

## EDITORIAL BOARD STATEMENT

# In Solidarity and Commitment to Black Lives Matter

YJBM Editorial Board

Yale School of Medicine, Yale University, New Haven, CT

We must begin by acknowledging the facts.

**Black lives matter.**

**Racism is systemic, pervasive, and harmful.** This statement is clear and uncontroversial for those who have been paying attention, but it is still vital to repeat it. Racial injustice is perpetuated by our legal, healthcare, criminal justice, and education systems, among others. Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) Americans are stopped by the police more frequently and receive harsher criminal sentences than white Americans [1,2]. There is a persistent health gap for BIPOC Americans in a wide variety of medical contexts [3-7]. The unaddressed historical legacy of “separate but equal” schooling leads to continued educational disparities at all levels of schooling [8]. The many stressors and disparities associated with living in a racist society mean that BIPOC Americans have a dramatically lower life expectancy than white Americans [9] – this is as much an act of violence as a police officer brutalizing unarmed Black people.

**Academia is no exception to the racism that pervades all our institutions.** Indeed, racial prejudice is deeply entrenched in the culture of science. Whites and Asians are overrepresented across a range of STEM occupations, whereas Blacks and Latinos are underrepresented [10]. Among other factors, unequal access to opportunities and resources, including mentorship and funding contributes to racial disparities in STEM [11,12]. This lack of a diverse community in STEM contributes to the isolation and marginalization of underrepresented students within the science community, and a narrative in which “white is the norm” [10,13]. The result is a loss of BIPOC scientists from the STEM pipeline. A study by Riegle-Crumb *et al.* found that 40% of Black students leave STEM majors compared to 29% of white students [14]. This problem extends throughout the academic ladder: Black post-doctoral candidates are perceived to be less competent, hireable, and likeable compared to white and East Asian counterparts, and Black scientists have nearly half the award rate compared to white scientists [12,15]. In addition to the clear harms of the current system to BIPOC scientists, a lack of diversity in science produces lower quality science [16-18]. Thus, the current system harms everyone.

**As both racism and science transcend national boundaries, BIPOC scientists cannot equitably participate in the scientific community until racism is addressed internationally.** As a group of primarily American students in biology and medicine, we do not have the background to comment on the specific historical underpinnings and manifestations of racism in other countries. It is clear, however, that racial discrimination and the normalization of whiteness in STEM is an international issue [19-24]. We encourage readers to educate themselves about racism in their country and learn what they can do to oppose it.

**Although racism is a systemic problem, meaningful change can be made through concerted action.** As part

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of a privileged, Ivy League institution and also part of the broader scientific community, *YJBM* has a responsibility to act. We have always had a responsibility to act, and regret that it has taken 92 years of *YJBM*'s existence for us to do so.

**Moving forward, *YJBM* commits to:**

- Support demands for anti-racist reform at Yale University, Yale School of Medicine, and the Yale New Haven Health System (viewable at [www.ysmdemands.org](http://www.ysmdemands.org)).
- Increase outreach to BIPOC authors about upcoming issues by inviting researchers who have presented at conferences SACNAS, ABRCMS, and other conferences intended to support minorities.
- Choose issue focus topics and subtopics that highlight health equity research and racial/ethnic diversity in clinical trials.
- Improve our training of editors to ensure sufficient and sustained outreach to BIPOC scientists.
- Internally track data on the number of BIPOC authors, podcast speakers, and colloquium speakers. We will review this data yearly and reassess our actions in light of the data.
- To combat bias against minority authors, *YJBM* is instituting optional double-blinded peer review. *YJBM* will not reveal the author's name to reviewers. Authors can choose whether or not to reveal their identity via the cover page and/or phrasing of the manuscript (for example, "in our previous work").
- *YJBM* will diversify its Faculty Advisory Board by recruiting additional excellent scientists of color.
- Highlight BIPOC authors who wish to self-identify as URM on our social media.

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