

Uricchio Lab Anti-racism Statement

This anti-racism statement is a living document. It is not set in stone or handed down from on high. It will be amended over time and ideally improved. It seeks to serve the students in the lab and the scientific community to which we all belong, and not the interests of the PI.

You will find many anti-racism statements from scientists and scientific societies on the [web](#). These statements express an acknowledgement that racism has been a major factor in excluding non-white people from academia, and that academia has explicitly undertaken a racist agenda in many fields (see for example the close historical ties between [eugenics and population genetics](#)). You will find commitments to dismantling racism on campus, in research, and within scientific disciplines. In some cases, you will see proposals for particular lab policies and codes of conduct that may be impactful agents for the advancement of equity.

I stand strongly in solidarity with goal of eradicating racism and I acknowledge the racist actions of my fields (genetics, evolution, computational biology, and ecology). I recognize that as a white man I have been the beneficiary of racism and the racist society in which we live. This document serves as a pledge of commitment to anti-racist scholarship and teaching specifically, but also the unraveling of prejudice more broadly.

In this document I will set out some personal and institutional goals for our lab. My hope is that these are concrete enough that we can report measurable progress as a lab over time. If we are doing a good job and fulfilling our promise, we will see this section of our lab site growing as we undertake outreach and service initiatives in our community, anti-racist scholarship, and inclusive teaching practices.

What are our values as a lab?

Academic labs have a dual purpose – they seek to investigate problems of scientific importance, and also to train the next generation of scientists to undertake and solve even more important challenges.

In my view, these two missions go hand-in-hand and cannot be separated. There is no such thing as an “objectively” important scientific question – scientific questions become “important” because they are important to some group of people. Because science has often excluded people of color, this has effectively meant that scientists often undertake an agenda that is shaped by the identities and perspectives of white people. If science is to be more inclusive, I think that we have to expand our view of important questions and include scientists of color and communities more broadly in the conversations about “scientific importance.” White scientists need to relinquish some power over the determination of what is “important.”

In order for our lab to undertake an anti-racist research and training agenda, I believe that we must:

1. Examine every scientific question that we ask from an anti-racist perspective. Who is the question “important” to, and why? How might the question itself be informed by racist and/or prejudiced ideas?
2. Encourage scientific questions and scholarship that are driven by the intellectual curiosity of all lab members, not only the PI.
3. Consider the impact of our work on historically marginalized communities and involve any potentially impacted communities in discussions about our work prior to publication.
4. Perform regular outreach to our broader local community in the form of science communication, teaching, and possibly computational training (e.g. of high school students or teachers).
5. Write papers that are broadly accessible to the greatest extent possible, to publish in ethically funded journals, and support our papers with blogs or science communication that unpacks the results for a broad audience.
6. Embrace a “distributed” mentorship model, in which each lab member has access to multiple mentors who can support them individually and as scientists.

What can we do to uphold these values?

As a lab, we will dedicate at least two lab meetings per semester to reading, writing, and reflecting on racism in science through journal articles. In addition, I welcome (and encourage) the inclusion of anti-racist discussions in all of our lab meetings, as well as research ethics more broadly construed.

The lab will also need a code of conduct that details how we treat each other, acknowledges the inherent power dynamics that are at play in any PI-advisee relationship, and sets forth procedures for dealing with any failures to adhere to these policies. I hope to include the first group of students in discussions about what this document should look like. It will be posted to the lab website upon completion of a first draft.

How will we assess our progress and performance?

Over time, the lab will report on our conversations and anti-racist activities through our website and social media. If we are having an impact (or at the very least, regularly engaging with these topics), then we should be able to post about them at least every 6-12 months. If we are doing our job, then community engagement section of the lab website will grow regularly.