



**AMERICAN COUNSELING
ASSOCIATION**
counseling.org

**Governing Council Meeting
June 17, 2020
Conference Call**

Minutes

The ACA Governing Council conference call meeting was called to order on Wednesday, June 17, 2020 at 6:05 pm ET. President Heather Trepal presided. Governing Council members present for all or part of the meeting were as follows:


Heather Trepal, President
Sue Pressman, President-elect
Simone Lambert, Past President
Thelma Duffey, Treasurer
Kathy Ybanez-Llorente, Parliamentarian
Judy Daniels, Process Observer
Richard Yep, CEO, Ex-officio
Wendy Killam, Governing Council Representative, AADA
Donna Gibson, Governing Council Representative, AARC
Hayley Stulmaker, Governing Council Representative, ACAC
Monica Osburn, Governing Council Representative, ACCA
Mark Scholl, Governing Council Representative, AHC
Jane Rheineck, Governing Council Representative, ALGBTIC
Elizabeth O'Brien, Governing Council Representative, ASERVIC
Jonathan Orr, Governing Council Representative, ASGW
Leigh Falls Holman, Governing Council Representative, IAAOC
Paul Peluso, Governing Council Representative, IAMFC
Dannette Berksteiner, Governing Council Representative, MGCA
Seneka Arrington, Governing Council Representative, NECA
Jason Marotzke, Governing Council Representative, Midwest Region
Summer Reiner, Governing Council Representative, North Atlantic Region
Melanie J. Drake Wallace, Governing Council Representative, Southern Region
Elizabeth Forsyth, Governing Council Representative, Western Region

Stella Beatriz Kerl-McClain, Governing Council Representative, ACC; Marty Jencius, Governing Council Representative, ACES; Carlos Hipolito-Delgado, Governing Council Representative, AMCD; Paige Nicole Dunlap, Governing Council Representative, ARCA; Edil Torres Rivera, Governing Council Representative, CSJ; Lisa Severy, Governing Council Representative, NCDA; Laura Pignato, Governing Council Student Representative were not present.

Others in attendance at the meeting as staff or observers include:

S. Kent Butler, ACA President-elect-elect

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Cirecie West-Olatunji, ACA Treasurer 2020-2021
Dave Jackson, Chief Financial Officer
Natasha Rankin, Chief Operations Officer
Tiffany Erickson, Chief Communications and Engagement Officer
Angela Thompson, Chief Human Resources and Diversity Officer
Lynn Linde, Chief Knowledge and Learning Officer
Brian Banks, Director, Government Affairs and Public Policy
Amy Smith, Governance Administrator
Brandi McIntyre, Governance and Executive Office Manager

Welcome and Chair's Remarks

President Trepal welcomed everyone to the call and thanked them for participating on such short notice.

Approval of Agenda

The two agenda items to be discussed are to review and consider adoption of the draft ACA Anti-Violence Statement and Action Plan.

- It was moved by P. Peluso and seconded by S. Pressman to approve the meeting agenda as presented.


MOTION CARRIED

ACA Anti-Racism Statement

President Trepal gave some background on the statement. On May 18th we released a statement against police violence and since that time, with recent events as well as feedback from leadership, members and the Governing Council convened a work group to work on a second statement. We reached out to the President of AMCD, CSJ, and SAIGE as well as our Human Rights Committee. This group worked for the past seven days. The members of that group were: Judy Daniels, Sam Steen, Kaye Cole, Shawn Spurgeon, Meaghan McBride, and Gargi Roysircar-Sodowsky. We have created a statement to present to the Board for consideration of adoption.

