

Timmy King's Position Paper on the George Floyd Statement (and ensuing matters)

Background

On June 9, 2020 – the following statement was issued to the press...

"AMC Statement on George Floyd and Racism

Cognizant of our responsibilities as the elected and appointed officers of American Mensa, we reaffirm Mensa's Constitution, which states that "Mensa encompasses members representing many points of view. Consequently, Mensa as an organization shall not express an opinion as being that of Mensa ... or have any ideological, philosophical, political, or religious affiliations."

However, we recognize that many of our members feel — as do we — the same outrage over the death of George Floyd, and all the other incidents of which his death was emblematic. We honor the public outcry and responses that are now changing the world. As Mensans, as human beings, we abhor racism, abuse of positions of authority, and institutionalized inequality. We recognize that such issues have been endemic to societies worldwide for a long time.

Mensa's Constitution states our purposes: "to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity; to encourage research into the nature, characteristics, and uses of intelligence; and to provide a stimulating intellectual and social environment for our members." Further, it lays out our policy that "Intelligence should be used for the benefit of humanity."

We also echo our long-held policy that "bigotry and prejudice are antithetical to the nature of American Mensa." We welcome healthy conflict of opinion, but we take seriously occasions when those differences overflow into personal attack or abuse of any kind. We believe that Mensans, and people in general, can and should disagree without being disagreeable.

To that end, we pledge to work within the organization we lead to eradicate any such abuses of people. We have already begun work on making changes, but Mensa is a society of equals: all intelligent, all opinionated. We ask for our members' input on how we can make those changes positive for them and for the organization."

The statement caused a firestorm of discussion in the Mensa on-line communities. Many people attacked it and many defended it.

At the annual business meeting on July 25, 2020 – the Chairman made the following statement...

"A statement was released in June regarding racism and bigotry in light of what is happening in the world around us.

This statement was a promise to the membership that we are going to look inward and follow our current rules about racism and bigotry being antithetical to Mensa.

There has already been a lot of discussion and changes to our committee structure and membership of those committees.

There is currently discussion on the AMC on how to integrate diversity and inclusion into our decision making so that we can support those members who have been set aside, ignored, or harassed.

Inclusivity will make our organization stronger and provide a better experience for all of our members.

My only regret in making this statement is that I did not provide the opportunity for each AMC member to list their name on this statement if that was their desire.

The statement was from members of the AMC not the organization, no matter how some Mensans have tried to change the intent by subverting the words that were stated.

We've had to make some very difficult decisions on issues that we've never been faced with as an organization.

This is not business as usual.

Please be patient with the board members and your local leadership as we work through this, I know there is a lot going on."

At the AMC meeting on September 12, 2020:

- The AMC passed an "Affirmation of Mensa Constitution"
- A member of the board resigned as a result of the aforementioned events

Questions and Answers

If you were AMC Chair at that time, would you have supported that Press Statement?

Absolutely not.

1. No AMC in the history of American Mensa has issued such a public statement about current events.
2. If this AMC decided that this issue was so critical that they needed to break the aforementioned precedent; they should have made certain that the wording clearly and unequivocally was NOT the opinion of American Mensa.
They missed that mark by a country mile.
3. The manner in which it was executed and communicated to our members was a typically poor example of what we have seen in recent years.
Even though it was (intended to be) a statement from the members of the AMC and only members of the AMC, it affected every member. Yet it was done without input from the membership or advance notification that it would happen.
When there was a major, immediate pushback from members; the Chairperson's response was to accuse members of being subversive.

I understand why the members of the AMC were so passionate about this topic. I share that passion in many ways.

But if elected Chairman, I believe that my public actions should reflect the beliefs of the community as a whole.

I support the Mensa Constitution and the principle that Mensa as an organization does not have any ideological, philosophical, political, or religious affiliations.

Did the AMC violate the Mensa Constitution?

Did you support the recall campaign?

No.

Whoever wrote the press statement made an effort to explain that it was not an official American Mensa opinion. They did a mediocre job.

That doesn't mean we need a revolution.

AMC members have decades of valuable volunteer experience in American Mensa. They have earned our respect, even if/when we completely and totally disagree with them.

I wish that 1, or 2 or 3 people would stand up and say, "We are the authors." But they have not. Thus far it is a statement from the entire AMC (except the one person who resigned his post because he was not given the option to withdraw).

But the press statement and subsequent AMC actions are not the biggest problems in American Mensa. I believe it is in our best interest to move forward and focus our efforts on other, more critical issues in American Mensa.

At the 9/12 meeting, would you have voted in favor of the Affirmation of Mensa Constitution?

No.

The AMC Chair traditionally abstains from voting unless there is a tie. It is easy for me to say that I would abstain.

In the unlikely event that the vote was tied, I would have voted No. The motion was unnecessary and not a valuable use of time.

I believe that the vote was intended to appease members who were upset about June 9th press statement. It ended up being an awkward discussion and a general waste of time.

It put AMC members in the uncomfortable position where anything but a “YEA” vote could be interpreted as disagreeing with the Mensa Constitution.