



News fEEB

Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Monthly Newsletter

June 19th, 2020 | Special Issue

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Monthly Discussion

As an EEB community, we have made a Black Lives Matter statement with actions that we plan on committing to in the immediate and ongoing future. How will you hold yourself and others accountable for them? The letter is also in this newsletter pages 4-6.

Want to join the discussion?

Reply to listserv OR tweet out your response while including the #TAMUEEB

Announcements

Starting TODAY Friday, June 19th

Academics for Black Survival and Wellness:
A week of workshops designed for non-Blacks to take antiracist action in academia. Also, mental health resources for Black academics. Find more information at: academics4blacklives.com

Make Juneteenth a national holiday! See information about all the actions going into making it a national holiday in the [Resources Link!](#)

Juneteenth Special Issue

Our goal with this special issue is to maintain the momentum fighting institutionalized racism by highlighting a historical hidden figure from TAMU, sharing anti-racism resources, and reemphasizing the Black Lives Matter Statement posted on our website two weeks ago. Additionally, we want to bring the Juneteenth holiday to everyone's attention. [Juneteenth](#) is a day to celebrate the ending of slavery in America. This day is chosen because more than two years after President Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, Union soldiers had finally made it down to Galveston, Texas to enforce the ending of slavery. Due to the strength of the confederacy in Texas, the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 had little impact on the enforcement of freeing slaves. All should take the time today to read about this holiday and reflect on both past and ongoing racial oppression.

Hashtags to follow on social media to understand the ramifications that racism has in our community:

#BlackInTheIvory #HateIsTheHiddenCoreValue
#RacismAtTAMUFeelsLike #BlackAFinSTEM



For more information visit: eeb.tamu.edu

Hidden Figures of EEB

We would like to highlight Dr. [Jesse Jarue Mark](#) Jr, a Texas native and Texas A&M Prairie View alumnus, who was the first African-American to gain a PhD in Botany in 1935. His dissertation research focused on alfalfa yield due to climate and temperature. You can read his dissertation in detail [here](#). Dr. Mark was a Rockefeller Agriculture Fellow and eventually became the head of the agricultural department at University of Kentucky State Industrial College. We cannot begin to comprehend his added struggles due to race in his journey to his accomplishments, but we can honor him.

We encourage you to take time to reflect on how past and present societal and cultural structures have shaped our fields, and continue to work for a future filled not just with new and exciting discoveries, but hope, equality and justice.

On Campus Resources

Resources for Support:

- TAMU Counseling and Psychological Services Group Counseling: Community of Color (Wednesdays 1:00-2:30pm) <https://caps.tamu.edu/group-counseling-schedule/>
- Self-Care Syllabus for Social Justice Activists: <http://diversity.tamu.edu/Diversity/media/diversity/PDF/A-Self-Care-Syllabus.pdf>
- Black Student Alliance Council: <https://stuactonline.tamu.edu/app/organization/profile/public/id/643>

Resources for Antiracist Education:

- Difficult Dialogues Workshop through Texas A&M University
 - <https://liberalarts.tamu.edu/communication/2019/10/24/encouraging-the-difficult-conversation/>

Resources for Taking Action at TAMU:

- Reporting Hate Crimes at Texas A&M University: <https://stophate.tamu.edu/fileareport/>
- Title IX office and contacts: <https://titleix.tamu.edu/>
- New Task Force on Race Relations: <https://today.tamu.edu/2020/06/17/announcing-task-force-on-race-relations-commission-on-historic-representations/>



For more information visit: eeb.tamu.edu

Off Campus Resources

- Academics for Black Survival and Wellness workshops (June 19-June 26)
 - In addition to workshops, there are additional resources including a list of anti-racist readings and ideas on how to support Black organizations and take action in your community.
<https://www.academics4blacklives.com/>
- Several people within the EEB community have contributed to this long list of resources surrounding academic racism and how to be anti-racist ([anti-racist resource materials here](#)). But here is a list of some of our favorites:
 - “The Emperor’s New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium”- By Joseph L. Graves
 - “Superior: The Return of Race Science” – Angela Saini; “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” – Rebecca Skloot
 - “The Home Place” – J. Drew Lanham
 - “Very Special Episode: BlackAFinSTEM with various Ologists” – Ali Ward Ologies podcast



For more information visit: eeb.tamu.edu



The Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB) community at Texas A&M University is outraged and saddened by the recent high-profile murders and the ongoing violence against the Black community. We stand in solidarity with our Black colleagues, friends and community members in the fight for racial equity and justice. We believe Black lives matter and it is long overdue for us to address these issues within our professional and personal lives.

