



Green Lands
Blue Waters

Voices From Our Network

The Civic Scientists

The next generation of continuous living cover (CLC) researchers reflect on the current moment in history and reimagine the future.

“Green Lands, Blue Waters, and the Color of Change”

E. Britt Moore
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This year, with all of its tribulations, has forced our society to look into the mirror and to see ourselves as we are; the good, the bad, the ugly. Discourses on race and the enduring legacy of racism, long topics of discomfort in many professional circles, are beginning to take hold across our nation. As our society begins to more thoughtfully reckon with racial injustices writ large, our profession can, in word and deed, model the moral courage to not only actively support equity and inclusion, but to also reject passive acquiescence to an inequitable norm.

My belief in the inalienable human right of unencumbered access to wholesome food and clean water has defined my journey as a scientist. As a Black man raised in the city, my experiences have indelibly shaped my identity as an agronomist. I know first-hand the disproportionately long shadow that an inequitable food system casts on communities of color. I have also witnessed first-hand the dearth of opportunities for young people of color to engage in the agricultural sciences; an opportunity gap that shamefully persists in most places.

Examining our collective role in preserving an inequitable norm must include a critical examination of racial homogeneity in the agricultural sciences. A substantive transition towards inclusion must include thoughtful engagement with communities that have too long been overlooked. A society where People of Color are full and equal partners in the food system, from farm to fork, is a goal that our profession should aspire to.

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As an agronomist, I have the responsibility to conduct scientific research that advances a more sustainable and equitable food system. My other, perhaps more important responsibility is to serve as an educator, mentor, and role model to People of Color. As scientists and citizens, we have a moral responsibility to not only speak out against inequity, but to also actively dismantle the

structures that foster de facto segregation at the institutions that we serve. Words of solidarity and pledges of financial support are not in themselves sufficient to achieve this aim. Of course words and finances matter; however, words without deeds are hollow, and money alone cannot substitute for investments of our time, expertise, and commitment to equity.

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There are of course notable efforts devoted towards recruitment of People of Color into the university; however, these efforts alone are inadequate to foster racial equity in our profession. Tertiary education is far too late to begin the process of meaningful engagement with communities of color. Investments in recruitment, training, and retention of People of Color in the

agricultural sciences can start as early as elementary school. These investments could include, for example, using our expertise to teach botany and gardening at summer camps, or hosting farm and laboratory field trips at our academic institutions. Transitioning towards greater inclusion is possible; however, we must possess the willingness and creativity to actualize this change. Structural change cannot happen in the absence of direct, thoughtful engagement to address the needs and concerns of marginalized communities. As scientists and citizens, we can make meaningful and lasting efforts to dismantle the racial inequities that manifest in our profession. Our efforts must go beyond niceties, platitudes, and one-time cash donations; if we truly want to serve as instruments of change then we must begin investing in marginalized communities of color: we must invest our time, our expertise, and our steadfast commitment to equity and opportunity for all.



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