



SPECIAL TOPIC

Visions by Women in Molecular Imaging Network: Antiracism and Allyship in Action

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Abstract

Recent events in America in 2020 have stimulated a worldwide movement to dismantle anti-Black racism in all facets of our lives. Anti-Black racism is, as defined by the Movement for Black Lives, a “term used to specifically describe the unique discrimination, violence, and harm imposed on and impacting Black people specifically.” In science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), we have yet to achieve the goal and responsibility to ensure that the field reflects the diversity of our lived experiences. Members of the Women in Molecular Imaging Network (WIMIN) have come together to take a stand on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field of molecular imaging. We strongly condemn oppression in all its forms and strive to identify and dismantle barriers that lead to inequities in the molecular imaging community and STEM as a whole. In this series coined “Visions” (Antiracism and Allyship in Action), we identify and discuss specific actionable items for improving diversity and representation in molecular imaging and ensuring inclusion of all members of the community, inclusive of race, disability, ethnicity, religion, or LGBTQ+ identity. Although the issues highlighted here extend to other under-recruited and equity-seeking groups, for this first article, we are focusing on one egregious and persistent form of discrimination: anti-Black racism. In this special article, Black women residing in America present their lived experiences in the molecular imaging field and give candid insights into the challenges, frustrations, and hopes of our Black friends and colleagues. While this special article focuses on the experiences of Black women, we would like the readers to

Perspectives The perspectives below are representative of collective experiences shared by contributors in this article.

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reflect on their anti-Blackness toward men, transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming people. From the vulnerability we have asked of all our participants, these stories are meant to inspire and invoke active antiracist work among the readership. We present strategies for dismantling systemic racism that research centers and universities can implement in the recruitment, retention, mentorship, and development of Black trainees and professionals. We would like to specifically acknowledge the Black women who took the time to be interviewed, write perspectives, and share their lived experiences in hopes that it will inspire genuine and lasting change.

Key words: Antiracism, Black, Molecular imaging, Diversity, Inclusion

Kyeera N. Mack: Equality vs. equity. Equity is “the quality of being fair and impartial,” and equality is “the state of being equal, especially in rights, status, and opportunities” [1]. The definitions of equity and equality sound the same but are very different. This difference is important in various aspects of life, especially in regard to racial equality versus racial equity. Until recently, I also thought these words were the same. I grew up hearing that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) fought to have the same equal rights as White people and that women fought for equal rights as men. The term “equal rights” sounded great. We all want to be treated equally and the same as everyone else. I don’t want to be treated differently because I am a Black woman. Yet recently, I’ve learned that treating people equally only preserves the status quo, often benefiting the majority while ignoring the needs of the minority. The concept of equality provides everyone the exact same resources, whereas equity involves distributing resources based on the needs of its recipients [2].

In the USA, racial inequality continues to be a challenge we have yet to overcome. It’s easy to become content with striving to provide BIPOC communities with equal resources. However, this is the minimum, and it remains insufficient if our goal is to eliminate the vestiges of discrimination and inequality. Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that allegedly ushered in an era of “equality,” educational institutions that serve minority students continue to have far fewer resources and are staffed by less qualified educators when compared to their White counterparts [3, 4]. However, what happens when minority schools finally receive those equal resources? Are they now on the same level as predominantly White schools? The simple answer is no, because it does not address the tremendous pre-existing disparities. For example, a student attends an under-resourced school from kindergarten to seventh grade and then finally gains resources in the 8th grade that rival the neighboring affluent neighborhood. That student still may not possess the same reading, writing, and mathematical skills as a student who attended a fully resourced school since kindergarten. True equity recognizes that not everyone is on the same level, and not everyone has the same needs. To ensure equity, additional resources must be provided on a personalized basis to even the playing

field. To achieve equity, everyone should be provided the same opportunities to succeed despite their individual differences. Equity is the only way we achieve a fair system.

Kimberly J. Edwards: Racial color blindness. Systemic racism is a societal construct created to benefit those who created it, the majority, at the expense of those who didn’t, the minority. The effects of racism are therefore most acutely felt by those it is perpetrated against, framing important parts of our identities, as well as shaping how we see the world and how we choose to engage with the people around us. It is unfortunate that, even in the year 2020, the concept, construct, and reality of systemic racism still exist. Its effects have created significant disparities in various systems like our criminal justice and healthcare systems. Racism certainly exists everywhere, and might I add, it also exists in our scientific institutions and societies.

