



CONNECTIONS

Linking EEO, Diversity and Science

Issue #34

EEO/Diversity Newsletter for NOAA Research

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"I Didn't tell you ..." Reflections on Race through poetry and research

By Annie Reiser

Boulder-based Poet and Social Justice Activist, Norma Johnson, opened NOAA Boulder's observance of Black History Month with her moving poem, "I didn't tell you . . ." The crowded conference room, abuzz with NOAA employees and guests from the community turned stone silent at Johnson's powerful and moving performance. "This poem was a cry from my heart to speak on a deeper level to my white friends and to attempt to relay to them that because of race, there is a palpable difference in the way our daily lives play out," explained Johnson. Taking a deep breath and closing her eyes in preparation, she then delivered an emotional poem that left the audience momentarily speechless. The poem, one in a collection of *Poems for My White Friends*, "is intended to move and inspire through the wisdom and a vision that already lives within each of us," according to Johnson, who seeks "to connect individuals and community back to the heart-centered place, where all vision lives."

After reciting her poem, Johnson invited the audience to pair off with someone they don't usually talk to and tell each other how the poem made them feel. The volume rose again as people had an animated discussion about what they had just heard—thought provoking stanzas like:

"I didn't tell you that my stomach clenches when I see a police car because it means I may not...be...safe," or

"I didn't tell you about the white woman I passed at twilight in the park, who tensed her body, tightened her grip on her purse and walked a large curved detour past me," or

"I didn't tell you about my day because I had been taught not to. And you have been taught not to even consider it."

Johnson's exercise set the tone for the next featured speaker, Hillary Potter, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at CU Boulder. Dr. Potter's research focuses on the intersection of



Photo: Norma Johnson looks on; pleased at the audience participation in her interactive exercise. Photo Credit: Susan Cobb.



Photos: An animated audience discusses how they felt after Johnson's powerful poetry reading. Photo Credit: Susan Cobb

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Black History Month - "Reflections on race through poetry and research"

race, gender, and class as they relate to crime and violence—a logical outcome of her degrees in both Sociology and Criminal Justice. "In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I became interested in what I had observed on television and in other media coverage of the disaster," said Potter.

She traveled to a New Orleans shelter, and as a 'participant observer' studied the social impact of this natural disaster on the way society is set up, especially for people of color and low socio-economic status. She also traveled to other city communities where excessive force resulted in citizen protests in the wake of social disasters such as the shooting in Ferguson, Missouri. Jokingly, Potter was called a "disaster chaser" among colleagues because she sought them out to observe.

Potter's studies showed that implicit bias (bias that resides deep in the subconscious) is prevalent in policing, that domestic violence rises in couples after natural disasters, and natural disasters brings about judicial reform in the criminal legal system. Potter has authored numerous articles and books and edited *Racing the Storm: Racial Implications and Lessons Learned from Hurricane Katrina* that speaks to the topic presented.



Photo: Dr. Potter talking about the impacts of disasters on race. Photo Credit Susan Cobb

NOAA's Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) EEO/Diversity Program Office, Boulder Labs Diversity Council, and Boulder County (BIG) sponsored the event that was webcast to OAR staff. The speakers' parting message, expressed by Norma Johnson, was "seize this juicy momentum of sharing and talking about race—carry it with you and keep talking so you'll act differently." That can bring about real change.



Photo: Key presenters and organizers: Left to Right: Albert Romero (NOAA), Ray Stewart (NOAA), Norma Johnson, Wilford Buggs (BIG), Georgia Madrid (NOAA), Hillary Potter, Eric Kihn (NCEI Director), Alisa Young (NOAA). Photo Credit: Patrita Salazar



Norma Johnson showcased numerous books on race relations. You can view a listing of some of the books on Norma's website at: <http://allinspirit.com>

You can also view her "I didn't tell you" poem at <http://allinspirit.com/video/>

A Message from the OAR AA and EEO/Diversity Awards

Dear Colleagues,

One of the central pillars of a healthy organization is a firm commitment to important values known to and practiced by all employees. Diversity and inclusion have become part of NOAA's central values, and I am committed to leading an OAR that actively celebrates and pursues diversity and creates an environment of inclusion for all employees. Diversity and inclusion are essential to our continued preeminence as a science leadership enterprise.

