

Statement on February 14, 2025 “Dear Colleague” letter from the U.S. Department of Education

As scholars of Asian descent in the United States, we oppose the Trump administration’s efforts to suppress intellectual freedom at universities and schools. This assault seems to take additional forms each week, but we focus here on the administration’s claims referring to Asian Americans, our group identity and area of core concern.

We view attempts to erase and omit data and analyses of Asian and other nonwhite groups as part of broader attacks on the study of American history, people, and institutions. One important way this has been done was through the February 14, 2025 “Dear Colleague” [letter](#) from the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR). We feel particularly compelled to comment on the OCR’s claim that “American educational institutions have discriminated against students on the basis of race, including white and Asian students.”

Asian Americans do face [prejudice](#) and [discrimination](#), as [documented](#) by many of our colleagues in political science and other related disciplines and fields. That prejudice is rooted in long political histories of [anti-Asian policies and stereotypes](#), as well as the efforts of leaders in the current administration to foment racial division through harmful and dangerous political rhetoric and practices.

The appropriate remedy to discrimination against Asian Americans is not to obliterate consideration of race in higher education admissions or in our classrooms and research. As scholars of race and racial politics in the United States, we are not only [skeptical of the claim that Asian Americans would somehow benefit from squelching the consideration of race in higher education](#), we know that [attempting to use Asian Americans as a wedge or as part of efforts to denigrate and further marginalize African Americans](#), Latinas and Latinos, and [Native and Indigenous groups](#) is an oft recycled, harmful, and divisive strategy.

Furthermore, research shows that Asian Americans support and benefit from institutions and programs that value diversity, equity and inclusion. For example, [they are twice as likely to join race-based employee resource groups](#) than workers overall. In addition, more than [70 percent of Asian American adults support "teaching about the history of slavery, racism, and segregation in public schools."](#) A majority of Asian Americans agree that colleges should foster [“the free exchange and debate of ideas and values,”](#) and that [“advancing equity and inclusion”](#) is a major purpose of college. The claim that Asian Americans would benefit from an attack on diversity, equity, and inclusion work is contrary to the evidence and to the majority opinion of Asian Americans themselves.

We reject this and other assaults on freedom of inquiry and expression. As a US racial minority, Asian Americans not only will not benefit from efforts to ban all considerations of race and ethnicity, our community will suffer from the potential loss of interminority allyship and solidarity rooted in the founding of the Asian American movement. We stand in solidarity with

our colleagues in political science and other fields who study these areas, and who are committed to defending rigorous scholarship and intellectual freedom.

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