

American Educational Research Association Statement on Human Rights Approved by AERA Council, April 27, 2013

Background:

Since its inception the American Educational Research Association (AERA) has supported the free exchange of ideas across national, state, cultural, and social borders. In doing so, the Association affirms the principle that research is essential for fostering a more informed citizenry in the United States and worldwide. By way of its involvement in the human rights activities of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the Scholars at Risk (SAR) Network, the Association has demonstrated its commitment to the protection not only of members of AERA but also of scholars throughout the world. The Association is committed to the principle of freedom to pursue scholarship and conduct scientific research without persecution or harassment.

Statement:

The mission of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) is to advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good. AERA has put forward statements in the past that support the right of education researchers and other scholars to conduct their work without fear of harassment or intimidation.¹ AERA affirms as a universal standard the human right to available, accessible, affordable scientific knowledge of quality and the benefits of scientific progress, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations.

This statement codifies and extends AERA's commitment to the basic rights of individuals as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Article 19 stipulates that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. The American Educational Research Association endorses UDHR Article 26, which states that education is a human right. As an Association dedicated to scientific inquiry to advance education and learning, AERA maintains that all individuals have a right to an education whereby they may acquire the basic tools and capacities that enable them to lead healthy and productive lives.

This statement codifies and extends AERA's commitment to the right to scientific progress and to education as set forth in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 15 states that everyone has the right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, and thus the knowledge gained and produced through education research. Article 13 recognizes the right of everyone to education and to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity.

Further, it follows that educational institutions and organizations and those working within them—whether child, teacher, administrator, parent, or researcher—must be free from physical and psychological abuse, violence, or the threat thereof. Violence-free environments are essential for effective scholarship and learning. AERA has a long history of members who have conducted research pertaining to what might be done to eradicate violence in schools, colleges, and universities. AERA reaffirms its support for such efforts and for sound use and application of such knowledge.

Accordingly, the American Educational Research Association urges all education research professionals, governments, and institutions to advance the human rights affirmed in this statement.

¹ On June 29, 2006, the AERA Council unanimously endorsed the AAAS Resolution on Free and Open Exchange.

Appendix A: Related Documents

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 26

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI), December 16, 1966.

Article 13

(1) The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(2) The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize that, with a view to achieving the full realization of this right:

(a) Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;

(c) Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;

(d) Fundamental education shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education;

(e) The development of a system of schools at all levels shall be actively pursued, an adequate fellowship system shall be established, and the material conditions of teaching staff shall be continuously improved.

(3) The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

(4) No part of this article shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph I of this article and to the requirement that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

Article 15

(1) The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone:

(a) To take part in cultural life;

(b) To enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications;

(c) To benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

(2) The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include those necessary for the conservation, the development and the diffusion of science and culture.

(3) The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity.

(4) The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the benefits to be derived from the encouragement and development of international contacts and co-operation in the scientific and cultural fields.

Other Association Statements on Human Rights

American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS):

Reaffirmation of Commitment to Protect Fundamental Rights of Scientists

http://archives.aaas.org/docs/resolutions.php?doc_id=369 (Adopted by the AAAS Council, May 28, 1984)

Statement on the Human Right to the Benefits of Scientific Progress

http://www.aaas.org/gr/docs/Article15_AAASBoardStatement.pdf (Adopted by the AAAS Board of Directors, April 16, 2010.)

American Psychological Association (APA):

Human Rights

<http://www.apa.org/about/policy/chapter-14.aspx#human-rights> (APA Council Policy Manual, 1987)

Human Rights Advocacy

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/human-rights/index.aspx>

American Sociological Association (ASA):

American Sociological Association Statement on Human Rights on the Occasion of Its Centenary

<http://www.sociologistswithoutborders.org/essays/ASAcouncilonHumanRights.pdf>

(Adopted by the Council of the American Sociological Association, August 12, 2009)

American Anthropological Association (AAA):

Declaration on Anthropology and Human Rights

Committee for Human Rights, American Anthropological Association

<http://www.aaanet.org/about/Policies/statements/Declaration-on-Anthropology-and-Human-Rights.cfm> (Adopted by the AAA membership, June 1999)