The ACA Anti-Racism Statement (as presented):

Racism, police brutality, systemic violence, and the dehumanizing forces of oppression, powerlessness, and White supremacy have eroded the very fabric of humanity which ideally binds our society together. Macrolevel systemic racism extends to disparities in institutional policies and procedures in healthcare, education, the judicial system, employment, sports and entertainment, and the brutal violence of law enforcement. These larger societal oppressions lead to inaccessibility to resources and social marginalization, which descend finally to individual racist attitudes, implicit biases, stereotypes, microaggressions, and even death. The ongoing and historical injustices are not acknowledged by those who want to be in power or protect their entitlements. Those who do acknowledge, do so reactively, temporarily, or superficially. There is no course of action for



change. Racism is often reframed as accidental, an unfortunate incident, or as the criminality of the victim.

Words cannot truly capture our feelings. We are angry, exhausted, grieving, suffering, furious, and in despair. The American Counseling Association mourns because of the pain and murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, and countless other Black/African Americans whose identities remain nameless. We stand in solidarity with our Black siblings in denouncing the historical legacy and destruction caused by institutionalized racism and violence perpetuated at the hands of law enforcement, the hatred bred of White supremacy, the deafening silence of dehumanizing and complicit inaction to address these systemic ills within our society. As counselors, we listen, we empathize, and agree with protestors that when absolute justice is established, peace will follow. Enough is enough, we cannot continue to watch fellow Black Americans being murdered and the very life force suffocated out of them.

The American Counseling Association is built on enduring values and a mission that promotes: Human dignity and diversity, respect, the attainment of a quality of life for all, empowerment, integrity, social justice advocacy, equity, and inclusion. These words become hollow and meaningless for our members and the counseling community when we remain silent and do not promote racial justice. Given the rapidly evolving double pandemic of COVID-19 and the continued exposure of Black people to institutionalized racism, ACA wants to be clear about where we stand and the ongoing actions we will take. As proactive leaders, counselors, mentors, supervisors, scholars, and trainers we will break away from this structure of racism trauma, and the violence born on the necks of Black people.

Our stance is: Black Lives Matter. We have a moral and professional obligation to infiltrate and deconstruct institutions which have historically been designed to benefit White America. These systems must be dismantled in order to level the playing field for Black communities. Allyship is not enough. We strive to create liberated spaces in the fight against White supremacy and the dehumanization of Black people. The burden of transgenerational trauma should not be shouldered by Black Americans even though they have remained resilient.

Additionally, all members must be willing to challenge these systems, but also confront one's own biases and racial worldview. Black lives are worthy. Black lives are valuable. Black lives are important. Black lives are beautiful.

A straw poll vote was done to see if the members of the Governing Council supported the statement and if they had any feedback. All members supported the statement, but some felt there could be some refinement. Comments include:

- Statement needs to be a bit leaner. The more we can, not just acknowledge what has happened and call attention to the atrocities, but move us forward into what we can and will do, the better we will be.

- The line “There is no course of action for change.” is troubling. The statement will come with a list of actions of what we will do. This could be tweaked in the statement. Another suggestion was to tag the preceding sentence “... superficially, resulting often in no course of action for change.”
- A suggestion was made to put “There is no course of action for change” as the last sentence in that paragraph and slightly change it to what we will do. “As an association, we will change the course of this or we will take action.”
- On the third paragraph, the sentence “These words become hollow and meaningless ...” these words become harmful, not just hollow and meaningless. It should be something stronger.
- Need to have a commitment of what we will do in the statement. Have the commitment line, then the stance.
- Mental health could be linked through the systematic oppression or part of what our mission is. We talk about our values or mission. Our mission includes providing quality care. We need to link why we are putting out this statement as a mental health association.
- Need to be cautious to **not** say “people of color are mentally ill”.
- Just because we are a counseling based organization, it doesn't mean we have to rationalize why we are putting out a statement because we are talking about human rights.
- The statement “Black lives are worthy. Black lives are valuable. Black lives are important. Black lives are beautiful.” is a little offensive because it seems like pandering.

It was moved by S. Pressman and seconded by M. Scholl to support President Trepal to make minor edits to the ACA Anti-Racism Statement based on feedback received from the Governing Council and distribute the statement broadly to ACA members and the general public.

