing more than 146,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, and students worldwide, the APA is committed to advancing racial justice and embedding intersectionality as a core framework across psychological science, policy, and practice. This response outlines the APA's ongoing efforts to address systemic inequities through an intersectional lens and highlights key initiatives aligned with the UN's objectives.

APA's Commitment to Intersectionality and Racial Justice

Throughout its 130-year history, psychology has been complicit in perpetuating oppressive ideologies, reinforcing the belief in human hierarchy through research and practice at times rooted in eugenics. October 2021, APA issued a formal [Resolution on Apology to People of Color for APA's Role in Promoting, Perpetuating, and Failing to Challenge Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Human Hierarchy in the U.S.](#) (2021a). In order to repair and reconcile this historical harm, the apology was followed by the [Racial Equity Action Plan](#) (2022a), which included a commitment to over 50 priority actions aimed at transforming the discipline—promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion across research, education, and clinical practice.

A core aspect of this transformation is the adoption of intersectionality as a guiding principle. Intersectionality recognizes that systems of oppression—such as racism, sexism, classism, and ableism—interact to produce distinct experiences of inequality. Understanding how overlapping social identities impact people's lives is essential to achieving racial justice. APA's policies and actions reflect this intersectional approach and align with the UN's call to identify and address the compounded impacts of discrimination.

How APA Addresses Intersectionality Across Key Areas

APA integrates an intersectional perspective into its work by addressing how various personal identities intersect with race to shape experiences of discrimination and inequity. The following outlines our efforts across core domains:

Race and Gender: Individuals at the intersection of race and gender face unique forms of bias and violence. The APA's Resolution on Gender Identity Change Efforts opposes harmful practices targeting gender-diverse individuals, particularly people of color, while promoting affirmative care. APA recognizes that girls and women

are often denied the right to safety via intersecting experiences of discrimination. [The Resolution on Supporting Psychologists' Education and Research About, And Advocacy Against Violations of Girls' and Women's Human Rights Globally](#) (2024a) recommends national and international research on intersectionalities of different cultural factors impacting the realization of girls' and women's human rights. Additionally, the [Resolution on the Role of Psychology and the American Psychological Association in Dismantling Systemic Racism Against People of Color in the United States](#) (2021b) supports efforts to dismantle gendered racism and protect the rights of those facing intersecting forms of oppression.

Race and Sexual Orientation: LGBTQ+ people of color encounter compounded forms of discrimination across social, legal, and healthcare systems. The [Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons](#) (2021c) recognizes that people of color who are members of sexual minority groups may experience racism in sexual minority communities as well as heterosexism in racial and ethnic communities; thus, they may feel excluded from or be mistreated by multiple communities. Practitioners must strive to concurrently address racism, heterosexism, sexism, ageism, ableism, and other structural oppressions, recognizing economic, environmental, and socio-political factors.

Race and Disability: People of color with disabilities face overlapping barriers to healthcare, employment, and social inclusion. The APA's [Resolution in Support of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (2014) emphasizes the need to address these dual forms of marginalization through accessible mental health services and inclusive policy reform. APA's [Guidelines for Assessment and Intervention with Persons with Disabilities](#) (2022b) states that to work effectively with clients with disabilities, psychologists should strive to consider how a client's disability-related issues interact with other cultural and social identities and experiences as well as the potential combined effects of ableism and discrimination on the individual's psychological well-being. APA also relies on frameworks such as the [Accessibility and Inclusion Maturity Model](#) (2024b) which recommends universal design and inclusive design; methods that promote equal access, inclusivity, and participation for all people.

Race and Socioeconomic Status: Structural racism and economic inequality are intertwined, with people of color disproportionately experiencing poverty and its associated harms. The [Resolution on Poverty and Socioeconomic Status](#) (2022c) calls for policies that reduce inequities and address mental health impacts through evidence-based, community-driven interventions.

Race and Immigration Status: Immigrants and refugees of color are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion. APA's [Policy Statement on Immigrant Health](#) (2024c) supports culturally responsive and evidence-based interventions as well as leveraging research to support immigrant health.

