

**An expression of grave concern regarding a letter demanding the resignation of Prof. Klaus Fiedler**

Update (December 15, 2022): This letter has been sent TODAY to APS board of directors and members of the publications committee, asking to respond to our questions.

Update (December 13, 2022): This letter has been sent to APS board of directors and members of the publications committee on December 8th, 2022.

Update (December 6, 2022): the APS has decided to terminate Klaus Fiedler's position as an editor, solely based on the paper by Steven O. Roberts. **He was not given an opportunity to reply to the accusations at any stage.** We intend to send this letter nonetheless, as this decision highlights the disregard to the notion of due process, and the potential for "mob justice".

PLEASE NOTE: WE HAVE NOW SENT THE LETTER TO THE APS. YOU ARE INVITED TO ADD YOUR SIGNATURES TO THIS FORM, AND WE WILL ADD SIGNED PERIODICALLY.

To sign the present open letter, please fill out [this form](#)

The present open letter is an expression of concern that pertains to [this letter](#) (from December 2, 2022)

The present open letter will be sent to [aps@psychologicalscience.org](mailto:aps@psychologicalscience.org)

December 5, 2022

Dear APS Leadership:

We wish to express our concern about a letter signed by approximately one thousand members of our community that:

(i) call for the resignation of Prof. Klaus Fiedler; (ii) accuse him of racism; (iii) ask for an audit of his correspondence and editorial decisions.

**We acknowledge that the motives behind this letter are benevolent: the signees express a genuine concern with inequality and racism, which we share.**

However, we feel that the conclusions expressed in this letter might be premature, and that it does not promote justice or represent good judgment. Sometimes, an attempt to fight injustice can lead to injustice, and we should try to avoid that. As psychologists, we should be keenly aware of that possibility.

The letter in question was a response to a preprint written by Prof. Steven O. Roberts wherein he details his interaction with Prof. Fiedler concerning a series of critiques of his 2020 opinion paper, that was to be published in *Perspective on Psychological Science*.

This preprint was published on December 2nd, 2022. Immediately, a trial in absentia of the defendant was held on Twitter, and within hours, a verdict was issued: **Prof. Fiedler was found guilty of racism and editorial misconduct. His punishment, which was endorsed by 1,000 members of his community:**

- “1. The **resignation** of the current Editor of Perspectives on Psychological Science.
2. Conduct an audit of Dr. Fiedler's editorial decisions and correspondence (given that other marginalized scholars may have met with **similar racism, incompetence, and/or abuse of power at his hands**). Make a report of this audit public.”

A few questions present themselves:

First and foremost, is whether the writers of the letter and its signees believe that a member of our community **has the right to defend themselves** before their reputation is tarnished by mob judgment?

Second, it is unclear what is the basis of the accusation, and whether the conclusion “Klaus Fiedler is a Racist” is indeed the most plausible interpretation of the evidence. The letter, with its ~1,000 signees, did not explicate what are the exact offenses for which Prof. Fiedler deserves such a harsh sentence. From the discussions on Twitter, and from the request to go through his emails, a few possibilities arise.

### **1. Is Klaus Fiedler being accused of blatant racism?**

But what is the evidence for this? Did he ever express racist positions? Did he use racial slurs? Did his colleagues or students accuse him of systematic mistreatment of minorities? We have seen no evidence for this in his correspondence, as detailed in the preprint by Prof. Roberts. *Are you certain that it is just to call a person “racist” in such conditions?*

### **2. Is Klaus Fiedler being accused of exhibiting extremely high levels of implicit anti-black bias?**

Again, we ask, what is the evidence for this? Are you certain that there are no other, more benign interpretations of Prof. Fiedler's editorial decision-making? (e.g., in accepting an article critiquing the Roberts paper; in inviting the reviewers to publish their critiques of this paper; in inviting Roberts to join this group of reviewers). Could it be that his decision were guided by principled views on how to advance diversity in psychological science (<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/fiedler-perspectives-journal>), and a pluralistic conceptualization of the different types of diversity (e.g., the importance of voices from non-American universities)? Could it be that his correspondence reflects cultural differences between German/European and American academics? *Are you certain that it is just to accuse him of unique levels of bias without giving him the chance to provide an account of his editorial decisions?*

### **3. Is Klaus Fiedler accused of making editorial decisions that reflect systematic institutional biases?**

For example, it could be argued that Prof. Fiedler was insufficiently sensitive to the importance of finding reviewers who are people of color, due to the fact that he is a member of a privileged group (i.e., a German white male). If this is the case, *is it just to tarnish the reputation of a specific human being for an issue that plagues an entire field?*

### **4. Is Klaus Fiedler accused of acting, as an editor-in-chief, in a grossly unethical or unprofessional manner?**

The pre-print by Roberts highlights several complaints concerning the editorial process. We ask the signees to consider - *is it possible that hearing just one side of the story is insufficient to pass judgment? Moreover, even if there were some faults in the editorial decisions of Prof. Fiedler, were they so egregious that they merit this response?*