Are you racially color blind or have you chosen to “see color?” This is not a trick question. Failing to “see color” is analogous to failing to recognize a minority as a whole individual; it inappropriately negates lived experiences, pains, and traumas that have been forged through the lenses of racial identity, inequalities, and discrimination. Being “color blind” denies the reality that there are race-based differences and racialized outcomes; it is tantamount to upholding the institution of racism that persists in our society, while concurrently appeasing the conscience of the majority [5, 6]. Color blindness doesn’t build toward a racism-free society but instead perpetuates the problem.

As scientists we are trained to address problems head-on. We collectively understand that in order to find solutions to a problem, we have to first identify the problem, acknowledge the problem truly exists, and find ways to understand and analyze the components and underlying mechanisms. Racism is the problem, not race or racial identity. Racism is an unhealthy and dangerous bias that is detrimental to society as a whole. Gone are the days when ignoring problems magically fixes them or renders them obsolete. If there is one thing 2020 has taught us, problems like racism won’t just disappear. Like COVID-19, we need treatments, a vaccine, and a collective effort to cure this century-old disease.

That being said, let us continue to have these difficult and necessary conversations about racism and discrimination

with empathy and understanding. Let us continue to amplify the voices of Black people and other minorities, proactively listen to what they have to say, and purposefully strive to find solutions to build toward an antiracist future. Let us also continue to understand the importance of diversity in our society, especially within our scientific communities. Let us celebrate the creativity, the innovation, the fresh ideas and perspectives, the unique intellectual contributions, and the competitive advantages that diversity brings to science. *Let us be brave and united while addressing this problem, for ourselves, for those to come, and for the future of our science.*

Oluwatosin Y. Ibhagui: Imposter syndrome. Drs. Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes, American clinical psychologists, define the impostor phenomenon (or impostor syndrome) as the internal feeling of intellectual fraudulence [7]. Based on my personal experiences and observing my colleagues and mentors from different institutions, it's clear BIPOC in research—regardless of status (graduate students, postdocs, or faculty)—have to work twice as hard to gain institutional notoriety, receive funding, or obtain high-level leadership positions. When you add in the intersectionality of gender, women of color have an even more difficult time rising through the ranks. As a Black woman, sometimes you end up questioning your own skills and ask, “am I even good enough for this role or am I just lucky to be chosen?” or worse still, “how long do I have before I am discovered as a fraud?”

For example, I have often witnessed the work of female scientists more readily questioned than that of their White male counterparts. Their findings are suggested as anomalies rather than a result of rigorous scientific aptitude. This can be seen from small group meeting situations to international conferences, which has a significant effect not only the individual but also others around them, reinforcing the imposter syndrome in those that relate to them.

The efforts to push toward a more diverse workforce are vital and important; however, there are real consequences when the person hired is made to feel their only purpose is filling institutional diversity quotas. These feelings resonate with me and my friends of color. To combat this, you need to acknowledge your intellectual capability to reward years of hard work and consistency. Our employment or access to opportunities is predicated on the institutions' need to increase diversity in order to obtain funding. Some People of Color may contend with the false assumption that they are inherently or biologically inferior. Malcolm X is famously quoted:

The most disrespected person in America is the black woman.

The most unprotected person in America is the black woman.

The most neglected person in America is the black woman.

I vividly remember when a colleague's PI asked during their weekly group meeting to define a scientific term. My colleague responded confidently (and correctly) but was told by her PI that she was wrong. The PI then called on a male lab member who gave the same definition. The PI turned to her and said, “you need to learn to use scientific terms in your definitions like he just did.” My friend was incensed, having given the same description, and she felt generally dismissed and undervalued by her PI. Upon challenging her dismissal, she was told she had a language barrier from being an international student and could have been misunderstood. Stories like this are an example of the external pressures that leads to the internalization of inferiority and imposter syndrome, especially in women and People of Color. There is also a need for people to listen and believe, regardless of whether the person speaking looks like us or has our shared experiences. We need to have these uncomfortable conversations on what can be done to prevent underestimating individuals based on gender and skin color.

