



## Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research

*Bridging the gap between health disparity research and successful minority aging.*

June 8, 2020

Dear RCMAR Scientists, Faculty, and Staff,

We are saddened, angry, and frustrated at the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. We are horrified by the systemic racism manifested by police brutality and the militaristic response to the resulting protests that, once again, targets Black communities.

As a national program that supports the careers of diverse socio-behavioral and biomedical researchers, the undersigned RCMAR Directors acknowledge the historical, institutional, and systemic racism in our country that underlies the many expressions of outrage and protest we are seeing in our communities. We want to reaffirm our commitment to our Black scientists, and all of our scientists, acknowledging the toll that acts of racism take on physical, economic, social and mental well-being. We commit to redoubling our efforts to support you in your academic careers, provide safe spaces for intellectual community, and advocate strongly for the research that dismantles systems that perpetuate racism and inequities, and addresses health disparities and community empowerment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted continuing racial disparities and inequalities in health and healthcare. The recent police killings are only the most recent highly visible acts of racism and violence, acts that have plagued Black and other communities of color since the founding of this country. These are the root causes of the issues that we and our scientists address in our work, and attempt to rectify with our research. Thus, we recommit ourselves to continuing this work, but also to breaking the systematic barriers that exclude diverse researchers from reaching their highest levels of academic leadership. We pledge to hold our academic institutions accountable for their diversity and equity efforts and identify and work to systematically eliminate explicit and implicit bias, and structural racism, that exists in our own institutions and professions.

To move towards this recommitment we will start with the following actions that further extend the mentoring and career development work that our RCMAR sites are dedicated to:

1. ensuring that Black, Latino, American Indian, and/or Alaska Native scientists serve in leadership roles in all RCMAR sites, including as MPIs, by the next round of RCMAR funding
2. establishing local and national RCMAR advisory groups in the next year of Black, Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native RCMAR scientists (current and alumni) to further promote and support the careers of our scientists, and to obtain critical feedback on how to improve our programs and practices
3. promoting best practices developed at RCMAR sites with other NIA centers on the recruitment, retention, and career development of underrepresented scientists through direct contact with those networks

4. pressing the NIH to increase funding for, and availability of, student loan repayment programs, especially for diverse researchers conducting health disparities research by advocating with the NIH Director's office as well as with the NIA
5. holding the NIH accountable for its own systematic biases and structural racism in reviews and decisions about research funding by developing a resource kit to aid in identifying such biases to use on review panels
6. holding other gerontology and geriatric associations and groups accountable for their lack of diversity in leadership positions by speaking up when we see patterns of exclusion
7. regularly posting and circulating the work of our RCMAR scientists on our websites and social media outlets

Sincerely,

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