

Dear Drs. Karney, Parkinson, and Hershfield,

We, the undersigned students, write to strongly recommend against the hiring of Dr. Yoel Inbar as a tenured faculty in the Psychology Department. We feel that serious consideration of Dr. Inbar directly conflicts with the values and standards we uphold as an institution and department committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). We believe that Dr. Inbar would not enter the Social Area as a member committed to creating a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment, and that his hiring would threaten ongoing efforts to protect and uplift individuals of marginalized backgrounds.

Our concerns were initially raised by Dr. Inbar's podcast, "Two Psychologists Four Beers" [[linked here](#)], which is publicly available to listen to on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and other popular websites. In each of the episodes, he discusses various topics relating to current events in academia, including but not limited to: diversity statements, anti-racism in psychological organizations, sexism and racism on college campuses, freedom of speech, polarization, and conservatism in psychology. As he has 101 episodes, we do not intend this to be a comprehensive overview of his podcast content; rather, critical episodes we would like to draw your attention towards are episode 15 "Just when you think you're out" and episode 92 "Should SPSP stay out of it?"

Most concerning to us as students is Dr. Inbar's opposition to institutions endorsing positions on sociopolitical issues he has deemed "contentious" or "controversial." In particular, he takes a strong stance against promoting DEI initiatives through the use of diversity statements and DEI criterion to evaluate research. He also takes a firm position against the use of diversity statements as a tool in the hiring process, and specifically criticizes their use in the University of California system's faculty application process. In episode 15, he remarks that his "skepticism about these [diversity statements] is they sort of seem like administrator value signaling. It is not clear what good they do, how they're going to be used..." He continues, "to lots of people on the left, diversity is such an obviously positive thing," and says that the left fails to acknowledge that these statements "[signal] an allegiance to a certain set of beliefs." Rather than recognizing the value of DEI initiatives to improve representation and inclusion of marginalized scholars, he casts valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion as uniquely "liberal" values reflective of ideological bias. These comments frame diversity statements as a threat to ideological diversity, and reflect a lack of prioritization of the needs and experiences of historically marginalized individuals across the lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. In contrast, our institution's position on this issue is unequivocal: page one of the [UCLA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion FAQ](#) proclaims "Equity, diversity, and inclusion are integral to how the University of California conceives of "merit."

In episode 92, Dr. Inbar discusses SPSP's implementation of DEI criteria as an additional method of evaluating submissions. Dr. Inbar highlights that the society's membership "relative to the [U.S.] population underrepresent white people...and Hispanic and Black..." implicitly undermining and distilling down the complexities of access, structural inequality, and representation in spaces that are historically dominated both in proportion of people and ideological power by dominant group members (e.g., white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, higher socioeconomic class, etc.). He goes on to share his support for "affirmative action," but states that "there's this other stuff...about using certain methodologies and if it's based on critical theory...and at that point I'm like 'come on'...I don't think it's the job of the organization to be promoting...certain subdisciplines...that to me goes under...the scientific quality of the work" and that these criteria "give reviewers license to apply their like existing political biases." This misunderstanding and/or mischaracterization of the function of DEI criteria tells us that Dr. Inbar does not understand nor value the need for an inclusive culture of academia either interpersonally or intellectually as a means of broadening and elevating the rigor of our science.

Also in episode 92, Dr. Inbar and his co-host discuss SPSP's stance against Georgia's decision to outlaw all abortions past six weeks following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Dr. Inbar firmly argues *against* SPSP advocating for complete reproductive autonomy by claiming that the organization's position on the matter "is quite extreme" and that "it is not the place of SPSP to take a stand on this kind of issue." He goes on to say that "when we align ourselves with a political side or faction it's bad for our science." His flippant conflation of this issue with a political disagreement (i.e., Democrats vs. Republicans) trivializes the necessity of bodily autonomy that all people, regardless of political ideology and governance, ought to be entitled to. The UCLA community's position on this issue was made abundantly clear when the UCLA Office of the Chancellor issued a statement on June 24th, 2022 to all UCLA community members that stated "as University of California President Michael Drake wrote today, this decision is antithetical to the University of California's mission and values. Our university firmly supports individuals' ability to access necessary health care services and make decisions about their own care in consultation with their medical teams." Moreover, Dr. Inbar claims that "there is a non-negligible concern about... the organization's values and who is excluded by them" because "who are the people...who are gonna be like more centrist on social issues such as abortion? It's gonna be the nonwhite people." This sentiment leverages the identity politics of BIPOC individuals while failing to acknowledge the reality that those most severely and directly harmed by laws restricting the reproductive rights of people who can become pregnant are from BIPOC and/or LGBTQIA+ communities. Time and time again in these episodes, he fails to reflect on how these issues structurally affect marginalized individuals. He instead prioritizes advocating for those he classifies as political minorities in academia. In doing so, he defends perspectives and positions opposed to values our university system has affirmed as fundamental to fostering a safe and inclusive environment for those most widely and deeply afflicted by ongoing sociopolitical issues.

