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 Geoscience[1], (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. By meeting these objectives, we hope that Geoscience departments and societies will be able to implement a well-researched crowdsourced group of anti-racist policies.

Deliverable - Pod Guidelines

Education is essential, but action is also imperative for achieving the objectives of URGE. Therefore, each URGE topic is paired with deliverables for individual pods to draft and share. *This deliverable is a set of agreed-upon guidelines and group norms (code of conduct) for your pod.*

Before you begin your work as a pod or in any group, it is critical to lay a strong foundation as a group so that all members of the pod can participate and learn. As a group, discuss what you need to ensure a safe, inclusive environment to discuss difficult and potentially controversial issues. This document is an update to the first URGE group norms document. New updates to the initial document are italicized. The section entitled "Five Element Framework for Developing Codes of Conduct" is completely new.

1. Examples of Widely Used Ground Rules[4]

Ground rules should be developed and adapted for your specific pod. Appropriate ground rules may depend partially on who is in your pod - is it all graduate students? Tenured faculty and non-tenured faculty? Is the group all white, or are there individuals with lived experience with racism? What are the power dynamics in play? The following list of common ground rules can serve as a starting point for your process of creating a similar list suitable to your own pod:

1. Listen actively – *listen to understand, not debate* – respect others when they are talking.
2. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," or "you").
3. Do not be afraid to *ask for clarification* by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks – focus on ideas and problems rather than people.
4. *Share airtime: be aware of the amount of time you take up or give up*
5. Participate to the fullest of your ability – community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice.
6. Instead of invalidating somebody else's story with your own spin on their experience, share your own story and experience.
7. The goal is not to always agree – it is to gain a deeper understanding.

[1] R. E. Bernard, E. H. G. Cooperdock, No progress on diversity in 40 years. Nature Publishing Group. 11, 1–5 (2018).
[2] https://notimeforsilence.org/
[3] https://www.change.org/p/geoscientists-call-for-a-robust-anti-racisim-plan-for-the-geosciences
[4] Adapted from http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html and
https://www.mnys.org/assets/1/6/ground_rules_-_arc_discussion.pdf

8. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses – they can be as disrespectful as words (even over Zoom!)
9. Assume everyone's good intentions but also acknowledge the impact of saying something that hurts someone else, even if it is unintended.
10. Maintain confidentiality. All stories shared in this space stay in this space unless explicit permission is given by the person sharing the story that it can be shared in another setting.
11. *Remember that we are all involved in a learning process and will be at different places in that process.*
12. *If you find yourself feeling defensive, reflect before you react.*

2. Making decisions as a group

Each pod needs to decide how you want to make decisions as a group. This will be relevant during the formation of deliverables, reporting back to the larger URGE group on activities, etc. Do you want to go with group consensus (https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/shortconsensus)? A majority vote? Make sure the group discusses these decisions before beginning on deliverables.

3. Pod member roles and responsibilities

Pod leaders are the main points of contact between URGE and the pods. Pod leaders submit files to the URGE website (e.g., sign-up form, updates to pod membership, and deliverables). It would work best if there is a designated person from the pod who submits files to URGE to avoid sending duplicate deliverables files.

Apart from this, you may organize pods in whatever ways work best for your members. You may have multiple pod members leading discussions or developing the deliverables, a different one for each session, for example. This spreads out the job of facilitating Zoom meetings, moderating discussions, and finalizing edits, in addition to engaging all pod members and leveling any power dynamics.

How you organize your pod is up to you, however, the group needs to make roles and responsibilities clear. Here is a list of recurring tasks that need to be assigned to a group member. When assigning tasks, please keep in mind that white women and people of color are more often asked to do 'secretarial' tasks than white men. Feel free to rotate tasks as long as it's clear who is responsible for each task during each unit (two weeks).

