

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.