Statement of the Connecticut Psychological Association on the Recent Attack on Democracy

January 9th, 2021

The Connecticut Psychological Association condemns the events that occurred on January 6, 2021, as well as the ideology and misinformation that fueled it. The world watched as there was an attack on the democracy of our nation, at a magnitude unwitnessed since reconstruction. The political and civil unrest that has been building in our country reached a frightening peak, and many of us observed with disbelief and a myriad of emotional reactions.

The act of domestic terrorism and violence that occurred is inconsistent with our most deeply treasured values as a nation. What transpired was unacceptable, un-democratic, and un-American. It was equally heartbreaking and horrifying to watch the belligerent desecration of the hallowed halls of our Capitol as it was overtaken by insurrectionists intent on wreaking havoc and inciting fear. Threatening lawfully elected Congressional representatives and refusing to abide by a fair and legal election is undeniably unpatriotic. Many Americans, irrespective of political views or affiliation, have decried and denounced the actions that occurred. Rioting, disrespect, violence, and other forms of aggression are not an acceptable avenue for expressing disappointment and frustration or motivating political change. Beyond being ineffective, this behavior is harmful, and the manner in which this action was taken shall be condemned regardless of political viewpoint. We shall stand together, as unified citizens of our great country, and stand up for our democracy and republic.

This event also demonstrates, with painful clarity, the destructive forces that have been building in our country over time. It is important to acknowledge the fragility of the values and institutions we hold dear. Among the multitude of challenges before us as a nation, we shall sharpen our focus on the following, which contributed to this moment in our history: sensationalized and biased media reporting; a culture of disrespect of science and facts; ready access to and rapid dissemination of inaccurate and biased information; the divisive and counterproductive sociopolitical climate; political and civil unrest fueled by an ingroup/outgroup mentality, which has resulted in the demonization of large segments of our population across the political spectrum; and the inability to tolerate, appreciate, or learn from differences in identity or ideology.

This event also continues to amplify the ongoing racism and race-related violence our black and brown citizens face. This is another in a long line of events that shines a spotlight on the ugly and persistent thread of racism so deeply ingrained in the fabric of our country. The insurgents, privileged in their most visible identities, were not subject to the level of force we have witnessed during much more peaceful protests and demonstrations of more diverse and marginalized groups. The difference in how groups and individuals are treated based on their demographic characteristics, and most notably, the color of their skin, is poignantly obvious and cannot be ignored. The reception to the insurgents who stormed the Capitol this month, the
lukewarm resistance they encountered, and the fact that they were permitted to roam the halls of Capitol and vandalize and disrespect it, is the definition of what it means to have privilege in this country. We shall not ignore the disturbing and offensive imagery present at the riot or what it symbolizes. The differences across our myriad identities should be celebrated rather than disrespected. We must also intensify our efforts to address systemic racism and the many inequities and injustices that pervade our society.

Our country is plagued by problems with deep-seated historical roots and fueled by powerful agendas and forces. While challenging, these problems are not insurmountable. Outrage is a catalyst for opportunity. As psychologists, we have intimate knowledge of what motivates behavior, how problems are solved, how relationships are repaired, how individuals grow when they can examine and challenge their own thinking and worldviews, how attitudes change and how progress is made. Psychology is uniquely suited to promote workability where there is, and has historically been, unworkability. In our noble profession we are tasked with understanding and studying the human mind and behavior. We are experts in facing the incomprehensible and helping people learn, grow, rebuild, and change. We work, everyday, with people with diverse identities and worldviews. We recognize, value, and embrace the multiple perspectives of all races, genders, sexual identities, abilities, indigenous status, cultures, religious beliefs and political affiliations. We have much to offer our communities to move towards healing the divisions in our country, through our legislative advocacy, education and training, science, clinical work, public education, community outreach, and other systemic interventions.

CPA works tirelessly on behalf of all psychologists and is committed to doing our part to promote democracy, reduce divisiveness, and foster socially conscious policy and political action. We are here to support and represent you and pledge to keep equity at the forefront of our work and agenda. Please reach out to us about concrete ways we can be supportive during this time. We welcome your expertise, energy and ideas for ways we can actively tackle some of these issues both within and beyond our CPA community.

These times are dark, indeed. But as we know better than anyone, it is only through the depths of the darkness we can truly find the light.

Respectfully and with deepest regards,
The CPA Board of Directors

Learn more about CPA, who we are, and what we do, here (https://connpsych.org/join-us/). Learn about our efforts specific to advancing diversity and inclusion here (https://connpsych.org/action-against-racism/). We invite you to join us and support us in our advocacy, socially conscious action, and desire to be a catalyst for positive change in our state and beyond.

*CPA is a non-partisan and non-political organization*