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Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for University/Organization - Example Deliverable

This is what was found by Science and Research Pod at Carnegie Museum of Natural History 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.

I asked for experiences across Science & Research, Marketing, and Education, but did not get full feedback or response. Responses are color-coded by department or section:

Anthropology

Powdermill

Earth Sciences

Mollusks

Herpetology

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:**
 - There have been many projects undertaken in countries or regions with communities of color. Notably the section of Anthropology supported field work in South America, the Arctic, and the Caribbean both archaeological and cultural throughout the 1980s and 1990s. All of these projects included participation from local communities either in a paid labor or an anthropological consultation position. In addition, smaller projects have been conducted in North American Indigenous communities, this can include Deb Harding's work with the Cherokee and the museum's active NAGPRA work. The museum maintained a short lived "Artists in residence program" to which we brought in an indigenous Alaskan Carver, Andean Weavers from Peru, and members of a local Black non-profit artisan group called the "Ujamaa Collective" <https://www.ujamaacollective.org/>
 - Indigenous consultation on curation of Alcoa Hall
 - John Wenzel. Eight years of one-week workshops in Brazil training graduate students in phylogenetic analysis (about 300 students total)
 - John Wenzel and team. Seven years of two-week workshops at Powdermill for Latin American ecology students (105 students total). Grant supported, students paid no fee.

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- Luke DeGroot, Annie Lindsay, and team. One one-week workshop for advanced ornithologists from Latin America (13 students). Grant supported, students paid no fee. Second and third offerings suspended by COVID
- Note that I haven't been at CMNH longterm so my interactions are not related to CMNH specifically. I did field work in SE Idaho where I worked with US Forest Service employees and private contractors managing of National Forest lands. This area is near the current Shoshone Bannock Tribes, though I had no interaction with the tribes. I did contact someone to investigate working with the tribes for a followup project, however I was somewhat dissuaded of pursuing it based on the fact that I had minimal/no experience working with tribes previously. That project was not funded, and therefore I was not able to continue pursuing it.
- My research is also related to environmental health and human health implications. Specifically, there are significant health disparities due to proximity to pollutants and preferential siting of plants and increased pollution in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods and neighborhoods dominated by BIPOC communities. Though I have not yet, I would like to work with these communities when developing projects to ensure that those research goals align with interests of community members. I would also like to include people from the community in the research, if possible.
- Volunteers. Section of mollusks works with a tremendous number of volunteers (before the pandemic around 25-30 volunteers per week, now about 7 per week). I know that our discussions from last week encouraged us to PAY workers, so at first glance, it looks ingenuous for me to brag about volunteers, but many of these volunteers don't care about the money; many of them are (well-educated) spouses (usually female) of foreign professors or students who aren't allowed to work for pay, are BORED, and are happy to have an opportunity to make a positive difference. And I pay the white volunteers equally with the POC volunteers (they all get zero dollars). Over the last 12 years, volunteers have included 2 African Americans, 6 SE Asians, 4 Indians (Asians), 3 Latinos, and 71 whites (primarily N American but also European). Non-race statistics on those volunteers include 48 female 41 male (several of those LGBTQ), and 3 people with visible disabilities. No stats on age, but current volunteers range from 14 to 92 years old.
- Work Study. For Work Study students since about 2004, we have had 2 African American, 1 Indian (Asian), 1 Latino, 1 Middle-Eastern, 1 SE Asian, and 60 white students. 40 female 26 male.
- Tours. I don't keep these kinds of statistics for behind the scenes tours (before pandemic we were running 4 half hour tours on the 2nd Saturday of each month, plus lots of misc tours), but we welcome African Americans and other PoCs on our tours and they seem to enjoy the tours at least as much as the white participants; everybody groans at my bad puns equally. The only time I balk at giving someone a tour is if it is just one female (regardless of race); then I am concerned about her comfort (given that I am male), so I really try hard to get additional people to join the tour, or encourage her to come back for another tour with more people.

