

August 5th, 2020

Remarks made to introduce the webinar *Addressing Racism in CSD Education*, hosted by the journal *Teaching and Learning in Communication Sciences and Disorders (TLCSD)*

My dear colleagues and CDS students: I welcome you to the second day of this webinar on *Addressing Racism in CSD Education*. I'm from San Jose State University (Go Spartans!) that has long been a place of passionate activism for human rights. It is a privilege to introduce today's session. Dr. King said "***There comes a time when silence is betrayal***". In CSD, we have been silent in public for too long, while also being vocal in private confessions and conversations in the safe spaces of diversity issues committees or special interest groups about the racism endured by Black Indigenous Persons of Color or BIPOC students, clinicians, and scholars. We've also been silent about the erasure of key topics of diversity, equity and social justice in our curricula, our journals, our department meetings, and the boardrooms of leaders of our organizations. In the last 15 years, my professional service roles have taken me through the Asian Indian Caucus, ASHA's Multicultural Issues Board, the California Speech Language Hearing Association's Diversity Issues Committee, and to the coordinating committee of

ASHA's Special Interest Group - SIG 14 on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. In this entire time, we never stopped having these conversations – indeed the mentors that I follow closely have had these same conversations, for 30, nearly 40 years. I noticed consistently that the lived experience of being minoritized in our professions continually drew people into these specific service roles.

In truth, I do not know where the conversation in this webinar will lead us. What I do know is that I'd rather have this critical conversation than not have it because it represents a beginning of us talking more openly about the trauma of racism and discrimination that BIPOC students and professionals endure. We are grappling with a fierce reckoning, and a much delayed, frank reckoning of racism in our professions, as also in our nation. Race is not a biological construct and never was but is a societal, human-made construct. Racism is a very powerful system that creates completely inaccurate hierarchies of human worth, across lines of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, and many other attributes. Research has shown that racism is perpetuated in every institution and system that we have, in our policies and procedures, and this happens on our watch. We have the power to upend it and have to respond decisively so I ask that we please not get busy with tweaks or incremental changes, and do the deep work. As Black scholar, Dr. Ibram Kendi has stated that "*the heartbeat of racism is denial*". He describes racism as a

cancer and I agree with him. We cannot defeat a cancer that we continue to deny. Racism is a cancer in our professions that so deeply affirm the human right to communication, voice, inclusion, and to life participation.

To borrow from the words of young climate activist, Greta Thunberg, how dare we, how dare we value these rights for our clients with communication disorders, while so often denying them to peers and peers-to-be, in our ranks? Please let us walk the walk because racism also stops with you and me. I simply cannot stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you if your invisible knapsack is weightless with privilege, and mine is weighted down with microaggressions, bias, and exclusion. Today's conversation is another chance for us to come together with open minds and hearts, in a steely resolve that we will flex our collective social justice muscle like never before. In today's talks, our distinguished speakers will share insights about cultural humility, implicit bias, examples of anti-racist curricula, and on how best to create inclusive learning environments. As I hand it off to our first dynamic speaker duo, Drs. Ginsberg and Mayfield-Clarke, I close with the words of abolitionist Harriet Tubman "*Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars and change the world*". Thank you.

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