

## Working with Communities of Color at CU-Boulder

(Due 3/19/21)

This document is a general guidance document and very basic starting point for STEM students at CU-Boulder interested in working with communities of color and/or decolonizing their research. It was compiled by the CU Boulder Grad/Undergrad students URGE pod in March 2021. Importantly, this is by no means a comprehensive or exhaustive resource. Rather, decolonizing our research and training and ethically working with communities of color are career-long pursuits that continually necessitate personal reflection and deep learning and vary depending on your personal identity and research context.

As STEM students at CU-Boulder, we found that these topics are a critical aspect of our studies but not a critical part of our education. **We recommend that:**

- CU Offices related to Engagement and Outreach provide more support to researchers across campus through workshops, resources, and training opportunities
- Units should formalize and require training, resources, and time dedicated to addressing the colonial and extractive history of STEM sciences and building best practices to move forward. Consider developing policies that guide students and faculty through developing relationships and research programmes with Communities of Color.
- PIs should consider how they are training their graduate students to perform ethical research (on colonized lands and/or with communities of color). PIs can consider the guiding questions below and discuss them with their groups and/or students.
- We all work to amplify the work of scholars that have strived to decolonize their research and have engaged ethically with Communities of Color through invited seminars and colloquia. We list a few below.

It is essential to realize that **working with Communities of Color requires TIME, TRUST, and RESPECT**. That means if a community does not want to work with you, that is ok, too. However, the “no” should actually promote self-reflection - perhaps your own research and/or research practices need to change.

**Below we divide resources into sections by subject:**

**Guiding questions. [URGE listed guiding questions](#) to consider that we found were useful as both inroads to reflection and insight into how to move forward.**

If you are involved in (or are interested 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?
- Actively sought to include local students in your research? Why or why not?

- 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?
- 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?
- 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.
- Acknowledged local communities / Indigenous tribes in your research results?
- 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?
- Considered and prioritized research questions and research locations based on needs of local communities, in addition to how impactful they are seen within academia?

**Coursework list. Through personal experiences in our group, we have found that taking courses outside of STEM fields can be an invaluable way to gain insight and an appreciation for the complexity of racism and community engagement. Consider coursework in the Ethnic Studies Department, Sociology, Anthropology, History, and others. Quick searches in the CU Course Catalog found:**

- > 90 courses including "race" AY 2020-2021, primarily in ANTH, ETHN, EDUC, GEOG, HIST, SOCY, WGST
- ~20 courses including "racism" AY 2020-2021
- 25 courses including "indigenous"

**A few courses that we have taken or are aware of are:**

ETHN 4233/5233: Indigenous Environmental Issues

ENVS 3030: Topics in Environmental Social Sciences: Foundation of Environmental Justice

**Reading list. Below we compiled a few resources that can help get started. Recognize there are entire fields of study that address this practice.**

General reading lists

URGE: <https://urgeoscience.org/session-4-racism-and-justice/>

Bryn Mawr Mineral Collection (extensive readings by Geology disciplines and more broadly in STEM): <http://mineralogy.digital.brynmawr.edu/blog/geology-colonialism-reading-list/>

Readings that address decolonizing our research and the history of our colonial and exploitative research:

Smith, Linda T. (2012). Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, 2nd Ed. Zed Books Ltd. London.

Decolonizing Research with John. B. Zoe (podcast):  
<https://www.spreaker.com/user/jayssick/s1e1>

Cannon, Sara E. (2019). Decolonizing Conservation: A Reading List. Zenodo.  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4429220> This is a compilation of different resources that students can use as just a place for background readings or to get more specific information on research related to conservation. This also applies to the two categories below.

Wong, C., Ballegooyen, K., Ignace, L., Johnson, M. J., & Swanson, H. (2020). Towards reconciliation: 10 Calls to Action to natural scientists working in Canada. FACETS, 5(1), 769-783. This is a call to actions paper that gives tangible ways scientists can change the way they work with indigenous communities.

**Researchers. Here are a few researchers that we find seem to be ethically engaged with communities of color. Peruse their websites, presentations, and publications for examples of what this work looks like in the academy. Our opinions only, and there are many more out there!**

- Dr. Lana Tsinnajinnie, University of New Mexico:  
<https://saap.unm.edu/people/faculty/lani-tsinnajinnie/index.html>
- Dr. Na'Taki Osbourne Jelks, Spelman College:  
<https://www.spelman.edu/about-us/sustainable-spelman/green-leaders/nataki-osbourne-jelks>
- Dr. Jennifer Shannon, CU Boulder Dept of Anthropology:  
<https://jenshannonanthro.weebly.com/>
- Dr. Gene-Hua "Crystal" Ng, University of Minnesota and the [Kawe Gidaa-naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin](#) project

**Resources available at CU-Boulder. A number of Offices on campus and unit webpages have links to additional resources, or provide the opportunity to discuss your interests. In general, we found it difficult to find resources and expertise on conducting ethical research with communities of color at CU, both at the University and unit levels. However, this is limited to what's available on the web and not reflective of the depth of knowledge and experience on this campus.**

- [Office of Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement \(ODECE\)](#) does have community partnerships with groups in the the City of Boulder, County of Denver, and surrounding areas. Reach out to learn more.
- [CU Engage](#) focuses on community-based learning and research.
  - Offers a CBR Graduate Fellowship that includes a stipend and “professional development and training” in critical social theory and the roots of community-based participatory research
  - Faculty Fellows in Community-Based Learning (more focused on pedagogy than research)
  - Website provides links to [various resources](#):
    - [Imagining America](#) publications
    - [AMPLIFY](#) podcast highlights university-community collaborations
- The School of Education hosts the “[INVST Community Studies](#)” program, which is a 2-yr program training students how to become effective and responsible community leaders
- The [CU Global Engagement Office](#) seems to be more focused on university-university partnerships, conflicts of interest, international travel
- [CU Office for Outreach and Engagement](#) (part of the Division of Continuing Education)
  - In the [Environmental Sciences and Sustainability “Focus Area.”](#) Office can facilitate connections across campus and with community groups
  - Office hosts an “engaged scholarship listerv” and events to connect researchers and students interested in [Community-Engaged Scholarship](#)
  - Likely most effective to just reaching out to the office.

#### Institute/unit resources

- EBIO
  - Has a “[In the Field](#)” webpage that shows international research projects and highlights their stories, but doesn’t provide any resources for how to do this research ethically
- CIRES
  - [CIRES Ed & Outreach](#) focuses on connecting scientists with K-12 students and teachers and Broader Impacts for scientists
- INSTAAR
  - [New Diversity webpage](#) does have a section on “Decolonizing our research and teaching”