Our concerns were deepened after the graduate student meeting with Dr. Inbar on Monday, January 23rd. During this meeting—which traditionally takes the shape of graduate students asking questions and interviewing faculty candidates—he initially prioritized asking us questions about the Psychology Department and life as graduate students, which would presumably inform his decision on whether to accept a job offer from our program. We interjected to reframe the discussion and ask pointed questions about his past and prospective efforts in advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts both in mentorship and in his line of research. To most of us in the room, his answers to these questions were less than satisfactory, and some responses were outright disconcerting. For example, he responded by indicating that his “work does not really deal with identity, so these issues don’t come up for [him] in a research context.”

As Dr. Inbar studies issues of morality, social attitudes, and political ideology, including how moral psychology shapes prejudice (e.g., Inbar et al., 2009; Inbar et al., 2012), it was deeply troubling to hear that he does not believe identity (i.e., individual background as it pertains to race, gender, sexuality, class, or ability) has bearing on these research questions. It is our perspective that considerations of identity cannot accurately be disentangled from the study of prejudice and moral behavior, and that disseminating these findings requires a high level of sensitivity to how results might be misrepresented or misunderstood given real-world sociopolitical conditions. For example, a reader might conclude that because an author had framed disgust as a “behavioral immune response,” that disgust and prejudice targeted toward gay people might be acceptable, natural, or inevitable; it is the responsibility of researchers to dismiss such possibilities. Dr. Inbar’s responses call into question not only his implicit and explicit biases on an interpersonal level, but with respect to his research. A systemic failure to consider the objective fact that groups experience certain phenomena and interactions differentially is an ongoing issue which the field of Psychology is actively working to overcome, and his response leads us to believe he does not understand and/or appreciate the importance of this issue as one of intellectual merit.

The January 23rd graduate student meeting also raised concerns regarding Dr. Inbar’s mentorship priorities. When probed about his mentoring experiences with underrepresented minority (URM) individuals, he shared that his primary approach to supporting graduate students generally is one where he “just asks what’s going on because graduate students will tend to tell you.” This response leads us to believe that he does not appreciate the importance of power dynamics or invisible barriers that prevent students from feeling empowered to advocate for themselves, particularly students from URM backgrounds. Finally, we were deeply troubled to discover that, following this graduate student meeting, he attended a dinner with faculty where he labeled a graduate student who is a woman of color as “intense” in response to her questions about DEI efforts. This incident raises overwhelming concerns regarding how he perceives and handles interactions with students of marginalized backgrounds.

As a Social Area and Psychology Department more broadly, we wholeheartedly support DEI efforts from faculty and students. This is self-evident in departmental rhetoric that asserts [“The Department is committed to fostering a positive climate for diversity for students, staff, and faculty in Psychology. Students with concerns about equity, diversity, or inclusion are encouraged to seek out support or guidance from their mentors, advisors, and anyone in Department leadership.”](#) This commitment must be continuous and prioritized when making decisions such as hiring. All job candidates should be held to these high expectations, and are expected to contribute positively and actively to making real the culture and climate we aspire to for the Department. We cannot set aside these values for the sake of a partner hire, even if this impacts [REDACTED] decision to work here.

Given the express priority of our university to consider DEI efforts and experiences in the faculty search and hiring process, we are adamant that the hiring committee enforce UCLA’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Office message that [“the UCLA Faculty Search Process plays a critical role in our ability to successfully recruit the best talent and to realize our collective commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion”](#) by electing to not extend a job offer to Dr. Yoel Inbar.

Signed,

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