We can admire and value what each of us brings to the OAR family, particularly as we learn more about each other. As we discovered at one of our informal brown bag lunches in HQ, we are much more than our job descriptions. We are also poets, scuba divers, therapists, hikers, and carpenters; bikers, mechanics and some darn good parents. We each have much to offer. I have been delighted to see OAR employees at all levels, from interns to senior managers, embrace these values and enthusiastically step forward to advance this culture.

NOAA has created the [Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan](#) with three goals, each with a cross-NOAA working group to implement the plan. Within OAR, we are taking the initiative to promote cultural awareness, improve understanding of issues impacting diversity and inclusion and provide forums for discussion among employees to address these issues -- to further the positives and mitigate or retire the negatives. For example, PMEL has created a Diversity and Inclusion Committee that has already surveyed employees on issues that impact inclusion. CPO's Diversity Committee is leading with a series of activities to build a spirit of camaraderie. OAR employees are on board. We see healthy participation in many recent diversity and inclusion events, including the first Town Hall focused on diversity and inclusion, Unconscious Bias training completed by OAR and other NOAA employees; the Cultural Diversity Series at the NOAA Boulder Campus and via webinar; and a Tribal Relations Seminar open to all of NOAA via webinar.

We are also looking to the future and integrating diversity and inclusion goals into how we tackle the very serious "missing generation" problem within our federal workforce. We are making use of very successful programs, such as [NOAA's Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions and the Cooperative Science Centers](#), to train and recruit student who will broaden the next generation of candidates. I was pleased to meet with students from Howard University, City College of New York, and the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, where in each location NOAA has a Cooperative Science Center. To make it easier to learn more about these and other recruitment, mentoring and internship opportunities and activities to engage the next generation, in addition to the *Connections* newsletter, we have just launched a new EEO/Diversity section of the [OAR Hub](#).

I thank each and every one of you for taking this journey with me. You bring value to OAR now and it is you who creates our future. From science to administration, from law to physics, and from the deck of a ship to an office chair, wherever you work your contribution is necessary to our mission. I leave you with this final thought: With inclusion comes diversity. We can make this a best practice and a regular one in our own house. Let's do so every day.

Sincerely,
Craig

Congratulations to the Recipients of the OAR EEO/Diversity Award for Exemplary Service

Laboratory Award: GLERL - For dedicated resources and support of the EEO/Diversity mission.



Photo: Dr. Sullivan, Deborah Lee, Anne Clites and Craig McLean at the OAR Awards Ceremony on December 5, 2016.

Employee Award: Catalina Martinez, OER, For dedication to improving the representation of women and minorities in STEM.



Photo: Dr. Sullivan, Catalina Martinez and Craig Mclean

OUTREACH - NOAA'S COOPERATIVE SCIENCE CENTERS VISIT PMEL

By Adi Hanein

On January 20, 2017, 14 representatives from three of the four NOAA CSCs visited PMEL. CSC leadership and students learned about PMEL research and introduced PMEL to the CSC students and their research. The visit helped everyone better understand the CSCs capabilities and to develop new partnerships and training opportunities between PMEL and the CSCs.

The day included an overview of PMEL, CSC presentations and



Photo: Michael Craig explains PMEL's mooring shops and operations.

breakout sessions to discuss specific research areas and student presentations. During the breakout sessions, attendees were exposed to eight PMEL research groups: Ocean Climate Stations, Pacific Western Boundary Currents, Global Tropical Moored Buoy Array, NOAA's Center for Tsunami Research, Earth Ocean Interactions, Arctic, Ecosystems & Fisheries-Oceanography Coordinated Investigations, and the Innovative Technology for Arctic Exploration. The purpose of these sessions was to provide the CSC attendees with an opportunity to meet with PMEL scientists and provide a better understanding of some of PMEL's research areas. In the afternoon, six CSC Fellows (3 from CREST and 3 from CCME) and one Postdoctoral Fellow (NCAS) gave presentations on LIDAR, aerosols, anthropogenic heat, living shorelines, Mosquito Lagoon and validation of soil moisture data.

