

A Statement of Support for Freedom, Social Justice, and Equity

Background

Since March 2020, the world has been coping with a lethal coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. Governments, businesses, and organizations of all types have been struggling to adapt to the situation. One strategy, adopted by most institutions of higher learning, was to shift to online instruction. This strategy seemed in accord with those in power until many institutions indicated they might continue doing so in the fall semester. In the United States, that action led, on July 6, to a threat by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a division of the Department of Homeland Security, to rescind its COVID-19 exemption for international students. This exemption had been put into effect on March 13 “for the duration of the emergency.”

While this threat has ended, many others remain. Worldwide, many of our students, colleagues, friends, and family members face similar threats simply because of their nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, gender identity, level of ability. These threats are visible reminders of the injustice and inequity that remain a part of our daily lives.

Our Statement

Our organization is primarily an academic one, which means most of our members work in academic institutions. That location and our roles as educators mean we care deeply about those we teach and serve. A mantra we hold dear is that we serve by demonstrating what bell hooks calls a “mutual commitment to education as the practice of freedom” (2003)¹. As an organization dedicated to teaching and research, we are also dedicated to service and freedom. We, therefore, feel obligated to take a clear and vocal stand in support of our students, colleagues, friends, and their families. We add our voice to those who seek to ensure greater inclusion for an honoring of all differences among students, faculty, staff, and their families.

The incident that threatened international students in the US, when put in conjunction with what is happening and has been happening all over the world for generations with regard to injustice and inequity, has prompted us to ask our Diversity and Inclusion Committee and our Board of Directors to begin formulating (1) A statement that outlines the Association for Business Communication’s position on diversity, inclusion, and equity; and (2) A statement that helps initiate an internal dialogue among our members.

The goals of both will be to provide recommendations that might lead to positive change, at our own level of a professional organization, at the institutions in which we teach and serve, and in our societies and cultures. Our goal is to contribute to work that focuses on connection, awareness, respect, and equity. We want to be part of the process that brings to mind a dream that many have outlined: one in which everyone has inalienable rights and in which our institutions work to enact and preserve those rights.

Signed: ABC Executive Committee Members (Geert Jacobs, Joel Whalen, Laurie Stokes, Marcel Robles, Jim Dubinsky), Diversity & Inclusion Committee Chair (Jacqui Lowman), and Jason Snyder (Member of Board of Directors)

¹ From *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* by bell hooks (Routledge, 2003), p. 83