



SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

Dear Members of SSAR,

We write to you to acknowledge the pain that Black members of our community experience on a daily basis, an issue that is on everyone's mind now with the recent murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. People of color in the United States face systemic injustices that White people do not experience and often ignore.

Professional organizations, including SSAR, need to address the fact that we function in the context of a greater society that does not treat everyone equally. Some of our members have received the message throughout their lives that even though they are allowed to exist in one sphere or another, they don't really *belong*. This message comes in forms ranging from outright hostility, to subtle cues that can be hard to see if you are not directly affected. It detracts from experiences at annual conferences. It threatens the lives of people of color (especially Black people) as they do fieldwork. It affects mental and physical health.

We in SSAR must commit to fighting racism, intolerance, and discrimination in all of its forms. We must build an inclusive community where every potential herpetologist can thrive. Like many fields in STEM, ours is primarily White. Therefore, a first step in building a more inclusive community requires White SSAR members to educate themselves about the experiences of people of color, and about what they can do to help, both in general terms and with respect to making our society and profession more inclusive. Many resources are available to this end. A Google search will turn up some of them, as will engagement with the literature on how to better serve people from minoritized groups through our professional interactions. Principles of anti-racism and inclusion should inform our teaching, our mentorship, our interactions with colleagues, and our decisions within SSAR.

Finally, let us celebrate Black scientists. A group of inspirational young biologists have organized a Black Birders' Week, showcasing Black biologists and nature enthusiasts. Here are a few relevant links:

https://twitter.com/hood_naturalist/status/1266387163727486977

<https://twitter.com/BlackAFinSTEM>

<https://twitter.com/hashtag/BlackInNature>

<https://twitter.com/hashtag/BlackBirdersWeek>

Onward,

Marty Crump, President SSAR

Kirsten Nicholson, President-elect SSAR

Marion Preest, Secretary SSAR

John Moriarty, Treasurer SSAR

Lynnette Sievert, Trustee SSAR

Jessica Tingle, Chair Student Participation Committee SSAR