



*Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE; [www.urgeoscience.org](http://www.urgeoscience.org)) is a community-wide journal-reading and policy-design curriculum to help Geoscientists unlearn racism and improve accessibility, justice, equity, and inclusion (AJEDI) in our discipline. URGE's primary objectives are to (1) deepen the community's knowledge of the effects of racism on the participation and retention of black, brown, and indigenous people in Geoscience<sup>1</sup>, (2) use the existing literature, expert opinion, and personal experiences to develop anti-racist policies and strategies<sup>2,3</sup>, and (3) share, discuss, and modify anti-racist policies and strategies within a dynamic community network and on a national stage. By meeting these objectives, we hope that Geoscience departments and societies will be able to implement a well-researched crowdsourced group of anti-racist policies.*

### **Deliverable - Policies for Working with Communities of Color**

Education is essential but action is also imperative for achieving the objectives of URGE. Therefore, each topic is paired with concrete deliverables for the individual pods to develop, draft, and share. This deliverable is *policies and plans for working with communities of color*.

Geosciences has strong roots in colonialism, with targeted expeditions that leverage local knowledge to accumulate valuable observations to be later analyzed and disseminated at home institutions with little to no collaboration or follow up with those previous contacts. The western approach continues in present day science; it will take recognition and commitment to change. Examples in the Session 4 readings include Indigenous, Arctic, and/or other international communities, but exploitation can also occur in non-Indigenous domestic communities of color.

Building productive relationships takes time. Laying a foundation of awareness, feedback, and buy-in is a start, but true inclusion goes beyond a "seat at the table." Approaching an issue from different perspectives, not just the western or academic standard, acknowledges that there are multiple ways of knowing. The time and effort invested upfront can lead to more meaningful and impactful results, for example considering language barriers to earthquake shaking accounts<sup>4</sup>, including perspectives of Indigenous communities in climate assessments and reports<sup>5</sup>, and addressing environmental racism through environmental justice<sup>6</sup>.

*The discussion questions below may not all be relevant or applicable to your pod, but we encourage you to think about how these can be addressed in the organizations or institutions you interact with as well as the broader geoscience field.*

---

If you are involved in research with communities of color, in the US or abroad, have you...

**Actively sought out local collaborators / liaisons / guides? Why or why not? ○ Were they included in the early development and/or proposal of the research or project itself, or added at a later stage?**

- **Were any local collaborators included as authors on presentations and/or papers?**

*Summary:* Groups in our department range from involving communities of color in every step of their research to not involving communities at all. Most people in our department do not involve non-academic communities in our research.

*Recommendation:* Department should have a framework or training program to think about how to engage communities of color which students and faculty participate in at the beginning of research projects.

***Actively sought to include local students in your research? Why or why not?***

*Summary:* Most people involve undergraduates in their research and some groups involve local high school students. The people that did not include local students did not have the means to reach out themselves. People that did include local students value working with and mentoring local students.

*Recommendation:* Consider creation of positions or pots of money to specifically engage local students and education on different pots of money that are already available for including local students in research.

**Sought to build trust and form long-term connections and collaborations with local institutions if your project is multi-year / ongoing? Why or why not?**

- **Were previous negative interactions, whether from inside or outside of your organization, addressed in the plans for building these connections and trust?**

*Summary:* Many people in our department work with local government and local non-profits regularly. One main reason is to enable maintenance of long term field sites.

**Shared data and findings with the local/regional community in a way that is more accessible? (i.e., translating into different languages). Why or why not?**

*Summary:* Many students in our group intend to do this, but there isn't a built-in framework within our department to do this. This is not highly valued in our department making it challenging for graduate students to follow through with this.

*Recommendation:* Department should place a greater emphasis on valuing translation of research through requirements for PhD students and faculty.

**Educated yourself and your group/team about local politics, culture, customs, and knowledge, including the history of colonialism / settler colonialism in the region? Why or why not?**

- **Was sufficient time allocated to the process of working within the community's governance, customs, and priorities?**
- **Is respecting culture and customs included as part of your code of conduct? *This***

***will be addressed in Session 6 as well.***

*Summary:* Some people in our community are educating themselves about local politics, culture, customs, and knowledge but there are no formal mechanisms or encouragement to do so from the institution.

*Recommendation:* Push for environmental justice policy and an environmental justice hire within our department.

### **Acknowledged local communities / Indigenous tribes in your research results?**

*Summary:* Most of us do not do this currently, but this is something we could easily implement individually.

*Recommendation:* DEI Committee should share a how-to document on how to do this properly.

### **Included local communities in your broader impacts in a meaningful way that builds on the community's identified needs and concerns?**

- **Did these efforts leverage community members, and was that work compensated appropriately?**

*Summary:* Most of the people answering this are not at a career stage where they have spent a lot of time on broader impacts.

*Recommendation:* There is a need for faculty in our department to establish relationships with the communities they work with in order to identify needs of communities.

### **Considered and prioritized research questions and research locations based on needs of local communities, in addition to how impactful they are seen within academia?**

*Summary:* Graduate students within our department are interested in being guided by the needs of the communities where they work, but are limited by timescale and working on problems that are available, convenient, or that flow from prior research.

*Recommendation:* Make a curricular requirement or programmatic intervention to make sure graduate students are asked or supported in learning about what the needs are. For example, asking about it during the Qualifying Exams, or in early coursework or orientation, or to articulate as a value and incorporate into new faculty hires.

### **Overall Recommendation to Department**

The department should have a guidebook for ways to engage stakeholders and communities of color. This could be accomplished via a DEI committee task force. We also encourage the

## BU E&E URGE Pod 1 - Session 4 Deliverable

department & DEI committee to think critically about what it means to engage when you don't have a local constituency. Pair a guidebook with training and institutional requirements around working with local communities. Try to get the department to more rigorously engage stakeholder communities.

*Recommendation for URGE:* Make clearer whether we should be focusing on working with communities of color or with the local community. This is not a synonym in Boston. There are a lot of initiatives to work with the city of Boston at BU, but not a lot of initiatives around working with communities of color specifically. Environmental justice is not a main focus of the department currently.