Haven't all of us made wrong professional decisions? *Do we wish to live in an academic environment wherein mistakes are treated by such a swift, unequivocal repudiation of your character by a thousand members of your community? Is this the route to a more just, egalitarian society?*

**Please sign if you agree. We also ask the signees of the letter from December 2nd, 2022 to reflect on these questions, and perhaps sign the present open letter as well.**

**PLEASE NOTE: WE HAVE NOW SENT THE LETTER TO THE APS. YOU ARE INVITED TO ADD YOUR SIGNATURES TO THIS FORM, AND WE WILL ADD SIGNEES PERIODICALLY.**

**To sign the present open letter, please fill out [this form](#), and feel free to distribute via social media (e.g., Twitter) and e-mail.**

This letter is signed by the following individuals:

Nira Liberman, Tel Aviv University

Mandy Hütter, University of Tübingen

Constantine Sedikides, University of Southampton

Tim Wildschut, University of Southampton

Leonel Garcia-Marques, University of Lisbon

Henning Plessner, Heidelberg University

Christian Unkelbach, University of Cologne

Tina M. Lowrey, HEC Paris

Christoph Klauer, University of Freiburg

Olivier Corneille, UCLouvain

Tal Eyal, Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Rakefet Ackerman, Technion Israel Institute of Technology

Sandra Godinho, ISCTE - IUL

Ravit Nussinson, The Open University of Israel, Israel

Michael Gilead, Tel Aviv University

Dominique Muller, Université Grenoble Alpes

Benoit Dompnier, University of Lausanne

Gün R. Semin, William James Center of Research, ISPA and Utrecht University

Jeff Sherman, University of California, Davis

Jochim Hansen, University of Salzburg

Hadar Ram, Bar-Ilan University

Christopher J. Ferguson, Stetson University

Jukka Savolainen, Wayne State University

Rachel Hartman, UNC Chapel Hill

Mirta Galesic, Santa Fe Institute

Roos vonk, Radboud University

Daniel Read, University of Warwick

Michael Mills, Loyola Marymount University

Robert Balas, Institute of Psychology Polish Academy of Sciences

Reuven Dar, Tel Aviv University

Baruch Eitam, University of Haifa

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Céline Darnon, Université Clermont Auvergne, France

Dr Linda Thomas, ANU

Catherine Salmon, University of Redlands

Komi Frey, The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE)

Florian Kutzner, Seeburg Castle University

Jukka Savolainen, Professor, Wayne State University

Cécile Nurra, Univ. Grenoble Alpes

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Ana Sofia Santos, University of Lisbon

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Thorsten Meiser, University of Mannheim

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Teresa Garcia-Marques, ISPA-Instituto Universitário

Tilman Betsch, University of Erfurt

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Mario Gollwitzer, LMU Munich

Marco Del Giudice, University of New Mexico

Mack D. Burke, Baylor University- Department of Educational Psychology

Bernardo Costa Neves, University of Lisbon

Geoffrey Miller, University of New Mexico

Marie-Pierre Fayant, Université Paris Cité

Michaela Wänke, University of Mannheim

Chris C. Martin, Oglethorpe University

Romina Angeleri, University of New Mexico

Tyrone Sgambati, UC Berkeley

Darrell Worthy, Texas A&M University

Todd K. Shackelford, Oakland University

Joseph Manson, UCLA

Shlomi Sher, Pomona College

William Crano, Claremont Graduate University

Birgit Spinath, Heidelberg University, Germany

Yaacov Schul, The Hebrew University

Noah van Dongen, University of Amsterdam

D. Vaughn Becker, Arizona State University

Monika Undorf, U. of Mannheim

Florian Delmas, University Grenoble Alpes

Theodore Alexopoulos, University of Bordeaux

Ran Hassin, Hebrew University

Karl Halvor Teigen, professor emeritus

Argaman Bell, Tel Aviv University

Alexandra M. Freund, University of Zurich

Tobias Vogel, University of Applied Sciences Darmstadt

Oulmann Zerhouni, Université de Rouen Normandie

Hans Alves, Ruhr University Bochum

Julia Fischer, German Primate Center

Peter Hoffenaar, University of Amsterdam

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Maximilian Knapp, University of Mannheim

Andrea Dr. Abele-Brehm, University of Erlangen, Germany

Christoph Stahl, University of Cologne

André Mata, University of Lisbon

Thomas Verliefde, University of Tübingen

Moritz Ingendahl, Ruhr University Bochum

Max Hennig, University of Würzburg

Rita Silva, ISCTE-IUL, Lisbon

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Gilad Hirschberger, Reichman University

Marco Biella, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart - Milan

Gerd Bohner, Bielefeld University

Annalisa Anzani, University of Milano-Bicocca

Armand Chatard, Université de Poitiers et CNRS

Charlotte Löffler, University of Cologne

Stéphanie Demoulin, Université catholique de Louvain

Bernhard Hommel, Shandong Normal University

Florian G. Kaiser, Otto-von-Guericke University Magdeburg, Magdeburg, Germany

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Florian Ermark, Heidelberg University

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Johanna Höhs, University of Tübingen

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(THE EMAIL WAS SENT TO THE APS AT THIS STAGE)

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