

NASP Statement on the Assault on the U.S. Capitol

Bethesda, MD—As a nation, we have much to grapple with in the painful aftermath of the violent assault this week on the U.S. Capitol and our democracy. The reality of an angry mob disrupting Congress in the fulfillment of its obligations and attempting to subvert the peaceful transfer of power—and the forces behind their efforts—pose the greatest threat to our country in over a century. As educators, parents, and caregivers, we have a critical responsibility to help our children and youth understand and process these events in ways that are both truthful and focused on their personal safety, security, honest reflection, and a belief that positive change is possible.

Many truths are entangled in the events that transpired on Wednesday, January 6, 2021. The consequences of allowing widespread dissemination of—and action based on—lies rather than facts. The swift and harmful outcomes of mob mentality resulting in death and injury to multiple individuals. The destructive nature of hate and violence. The subversive results of failed leadership. The chaos wrought when our critical systems fail.

Yet underlying these events, there is no more glaring truth than the role of White supremacy and racism in driving all of the above. The evidence was everywhere: From the disgraceful display of the Confederate flag in the Capitol building and nooses on the Capitol grounds to the outrageous disparity in the response of law enforcement to this violent event and the largely peaceful Black Lives Matter protests last summer.

We cannot move forward from this moment without confronting this truth and tackling it head on as a country, as a profession, and as individuals. Each and every one of us bears this responsibility.

Children and youth are watching these events and looking to adults for reassurance and help making sense of the chaos. We must help them engage in thoughtful reflection and discussion. Help them express their feelings and concerns in productive ways. Help them—and ourselves—genuinely understand the history and current realities of racism in this country. Help them find themselves in the positive solutions that include acknowledging our own biases and privileges, calling out racism when and wherever we see it, and engaging in meaningful civic involvement to advance equity. We can do this in the classroom (virtually or in person), at the dinner table, on a walk, on the couch. We must do this, because complicity and complacency have contributed to the current state of our country, and silence is not an option.

In effective schools, we teach students the skills of appropriate assertiveness, conflict resolution, perspective taking, and dealing with situations that do not always turn out in one's favor. We emphasize learning, problem solving, and growth. We instill the values of respect for diversity of individuals and ideas and the fundamental rights of fairness and equity. Addressing racism and privilege is central to this work.

NASP is committed to supporting the healthy development of all children and youth and to promoting social justice. We have a number of resources for educators and families to begin engaging in these conversations and reflections among ourselves and with our children and youth. These can be found on the NASP website at <https://www.nasponline.org/social-justice>.

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