



## EDITORIAL

# Sowing the Seeds of Equity and Diversity in Academia and STEM Disciplines<sup>[OPEN]</sup>

On June 10, ASPB participated in #ShutDownAcademia #ShutDownSTEM, which called for White and Non-Black People of Color to educate themselves and define a detailed plan of action to carry forward, toward the goal of eradicating anti-Black racism in academia and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). As part of ongoing efforts to facilitate further reflection, understanding, and action in the community, we encourage the submission of Letters to the Editor from members of the plant science community that deal with the Black experience in academia and STEM and suggest approaches or activities that might contribute toward reaching this goal.

We are emphasizing a call for letters that focus on anti-Black racism, including its expression in colonialism globally, as this is one of the most pernicious and pressing issues of our time. We note that although #ShutDownAcademia #ShutDownSTEM arose out of events occurring in the United States, these events are relevant globally, and indeed, sparked protests against anti-Black racism around the world. We also recognize that there are many areas of bias that the scientific community needs to confront and address and that racism is a major issue for all People of Color. Authors may also choose to reflect on issues unique to or inclusive of other Non-Black People of Color as well as ways that other aspects of their identity contribute to oppression that has both overlapping and unique impacts within our community.

Letters should be no more than ~2000 words of main text and may be accompanied by a figure if it clearly adds to the arguments presented. To submit a letter, go to <https://tpc.msubmit.net/> (contact Nan Eckardt with questions). These articles will be reviewed, but the only criteria for acceptance are that an article is judged to be well-written and of interest to our readership and to provide some novel ideas that might have a positive influence on efforts to eradicate racism in academia and STEM. Personal opinions and a degree of speculation are welcomed; it is not necessary that the editors and reviewers share the views of the authors in all respects.

That said, we are pleased to introduce this series with the Letter “Planting Equity: Using What We Know to Cultivate Growth as

a Plant Biology Community” by Beronda Montgomery (Montgomery, 2020a). Beronda is passionate about plant science, about teaching and mentoring, and especially about making science open, inclusive, and accessible to Black and other underrepresented scientists. In this Letter, Montgomery draws analogies between how we think about plant and human communities and encourages a collective shift in academia from “gatekeeping” to “groundskeeping” practices, specifically with respect to facilitating successful outcomes for Black and other People of Color and underrepresented groups in the scientific community (see also Montgomery, 2020b). We are especially interested in the submission of letters for this series that enlarge upon the theme of a “groundskeeping” approach to mentoring, and what forms this might take, that it might become the paradigm for teaching and mentoring in STEM.

Finally, we also recognize that *The Plant Cell* has considerable work to do to broaden the diversity of our editorial board, and we are committed to making progress on this front in the near future.

**Nancy A. Eckardt**  
Senior Features Editor  
*The Plant Cell*  
[neckardt@aspb.org](mailto:neckardt@aspb.org)

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1658-1412

**Blake C. Meyers**  
Editor-in-Chief  
*The Plant Cell*  
[bmeyers@danforthcenter.org](mailto:bmeyers@danforthcenter.org)  
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3436-6097

## REFERENCES

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- Montgomery, B.L.** (2020b). Academic leadership: Gatekeeping or groundskeeping? *Journal of Values Based Leadership* **13**: 135–151.

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Nancy A. Eckardt and Blake C. Meyers

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<b>References</b>	This article cites 2 articles, 1 of which can be accessed free at: <a href="/content/32/11/3371.full.html#ref-list-1">/content/32/11/3371.full.html#ref-list-1</a>
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