



Diversity ● Equity ● Inclusion



Five pointers to educate, promote diversity and inclusion, and combat racism

- Listen to the [Addy Hour](#) with Dr. Nii Addy, Associate Professor and Neuroscientist at Yale University. In this podcast Dr. Addy discusses topics at the intersection of brain science, mental health, faith, culture, & social justice.
- Read this [Reviews and Overviews from the American Journal of Psychiatry, From the womb to neighborhood: A Racial Analysis of Social Determinants of Psychosis in the United States.](#)
- Recommended book reading: [The Antiracist: How to start the conversation about race and take action](#) by Konrad Fidel who was born and raised in West Baltimore during one of the deadliest eras of American history.
- Many of us research mental health but the prevalence of mental health challenges amongst scientist, especially trainees, is very high. This is addressed in [The mental health crisis in science](#) by Wei Li, a PhD student in the Chemistry and Chemical Biology program at Harvard University.
- The National Institute of Drug Abuse recently held a workshop on [Enhancing health disparities research related to substance use and addiction: Research Gaps and Opportunities Meeting.](#) Videos and transcripts are available through the link.

Featured trainees who contribute to diversity and inclusion

Poorna Dharmasri (he/him/his), a PIN PhD student in the Blanpied lab, is Sinhalese and a first-generation immigrant born in Matara, Sri Lanka. Poorna has encountered difficulties with managing a PhD while dealing with mental health challenges.



He promotes diversity and inclusion by engaging in Brain Awareness week at local Baltimore City schools and providing lab tours to high school students. Poorna was the former president of the PIN student training committee. He is passionate about curriculum and student training and he strongly advocates for all students on Curriculum and Recruitment committees. He has been involved in PIN retreat organization, he pushed for changes in curriculum including data analysis and coding, and he participated in teaching and teaching assistantships in many PIN courses. Poorna is most proud of his research focused on how ionotropic glutamate receptors may impact protein organization at the synapse in an unexpected way, being consistently funded through the membrane training grant and a [NRSA](#), and use of his images by the PIN retreat programs, the website, and recruitment banners.

Yasmine-marie Cissé (she/her/hers), a postdoctoral fellow in the Bale lab, identifies as a Senegalese-Ivorian-American, and as a gestational attendee to her mother's thesis defense, a proud second-generation PhD.



As part of the Center for Epigenetic Research in Child Health and Brain Development (CERCH), Yasmine has participated in community engagement activities in Baltimore, including the Reading on the Brain program, partnering with a local elementary school to teach students and their families about the brain and the benefits of reading for brain development. Yasmine's research focuses on understanding how maternal preconception stress experiences are stored and later unmasked by the

physiological demands of pregnancy to alter both maternal and fetal health outcomes. Last year brought into focus the pervasive nature of racism and the research supporting its role in inducing a state of chronic stress called "weathering" in Black Americans. Weathering contributes to racial disparities in health, including the devastating disparity in African American maternal and fetal morbidity and mortality. To center her research in a translationally and socially relevant context, she is working in collaboration with the Grady Trauma center to evaluate lasting biomarkers of stress in women that experienced trauma and lifetime discrimination.