We acknowledge that systemic, institutionalized, and individual racism is a problem within the ecology and evolutionary biology disciplines. These problems have far reaching consequences as science does not happen in a vacuum and is inherently intertwined with the lives and societies of the scientist. In particular, we recognize that our fields have a problematic history of supporting or ignoring white supremacy, eugenics, and white settler colonialism. To address ongoing inequity in EEB, we need to reckon with this past, amplify Black voices, and take action to increase Black representation.

We encourage the EEB community at Texas A&M and those elsewhere to participate in [the Strike for Black Lives - Shut Down Academia](#) on **June 10th, 2020**. The goal for this day is to hit pause on all non-essential academic work and take action towards eliminating racism. This is not a day off, rather a specific time and place carved out to address long-standing problems in our discipline and university that are long overdue for our attention. This is an opportunity to educate ourselves on the history of anti-Black violence both within our discipline and greater society, to evaluate how we teach about the role of white supremacy and anti-blackness in our courses, to reflect on and revise the mentoring practices and interpersonal dynamics within our research groups, and to make an action plan about how we will engage in anti-racist activities moving forward. We encourage all EEB members to commit to educating themselves on at least one of these topics on this day, whether through discussions in lab groups or independent reading and reflection. Resources and more information about this initiative can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Words are not enough to address the injustices against the Black and Brown communities. Below, we have detailed our action plans for immediate and long-term progress within our EEB community at Texas A&M University.

Items we are taking action on immediately:

- As a community of faculty, post-docs, and graduate students, we will encourage participation in training addressing bias awareness and racism through [Difficult Dialogues](#), or a similar in-person program.
- As an interdisciplinary program at TAMU, our program does not have control over faculty



- hires. However, as a community we will hold our faculty to a high standard of mentorship, particularly the mentorship of underrepresented groups. All EEB faculty will be encouraged to attend in-person training on how to be effective mentors, especially for underrepresented groups. These training programs will be integrated as a way to continuously engage the EEB community in these discussions and reflections.
- Lab leaders within our EEB program will be encouraged to hold a lab meeting discussing action items for their own labs. This meeting will also serve as a safe place to educate all lab members on the language of anti-racism, including, but not limited to, engaging in conversations about equality versus equity and implicit versus explicit biases.
- As a community of faculty, post-docs, and graduate students, we will demand the immediate removal of the Lawrence Sullivan Ross statue from the Academic Plaza. Ross was a Texas Governor, Texas A&M President, and Confederate General. Although history is complex, this statue is a symbol of white supremacy and serves as a rallying cry for modern white supremacists masking behind “tradition”.

Items we are going to take action on as a community long-term:

- Demand TAMU to take action in hiring diverse faculty. Less than 10% of both tenure-track and tenured professors across the university belong to underrepresented groups (Black, Hispanic, Native American/Alaskan Native, [link to data](#)). We think these numbers are abysmal for the largest university (by student enrollment) in the US. As a community we will push for TAMU to allocate resources to increase faculty diversity.
- We are committing to increasing diversity of graduate students in our program and across the university. Of 1,716 graduate student teaching assistants at TAMU, only 2% are Black, 7% are Hispanic, and 0.1% are Native American or Alaskan Native. We are currently creating a committee of faculty and students to address these issues within our departments.
- We will focus on building a more supportive community to increase retention of underrepresented minority groups, such as creating a student-student mentorship program, highlighting university-level cultural clubs, and requiring new students to attend workshops addressing race in the classroom and in the lab.
- We will increase the number of Black and other underrepresented scientists (particularly those that are early career) invited to our EEB department seminars.



In many ways, the goals of academia and science are to contribute to an improved society. We cannot do this without also ensuring equity and inclusion in all aspects of our professional and personal lives. It is not enough to stand in solidarity with the communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. We must also commit to take action. By tackling these issues head-on, we can work to create a more inclusive, diverse and equitable community and produce better science.