Jenny N. Ijoma: Self-esteem. I've never been able to recognize myself in the mirror. I don't understand the meaning of praise or acknowledgment. I don't know what it is like to feel like I've done enough. As I got older, the fear of failure accompanied every new project or skill. This is what motivated me. I didn't want to disappoint those who believe in me. I didn't want to be a wasted investment, a mistake. I never felt like it was right when trust and worth were placed in me with every new responsibility. Like I was wearing mismatched socks. Like I left my keys in my other bag. It never felt like I was the right choice because I never felt like I was enough.

Encouragement from others never quite did the trick. I learned to read between the lines when others told me that I was “working at the best pace *you* can,” “the results *you've* got are fine,” and “*you* must be so smart and ambitious.” I've always seen and felt that these words only intended to compare me to people of different colors or different genders, and these words rotted the beauty I could find in a compliment. These words of praise mean very little when my success is measured differently because of the color of my skin. The norm is white, and people that are different are labeled as others. Are my accomplishments great only because there are no other comparisons for what Black excellence looks like?

I love what I do now and what I want to do with my life as a physician-scientist. I don't know if my passions and aspirations hold places in spaces where Black bodies are embraced. I don't know if my aspirations are realistic because I've never seen Black bodies dream as big as I do when Black students make up only five or less percent of MD-PhD students who graduate from US medical schools every year [8]. I feel isolated and out of place because no matter what I do, I always feel like I'll never be in the same league as White people. When I stand in front of another individual, a stranger, they will always judge me first on what they see and never give me a second glance.

Interview Excerpts

Interviews were conducted by Oluwatayo F. Ikotun and Kelly E. Henry with Black women in the molecular imaging field. We document excerpts of interviews between trainees and professionals in the molecular imaging community to hear their candid experiences and perspectives on what it is like to be Black in academia, where change is most needed, and how institutions and individuals can do better to set forth initiatives to support Black people across all levels of their career. Sensitive parts of these interviews have been anonymized to protect the privacy of the interviewees.

Interviewer: What are the most common barriers you experience as a trainee that your peers are unaware of?

KNM: One important barrier is the lack of representation of People of Color. Often, I am one of a few Black people in science. Sometimes I shield my true self because I don't know if it will be portrayed as "too much" or if people will say, "why is she acting that way?" You try to represent yourself in a way that society thinks you should be—dress a certain way, wear your hair a certain way. I think not having that representation puts an added stress because you don't know if you're accepted.

VLN: I am biracial (Black and White) and frequently White-passing, and with that comes privilege. I can float past some barriers that my darker skinned peers cannot. My ability to pass also comes with people saying inappropriate things in front of me because they don't realize a person of Black heritage is in the room. I end up in a position where I have to police my peers and question superiors, which is a lot of pressure for a trainee. It forced me to grow up faster than my White peers. In undergrad at the College of William and Mary, my thesis mentor was the first Black scientist to be tenured at my institution (Shantá D. Hinton, Ph.D.), which is astounding because it's the second oldest college in the country. Dr. Hinton was de facto the mentor to every Black student that wanted to do science. She did incredible science while policing her White peers to reduce the trauma her Black students experienced as they attempted to succeed in STEM. She was an awesome mentor, but I saw the huge personal toll it took to be the first Black faculty. I don't know if I want to take that on. Why should I have to sacrifice myself so that an institution can claim diversity?

Interviewer: What questions would you have wanted answered by a White hiring committee?

KNM: What is their mindset/headspace on race and racial disparity? Do they feel like it's a problem, and if they do, what are they trying to do to fix it? What changes are they implementing within their own labs? Are they going to develop safe spaces for people to make a complaint about microaggressions? We need White faculty's help because that's who's in charge right now.

Interviewer: If you could pick one or two things that we need to change immediately to push us forward in our path to being antiracist—what do we need to focus on to make that change?

Anonymous: We need to increase the diversity in our spaces. When we have predominantly White populations, it increases the sense of "otherness." Afterward, we need training on how to make people aware of their biases. We need to teach them how you can discriminate overtly and covertly and how to acknowledge it has happened, how you respond to it. These are ways we can make people in our environments feel more at peace and safer.

