

In response to the harassment that occurred at CSWE's Annual Program Meeting, November 10 - 14, 2022 in Anaheim, California- we, the undersigned, extend comfort and solidarity to the individuals who were sexually harassed at the recent CSWE-APM. We also send our thanks to those faculty and students who responded with care and concern, helping these women navigate an untenable situation, highlighting the significance of community care.

Despite being a professional organization that espouses equity and justice, and has conference attendees agree to a zero-tolerance policy regarding harassment, we are deeply concerned that CSWE did not step up and address the multiple reports of harassment in ways that protected those harmed and sanctioned those who were committing harms. **CSWE must be held accountable for its failure to act. It cannot hide [behind a statement](#) that essentially includes lofty sound-bites, but little to no remedies.** Of note, this statement was widely criticized on Twitter and has since been removed from the CSWE website.

We demand that CSWE immediately:

- Issue apologies for its failure to act to those who came forward and reported this abuse
- Provide compensation to the people who essentially withdrew from the conference for fear of continuing harassment or reprisal; this compensation could be waiving future APM fees or reimbursement for this year's conference
- Given that at least one of the people who committed sexual harassment is known, CSWE needs to apply sanctions to that individual in the form of banning the individual(s) from future events and revoking membership. CSWE should contact that individual's Dean and report this unacceptable behavior. If the names of other harassers are known, then similar steps should be taken.

Going forward, CSWE and, as prevention Society for Social Work Research (SSWR) and other professional organizations, need to **revisit their protocols for rapidly and swiftly responding to reports of intimidation, harassment, and assault included but not limited to sexual, racial, gender identity, and dis/ability status.**

We recommend the following:

- A careful internal audit of the current procedure that holds people accountable for their failure to act in ways that affirmed and protected these individuals.
- Training of all CSWE (and SSWR, National Association of Social Workers (NASW), other professional organization) staff to understand the ramifications of and appropriate responses to sexual and other forms of violence.
- The designation of ombudspersons at conferences and other events who are responsible for addressing reports of exclusion such as intimidation, harassment, and assault.
- The designation of safe spaces for people who need sanctuary and support.
- The affirmation of a zero-tolerance policy that goes beyond talking to the person(s) responsible for harm and asking them to stop. Clear sanctions need to be delineated and followed.
- Only hold conferences at hotels that are inclusive with all-gender bathrooms and accessible access to all spaces.

Failure to act by CSWE and other professional organizations will be met with actions including (but not limited to):

- Boycotts of future events
- Demands for new leadership
- Withholding of membership

Should such steps be necessary, we invite others to join us in sending collective messages, through our actions, that the status quo is not acceptable.

We suggest that CSWE leadership engage with the appropriate Commissions and Councils to seek member expertise to carry out these and other recommendations. All steps should be transparent and shared with membership throughout the year. Waiting until the next APM to “take action” is too late and not acceptable.

It is not possible to overstate the damage done directly to these individuals. Most were women and/or people of color, early in their careers or doctoral students, seeking networking and mentoring opportunities – that is, they were particularly vulnerable and that vulnerability was exploited. That they endured further trauma because of CSWE’s failure to center their stories and experiences, and instead essentially privileged the experiences of the people responsible for harm, is unconscionable. **Further, this failure sends a message to other groups that their concerns will not be taken seriously. Indeed, such was the case with people seeking all-gender bathrooms (there were none), people who were nursing (no dedicated space so bathrooms had to be used to pump or breast/chestfeed), people of color contending with endless racial microaggressions, and people with disabilities who had to navigate inaccessible spaces (as well as those who could not attend due to the lack of both masking/testing policies and online options for attendance). These aren’t separate, distinct concerns but rather a pattern that underscores exclusionary practices by CSWE.**

Inclusion isn’t a slogan or motto. It is a living, breathing process that demands from all us more than just saying “the right thing.” CSWE needs to act. Anything short of internal change and external accountability will only maintain systems and procedures of power that many of us are committed to dismantling. This is a time of reckoning regarding our leadership bodies, our accountability, and our strategies for moving forward in the months to come.

Signed,

The Social Work Activist Collective

Association of Community Organizing & Social Action (ACOSA)

Social Worker Equity Campaign (SWEC)

Social Welfare Action Alliance (SWAA)

Social Service Workers United (SSWU)

Abolitionist Social Change Collective (ASCC)

Pilipina/o/x Social Work Scholars (PSWS)

LGBTQ Caucus of Faculty & Students in Social Work
Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) Fellows
Doin' The Work: Frontline Stories of Social Change Podcast
Social Work Podcast
The Social Work Routes Podcast

This statement was developed collaboratively by the above groups. We invite individuals and/or groups to join us in solidarity and sign [at this Link.](#)

In Solidarity,