The group on Friday included the NOAA Center for Earth System Sciences and Remote Sensing Technologies (CREST) led by the City College of New York, NOAA Center for Coastal and Marine Ecosystem (CCME) led by Florida A&M University and NOAA Center for Atmospheric Sciences and Meteorology (NCAS) led by Howard University. The CSC Directors in attendance were Dr. Reza Khanbilvardi (CREST), Dr. Vernon Morris (NCAS), Dr. Terri Adams (NCAS), Dr. Richard Long (CCME), Dr. Shakila Merchant (CREST) and Jacqueline Rousseau from NOAA's Educational Partnership

Program and Student Scholarships, 11 CSC Fellows and one Postdoctoral Fellow.

The following week, Adi Hanein led tours for nine additional students who were attending the American Meteorological Society's Annual Meeting and who were not able to attend the



Photo: PMEL staff meet with CSC Directors, Faculty and Fellows.



Photo: CSC students stand next to a RAMA moored buoy.

visit on January 20. The students met with a variety of PMEL staff including Christian Meinig, Geoff Lebon, Tom Walton, Michael Craig, Derek Coffman and Jessica Cross. The tour included PMEL's engineering spaces, the machine shop, and the mooring facility. The students were able to see some of the technologies PMEL uses as well as the portable vans used on research cruises.

The visit was very successful and enjoyable for all who participated. All of the attendees were engaged throughout the day and this event has encouraged PMEL scientists to seek more opportunities to collaborate with the CSCs.

OUTREACH - AISES - A CONFERENCE LIKE NO OTHER

OAR had an excellent team at the American Indian Science & Engineering Society conference in Minneapolis, MN, November 10-12, 2016. Brent Lofgren (GLERL), Bob Rabin (NSSL), Catalina Martinez (OER), Georgia Madrid (EEO/Diversity), and Jackson Osborn (CSD intern) all participated in various ways. In addition to staffing the exhibit booth and sharing career information, Bob was a science fair judge for both the oral and poster presentations, and Catalina presented her workshop, *Equity through Inclusion: Increasing the Potential for Minority Success in Majority Settings* to a full house.



Photo: L to R: Brent Lofgren (GLERL), Catalina Martinez (OER), Georgia Madrid (EEO/Diversity), Bob Rabin (NSSL)

Jackson presented his poster, "Embedded Systems for Atmospheric Instrumentation." He talked about his work with ESRL/CSD which "outlined switching from expensive specialized computers to low-cost embedded computers." Jackson is a senior electrical engineering student at the University of Colorado at Denver. He has worked with the Atmospheric Composition and Chemical Processes division since January 2016. He assists with electronics development and assembly and C-programming, mostly related to the POPS (Printed Optical Particle Spectrometer) instrument for measuring the concentration and size distribution of aerosols in the atmosphere. "I get to engage in meaningful research and appreciate the collaboration between scientists and engineers of various disciplines." said Jackson. Jackson is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and is the current President of the AISES CU Denver chapter. Jackson said that his experience at AISES was a fantastic learning experience.

For Brent and Catalina, it was their first time attending AISES. They said it was a wonderful venue to reach out to American Indians in the sciences as well as to learn about the culture. Catalina said, "Attending a conference entirely focused on Native Americans in science allows for a unique in-depth learning



Photo: L to R: Jackson Osborn (CSD intern), Catalina Martinez and Georgia Madrid

experience that really can't be replicated otherwise. The breadth of challenges, barriers, and opportunities within and among Native communities really are special, and the more we learn about the importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge with science, the better we can all manage our natural environment and resources. Several students applied for NOAA internships and fellowships, and I was invited to speak at the AISES Region 1 and 2 conference at Humboldt State University in Eureka, CA in March. I'm extremely thankful for my first AISES experience, and I look forward to helping build an even stronger NOAA presence at future conferences."

