

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of SCHOLARS

Myrtle Davis
President, Society of Toxicology
11190 Sunrise Valley Dr., Ste. 300
Reston, VA 20191

November 5, 2021

Dear President Davis,

I write to express my concern about the publication processes of the Society of Toxicology's official journal, *Toxicological Sciences*. Science publication processes are not trivial: they are the institutional foundation of commitment to the pursuit of scientific truth. The Society of Toxicology imperils its commitment to scientific inquiry when it allows these processes to be degraded. The publication process in question, moreover, involves the subordination of *Toxicological Sciences*' to the pursuit of "diversity" advocacy. While this letter focuses on the question of publication processes, I will also note that the substance of "diversity" ideology also imperils the pursuit of scientific truth. It has already led the Society to abandon its fidelity to publication processes, and it will require you to commit ever larger departures from the pursuit of scientific truth.

I write as President of the National Association of Scholars (NAS). NAS is a network of scholars and citizens united by our commitment to academic freedom, disinterested scholarship, and excellence in higher education. As part of our mission, we support the highest standards of truth-seeking in the sciences, and seek to have science institutions support and rely upon scientific publication that eschews political advocacy and subjects its own procedures to the strictest scrutiny. (For further information, please see www.nas.org.)

Toxicological Sciences recently published a Letter to the Editor entitled "The Role of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Future of Toxicology."¹ *Toxicological Sciences* should not have done so. The journal clearly states the guidelines for Letters: "Letters to the Editor regarding published articles should be submitted within two months of mailing of the printed journal. Letters may be peer-reviewed for factual accuracy and originality. Unsubstantiated claims or opinions are not permitted."² It is not a venue for opinion or advocacy, but for scientific inquiry. The Letter self-evidently is polemic rather than scientific inquiry: it concludes with a call for "the leadership and broader membership to evaluate current practice from a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens, and to use introspection to strategize forward-thinking best practices to authentically engage and support all membership, especially persons excluded due to ethnicity or race." But even its citation of history, which is not the natural domain for peer review by

¹ Sant, K. E., & Williams, L. M. (2021). The Role of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Future of Toxicology. *Toxicological Sciences*, 182(2), 355–356. <https://doi.org/10.1093/toxsci/kfab077>.

² About the Journal, *Toxicological Sciences*, <https://academic.oup.com/toxsci/pages/About>.

toxicologists, would not survive peer review by historians. No self-respecting historian would take a sole citation of Ibram Kendi as a professional review of the scholarly literature on the intellectual and social history of race.

Toxicological Sciences should not advocate the racist “diversity” ideology of Kendi and his peers. To an outside observer, it appears as if the *Toxicological Sciences* board decided to obfuscate its endorsement of this ideology by allowing a “Letter to the Editor,” which it could publicize without officially endorsing. But regardless of the motivations, the *Toxicological Sciences* board committed a graver error by permitting an article of advocacy to appear in a venue reserved for scientific inquiry. *Toxicological Sciences* thereby gave its official imprimatur to allowing ideological polemic to claim the status of scientific inquiry aimed at truth.

The board of *Toxicological Sciences*, moreover, has compounded this error by refusing either to retract the Letter or to allow public criticism of its decision.³ The Society of Toxicology now appears committed both to presenting ideological advocacy as scientific inquiry and to preventing its members from criticizing its mistakes. Such actions imperil not only the professional credibility of the journal *Toxicological Sciences* but also that of the Society as a whole.

I stated earlier that NAS opposes the substance of “diversity” ideology itself. We do so partly because its explicit goals require the repudiation of the principles and practices of equal opportunity and individual merit both within the academy and in the republic as a whole. We also do so because it subordinates the pursuit of truth to the pursuit of “diversity,” and corrupts all professional standards so as to achieve “diversity.” *Toxicological Science*’s publication of diversity advocacy in the guise of a scientific publication epitomizes how “diversity” ideology degrades professional standards and practices. This degradation begins with Letters to the Editor, but, unless firmly opposed, will inevitably corrupt all your publications.

I would like to emphasize here that science, of all the modes of intellectual inquiry, particularly depends upon commitment to the principle that a truth is universally true, no matter who produces the theory or the experiment. “Diversity” ideology is toxic to science—at any dose.

The NAS more broadly urges the Society of Toxicology to relinquish its ideological commitments to “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion”—but that is not immediately at issue. For now, we urge you to make a public acknowledgment that *Toxicological Sciences* erred in publishing “The Role of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Future of Toxicology” and officially to retract its status as a scientific publication. We also urge you to publish the correspondence criticizing your errant decision. We finally urge you to establish procedures that will preclude a recurrence of this grave misstep by the editors of *Toxicological Sciences*.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Wood', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Wood
President, National Association of Scholars

³ John Budny, “Using Letter to Editor Article Type for an Advocacy is Inappropriate,” subm., 19 September 2021.