

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE; www.urgeoscience.org) is a community-wide journal-reading and policy-design curriculum to help Geoscientists unlearn racism and improve belonging, accessibility, justice, equity, and inclusion (BAJEDI) 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 Geoscience¹, (2) use the existing literature, expert opinion, and personal experiences to develop anti-racist policies and strategies^{2,3}, and (3) share, discuss, modify, implement, and assess anti-racist policies and strategies within a dynamic community network and on a national stage.

Refining Conversations Module

Paper Title: Strategies for and Barriers to Collaboratively Developing Anti-Racist Policies and Resources as Described by Geoscientists of Color Participating in the Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE) Program

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Summary:

The study focuses on the experiences of geoscientists of color (GoC) that participated in the URGE program

- Aims to describe strategies for and barriers to developing anti-racism policies/resources
- Aims to place GoC experiences in a theoretical framework for what leads to effective collaborations and examine how discussing anti-racism influences aspects of existing theoretical frameworks on collaborations

URGE encouraged:

- Engaging in open dialogue and active listening
 - BIPOC-only discussion group sessions to discuss questions and create safe spaces → URGE evaluated this feedback, and comments to conduct the study and identify significant themes (p. 4,5)
- Sharing personal experiences
 - URGE-wide survey: assess the motivations of participants and their personal experiences to improve the program (p. 5)
 - BIPOC-only survey (p. 6)
- Advocating for institutional change
 - Accountability must come from the “top” → leadership must build trust with GoC and actively practice inclusion (p.8)
- Promoting diversity and inclusion in geoscience
 - Encourage White geoscientists to listen, follow through on actions, hold themselves accountable, and focus on anti-racism conversations (p.8)

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Barriers to effective collaborations include (See p.6-7 for figures recording survey responses):

- Unequal power distributions influence pod decisions and discussions
- Unaddressed microaggressions
- Lack of recognition of how intersectionality/power differentials influence conversations
- Lack of institutional support from leaders and other members
- Limited access to resources and funding for anti-racism work
- Tokenism occurring in groups
- Emotional and mental exhaustion from experiencing and teaching others about racism

Strategies for effective collaborations include:

- Need for strong codes of conduct that groups adhere to
- Leaders who support the work financially and otherwise
- Closing of loopholes in Title IX Education Amendment and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Need moderators who are trained/skilled and rotate with time
- Resist asking GoC to play the primary educator role
- Anonymous and live (in the moment) ways to keep participants accountable
- Deepening relationships between each other and leaders
- Using anti-racism actions to combat a history of mistrust between GoC and White geoscientists and leaders
- White participants should engage in anti-racist discussions that acknowledge their privilege and confront fears of being labeled racist
 - Need for raising awareness of microaggressions
 - Increased support for geoscientists of color
 - Need to focus on action

Suggestions for programs like URGE (p.10):

- Explore limiting group size—the suggested size could vary across institutions
- Continue providing self-care guidance for participating GoC
- Provide legal advice and suggestions for implementing policies and resource
- Advocate for compensation and additional recognition for work done in URGE and similar programs; the work should have products and outcomes that can be included on C.V.s and considered during career promotion and hiring deliberations
- Use storytelling, videos, and social media to highlight the work done by pods.
- Provide additional guidance on good practices for refocussing discussions and redirecting negative comments
- Provide a GoC mentoring program since many institutions are missing this

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- Provide mediators for anti-racism conversations within the workplace
- Provide a description of the purpose for each anti-racist policy and resource on instructions for drafting the anti-racist policy and resource. A description of the purpose for the policies and resources should remind participants why it is essential to work on these policies and resources

Conclusions (p.13):

- Future programs should emphasize training participants on how to discuss racism and create and adhere to codes of conduct
- The effectiveness of collaborations was influenced by the autonomy or accountability dilemma, defined as the difficulty of making decisions due to a tension that emerges from differences between the interests of individuals versus the collective
- The effectiveness of collaborations was influenced by conflict aversion by some participants