URGE
Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for Bowdoin EOS Pod Deliverable #4

This is what the Bowdoin EOS Pod at Bowdoin College found on Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

Pods may have members from a range of career stages and involvement in the development and execution of research projects, and pod members may have different experiences or different perspectives when responding to these questions. Consider this in the summary document and focus on capturing responses that are representative of the range in your pod.

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:**
  - In South Africa, we worked with geoscientists from the CGS (USGS equivalent), my closest contact was Coloured (multi-racial ethnic group), most were white men (born in South Africa). We also worked with several SA academics, also mostly white men (mostly European-American). And for one of my two field seasons I worked with a black South African Msc student from Limpopo. While driving around and through 100s of village communities, I would often use local knowledge to help me find the rocks I was interested in targeting. This was 100% extractive. I had semi formal permission from the govt (CGS), and not formal at all permission from the locals - I had to checkin with a local leader - most often the owner of the general store. However, this was to avoid trouble, I provided nothing in return in the way of data sharing or collaboration. Mostly, I just hung out with the local kids who were like "who is the weird white lady with a car". So again, very extractive, not collaborative, though insanely useful for me to have local insight and to work with a field assistant that spoke two of the more common languages in SA besides English: isiZulu and Sesotho sa Leboa.

- **What worked well in these interactions?**
  - *E.g. Using local names for landmarks or features, adhering to restrictions and customs such as not scheduling outreach meetings/events during hunting season*
  - *Start with official channels of permission*

- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
  - *E.g., We did not include priorities of local communities of color when developing our proposal, and to address this in the future we will include community member(s) in the early stages of proposal planning and writing as collaborators*

- ⊄ *In a research proposal (specifically Haiti EPGFZ project) adding in local collaborators as a last minute box checking activity rather than incorporating them into the development of the project and the decision making surrounding whether the questions asked are relevant, of interest, or what questions / preexisting knowledge might be missing.*
- ⊄ *Engage local collaborators early, often, and in a meaningful way.*

- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
  - ⊄ *E.g., Work with and compensate community members to translate research results and outreach materials into local language, include acknowledgements in forthcoming publications and presentations*
  - ⊄ *Well the Haiti EPGFZ project was not funded by Nat Geo so I have a chance to rethink how to engage collaborators and to actually try to get that feedback as I reassess and try to rethink the project. Honestly, this process is likely to kep to designing a project more grounded in reality than the previous one. If I don't make an effort to do this work it's probably best to let this project go right now.*
  - ⊄

- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**
  - ⊄ *E.g., Additional support/funding for early planning process of projects to include forming productive and mutually beneficial connections with communities, establish a point of contact for interfacing with communities so as not to overwhelm with individual requests from researchers and collaborators*
  - ⊄ *Secure permissions from local landowners prior to access to ensure safe access for all our students*
  - ⊄ *Describe our process for getting access – we are not trespassing*
  - ⊄ *Acknowledge indigenous land rights*
  - ⊄ *Develop a field safety protocol that considers risks for students of color*
  - ⊄ *Develop a response to how we will handle situations where we find ourselves in a challenging situation*
    - ■ *Ex: seeing a confederate flag in field locations in Maine*
  - ⊄ *Make sure students know the field trip is not a test (in some cases, the field trip IS a test, so I'm not sure this is fair to say)*

Guidelines from my other Pod:

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Policy for working with communities of color (based on Dr. Aarons and Dr. Cochran's best practices):

- Do your research- Know whose lands your work is occupying. If you are seeking out to work with these communities do your research about them beforehand, it is not their job to teach you everything about their history.
- Plan ahead- Collaboration doesn't mean reaching out to put a native person's name on your proposal at the last minute - you can write the proposal after getting all collaborators on board so that voices from the communities you are working with have equal say in the project. Get permission from communities to do work. This work takes more time, so be sure that you're giving yourself enough time to authentically engage all partners in the research,
- Give credit- Make sure you are not checking off a box by adding an indigenous researcher to your proposal. Compensate them, add them as authors to all papers and talks associated with the work.
- Make a true collaboration- Incorporate traditional knowledge into your research where you can, design the study such that the information is mutually beneficial to everyone involved, listen to community members and their pre-existing knowledge when designing your study.
- Ethics- Be kind and act with humility. Make sure research is not exploitative of communities of color, respect the community's ownership of data and acquire permission for use in publishing. Share the final product as openly with the community as possible.