

# Truth and Transformation: RSNA's Journey Toward Equity

From the RSNA Board of Directors

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Recently, in the article “How We Got Here: The Legacy of Anti-Black Discrimination in Radiology,” published in RSNA’s journal, *RadioGraphics*, Goldberg et al (1) provided a clear historical look at anti-Black discrimination in the field of radiology, including within RSNA. The authors present a compelling history that connects this disturbing past both to the low representation of Black radiologists in the U.S. and to the persistent health disparities in Black communities that are evident today.

In an invited commentary, RSNA board member Dr. Jinel A. Scott states: “Although acknowledging these historic events is painful and uncomfortable, to disregard them would be injurious to the specialty and directly harmful to Black physicians, radiologists, and patients.” (2)

As leaders of a professional medical society that strives for inclusion, equity and diversity, we read this historical account with sadness and remorse. We applaud the authors’ important work gathering the facts and telling the unsettling story of our past. The events presented in the article likely do not represent a full accounting of RSNA’s harmful actions, but these examples are representative of actions and a time when our organization failed.

Racism’s destructive impact on human welfare on all levels – psychological, physical, social, educational, and economical – is antithetical to RSNA’s mission and to our current efforts and focus. We agree with Dr. Scott that it is uncomfortable to confront the harmful actions of our past. But to deny or dismiss our historical role in anti-Black discrimination would cause further injury.

We write this statement to acknowledge our historical contribution to structural racism in radiology and to apologize for RSNA’s actions that perpetuated systemic racism, both through omission and commission. We also deeply regret RSNA’s past policies and practices that have contributed to the health care disparities and inequities we see today. We recognize the profound and lasting impact these failures have had on communities of color and Black radiologists, as well as on the field of radiology. We reaffirm RSNA’s opposition to discrimination in any form and its commitment to initiatives and policies that aim to resolve these disparities and create a more equitable and inclusive society.

Because an apology without action and sustained commitment has little meaning, our future actions will reflect the authenticity of this statement and our commitment to listening and learning. RSNA’s strategic plan

includes the crucial goal of promoting diverse representation within the profession and ensuring diversity in RSNA leadership. But more must be done to reconcile the past and create a better future.

With the help of two key RSNA groups, the Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and the Health Equity Committee, as well as through the work of all parts of the organization, RSNA commits to the following actions:

- Ensure that RSNA bylaws, policies and programs are free from discriminatory practices and unconscious biases.
- Prioritize RSNA’s diversity, equity, and inclusion values and goals throughout the organization.
- Continue our assessment of gaps within RSNA leadership and volunteers, including board governance, speaking opportunities, and committee service.
- Identify areas of need and increase RSNA’s recognition opportunities, including awards and grant funding.
- Establish more equitable pathways to build diversity and address gaps within the radiology profession.
- Collaborate with organizations focused on improving the field of medicine for Black physicians and communities of color.
- Continue our commitment to reducing health care disparities and inequities within North America and throughout the world.

We hope this statement, the steps we plan to take, and our commitment to create a radiology community that is inclusive, equitable and diverse, will foster healing and positive change.

You can learn more about RSNA’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion at [rsna.org/about/rsna-diversity-equity-inclusion](https://rsna.org/about/rsna-diversity-equity-inclusion). We invite your ideas for improving RSNA, creating a stronger radiology community and a more welcoming environment for all people. Please direct your comments, questions, ideas and suggestions to us at [board@rsna.org](mailto:board@rsna.org).

## References

1. Goldberg JE, Prabhu V, Smereka PN, Hindman NM. How we got here: the legacy of anti-black discrimination in radiology. *RadioGraphics* 2023;43(2):e220112.
2. Scott J. From unacceptable to intolerable. *RadioGraphics* 2023;43(2):e220190.