➤ MOTION CARRIES

Draft Action Plan (as presented):

1. **Individual** - *addressing cultural blindspots, (counselors joining with local organizations that are fighting exclusion and marginalization; counselors listening to anti-racism podcasts; counselors joining online anti-racism conversation and action groups to process experiences, to enact, to support, to find resources.)*
 - *Non-black:*
 - *Black:*
2. **Community** - *Gatekeeping, Member Call out*
3. **Organizational** - *Informing CACREP; Teaching Standards; Social Justice*
 - *ACA: ACA will work to support and elevate the voice of its divisions, regions and partners. ACA will conduct a deep dive into its Bylaws, policies, procedures and practices related to institutional racism. This includes the vision, mission and core values. ACA will be transparent in the process and release actionable steps by _____.* Membership

will be updated on the process quarterly. (dashboard including data on updates?)


- *Ask the ethics committee to review contents within ethical codes to introduce new standard on addressing institutional racism and racial identification.*
 - *Divisions / Regions: ACA will support the divisions in their continued exploration of systemic and institutionalized racism in their governing documents, competencies, etc.*
 - *Committees: The ACA president instructs committee chairs in their charge to include looking at their focus in light of institutional racism*
 - *Other: ACA calls our partner organizations into this work*
- 4. Legislative** - *Capitol Hill, Working groups for hate crime law; informing law makers about the effects of trauma*
- *Local:*
 - *Regional:*
 - *National:*
- 5. Education** - *Training, Supervision. Are teaching and supervision geared to Black students whom we proactively recruit to diversify our student body? We are teaching and supervising Black students using pedagogy designed for White students. Thus Black students are again marginalized. White supervisors need to respond to dyadic racial dynamics in supervision and counselor-client.)*
- 6. Clients** - *Mental health services to children, families and communities. Those who we serve in schools and communities. Address the effects of intergenerational racism trauma.*
- *School Counselors:*
 - *Mental health counselors:*
- 7. Support** - *BLM, BEAM, Reclaim the Block, NAACP LDF, ACLU (add links).*
- *Local: Black owned business directory.*
 - *National:*
 - *Global:*

A roll call was done for feedback on the Draft Action Plan. The feedback included:

- Happy that we are making progress and moving along. Felt that this was a start, but needed a little more work. A fluid process that we begin that we continue to work on and develop and look at this as a learning organizational document.
- Need a more succinct plan made in each area. Things that we can actually accomplish to demonstrate our full commitment that this wouldn't be harmful or hollow words, but things that we can follow through on.
- Would like to see a more succinct and precise version, and look at action verbs and action items. This needs further development.

- Appreciated that ACA staff actions were shared, after reading those actions about their commitment to diversity in leadership and supporting individuals from underrepresented identity groups, recruitment, training, promotion, the BIPOC across all levels. Would like to see an action plan like what the ACA staff did, a little more broadly, like leaders of color, scholars of color, and counselor educators of color. And have a more concise statement of actions that are measurable.
- Operationalize this. Have some timelines on some of this. View this as a living document that needs to be revisited. After the first set of goals are achieved, it would be time to implement some additional goals, like a staged process.
- Less is more. Need to focus on action rather than things that we may not be able to do, and making those the focal points.
- Needs to be a clear path addressing racism. Make sure this isn't just another statement, it should be something that we can actually accomplish.
- Some of the language should be addressed. We use the word "we" a lot, who is the "we"? It needs clarity and accountability.
- Appreciative of how specific a number of the action steps are.
- Appreciated that there were a number of action steps that would require staff collectively or individually to go outside of their comfort zone.
- One piece that should be added, is "post-vention" piece. We have a lot of prevention and intervention, we need to make room for conversations, and how those are going to happen over a timeline to promote healing for our members, people that we interact with, and stakeholders.
- Concerned that we are going to get stuck in the weeds and take no action. Peel off the pieces that can be done at an institutional level, like some of the legislative initiatives that can be demonstrated that we can do immediately.
- Like the idea of engaging with our membership to see what they are planning to do, challenging and opening up the conversation, so it's not us acting on behalf of the membership. We are actually engaging the membership.
- Systemic changes need to be made in this organization. Racism or bias is evident within the organization, and it's evident in the Board makeup. Mentoring up is important and mentioned in this, but we don't need to wait. We need to reach out and more intentional in inclusion of different voices. When this Board is making decisions about things such as this, we need to hear those voices, and they aren't here. Maybe we can take some sort of action to committing to including those people, some sort of process that brings in a diversity of voices.
- We need to commit resources, whether that's time or money.
- We are going to go into a strategic planning period as an organization and we may want to put in this action plan that these issues will be discussed or incorporated into future action plans for the new organization.
- This plan is an opportunity to not only serve as allies and advocates but to be activists. Agree that we need the plan to be more succinct with action steps that are measurable and operational, so that we aren't moving into performance activism.

