



Society of Vertebrate Paleontology

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On 1st June 2020, SVP released a short statement on our website and via social media condemning racism in our field in any form, affirming our support for and committing to doing better for our BIPOC members. You can find this statement here: <http://vertpaleo.org/Society-News/SVP-Paleo-News/Society-News,-Press-Releases/SVP-statement-on-recent-events.aspx>. Here we present an extended statement and outline some of the steps we are taking.

Paleontology as a science is not divorced from racism and colonialism. As much as we think of science as a noble, fact-based pursuit of knowledge, it is performed by people, none of whom can easily separate their work from their prejudices and biases. As a result, many aspects of science have a history of upholding and enacting racism, from evolutionary biology to natural history museums to the theft of and experimentation on Black bodies. From using funding derived from the slave trade to removing fossils from colonies without crediting indigenous discoverers, it is long past time that we acknowledge our past, confront our present, and accelerate our work to support Black colleagues and diversify our field.

Recent events in the United States have brought racism, police brutality, and violence against Black people to the forefront of national and international news. In this upsetting time, the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology acknowledges that these events are symptoms of the greater disease of white supremacy and systemic racism that Black people face every day. We condemn the systems of power in broader society (including those within our profession) that devalue Black lives and dehumanize Black people. We affirm in our belief that Black lives matter, and that they are being ended by structural inequities and institutional violence at an alarming rate.

We thank all of the Black writers who have shared the thoughts that have shaped this statement and our understandings of their experiences. We acknowledge that SVP has very few Black members relative to our overall membership and that this low level of representation is reflected in the leadership of our society and in the drafting of this statement. We as a community need to do much more to recognize, support, and include Black paleontology professionals and students, including Black members of SVP. Members of our Executive Committee and Diversity Committee are educating ourselves on the steps that we, as individuals, can take to fight white supremacy, and we encourage our non-Black members to do the same. The Paleontological Society has prepared an excellent set of resources to start this process (<https://www.paleosoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Paleontological-Society-How-to-Be-an-Anti-Racism-Ally.pdf>). Members who are financially stable can also make donations to organizations involved in this fight:

US organizations: <https://www.distractify.com/p/best-places-to-donate-for-blm>

Canadian organizations: <https://tinyurl.com/y6wm5rdn>

UK/Europe organizations: <https://www.enar-eu.org/how-to-support-the-anti-racist-movement>

We will amplify and listen to the voices of our Black members. We commit to learning, and are open to criticism and discussion towards what other steps that we, as scientific societies, can take to support our Black members, without placing the burden of repairing our world on them. As a starting point for our efforts, we are developing a new grant for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) students to support research, internships and SVP meeting attendance. We are also working on providing mentorship opportunities for BIPOC students attending our meeting. We commit to adding to our efforts at community building to make SVP a supportive environment for BIPOC members, and to add their voices to our governance. SVP has also endorsed the *Call to Action for an Anti-Racist Science Community from Geoscientists of Color: Listen, Act, Lead* proposed at <https://notimeforsilence.org/> and we commit to proposals outlined for Professional Societies to make meaningful change in their communities.

This statement and our actions are a continuation, not the end, of our ongoing efforts to make our field more equitable and just for Black paleontologists and paleontologists from all backgrounds. We will provide updates and hold ourselves and our progress accountable as we develop our efforts and our understanding of the steps we must take for the future of the science we love.