Interviewer: On racism, what would you tell your younger self on how to cope with microaggressions and attacks, and not let them deter your career?

KNM: I would tell my younger self (and my current self) to not be afraid to speak to the person who may have said a microaggression to me. It's not about calling them out with an attitude but being in a place where you can pull them aside and speak to them about it: "What did you mean by that?," "Can you explain more?," "This is how this comment affects me, and this is how it can be taken the wrong way." Sometimes people just say things and don't realize how it may affect someone. I'd also tell my younger self to be more confident in owning who I am, accepting who I am, and doing the best I can to succeed.

Interviewer: Do you think implicit bias training is actually going to help solve anything?

Anonymous: The optimistic part of me thinks that implicit bias training will do something, but I also think it is mostly just box-checking. Adding an additional layer of situational judgment would be good—this will help to ensure the training is sticking. By implementing these kinds of tests before elevating someone to a position of influence and authority, you will be able to ensure that we are not still governed by their implicit biases or denialism. People in power should not be the ones wanting to do studies that only benefit White people or promoting a drug that's only going to help White people, and not realizing the repercussions of their actions.

Interviewer: What will it take to change as a system in academia?

KNM: Numbers definitely help, but it's not enough. Institutions may recruit minority candidates, but they have to have a supporting cast there for them to succeed. Keep in mind that they may need a little extra assistance to keep going. Once that is provided for them, those individuals can keep passing it down to their students, and more BIPOC and minorities might actually apply to these academic positions because it helps to have that representation.

Interviewer: Racism in the scientific and academic workplace/community may be less overt relative to experiences in other White-majority spaces. Still, microaggressions are something that People of Color can spot right away and feel that others don't. How do you discern something that is "interpersonal dynamics" versus what you feel/know are race-driven microaggressions?

Anonymous: I think it's a lot of ignorance at that end. If they're not experiencing racism firsthand, they're often going to fail to understand it. People lack empathy and

can't put themselves in another person's shoes. However, any victim of abuse or discrimination can understand this difference. I don't wish this experience on someone just so that they can feel that way or be hurt similarly, but I do wish I could put this experience in a pill for people so they can just understand it and wake up. Like, I hate seeing White people clutch things tightly to them or look at me like I don't belong when I walk by.

Interviewer: How does race play a role in imposter syndrome and microaggressions?

Anonymous: The imposter syndrome became more apparent when I got more responsibilities in my current position—because my PI had a lot of trust in me, but my lab didn't. So, I had a lot of trust from the person whose opinion mattered the most but not from the ones I was around the most.

Interviewer: Do you feel as though there were any implicit biases that may have played a role in those dynamics?

Anonymous: I was training a senior researcher on how to use a piece of equipment that she was unfamiliar with. She steamrolled over me during the entire training and treated me like her personal assistant. Her training was supposed to be over in the afternoon, but I was around until 10 PM that day. She made me second guess every step I described. She said things to me like you're "just a technician" with a lot of venom in her words. She was an older White woman who wasn't being blatantly racist, but it felt super harsh. When I told my PI, he was supportive, but he also told me that there couldn't possibly be any race (discrimination) associated with her behavior. I was beside myself for a while.

Interviewer: In your experience/opinion, where is change most needed?

VLN: There needs to be both top-down and bottom-up change. Institutions need to recruit new Black faculty but also established tenured Black faculty that can advocate for incoming faculty. There is so much risk for new faculty without mentorship—being both the first Black faculty and new faculty is incredibly taxing. Institutions also need to seriously incentivize Black faculty recruits. On paper they may be hired to run a lab, but their unwritten job description is to help change the culture of the institution, a culture that has historically oppressed them. That is deeply exhausting, and valuable work and offers should reflect that. Institutions also need to increase recruitment of Black postdocs and graduate students. It's much easier to recruit from friends of friends as opposed to doing the work and seeking out BIPOC trainees. PIs need to take responsibility and go out of their way to look for students of color.