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- a) it's legally required by the government of Malaysia and b) it's just good practice. I can't imagine going to another country and NOT seeking out local collaborators/liaisons/guides.
- I have not translated things into Malay or Thai, partly because I am not fluent in those languages, and partly because the language of international science is English, and I have focused on getting my results into peer-reviewed journals. I have, however, published in Thai and Singaporean journals, which make their work freely available, so that regional scientists and others can access them.
- While conducting long-term field work, I have given presentations to local communities in a mix of languages (I'm not fluent enough to do it completely in Thai or Malay) about my work.
- More recently, I have started to liaise with Malay school teachers re: outreach projects related to my work
- I have acknowledged individuals that have worked with me, but not the entire communities that they come from, not all communities or indigenous tribes across Sabah. I would like to know what others think about how/when this applies.
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- **What worked well in these interactions?**
 - As Anthropologists, we try to be respectful of everyone's beliefs and customs. The most beneficial thing about all of these interactions is the relationships and open lines of communication that were established.
 - Providing free time for students to speak with instructors one on one, for those who are shy to speak in groups, or shy to speak English (Spanish and Portuguese welcomed).
 - Everyone also wants to buy from Amazon items not available in the home country, so we facilitate that.
 - There weren't really any interactions, unfortunately
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- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
 - At the time that this work was being done regularly, it was not at all regulated. We have no way of fully knowing how our former staff behaved in these communities and whether or not they exploited the communities' time and resources with no benefits to them.
 - When we had an artist in residence program, specifically when the Ujamaa Collective spent an evening demonstrating beading techniques in an event open to the public- there was not sufficient advertising or institutional support and the event was very poorly attended.
 - Cultural dining practices are not easily modified. The schedule for meals and the type of food quickly becomes a sensitive issue when students are expected to persevere, day after day. For example, many Latin Americans want to have a

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big meal in the middle of the day, and then a period of relaxation. This is not compatible with the US standard of a sandwich, and then back to work. They also tend to eat dinner much later than Americans which has at times been difficult for caterers.

- Most Latin American students expect to have maid service, which we do not have. It is important to stress that they must clean up after themselves in the lodging.
 - I would like to include community member(s) in proposal planning and writing as collaborators. I would also like to provide educational/research opportunities for students coming from these communities to work on the research in my lab and develop research projects based on questions that are relevant and important to them.
 - I strongly believe it is every scientist's responsibility to train the next generation of scientists, so I have always hired students or recent grads as field assistants, even in grad school. I have tried to include local students as much as possible because I also believe in capacity building—Malaysia is by some measures a developing country (though this is debatable), so I try to do what I can to help build up the scientific community there. It is challenging, however, because the students there have very different schedules than we do—they have 3 separate 1-month breaks spread throughout the year, rather than having 3 months in the summer. This makes it challenging to hire students as field assistants because my work requires personnel for longer periods of time than they are available.
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- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
 - Deb's work with the digital repatriation of Amazonian cultural Material is a really good example of this. Bringing in the voices of those whose cultural material we are presenting is the logical place to start. Compensation is really important.
 - Regarding the meals, we now intersperse "Latin" style meals with the US style, which apparently helps students put up with US style.
 - In future talks where I discuss the SE Idaho project, I would like to include a land acknowledgement. I would also like to include more context on environmental justice issues related to environmental pollution and human health impacts that preferentially impact lower socioeconomic communities and communities of color.
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- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**

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- Besides these really thoughtful examples there should really be a demand that all work done by BIPOC should be compensated. (Personally, I think that paid internships should be something for the institution to take more seriously and not expect each scientific section to be responsible for from their own operating budgets.)
- After all the experience we have, we are pretty good at making the rough places smooth, but we also want our guests to experience US culture at the same time.
- 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. This would also be helpful because it is often hard to know who to contact to initiate collaborations when you haven't worked with groups before.
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