

New report calls on bioethics to take a stand against anti-black racism

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A new Hastings Center special report calls on the field of bioethics to take the lead in efforts to remedy racial injustice and health inequities in the United States. As an academic field concerned with health and health

care issues—particularly the influence of structures, policies, practices, and norms on conditions that unfairly advantage some and disadvantage others throughout society—bioethics has a moral responsibility to respond to the longstanding harms that racism has posed to the overall health and well-being of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other people of color. Yet, over its 50-year history, bioethics as a field has remained largely silent on issues of racial injustice.

The special report, "A Critical Moment in Bioethics: Reckoning with Anti-Black Racism Through Intergenerational Dialogue," represents a collaboration between an independent antiracism task force of bioethicists from across the United States and The Hastings Center, as part of the Center's health equity initiative. Highlighting the intergenerational work of mostly Black scholars, the report examines structural racism—particularly anti-Black racism—in health care settings, in health equity research and practice, and in bioethics.

"In this critical moment in United States history, we reckon with anti-Black racism and the lack of prioritization of social and racial justice in the field [of bioethics] by gathering behind social justice issues specifically affecting the health and well-being of Black people," the editors state in the introduction.

The report—comprising articles, essays, and commentaries—presents considerations for transforming 1) bioethics scholarship and education, 2) health care and [medical education](#), and 3) health equity research to address structural and systemic forces that perpetuate social injustice.

Additionally, the report concludes with a powerful tribute to the late Marian Gray Secundy (1938-2002), who served as the first Black American to direct a federally funded bioethics center. Dr. Secundy's legacy of intergenerational engagement and commitment to racial justice in health and [health care](#) is central to the work of this special report.

"This special report is a call for structural change, a much-needed push to move from silent allies and activists within our trades, our professional organizations, our communities of practice, our communities of living, and our discipline communities—to uphold and uplift the values of justice and respect for persons within each of our communities and work toward being antiracists," wrote task force member Vanessa Y. Hiratsuka, Ph.D., MPH.

More information: Faith E. Fletcher et al, Addressing Anti-Black Racism in Bioethics: Responding to the Call, *Hastings Center Report* (2022). [DOI: 10.1002/hast.1360](https://doi.org/10.1002/hast.1360)

Provided by The Hastings Center

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