1. Schedule meetings (use when2meet, doodle, etc, to make this easier!)
2. Take attendance (important for accountability)
3. Take notes as needed, especially in discussions of deliverables

4. Upload deliverables to the URGE website
5. Schedule meetings with organization/institution leadership (Week X)
6. Read supplemental articles/materials for deliverables as needed (for example, the asset mapping deliverable will be accompanied by a short paper about the purpose of creating community asset maps and how to generate your own.)
7. Draft deliverables and share them with your pod for review/edits/discussion at the pod meetings

Pods should upload their code of conduct to the URGE website by July 31, 2023. We also encourage pods to post these guidelines on the organization's website and share them over social media (use #URGEoscience and tag @URGEoscience). Sharing deliverables will propagate ideas, foster discussion, and ensure accountability.

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Five Element Framework for Developing Codes of Conduct

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When embarking on the creation of codes of conduct as guidelines to be used in fostering and engaging in anti-racist action, it is important to recognize that it is a process. Since processes are dynamic and do not always follow a linear progression, there are five important elements to consider throughout the work that is endeavored.

1. **Positionality**
   Positionality refers to one's social location and worldview, which influences how one responds to power differentials in various contexts (Warf 2010). In acknowledging positionality, we also acknowledge intersecting social locations and complex power dynamics

2. **Socialization Process**
   We have all been socialized into an already existing system. As a result of the legacy of White supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, capitalist exploitation, the messages we have received from a very young age promote the values, norms, and beliefs that these social forces have created and continue to endorse. Understanding how the cycle of socialization (Harro, 2000) operates is vital to understanding what it is that we all need to unlearn.

3. **Critical Consciousness Development**
   This way of "reading the world" (Freire, 1970) enables individuals who experience marginalization, exclusion, and oppression to recognize and understand the complex structures and dynamics that constrain their lives. Along with the critical awareness of how the social order and the social relations within are inequitable, critical consciousness is part of a larger reflexive practice. Freire (1970) used the term praxis to explain how critical consciousness is developed through the iterative and ongoing process of critical reflection, action, critical reflection, and action.

   ● Unseen forces are present in our larger society; the influences of these things are with us all of the time, and we need to be critically aware; we have to be aware of our interactions. White supremacy has been the force that has determined what our socio-racial relationships are like (Garran et al., 2021).

- Core components as operationalized by Diemer et al (2016): Critical reflection, motivation, action

4. **Dialogue**

Dialogue can increase critical consciousness
- How we 'read the world' depends to much on our lived experiences
- Experiences are influenced by the larger social forces of White supremacy
- Freire action and reflection=praxis --- Reflection
- Sustained communication - not a one and done

5. **Assessment and Accountability**

How to access:
- Confidential survey about how people feel about the environment and process
- Check-in to see if codes of conduct are holding up - do they need to be amended?
- On-going - again, not one and done; codes of conduct can change as topics for discussion change
- Have the codes of conduct been guiding the process?

Forms of Accountability:
- Acknowledging the need for skilled facilitation
- Following the lead of the marginalized group
- Not taking credit for other people's work and ideas
- Highlighting the work of people from marginalized groups
- Cultivating relationships to check in with people from marginalized groups as well as with people from the dominant group
- Acknowledging and taking responsibility for mistakes
- Keeping people informed of the progress
- Recognizing and addressing Performative Allyship
- Asking for what is needed from the organization

Things to Remember that the Process requires:
- It is an iterative process
- It is not always linear
- It requires mutual respect for where people find themselves
- It requires communication
- It requires ongoing self-reflection
- It requires trust in the process, knowing things can always change

References

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* Penguin

Garran, A. M., Miller, J. L., Rozas, L. W., & Kang, H. K. (2022). *Racism in the United States: Implications for the helping professions, 3rd ed*. Springer

Harro, B. (2000). The cycle of socialization. *Readings for diversity and social justice*, *2*, 45-51.

Warf, B. (Ed.). (2010). Positionality. Encyclopedia of Geography (5th ed.). Sage.