

September 25, 2020

ASBMB statement on Trump's executive order banning racial sensitivity training

The following is a statement from Benjamin Corb, public affairs director for the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology:

“We are disappointed but not surprised by President Donald Trump's executive order characterizing training programs designed and proved to help to make workplaces more equitable as ‘anti-American.’

Inequities in hiring, funding, pay, advancement and treatment in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields are well documented. So too are historical experimental and clinical abuses and racist and sexist ideas about biological differences. Denying or ignoring the present and past amounts to perpetuating a fiction.

Scientists are in the business of facts and evidence and are always seeking methods and approaches to do their work better. The ASBMB wholeheartedly supports the ideation and execution of professional-development and mentoring programs and resources that are rooted in the literature, and it encourages the careful evaluation of those programs and resources to be certain they produce meaningful outcomes that make STEM more accessible to and inclusive of underrepresented minorities and women.

Furthermore, this misguided policy position from the Trump administration fails to recognize that training to reduce bias and foster diversity makes STEM workplaces more creative and productive, which results in better technologies and treatments that improve quality of life for and well-being of all Americans.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore how longstanding inequities in housing, employment and medicine result in health disparities. But we've known for a long time that employment discrimination, both overt and cloaked, affects who does science and who administers care. Those hiring and promotion decisions influence what scientific and clinical questions are asked and what solutions are put forward.

Neither this nation nor the scientific enterprise was designed with equity at its core. For those who idealize America and science, that's a tough pill to swallow. But only by recognizing historical injustices and the modern-day perpetuation of unjust systems and practices will we be able to make the changes necessary to reach our greatest potential and serve all of humanity.

The ASBMB is committed to interrogating how science is done, who is allowed to do it, who it benefits and whether its products contribute to a more safe, healthy and happy populace.”