



Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [June 8, 2020]

SPECIAL ISSUE: SCIENCE AND RACE

NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES

ABC News: [2 viruses—COVID and racism—devastate the Black community and threaten America's stability](#)

Black Americans have died from the coronavirus at a much higher rate than other racial groups. And for as long as anyone can remember, they have also been the victims of police brutality and killings—also at a disproportionate rate. Add to this systemic inequities that have led to economic, health and housing disparities and the result is exhaustion and exasperation.

The New York Times: [“Pandemic within a pandemic’: Coronavirus and police brutality roil Black communities](#)

The current civil unrest is deeply connected to the racial disparities exposed by the coronavirus crisis. “I’m just as likely to die from a cop as I am from Covid,” one organizer said.

Physics World: [US scientific societies condemn racism in the wake of George Floyd death](#)

Responding to Mr. Floyd’s death and other African Americans who have died at the hands of police, science-based organizations have condemned injustice, systemic racism and lack of opportunity for minority members in science and the broader community. Yet some have criticized the society statements as coming too little, too late, and without the support of positive action to counter the abuses.

Financial Times: [Protests in a pandemic present dilemma for scientists](#)

Public health experts fear admonishing protesters for potentially accelerating the spread of the virus in a politically polarized America where their words could be used by leaders to try to stop demonstrations.

E & E News: [How a climate plan in Minneapolis fostered racial divisions](#)

The plan for climate action of the city of Minneapolis—one of the first passed by a major U.S. city—included reforms on issues ranging from energy efficiency to waste management. But activists say the effort launched without the input of the city’s minority and low-income communities.

E & E News: [“Overwhelmingly white” green groups forced to confront past](#)

The social justice protests sweeping the country have pushed mainstream environmental groups into a corner, with many struggling to show solidarity without appearing hypocritical. Most of the largest groups are overwhelmingly white, and their conservation focus has historically

ignored the disproportionate impact of pollution on communities of color. Some also have racist and anti-immigrant pasts.

The Smithsonian: [Deep biases prevent diverse talent from advancing](#)

A new study finds that although underrepresented scholars in science-related fields are more likely to innovate, they are also less likely than their majority-group peers to earn influential academic positions—what the authors call a diversity-innovation paradox.

REGIONAL NEWS

WishTV.com: [Doctors call systemic racism “public health crisis” during “White Coats for Black Lives” march](#)

Indianapolis doctors call systemic racism “public health crisis” during “White Coats for Black Lives” march. Doctors, nurses, residents, students, technicians and other hospital employees marched with their white coats turned inside out to conceal their professional affiliations.

OPINION AND ANALYSIS

Scientific American: [George Floyd's autopsy and the structural gaslighting of America](#)

Medical science has long been used for the consolidation of power rather than for solidarity with the oppressed. Initial reporting about George Floyd's autopsy overstated and misrepresented the role of chronic medical conditions, inappropriately alluded to intoxicants, and failed to acknowledge the stark reality that but for the defendant's knee on George Floyd's neck, he would not be dead today. The framing of the circumstances surrounding Floyd's death was at best, a misinterpretation, and at worst, a deliberate obfuscation.

Vox: [How medical bias against Black people is shaping Covid-19 treatment and care](#)

Black Americans are less likely to receive testing and medical care for the virus and have a 2.4x higher mortality rate than their white counterparts. Harmful biases within the medical institutions have stood out during the virus but reflect a long history of mistreatment.

Vox: [Police brutality is a public health crisis](#)

A PNAS study showed 1 out of 1,000 Black men are likely to be killed by the police in the United States. In Chicago, Black Americans make up 29% of the population but 70% of COVID-related deaths. Systemic racism is causing and amplifying two concurrent public health crises.

Live Science: [How to actually stop police brutality, according to science](#)

Evidence-based changes to policy around policing can reduce deaths at the hands of the police. These steps alone cannot end racism overnight or erase the myriad inequalities in American society, but they can save lives.