KNM: There needs to be more of an effort to bring in a more diverse group of people across all fields of science. It is also very important for White people, especially White men, to make themselves aware of the situation. We need them to not just become aware but to actually care—to want to become an ally but also to make change. You're not actually helping if all you do is increase your numbers. It's

just a phase/increasing your statistics, because you're not really diverse unless you are putting in the work. Institutions also try to showcase the token Black or [Latinx] person without actually recruiting more of a diverse group of people.

Anonymous: I think we need a complete overhaul of what exists now. I think the majority of people in leadership should be People of Color, even if that doesn't necessarily represent the city or state that they live in. I think when you have those identities at the forefront of decision-making, they will commandeer initiatives that will benefit everyone. Representation in leadership matters, and if I went to an institution whose leadership was closer to 50:50 White and non-White, I would feel more comfortable and actually want to stay there. These emails from institutions like "we don't support racism" are pointless because what are they going to do after this? If leadership shares the identity of those being oppressed, they will drive the work of antiracism or support anti-bias training and actually push people to change.

Interviewer: When a student of color is walking into an institution, what do you wish the rest of us knew? What are the things a student of color is experiencing when they live in a white space?

KNM: I wish they knew sometimes how much being a person of color can be a burden. When I walk into a room of predominantly White people, I sometimes say to myself "I don't know what they are thinking of me," and I feel that I have to be super intelligent to impress them. I often think to myself "should I even be here or was I just accepted because I am a minority?" Growing up we are told that we have to work ten times harder; we have to show them (non-Black people) we're legit because we already have our color going against us.

Anonymous: I have always felt very disregarded by peers and professors. I wish people would know how alone you feel, how much that really hurts, and how much the majority might pressure you to assimilate to them. When I was young, I was very anti-Black because I felt like I had to blend into these spaces to feel safe. I wish people knew how much I have to sacrifice to feel safe and how alienated students of color feel every day when there is no one else like them.

Interviewer: What have you seen happen that's exciting/hopeful for you? Are you optimistic about change?

KNM: The overall increase in awareness from a lot of people I care about and people in the lab feels genuine. A lot of people in our generation are like enough is enough. People are now seeing these issues and advocating to help change them.

Anonymous: In my previous position, I was never promoted because I worked for someone that didn't want to see Black people succeed. They only promoted White people and those of Asian descent. My PI didn't have any faith or support anyone like me to succeed. I feel successful

now because I proved him wrong. I have multiple offers to be a physician scientist, and I want to get into cancer therapeutics and discover really wonderful things. I want to see what diversity efforts these institutions are trying to make to include people like me. I love having these open conversations with people, and the pressure that's being put on them now helps me feel less afraid to be honest about what I've always been thinking about.

How to be an Ally to a BipoC Colleague or Peer

Patricia M. R. Pereira and Oluwatayo F. Ikotun, with excerpts from interviews and discussion.

If you want to be an ally to a Black colleague or peer in the field of molecular imaging, you first need to know that this will be a lifelong and continuous process—and the best time to start is now. The first step for you is to recognize and understand your power and privilege and then use it to amplify your Black colleagues' voices. The second step for you is to plan on taking ally-like actions and committing to the long-term effort of being an ally to a Black colleague. Below are a few reflections that you could pay attention to while defining your role as an ally:

- Empathize with your Black colleagues and peers. Be mindful of your unconscious bias. Implicit bias is, by definition [8]: “the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.” Consider the following materials on the topic of implicit bias: [9, 10]. You can begin to uncover it by taking one of Harvard's Project Implicit tests [11].
- Understand the difference between being a white-savior and being an ally.

There is a pitfall that allies sometimes fall into and that's the savior complex which is far from helpful. – OFI

An ally is any person that actively seeks a culture of inclusion through conscious, intentional, and positive efforts that benefit people as a whole. Allyship is not a label or a self-defined process that happens overnight; instead, it is a continuous, iterative learning process. A commitment to paying attention and, most importantly, listening to the people for whom you are trying to be an ally.

