

## **A Call for a Robust Anti-Racist Action Plan from All Professional Geoscience Societies and Organizations**

We, the undersigned, appreciate that many geoscience societies<sup>1</sup> have written statements referring to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Julius Jones, Belly Mujinga, Tony McDade, João Pedro, Willie Simmons, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, Kendrick Johnson, Tamir Rice, Darren Rainey, Darrius Steward (and sadly the list goes on... and on... and on...) and other Black People in the United States as well as the systemic racism plaguing our society. We also value initiatives – such as Geological Society of America’s On to The Future and Paleontological Society’s anti-racism resources – that were built in recognition of the significant lack of diversity in the geosciences and its many professional societies.

At the same time, we humbly but firmly demand all geoscience societies and organizations **take concrete action against racism** – particularly the anti-Black racism that plagues our community – because written and/or oral denouncement does not go far enough. Those of us – especially white and otherwise privileged geoscientists – who have been mostly silent must take advantage of the following action plan to engage in meaningful anti-racism and not be complicit in racism, discrimination, and inaction any longer.

Some societies have gone further with their statements than others. The Paleontological Society, for example, posted their support for #BlackLivesMatter and anti-racism on their home page. In contrast, the Geological Society of America (GSA) posted a statement on the GSA message board, hidden behind multiple clicks, instead of featuring it on the front page of the GSA website. Other societies – like the American Geophysical Union (AGU), Society for Exploration Geophysicists, and the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography – failed to specifically reference anti-Black racism. Even worse, some societies – for example the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) – have been uncomfortably silent. At this time of much-needed solidarity, most society and organization responses to their Black membership mirror similar unsupportive responses toward other minoritized communities (e.g., people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, foreign nationals, women, Latinx, and Indigenous People). Thus, a statement of solidarity is a simple first step towards a commitment to equity.

**“In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist.” - Angela Y. Davis**

What does it mean for a professional society or organization to be anti-racist and equitable to all members? For a start, they will continually ask AND answer difficult but important questions: Who benefits from the institution’s status quo? Who is left out? Who continues to hold power?

---

<sup>1</sup> Geological Society of America, American Geophysical Union, Paleontological Society, Association of Women Geoscientists, European Geosciences Union, Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography, National Association of Geoscience Teachers, Society of Economic Geologists, American Meteorological Society, American Association of Geographers, Earth Science Women’s Network, GeoLatinas, Society of Exploration Geophysicists, Geochemical Society

Who feels safe, who does not feel safe, and why? Who do we want to attract to and retain in our societies and organizations? For those that want to strive toward anti-racism and equity, we demand the enactment of the following action plan, including development of work groups and timelines for implementation:

1. **Post anti-racism statements publicly and accessibly, and incorporate anti-racism into codes of ethics.** As an example, all organizations and societies should post anti-racism statements on public-facing websites.
2. **All members and all levels of leadership, in particular, should actively work to understand the lived experiences** of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other minoritized groups including how racism and discrimination have impacted their ability to succeed and feel belonged in the geosciences and other science disciplines. Societies should invest in hiring Black, Indigenous, and Latinx experts on issues related to minoritized groups (e.g. Black anti-racism experts, sexual harassment and anti-bias experts, bystander intervention trainers) to offer ongoing training to educate leaders and members on the identification and removal of structural and implicit biases within the geosciences.
3. **Identify ways each society and organization has previously failed Black, Indigenous, and Latinx People and other minoritized groups both structurally and individually.** Consider the ways they have failed in protecting, supporting, mentoring, and retaining members of these groups to correctly identify how to make progress with specific actions. In addition to the national organizations, this is especially salient in local and regional chapters of societies, where organizations can leverage and learn from the diverse experiences of members in their local chapters. Through listening to these local communities, local and regional chapters may serve Black, Indigenous, and Latinx People and other minoritized groups in ways that are relevant to their needs.
4. **Interrogate written policies and procedures to identify bias, then revise and redesign policies and evaluation criteria to be anti-discriminatory.** For example, procedures for becoming a GSA or AGU Fellow are biased against anyone who does not know an existing Fellow. Lengthy nomination procedures also put an undue burden on minoritized people who generally have fewer connections within the larger primarily white community.
5. **Question unspoken rules.** Racism and other forms of discrimination can manifest in unspoken “rules” as well. These rules often dictate how members are expected to behave, what is considered professional attire and hair, and what passes for appropriate language and diction. Societies should reflect on how these rules negatively impact Black, Indigenous, and Latinx People and other minoritized groups.
6. **Acknowledge and address the impacts of historical and ongoing exploitation in the geosciences.** The colonialist project of exploration and exploitation has negatively

impacted – including death and loss of land – Indigenous people in North America and all over the world. Geologic exploration has also been used to take natural resources (e.g., rare rock, mineral, and fossil samples) to populate US museums and private collections, instead of respecting the autonomous rights of indigenous communities and nations to their natural resources. Furthermore, modern-day geology is pervaded by a research model which extracts geological knowledge from remote locations with little to no respect for, engagement with, or participation by Indigenous communities. This research model is racist and exploitative and limits the scope of science done to a narrow band of questions solely dictated by the white majority. We must affirm that achieving robust representation of Indigenous communities in our research community will improve our science and must take action to ensure this.