- Be mindful of what we can do, what we have access to, and what we can deliver.
- Needs to be shorter and more direct.
- There should be a few documents: one is more the aspirational directed at the everyday member; another might be around something else in the action plan; the final one is the action steps that are measurable and can be accomplished in the next year or two.
- When we put out a statement, it needs to be followed by an action plan.
- The legislative piece has already been vetted through Government Affairs and they are committed to doing. That piece is already in motion
- On the Individual part of the action plan, there is training that is going to happen already on racism, a training on racial healing, and one on working with black clients. These are have all been committed to and budgeted for.
- Look at the things on the action plan that we can clearly commit to or have already committed to and have those attached to the Statement. Then maybe pull some of the others and look at what it will take to do some of the others.
- A commitment document that the members could sign.
- Governing Council will commit resources over the next year to explore systemic changes to occur within ACA in preparation for our next strategic plan.
- The way the document is laid out is confusing. Under Individuals, we start telling what our members are doing. With ACA being on the first bullet then it goes to “we”, so it makes it confusing. It needs to be more consistent with how we want people to read the document.
- Are there themes in the document that we can create as a larger objective?
- Let’s look at our strategic plan and align this action plan with what we’re going to do around change in this area.
- Our response needs to be in alignment with other kinds of responses that are occurring where people are making sweeping changes that are an attempt to erase the kind of oppressive actions that have taken the lives of people. As a person, that urgency isn’t felt in this document.
- We need to make a commitment to looking at what we do about more African-Americans being on the Governing Council.
- Coming up with a document like this quickly doesn’t feel thoughtful.
- We could put out the Statement and put out that in the coming weeks or months, we will be putting out an action plan.
- A lot of nepotism happens in leadership and being promoted for leadership.
- There are people that are hurting and people who are in need of action, and what that looks like. But it needs to be recognized that voices are necessary and needed. As we move forward with this, that we recognize that the Governing Council and ACA as a whole needs to enter into these discussions and have these types of hard conversations moving forward. It is important instead of rushing the process, making the process work.



President Trepal suggested that we send out the Statement that has our commitment and as we transition to President-elect Pressman's leadership team that we work how we're going to engage in this process in a more deliberate and strategic way. When the Board does put out the Action Plan, we can all feel that it's what we want for the organization and the profession.

It was commented that whatever we put out needs to be exact. The people who are needing us right now are the people who are hurting. We as an organization should always be putting our best foot forward to help the people that are hurting. The action plan needs to be so succinct and correct that it pushes the needle on what we do as a profession. The change that what society is looking for needs to happen.

President-elect Pressman stated that if any members of the Governing Council that have the time, or bandwidth to work on this to send an email to her or President Trepal.

It was commented that the entire Governing Council body should work on this, whether it's email or meetings.

A doodle poll will be sent to set up another meeting of the Governing Council.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 7:51pm ET by consensus.