Allies group around Black individuals to be their “shield” against the police in different protests. It showed how allies could use their bodies (their privilege) to mitigate the violence that Black individuals received at these protests. – Anonymous

A savior, by definition, is “a person who saves, rescues, or delivers.” The “White savior” is often seen as the person who benefits from White privilege. The

“White saviors” place themselves in the center of the narrative and try to dominate those they are supposed to help. They try to “save or rescue” the people from unprivileged communities, usually without knowing that community [12]. As a Black trainee mentor, you should never consider yourself a “savior.” Your role is to give your mentee all the resources and support that they need to succeed without entering into a situation of preconceived notions about them or their background. Importantly, it is your responsibility to encourage and support your trainee to apply for all kinds of fellowships where your student might be eligible and not only the ones that focus on more diverse students. Mentors sometimes fall into the trap of suggesting that your BIPOC student will definitely get a diversity initiative grant, essentially inferring not just to your student but your entire group that the grant is less competitive. What happens if the student isn't awarded the grant? The feeling of inadequacy, “I'm not even smart or good enough to get this easy grant,” can be crushing and psychologically damaging. If you truly believe in your student's talent, you should support their application to a broad spectrum to grants.

It's a balance, you need to be pushed to apply for all types of grants. I just want to be held to the same standard as everyone else. – KNM

A faculty member encouraged me to apply for a training fellowship because the email advertising it said, ‘we are going to try to focus on more diverse students to take these open slots.’ They said, ‘it's a given’ – and they don't realize that it is a microaggression. – KNM

When you are a person of color, everyone assumes your achievements were handed to you because you're ‘diverse’. That is a false and damaging assumption. The reality is that Black people work significantly harder to get into the same room as their white peers. We need to stop building a culture where it is presumed that Black success is a result of the standards being lowered in some way. – VLN

- Listen actively and attentively. Think and reflect on your Black colleagues' and peers' voices. As an ally, you will significantly increase the sense of belonging among Black people by being intentional with your actions and behaviors. An open and honest dialogue with your Black colleagues or students will be uncomfortable and painful. Importantly, listen before you act.

I think it is helpful for allies go out of their way to consult the People of Color they know (*with a plan, I cannot write the plan for you*) before they push an

agenda. This way, plans are more inclusive, and this also creates space for interventions when certain aspects of a plan are tone-deaf, even if well-intentioned. – VLN

- Do not ask a Black colleague for guidance on how to be an ally before you have done your homework. If you are a researcher, you know what to do: do the research and look for journal articles that describe the impact of being an ally for a Person of Color. Read books on being an antiracist and learn the unvarnished history of racism. If there are events and webinars around the topics of diversity and inclusion at your institution, consider attending them to listen, learn, and be a visible ally. Consider the following sources: [13–17].

Although it is not your Black colleagues' or trainees' responsibility to provide a roadmap for allyship, they should be partners in developing an antiracist or diversity initiative. This is not a process to be done alone. You will not end racism by yourself!

Black individuals create a foundation, and allies have a responsibility to build upon this foundation and add to our momentum. It's like a balancing act between the two, where we all can recognize the apathy or fatigue Black individuals have (or have had) by to being the face of this movement and the mistakes allies may make in their advocacy (e.g., learning what 'impact versus intention' is, etc.). – Anonymous

- Create protected time and opportunities for challenging conversations, specifically on the topics of equality, diversity, and equity. If your lab has not created time for these conversations yet, then you are probably not adequately supporting your Black trainees and colleagues. Now is a good time to start having these conversations, as it can make a meaningful difference. If you mentor or supervise students, make sure you support them by attending such events, make an effort to be present in these conversations, check in with your mentees, and ask reflective questions: "Are you being adequately supported? Is there anything happening in the lab that I should be aware of?" Your demonstrated willingness to "do the work" can not only address emotional distress your students may be feeling but can make a difference in retaining Black students in the field of molecular imaging. Ensure that these conversations actually benefit the People of Color in the room.
- Understand your White privilege and be antiracist when necessary. White privilege is described as the "unearned rights and benefits afforded by White people in Western society because of the color of their skin," and "that as a white person, you're going to get opportunities that others who may have the same or better qualifications and who are not white, would not have gotten (Glenn Block, DEI advocate in article by [Janice Gassam Asare](#), Forbes)." If you see a colleague struggling, listen to their experiences and concerns, and lift them up while giving them secure and safe space to communicate. If you witness any form of racism overt or microaggressions, do not stay silent. Silence is acceptance.
- Know that it is your responsibility as an ally to call out racism when you hear or see it. If you do not feel comfortable speaking up, consider self-reflection: (Why am I uncomfortable? What am I afraid of? Would I want someone to stand up for me if the roles were reversed?),