7. **Acknowledge environmental injustice in geoscience**, including the disproportionate lack of funding for environment-focused work compared to hydrocarbon (petroleum, gas and coal) and mineral mining. Geoscience is intimately tied to fossil fuels, mining, environmental contamination, atmospheric pollution, water quality, natural hazards, parks and tourism, and climate change. Black, Indigenous, and Latinx People and other minoritized groups are disproportionately impacted by limited access to these resources, and the negative impacts of each of these. In addition, although these sectors have helped to attract Black, Indigenous, and Latinx People and other minoritized groups into geosciences, societies should recognize, acknowledge and work to resolve the fact that Black, Indigenous, and Latinx People and other minoritized groups are often the first to leave these industries during downturns. This means minoritized communities do not always have people within industries to advocate for and sponsor them.
8. **Acknowledge the inequities inherent to field work while affirming that cutting-edge geoscience happens in many different spaces.** Black, Indigenous, and Latinx People and other minoritized groups are not safe in the field – because of traditions and systemic discrimination and racism in place in our discipline, country, and world. A glaring example is that Black geoscientists are not safe to engage in fieldwork everywhere that white and other privileged geoscientists are able to. Whereas, a white geologist with a rock hammer will be seen as “safe”, a Black geologist may be seen as a threat. Holding “suspicious” objects has been used as a defense to call the police on Black People in recent history and it has led to the death of unarmed Black individuals, purely because of racial profiling, discrimination, and unjustified fear of Black People. Field work requirements for degree attainment also inherently block many disabled people, poor people, and women from engaging in geoscience work due to limited accessibility, harassment, and expense. Societies can lead by disseminating best practices to make all field programs safe for and accessible to everyone. They should also encourage the reevaluation of training requirements for rising geoscientists. Indeed, cutting-edge geoscience happens not only in the field but in laboratories, on computers, and in classrooms.

9. **Address issues of workplace culture that are active threats to safety, wellbeing, and careers, and acknowledge, address, and promote the safety and success of** Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other minoritized geoscientists and students who have been historically marginalized in education and the workplace. Professional organizations can bring their power to bear on universities, colleges, and other academic spaces to enact change. By creating no-tolerance policies, societies and organizations are holding academics accountable for their actions and inactions.
10. Geoscience societies and organizations must **actively advocate and create accountability for income parity for Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other minoritized geoscientists**, especially women, trans, genderqueer, and disabled geoscientists of color.
11. **Actively diversify nominations and awards committees** who in turn work to nominate diverse Board members, Leadership candidates, Committee chairs, and awards recipients. Purposefully populate Boards and Chairships with Black, Indigenous, and Latinx, and other minoritized geoscientists and students to be better representative of the membership and ensure all voices are heard.
12. **Actively recruit and pay** Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other minoritized geoscientists as journal editors and reviewers, session conveners, and mentorship event participants. This pay is partially in recognition of the reparations due to all Black and Indigenous People.
13. **Directly sponsor networking events** for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other minoritized geoscientists at **all** meetings and other large gatherings. Financial hardship is a reality for many Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other minoritized students and professionals. Societies and organizations should be doing the utmost to remove financial barriers to events which often result in career-advancing conversations and connections.
14. **Publish annual, data-rich reports** of the self-reported, intersectional demographics of members, including demographic data about who is getting awards and who is engaged in leadership in the organization. These reports should be made publicly available and accessible through an annual evaluation. As scientists we know the value of data and must measure progress on properly serving and retaining Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other minoritized geoscientists using data driven methods.
15. **Finally, organizations should no longer relegate “Diversity” to non-technical sessions or fireside chats**, but should actively elevate discussions on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access, and Justice to well-attended spaces. Keynote Symposia, Presidential Addresses, and Awards Ceremonies should acknowledge and feature a truly diverse array of speakers representative of the technical community. When these sessions are relegated to secondary time slots or buildings or are scheduled simultaneous with other

sessions of interest, attendees are more likely to be members of minoritized groups and allies. **Non-minoritized members need to know that they are expected to show up.**

### ***Individual Signatories***

Hendratta Ali, *GSA Culture Task Force, SEG-WNC Advisory Board*

Erika Amir-Lin, *Geoscientist*

Jennifer Bauer, *Museum Professional, PaleoSoc Communications & Development Committees*

Rocío P. Caballero-Gill, *Co-Founder & Executive Officer - GeoLatinas, GSA Culture Task Force*

Julia Cisneros, *Leadership Council - GeoLatinas*

Kim M. Cobb, *ADVANCE Professor*

Dipa Desai, *Graduate Student*

Maitri Erwin, *SEG (exploration) Foundation Board and Women's Network Committee Advisory Board*

Heather L. Ford, *Lecturer*

Diana Fregoso-Sanchez, *Graduate Student*

Lis Gallant, *Leadership Council - GeoLatinas, GSA Culture Task Force*

Nicole Gasparini, *GSA Fellow*

Jennifer B. Glass, *Assoc. Professor*

Kiara Jeannelle Gomez, *GSA Culture Task Force*

Erik Haroldson, *SEG (economic) Fellow*

Benjamin A. Keisling, *Postdoctoral Fellow, AGU Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee*

Joe Kopera, *Geoscientist*

Julie Libarkin, *GSA Fellow, GSA Diversity Committee*

Robert Mahon, *Geoscientist, Academic*

Erika Marín-Spiotta, *Professor; Leadership Council - Earth Science Women's Network*

Allison Mattheis, *Academic*

Joseph Panzik, *Geoscientist*

Victor J. Ricchezza, *Geoscientist*

Blair Schneider, *Associate Researcher and Science Outreach Manager, Chair of SEG Women's Network Committee*

Sarah Sheffield, *GSA Fellow*

Dave R. Stegman, *Geoscientist*

Anonymous, *Latinx Neuroscientist*

Elizabeth K. Thomas, *Assistant Professor*

Leiaka Welcome, *Graduate Student*

Jane Willenbring, *GSA Fellow*