

Dear members of the Penn Biomedical Graduate Studies community,

We, the faculty and students of the Cell Biology, Physiology & Metabolism Program in the CAMB Graduate Group, are writing to you in response to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and so many other Black individuals due to police brutality and racism. We are deeply saddened and angered by these senseless and tragic deaths that are just a few examples of the many racial injustices against the Black community that have plagued and continue to plague our country.

These issues are not new and are endemic to all corners of our social, political, and scientific institutions. As scientists, we are not immune to the effects of racism, and recent events have only highlighted the need for change. We acknowledge that the trauma of systemic racism in the criminal justice system, academia, and every other aspect of our lives hurts our Black students, postdocs, technicians, staff, administrators, and faculty, and ultimately harms the advancement of science. This must stop.

To simply reaffirm a commitment to diversity is not enough. We must actively amplify the voices of our Black colleagues and recognize where we have failed them. This begins with investing time and resources in supporting our Black scientists while opening up more opportunities to Black students to enter research at all levels. Additionally, we must rededicate ourselves to combating racism in academia. We encourage you to speak out against racial injustices you see in scientific spaces – in your lab bays, at lab meetings, and at scientific conferences. To be silent or inactive is to be complicit. We must reinforce the idea that Black scientists are a valued and instrumental part of the community and that, unequivocally, Black Lives Matter.

As we begin to see institutions across the country enact reform, we too must make changes that address the racism that is deeply rooted in our scientific community. We are hopeful that we can make a difference, as it is in our nature as scientists to find unique solutions and answers to problems. As your leaders in CPM, we are committed to creating a concrete plan of action over the next few weeks and implementing it over the next academic year. ***A first step we will take is creating a committee consisting of interested students and faculty to specifically address racism in science and in society as a whole that leads to unequal representation of all minorities in science.*** Specifically, we want to reassure you that Black voices will be heard while recognizing that it is not the responsibility of Black scientists to fix this problem.

We recognize that many of you are not okay. We want to check in and tell you that CPM is here to listen and learn. Faculty and fellow students are here to support you, and you should feel comfortable contacting us if there is anything we can do to make this easier for you. ***Let's pursue a more inclusive place for science together.***

In solidarity,
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Erika Holzbaur
Zolt Arany

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Megan Blain
Joe Baur
Charles Bond
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