Brent said, "AISES is a conference like no other that I have attended. In addition to scientific presentations, it features many sessions on career advice and personal motivation, aimed especially at students. Unlike most conferences, it also incorporates a healthy dose of humor. Some of the attendees were raised on reservations, and are trying to connect to the scientific community, while others were raised away from the reservations, sometimes with a more mixed ancestry, and are trying to connect with their Native American heritage. It is an excellent opportunity to recruit, especially for summer intern opportunities and NOAA's scholarship programs. In addition to the science presentations, I recommend going to some of the talking circle sessions to hear people's personal stories, as well as the closing pow-wow."

The 2017 AISES conference will be in Denver, CO September 21-23. NOAA Boulder plans to host a Tribal Colleges & Universities/ AISES STEM Day on September 20, 2017. Please email georgia.madrid@noaa.gov

EEO/Diversity Across OAR

AOML - Howie Receives Order of Sherman's Lagoon Award

Howard "Howie" Friedman, the deputy director of AOML's Hurricane Research Division, was honored by Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, the NOAA Administrator, during an all-hands meeting of NOAA's Miami employees on November 2, 2017.

Howie received the first ever Order of Sherman's Lagoon award, bestowed to honor his exemplary service to NOAA's mission. The



Photo: Dr. Sullivan, Howie and Bob Atlas, AOML Director

award recognized Howie's long-term efforts to promote equal employment opportunity and diversity and educational and outreach activities at AOML. Howie was also recognized for his 55 years of federal service. The award is broadly based on the comic strip Sherman's Lagoon by Jim Toomey.

ARL - Students Learn About the Vital Role of STEM

Students from Norris Middle School Technology Student Association (TSA) visited ATDD on December 7, 2017. The purpose of the visit was to introduce the students to NOAA/ATDD and the vital role STEM has on a national and global



Photo: Mark Heur gives his presentation. Photo credit: Dave Senn

level. The twenty 6th to 8th grade students, two teachers, and twelve parents toured the laboratory which included USCRN (U.S. Climate Reference Network) station, wind tunnel laboratory, and electronics laboratory.



Photo: LaToya Myles gives an overview on research at NOAA. Photo Credit: Dave Senn.



Photo: Randy White and Michael Buban launch weather balloon. Photo credit: Dave Senn

The students participated in presentations by ATDD scientists and engineers working in their research areas. They included: Dr. LaToya Myles: NOAA/ATDD general information, scholarships, student programs and Air Quality, Mark Heur: Air Surface Exchange - Developing technologies, Edward Dumas: Atmospheric - Unmanned Aircraft and Randy White, Temple Lee, and Michael Buban who conducted some Weather Balloon Launches. The students were introduced to educational and career opportunities and were encouraged to continue their STEM related activities and remain active in science and math.

ESRL/PSD - Peer Mentoring and Outreach

Lesley Smith participated in three different education/outreach activities: the Adopt-a-Physicist program, PROGRESS, and NCAR’s Super Science Saturday. The goals of Adopt-a-Physicist are to: Engage high school physics students and teachers in exploring the benefits of studying physics; encourage physicists to give-back by sharing their experiences with students; and, advance the dialogue between the physics and the high school education communities. Three different classes of students “adopted” Lesley: one home-school science class of mixed ages, and two high school physics classes. Over a three week period, she hosted a discussion forum in which the students asked her all kinds of questions about physics and science and what it’s like to be a real professional scientist.

PROGRESS (PROmoting Geoscience Research, Education & Success). It aims to recruit and mentor STEM undergraduate women into the Earth and Environmental Sciences through a combination of formal and informal, professional and peer mentoring. Lesley met and emailed with her protege several times, discussing various aspects of science and school and research. Their activities included attending the annual ATOC Earth System and Space Science Poster Conference.

