



Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities' Statement on Supreme Court Discrimination

As President Biden said, "This is not a normal court." The Supreme Court's rightward turn continues to gut civil rights in this country. In the United States, based on the ruling meted out, it is now legal to discriminate against members of the LGBTQ+ community on the basis of anti-LGBTQ+ religious inclinations. This came in juxtaposition to the Court's ruling that effectively delegitimized affirmative action initiatives used in higher education to offer greater opportunity to typically minoritized groups, especially along lines of race. Furthermore, these come as a glut of anti-trans laws make the rounds of conservative jurisdictions. Make no mistake: this is a dark time for oppressed groups.

We, as counselors, have an ethical obligation to see the harm these decisions do to those who've faced oppression for their identities. The notion that LGBTQ+ people can be discriminated against based on the personal beliefs of the discriminator represents a fundamental discord with the basic humanist tenets of what it means to be a counselor. We predicate our work on the acceptance of the whole person. While we as counselors are free to adopt whatever religious or moral belief we so choose, we are also under an ethical obligation to bracket our personal values when working with clients to avoid potential harm. We simply subscribe to the idea that these beliefs should not be foisted on minoritized groups like those in the LGBTQ+ community to their detriment.

Bigotry can and should find no home in the counseling profession, and there is precedence to fight back against systems that allow for the values of the counselor to take priority over the humanity of the clients and communities we work with. What we must now do as counselors is stand on the principles of acceptance, inclusivity, empowerment, and equity by using our positions as mental health authorities to advocate for defanging the grotesque intolerance this Court's decision has effectively unleashed in full. We cannot go back in time and undo all of the work our pioneers have put into promoting social justice and equal rights for all of us by remaining silent in the present.

Many of us are asking about ways that we can challenge these Supreme Court decisions, as well as state laws, that promote racial injustice in the United States. We acknowledge that these systems of oppression perpetuate mental health disparities and trauma in minoritized groups, and it is important to fight for change. It may feel hopeless to challenge such big decisions that impact our country. However, it is important to know that all voices deserve to be heard, especially in this fight for justice. Here are ways that you can make a stand:

- SAIGE (The Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities) is always open to collaborating on social justice movements that can make significant differences in the ways that counselors engage in counseling practice, as well as advocate for social justice issues that impact all communities. If you are able to dedicate your time and voice to social justice causes, please reach out to SAIGE leaders through <https://saigecounseling.org/>. Let them know your ideas and desires to get involved in social justice movements. The more voices we have that speak up, the louder our social justice change can become.
- Join ACA divisions outside of SAIGE that are taking steps to advocate for social justice and create change. A list of divisions can be found here <https://www.counseling.org/about-us/divisions-regions-and-branches/divisions>. If you are already part of a division, you can also urge them to take action if you feel they are not living up to counseling values.
- Look for grassroots efforts in your communities and universities to join. Counselors cannot reach their full potential as advocates if they only work in educational and mental healthcare spaces. Community care is vital to liberation.
- Who are your local and national advocacy groups and representatives? Who are your community leaders that have been speaking out about issues related to affirmative action and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric/action? Reach out to these officials and let your voice be heard. Every local and national movement counts towards the bigger picture of social justice change, even if it does not feel that way at times.

This statement represents SAIGE exclusively and not any other organizations.

Drafted by: Frank B. Gorriz FitzSimons, PhD, LPC, NCC & Brandon R. Tomlinson, PhD, LPCC, NCC - SAIGE Public Policy Committee Members

Edited by: Valeo L. Khan-Snyder, MS, tLMHC, NCC - SAIGE Public Policy Committee Member & Gene N. Dockery, PhD, LPCC, NCC - SAIGE Public Policy Committee Chairperson