



Dear friends of New Harvest,

It's amazing how much change is in the air.

I have to admit, I initially thought Black Lives Matter was not relevant to New Harvest's mission. I thought participating in the movement was too political, and I feared alienating parts of our donor base. I was afraid of saying the wrong thing or appearing ignorant.

Then we got called out. For those of you not on Twitter, a researcher from our broader community [criticized us](#) for not standing in solidarity with the movement. With that, a door opened. I started to think hard about the consequences of remaining silent, and about whether New Harvest ought to play an active role in combatting racism in cellular agriculture.

The answer is a resounding yes.

Here's why:

In my third year at the helm of New Harvest, I realized we had to start funding research. Cell ag is caught between worlds: the expertise in large scale cell and tissue culture resides mostly in the biomedical space, while the application resides in food science. As a result, cell ag falls into a funding gap between disciplines and has remained neglected for decades.

It was only as a science funder that we could have enough power and influence to mandate interdisciplinary, inter-institutional, pre-publication collaboration—a defining feature of our fellowship program. It was only as a funder that we could bring together fields that don't often communicate—a collaboration necessary to create an agricultural application of a traditionally medical technology. **It was only as a science funder that we could address entrenched problems in academia. One such problem is racism.**

If we are to build the field of cellular agriculture from scratch, we want to build it *right*. Let's carry forward the positive aspects of academic research—peer-review, academic freedom, and scientific creativity—and leave behind the closed doors for fear of scooping, siloed disciplines, needless competition, hopeless graduate student experiences, and unfair power dynamics.

SciChickNik's tweet made me realize that we must address even more entrenched problems—systemic racism and barriers to entry for Black scientists. Again: If we are to build the field of cellular agriculture from scratch—we want to build it *right*.

Tomorrow, we are participating in [#ShutDownSTEM](#). If you're in STEM, I encourage you to do the same. We are taking the day to create an action plan to leverage our position as a funding agency to better support Black scientists in cellular agriculture. As the leading organization building this field from the ground up in academia—as the leading organization creating the talent pipeline in cellular agriculture—it is our responsibility.

I look forward to sharing our plans, hearing your thoughts, and getting this dialogue started.

Thanks for joining us in creating a better world.

Isha
Executive Director, New Harvest

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