Super Science Saturday is NCAR’s biggest outreach and education event of the year. The event brings kids and adults together to explore hands-on activities, think about new ideas, and learn about science. This year’s theme was *Our Changing Climate!* Lesley worked in the computer science area, answering questions about NCAR’s computers, climate models and science, and helping with crowd control for the NCAR 3D Visualization Lab Demo.

GLERL - Cultural Awareness Events

The GLERL EEO Committee hosted two cultural awareness events, a ‘Diversity Potluck’ and American Indian Heritage Month Observance. For the diversity potluck, employees were encouraged to bring a dish to share that reflected their family heritage or a family favorite. “As always, everyone ate well and enjoyed some delicious homemade Chinese dumplings, Indian dhal, Polish Golabki, and many other treats” reported Anne Clites.

For American Indian Heritage Month, a lunchtime showing of the PBS video, *We Shall Remain* and a second movie in that series, *Tecumseh’s Vision*, about Chief Tecumseh and the struggles of the Native American tribes in the Great Lakes area were viewed.



Photo: GLERL employees enjoy food at diversity potluck.

Climate Program Office - Leading Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

CPO formed the following Diversity and Inclusion (D/I) subcommittees: (a) Training, (b) Professional Development, (c) Team Building, (d) Improving Communication and Transparency, (e) Issues related to Non-Feds, (f) Outside Office Activities and (g) incorporating D/I Principles into the CPO FFO. Each of these committees has approximately 4-10 members and have met a minimum of two times over the last few months. The subcommittee heads have met twice to report on progress.

Since June 2016, they have held informal bag lunches three times per month to allow staff to interact and learn more about each other in an informal setting; posted a D&I bulletin board with relevant articles, statistics and notices of upcoming events; and held a meeting for DC-area UCAR CPAESS staff at CLIVAR Headquarters in Washington D.C. in November 2016. The meeting provided an opportunity for staff to meet with Hanne Mauriello, CPAESS Director, and Laurie Carr, UCAR Human Resources Manager, during the UCAR 2017 Annual Open Enrollment to discuss health and retirement benefits similar to guidance provided to Federal employees and Boulder-based UCAR staff. The attendees discussed concerns and received guidance on UCAR policies to help employees better understand their unique role within Federal agencies. In addition, benefits such as education and training opportunities as well as transit and fitness benefits, which are available to Boulder-area staff, were discussed.

NOAA Research EEO/Diversity Program Office

CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

Connections is published quarterly by the OAR EEO Office. The purpose is to share accomplishments and to link Diversity, EEO and Science within all of OAR laboratories and programs.

If you have any newsletter ideas, suggestions and stories to contribute, please email Georgia Madrid georgia.madrid@noaa.gov.



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ABOUT US

VISION OF EEO OFFICE: To assist the Agency in creating a diverse workforce that is inclusive and free of discriminatory and retaliatory actions.

EEO MISSION: To bring awareness to employees, applicants for employment and management about EEO through the following:

Empowerment: Consultation services to employees, managers and applicants for employment.

Exposure: Recruitment and outreach activities for short and long-term recruitment.

Education: Federal EEO Mandated training, Special Emphasis programs and *Connections* newsletter.

Evaluation: Monitor employment statistics to prepare reports for NOAA, DOC, EEOC and OPM.

Website:

www.eeo.oar.noaa.gov

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

EEO COUNSELING:

Federal law prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy discrimination), age (40 years and over), physical or mental disability, including the provision of reasonable accommodations for qualified applicants and employees with disabilities or genetic information (GINA), gender identity, and retaliation for participating in activities protected by the civil rights statutes. In addition, NOAA prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation.

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To initiate EEO Counseling or for more information, contact:

Civil Rights Office, NOAA

Phone: (301) 713-0500 or 1-800-452-6728

Fax: 301-713-0983

Website: www.eeo.noaa.gov

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION:

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Website: www.wfm.noaa.gov/adr/