Race and Age: Older adults of color experience compounded discrimination rooted in both ageism and racism. The [Resolution on Ageism](#) (2020) advocates for policies and research that protect aging populations while recognizing their unique challenges.

Race and Indigenous Identity: Indigenous communities face persistent structural inequities stemming from colonization and cultural erasure. The [Report on an Offer of Apology, on behalf of the American Psychological Association, to First Peoples in the United States](#) (2023) emphasizes the need to protect Indigenous rights and advance culturally appropriate psychological practices.

APA's Actions to Advance Intersectionality and Racial Justice

APA has undertaken several concrete actions to institutionalize intersectionality within its work and address the systemic inequities faced by people with intersecting marginalized identities. These initiatives span research, clinical practice, policy advocacy, organizational reform, and international collaboration:

Research and Education: The association is promoting intersectional frameworks in research to better understand the multiple systems of oppression that shape human experiences. The [APA Multicultural Guidelines](#) (2017) recognize limitations in research such as non-representative normative methodologies and the promotion of intersectional frameworks in psychological research studies.

Clinical Practice: APA is committed to ensuring culturally responsive care accounts for intersecting identities. This includes the development of clinical guidelines that explicitly address the needs of clients who experience multiple forms of discrimination. The [Clinical Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\) in Adults](#) (2017) acknowledges the importance of intersectionality, recognizing that individuals' experiences of trauma and recovery are influenced by overlapping social identities such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status. This approach emphasizes culturally responsive care that considers these intersecting factors to provide effective, personalized treatment. Through models such as the [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Framework](#) (2021d), APA provides a foundation for clinicians to address systemic barriers and deliver care that reflects the complex realities of clients' lives.

APA's [Resolution on Advancing Health Equity in Psychology](#) (2021e) and [Policy Statement on Psychology's Role in Advancing Population Health](#) (2022d) emphasize the influence of social determinants—such as socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and gender—that shape health outcomes. These concepts align with an intersectional perspective and highlight the necessity of addressing health disparities through culturally sensitive care and research.

Policy Advocacy: APA actively engages in policy advocacy to address intersectional inequities at local, national, and global levels. For example, the [APA Resolution on Psychology's Role in Addressing the Impact of, and Change Required With, Police Use of Excessive Force Against People of Color and Other Marginalized Communities in the United States](#) (2022e) calls for reforms that address the disproportionate harm faced by people of color and those with additional marginalized identities. APA also advocates for intersectional approaches in [health equity and social justice](#) (2024d), [mental health workforce diversity](#) (2024e), [Native American youth mental health](#) (2024f), [mental health crisis among Black men and boys](#) (2024g), and many other policy arenas.

Organizational Reform: Internally, we are transforming our governance structures to reflect our commitment to intersectionality and ensure that the organization's decision-making bodies are representative of diverse identities and perspectives. APA has instituted accountability measures such as a [Diversity Matrix](#) (2025) to track progress on intersectional equity goals across the organization.

Cross-Sector Collaboration: Recognizing the global dimensions of racial justice, collaborations with international organizations allow us to promote intersectionality in psychological science and human rights. Through partnerships with bodies like the UN, the [Global Psychology Alliance](#) (n.d.), and the [National Academies Committee on Human Rights](#) (National Academies, n.d.) Forum for Attacks on Health Professionals, APA advocates for intersectional frameworks that address global inequities and promote collective action toward justice.

We acknowledge that advancing racial justice requires an unwavering commitment to intersectionality. By addressing the interconnected systems of oppression that shape people's lives, our aim is to foster a more just and equitable society. The organization remains dedicated to working alongside the United Nations and other global partners to dismantle systemic barriers and promote the human rights and dignity of all individuals.

The policies and strategies outlined above reflect APA's commitment to integrating intersectionality across psychological science, policy advocacy, clinical practice, and organizational reform. We look forward to continued collaboration with the UN and other stakeholders to advance racial justice and intersectional equity worldwide. If we can provide any further information or other assistance, please feel welcome to contact Jagruti Bhakta (jbhakta@apa.org) or Gabriel Twose (gtwose@apa.org).

Sincerely,



Maysa Akbar, PhD

Chief Diversity Officer | Chief of Psychology in the Public Interest
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