Often times the only incentive to participate in a conversation is for my white peers. Engaging in conversations about race improves their social capital. My participating is largely to educate them. I've spent my entire life educating White people. I don't have the time or the mental stamina to unpack the issues of my oppressors. If the conversations were to benefit myself and my Black colleagues, it would be much easier to prioritize. – VLN

- Know that it is not your Black colleagues' responsibility to start these conversations or make them easy for you. Your Black colleagues often have to carry the burden of educating White people in both their professional and personal lives, spending time organizing committees, and often being asked to relive their traumas as a means of sparking these conversations. University and department heads can encourage and help faculty members to learn how to initiate and maintain these conversations with their teams.

I always hate that the burden of teaching falls on us that are suffering. We need to make them aware of that without provoking more (white) guilt. The first thing they need to do when we point out a blind spot is to listen, and not get defensive. If people could just listen and reflect on what they're listening to and then make changes to be better in the future, it would be so much more helpful and productive. – Anonymous

The response to this from white faculty on more than one occasion has been 'what do you think we should do to fix it'? It's just not my job to solve these problems for the hiring committees that I have not been a part of. Do the work and consult me when you have a plan – I won't do the work for you. – VLN

and consider getting some training by reading, speaking to colleagues (Black and non-Black allies), or attending courses.

We're trying to do hard things here, like cure cancer. Why can't everyone take the same level of critical thinking when it comes to racism? – OFI

- If you are in a position of privilege and/or influence, amplify and support the voices of Black individuals to ensure they have a position of power when addressing issues of racism, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace. Although you might have good answers for specific situations, you need to admit that you do not have all the solutions to antiracism in the workplace. It is also crucial that you do not speak for or over your Black colleagues but instead give them space and opportunity to speak and, most importantly, make sure they are part of leadership and have roles of power. It's important to recognize if Black people are afforded positions of power/influence only on the topic of diversity and inclusion; then the message is diluted. *Our Black peers want to focus on science and be recognized for their scientific contribution first and foremost.* Helping build a more diverse community is the “Black tax” that is paid so the next generation doesn't have to.

I have mostly supportive mentors, but sometimes it feels like they don't need to grow any more, and therefore are reluctant to actually go deeper. They're in positions of power and when you speak to them directly about this, they don't make it a priority to advocate. – Anonymous

All too often, Black and Indigenous voices are politely listened to and used for consultation and educational purposes only. When institutions are striking their various antiracism task forces, BIPOC are consulted with, but not actually part of the strategy. It's kind of like having an idea for a grant, then running around collecting signatures from BIPOC and women etc. to show you have a DEI subcommittee. Instead, BIPOC should be part of the strategizing of the research question and be equal partners in the research. – SD

Many institutions now have a diversity advisor on their hiring committee; however, the diversity advisor may or may not be a voting member. Why is the diversity advisor not a standing member of the committee with voting privileges? A role without power sends the message that diversity is not an important consideration in the hiring process. – MS

Concluding Remarks

“The imposter syndrome will subside. Lean into it. Your fear of not fitting in or not being smart enough only serves as a driver. I am sure you have inspired or touched someone in the spaces you occupy. Even when you're feeling pessimism, keep fighting the good fight, so people like us can exist without questioning their right to be there. Black is strong. Black people are survivors. We will always prevail.” – OFI

WIMIN is committed to being part of the solutions in eradicating racism in the molecular imaging field and STEM more generally. As we work on plans to address inequality, inequity, and injustice individually and give the first steps toward action, we hope our efforts will serve as a catalyst for change with the broader WMIS community.

Future Work

Visions by WIMIN are an example of Antiracism and Allyship in Action. This is an ongoing series that aims to publish quarterly in *Molecular Imaging & Biology*. The goal is to empower and amplify voices that WMIS should hear, members who can challenge and enrich our society's vision and values through diverse perspectives. We want you to be involved, or interviewed, or provide perspective. We especially welcome a global perspective on anti-Black racism for a follow-up article. Please reach out to the authors for further correspondence.

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Declarations

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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