

Inclusive Partnerships with Indigenous Communities and the BIPOC Workforce

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Image credit: Polynesian Voyaging Society



Image credit: NASA

Gratitude to:

- NASA and its leadership for holding this day and this space (and a request)
- My deeply sustaining work-life ecosystem, including my collaborators who model inclusive transformative partnerships among our many human identities and knowledge systems
- *I respectfully acknowledge those whose ancestral homelands I am speaking on, the Coast Miwok and Ohlone of Northern California, and the traditional custodians of the land where each of you are*
- I also honor the courage and vision of many working on these issues, including those who could not be present at this meeting

The Existential Crossroads We Are At

The dramatically accelerating fallout for our survival from:

- Climate Change
- Pandemics
- Economic inequality
- Digital Divide
- Systemic hurdles to inclusive excellence
- The rapid occupying of near-Earth space

Borne disproportionately by the same (BIPOC) communities

Appeal, and Charge, to NASA Leadership

- Take on leadership role in targeted ways with some of these crises
- Review closely, and implement actionable recommendations from, **the many excellent State of the Profession white papers from Astro2020 and Planetary 2023**
- Who are the stakeholders for the future of NASA's initiatives that we are missing at the decision-making table?
- Translate NASA's Mission and values to diverse excellence in NASA's future workforce, and greater mission success
- **WE NEED YOU** – as a federal agency, you are accountable to us, unlike companies and private actors in space

Actionable Items on the Ground

(we already know how to do most of these)

- Honor the long on-ramp, made longer in 2020, for the communities we need in our future workforce. Targeted solutions: funding *now* for early-career workforce, increase support for bridge programs and nontraditional students, recognize that the same pandemic/economic/SiP conditions will make some of the workforce disappear, potentially permanently, while maximizing productivity for a few
- Digital Chasm (Moses+2020): NASA can help with this
- Fund long-term relationship building and initiatives: offer 5-10 year interdisciplinary grants rooted in BIPOC communities, discourage last-min DEI partnerships in grants, review the reviewers, review the repeat applicants for whom an award would be a game-changer for their institution and community

Transform Scientific Culture at NASA

- Recognize that science outcomes are inseparable from the scientists, and values of the scientific system
- **Reject divisive dualities** (science vs. culture) and siloed “monoculture” thinking – this is artificial and *not* how human beings achieve our best (often surprising) outcomes
- **Move from a transactional extractive mentality to true long-term thinking:** relational, ethical, consensus building
- Reward models of inclusive leadership
- **Please lead the world’s space agencies in establishing a Cultural Ethics/Protocol Office** – needed for the best outcomes from NASA’s inclusive workforce of tomorrow, including indigenous communities

Communities, not Colonies, in Space

- Space is now the playground of billionaire investors and private companies. We need **consistent international regulatory and ethical standards that honor ALL stakeholders in dark skies and near-Earth space**
- **Space as an ancestral global commons for science AND culture** (Venkatesan+2020): We need YOUR advocacy
- **New anti-colonial treaties to replace the Outer Space Treaty** (lofty ideals but toothless). **Tavares+2020**. Move away from a first-come, first-claim race to ownership and occupying of space. Learn from the history of land treaties (recent majority opinion from SC Justice Gorsuch, *McGirt v. Oklahoma*)

Dark Skies as a Human Right, Cultural Value of Moon and Celestial Objects

- Please act on this now – before irreversible changes
- Recognizing the importance of dark skies for scientific/cultural practices of ALL of humanity, indigenous peoples including wayfinders
- All our ancestors have been scientists and explorers – what can we learn from ALL traditions to maximize NASA Mission success?

Video: Marco Langbroek
Reuters and NYT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytUygPqjXEc>



Image: Torsten Funke



Looking Ahead

- Thank you for listening and for giving space and intentionality to these issues. **In gaining the stars, who are we losing?**
- This is our – human – journey. What will future scientists and storytellers say about what we did – and did not do – at this juncture in our collective history? Can we be the elders and leaders our future workforce deserves?
- **Please do this event again in a few months**

I offer the lesson of the stone mason; the greatest works require a tremendous effort with surprising patience, one stone at a time.

- Paul Coleman, first Native Hawaiian to receive a doctorate in astrophysics