

ASA Advocacy Policy

Overview

The ASA has lacked a formal advocacy policy to guide its advocacy activities. The current ASA Policies and Procedures manual (Jan. 2021) has a statement of the activities but lacks a clear mission for the Committee and does not comport with the ways the Committee currently operates in practice. Because of the nature of the issues requiring advocacy, a timely response is often critical to the relevance of the advocacy statement. The establishment of a formal advocacy policy will assist the ASA with formulating more timely responses to emerging issues. It will also allow for clarity with Affiliate and Coordinate organizations, as well as other ASA members (and non-members) who may want to request that the ASA issue or support advocacy statements. In addition, the ASA Secretariat has already been taking the lead on advocacy regarding funding and membership and it is agreed that the Advocacy Committee may in the future take on a greater role in these activities.

Policy

The ASA engages in advocacy to raise general awareness about the field of African Studies, to ensure the continued funding and support of African Studies within institutes of Higher Education, and to address ethical, academic freedom, and human rights issues relevant to the field.

The ASA achieves its advocacy agenda by issuing position statements and letters to officials, participation in coalitions such as ACLS and the Council for International Education, and outreach to the media.

The ASA core advocacy agenda is defined through the following:

- 1) The “Ethical Conduct Guidelines” adopted by the Board of Directors on June 23, 2015
- 2) The ASA Policy Statement Concerning Academic Freedom
- 3) The ASA Policy Statement Concerning Human Rights

The ASA may advocate and release formal statements only on issues that directly relate to one of these three policies or which are directly relevant to the field of African Studies.

The decision to issue or support advocacy statements will be at the discretion of the ASA Advocacy Committee and approved by the ASA Executive Committee or the Board. The Committee may issue or support a statement in the following circumstances and based on the following process:

1. The ASA Secretariat may draft policy statements from time to time and bring these to the ASA Executive Committee for approval by electronic vote. To ensure the timely response to emerging issues, all advocacy statements will be approved via an email vote, with non-response within a four (4) day time period considered to be consent with the issuance of the statement. A majority vote may be required for approval.



African Studies Association

2. Requests for the ASA to engage in advocacy can be generated by ASA members for consideration by the Association's leadership. All requests for advocacy should be sent to the Chair of the ASA Advocacy Committee to evaluate the potential for advocacy. The Chair will convene the Advocacy Committee within 48 hours, or at the latest four (4) days, for a response, either by electronic vote or via virtual meeting (when required). The Chair and the ASA Secretariat will utilize all appropriate means to attain input from the Committee and votes and provide timely responses to all requests.
3. Requests for advocacy may come from one of two sources: ASA Affiliate or Coordinate organizations can generate statements for consideration by the Committee, or at least 10 ASA members may generate a statement regarding an issue or individual circumstance requiring the Advocacy Committee's attention. In either case, the request should include documentation of the advocacy issue so that the Advocacy Committee members have the information at hand to evaluate the relevance to the ASA Policy guidelines stated above (ethical, academic freedom, and human rights issues relevant to the field of African Studies). When all materials have been provided, and if the Advocacy Committee determines that the statement should be endorsed or written by the ASA, the Chair of the Advocacy Committee will forward it to the ASA Executive Committee within one week for their review, approval and dissemination. The Advocacy Committee and the Secretariat may take the necessary steps to verify the authenticity and accuracy of any statement to be endorsed by the ASA.
4. In some cases, coordinate and affiliate organizations may want to issue a statement independently of the ASA Board. They may do so as long as they clearly indicate that they act in their own capacity and not on behalf of the ASA Secretariat or Executive Committee.
5. ASA may sign statements of other academic organizations like ASAA, ACLS, AHA, etc.