

# Correspondence

## Iran: amplify voices of persecuted academics

People in Iran are under attack, our fellow academics among them (see [go.nature.com/3gnoc9w](https://go.nature.com/3gnoc9w)). In recent weeks, the Islamic Republic has orchestrated several violent assaults against Iranian universities (see *Nature* **610**, 430; 2022). We are among the more than 500 scholars who have signed an open letter condemning these attacks and the brutal oppression of academics by the government (see <https://supportiranianacademics.org>). We demand the immediate release of all activists, including students, from the prisons of the Islamic Republic. We call on the international scientific community to amplify the voices of those in Iran, and to recognize the extraordinary challenges faced by Iranian scholars.

In addition to violence and harassment, students face disrupted Internet access, economic uncertainty and unwillingness of the universities to perform administrative duties. As such, we urge scientific institutions to show flexibility in their admissions processes for Iranians, ease financial burdens through application-fee waivers and scholarships, and provide open access to academic resources.

Education, the liberty to pursue scientific enquiry and freedom of expression are basic human rights. Wherever scholars are under attack, we, as a scientific community, have a duty to stand with our colleagues and defend those rights.

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\*On behalf of 6 correspondents. See [go.nature.com/3dfmjz](https://go.nature.com/3dfmjz)

## Probe how race and gender intersect in author attribution

To make academia a profession of equal opportunities, we must use metrics and data-driven decisions to resolve deep-seated inequities, including lower accreditation of women as authors compared with men (M. B. Ross *et al.* *Nature* **608**, 135–145; 2022). This gender injustice is compounded for researchers in under-represented ethnic and racial groups.

The intersection of race and gender in authorship attribution has at least two components. One is that researchers from minority groups might be less likely to be invited to participate in writing a paper or to be offered authorship. Another is that they often have fewer opportunities to write papers – for example, their time away from research is frequently taken up with mentorship and service activities related to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

Team leaders and mentors must aim to engage and sponsor more women and people from minority groups. Proactive transparency and active sponsorship in attributing authorship is crucial. Furthermore, gender representation and other aspects of diversity must be promoted in academic leadership, as well as on editorial boards, grant-review panels and other decision-making bodies.

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## Japan: reform leadership in clinical medicine

Cronyism and gender bias have shaped academic leadership in Japan for 100 years or more (see N. Nagano *et al.* *Women's Health Rep.* **3**, 115–123; 2022). This has perpetuated a stagnant system of leadership and faculty immobility that is damaging the composition and quality of Japan's academic workforce (see also K. H. Wapman *et al.* *Nature* **610**, 120–127; 2022).

Out of Japan's 82 medical schools, we estimate that cronyism was involved in the appointment of all the current deans and hospital directors in the top ten ranked institutions. And although all 82 hospital directors hold PhDs in experimental medicine, none has a management qualification. In our view, this narrow science-degree bias in leadership appointments risks suppressing dynamism. Leadership searches should include a wider diversity of candidates.

None of the current deans or hospital directors is a woman. The proportion of female professors is falling at all medical schools, even though the total proportion of female physicians in academic positions increased from 10% in 1980 to 21% in 2016 (K. Kono *et al.* *JAMA Netw. Open* **3**, e209957; 2020). Furthermore, the presidents of all 19 of Japan's clinical specialism societies are men.

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## Remembering an original primatologist: Judith Masters

Evolutionary primatology tragically lost one of its liveliest intellects when Judith Masters, with her partner and scientific collaborator Fabien Génin, died during a robbery at their home in South Africa in October.

Judith, aged 67, retired last year from her professorship at the University of Fort Hare in Alice, South Africa, and was starting a revitalized career as a biogeographer. She was seeking to understand just how vertebrates had colonized the island of Madagascar, research that had begun to bear spectacular fruit (see, for example, J. C. Masters *et al.* *J. Biogeogr.* **48**, 492–510 (2021); F. Génin *et al.* *Biol. J. Linn. Soc.* **137**, 163–182; 2022).

This work bore all the hallmarks of the original thinking and synthetic ability that characterized Judith's research from the start. She perceived the need to change conventional views of how mammal species should be recognized, and also the practical consequences of doing so. Her reasoning underpinned the recognition that, far from being a dwindling relict group, the African strepsirrhine primates – the group that includes galagos and pottos – are instead vigorously diverse (J. C. Masters *et al.* *Zool. J. Linn. Soc.* **181**, 229–241; 2017).

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