

Fighting DEI Lies



Dave Hoeek/Shutterstock.com

In the wake of a Trump administration [missive](#) threatening K12 and postsecondary schools with the loss of federal funds if they pursue goals related to “diversity, racial balancing, social justice, or equity,” NEPC Fellow [Shaun Harper](#) has clapped back with a [“dear colleague” letter](#) of his own that urges educators to fight back by organizing via coalitions and employing evidence to refute lies about DEI.

Writing for the online publication *InsideHigherEd*, Harper, a professor at the University of Southern California, began by acknowledging, “The tone of the department’s letter is serious.” He then offered ideas about how to move forward.

In addition to recommending that institutions organize via coalitions such as professional associations and athletic conferences, he points readers to [The National DEI Defense Fund](#) at the University of Southern California’s Race and Equity Center, which he formed to fight “politicized efforts to ban books, eliminate diversity and inclusion educational programs, and suppress the teaching of truths about America’s racial past and present.”

Dr. Harper also encourages educators to disseminate facts that disprove misleading and false statements incorporated into the Feb. 14th U.S. Department of Education “Dear Colleague” letter.

For example, Harper points to statements in the letter asserting that U.S. schools have “toxically indoctrinated students with the false premise that the United States is built upon ‘sys-

temic and structural racism,” and that schools have implemented DEI-related programs and practices that have themselves “discriminated against students on the basis of race, including white and Asian students.” Harper stressed the need to counter these anecdote-based claims with evidence and facts.

For instance, decades of research on aspects of education ranging from [teacher expectations](#) to [student discipline](#) demonstrate it is Black students who disproportionately experience discrimination.

And in a [report](#) issued last year by the National DEI Defense Fund, NEPC Fellow [Mitchell Chang](#) cites a [meta-analysis](#) (which uses quantitative methods to [summarize](#) the results of multiple studies on the same topic), concluding that DEI programs on college campus do reduce bias.

Harper recommends that educators share such research evidence and avoid [obeying in advance](#). He also shares a link to the U.S. Department of Education’s [web portal](#) for reporting civil rights violations and urges readers to use it to document any actual cases of discrimination.

“What sense does it make to know something is a lie and to have examples of what’s actually true, yet deliberately hide those truths for fear of what liars might do?” he asks.

NEPC Resources on Politics

This newsletter is made possible in part by support provided by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice: <http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

The National Education Policy Center (NEPC), a university research center housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education, sponsors research, produces policy briefs, and publishes expert third-party reviews of think tank reports. NEPC publications are written in accessible language and are intended for a broad audience that includes academic experts, policymakers, the media, and the general public. Our mission is to provide high-quality information in support of democratic deliberation about education policy. We are guided by the belief that the democratic governance of public education is strengthened when policies are based on sound evidence and support a multiracial society that is inclusive, kind, and just. Visit us at: <http://nepc.colorado.edu>