The Atlantic: [The American Nightmare](#)

Ikram X. Kendi on the ongoing legacy of Frederick Hoffman, considered “dean of American statistics,” who argued in 1896 that Black Americans were headed for extinction. Hoffman's career illustrates the fulfillment of the American nightmare—a nightmare still being experienced 124 years later from Minneapolis to Louisville, from Central Park to untold numbers of Black coronavirus patients parked in hospitals, on unemployment lines, and in graves.

Scientific American: [Racism, not genetics, explains why Black Americans are dying Of COVID-19](#)

Much of the public and scientific reaction has invoked baseless ideas about unknown genes that make African Americans vulnerable to the virus, rather than focusing on abundant evidence for the devastating biological consequences of systemic inequality and oppression.

Prospect: [The Covid race riddle defies skin-deep simplicities](#)

The habit of forming myths about the susceptibility to COVID-19 has deep roots in the scientific racism of 19th-century Europe, when slavery and colonialism were justified by the assumption that non-white people were biologically inferior and white slaveowners claimed that Black slaves felt less pain than they did.

Forbes: [4 ways that scientists and academics can effectively combat racism](#)

Why economics and environment are the only factors determining representation of Black students among those earning science degrees and what academics can do about the situation.

Texas Monthly: [The “Father of Environmental Justice” on why he isn’t surprised by COVID-19 health disparities](#)

In the seventies, Robert Bullard’s research in Houston demonstrated that toxin-releasing facilities like waste and sewage plants were disproportionately placed in the city’s Black neighborhoods, leading to a higher concentration of health problems. To this day, the pattern holds true.

Science Advances: [NIH peer review: Criterion scores completely account for racial disparities in overall impact scores](#)

A closer look at the reasons at the persistent funding gap for Black investigators focusing on preliminary criterion scores.

Scientific American: [Silence is never neutral, neither is science](#)

A statement from 500 Women Scientists Leadership: Amidst #BlackLivesMatter protests and resounding calls for justice, many scientists, academic institutions, and science organizations remain eerily silent. While the coronavirus pandemic highlighted the importance of science and evidence, the #ScienceNotSilence sentiments seem to stop short of extending to another major threat to people in the U.S. and across the world—systemic racism and race-based violence.

Science: [Protests over killings of Black people could erode racism, researcher says](#)

An interview with James Jones, a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Delaware, Newark, author of “Prejudice and Racism” (1970), on how scientific efforts have been fundamentally incapable of redressing the negative feelings, perceptions, thoughts, beliefs that underlie this systematic, continued bias against Black people. The protests might present an opportunity for a fundamental change.

Vox: [What public health experts want critics to know about why they support the protests](#)

Public health experts address the risks associated with protesting, which are often aggravated by law enforcement’s response, while recognizing the need to fight against a different life-threatening problem.

Science: [“I can’t even enjoy this.” #BlackBirdersWeek organizer shares her struggles as a Black scientist](#)

Corina Newsome on how nature offers good models as to why diversity is necessary and why academic departments to apply that same perspective to diversity in the workplace.

Live Science: [#BlackBirdersWeek co-founders talk nature and race](#)

Live Science spoke with two of the event’s organizers, Danielle Belleny, a wildlife biologist based in San Antonio, Texas, and Sheridan Alford, an environmental educator based in Athens, about the dominant role of white man in the field and why the outdoors belongs to everybody.

TAKE ACTION

500 Women Scientists: [Communicating your support for #BlackLivesMatter](#)

Communication around this topic needs to be extremely thoughtful and not unintentionally cause harm or further trauma to Black communities.

Our CSIU news bulletin is intended to provide a brief update on recent news, editorials, as well as action items related to science integrity and science policy. Note that editorial pieces and action items are assembled from a variety of sources and organizations; they do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy priorities of Concerned Scientists @ IU. This week's news bulletin was compiled by ASIU and IU biology major Emma Hand and CSIU member Christoph Irmscher of IU's Department of English. We're looking for volunteers! If you'd like to volunteer—or if you have additional links you'd like to share for future bulletins, send them to Christoph at cirmsche@indiana.edu.

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