STILL SITTING ON THE BACK OF THE BUS: BLACK COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS ACADEMICIANS SURVIVING IN A SYSTEM OF BIAS AND PREJUDICE

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As a profession, racism has been "staring us in the face" for countless decades, yet we have chosen to address everything else around it. As such, solutions for ending racism in the field of communication sciences and disorders (CSD), consisting primarily of the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology, requires us to know where we came from, so that we have a better blueprint of where we can go. The fact remains we are still fighting in 2020 to have, (1) our governing professional certification board do more than release a statement about racism; and (2) a space where Black academicians can speak out about biased and prejudiced practices in the academy without repercussion. As such, before we can attempt to "end racism", we must first start by each inherently asking ourselves four questions:

I. Is this our Problem?

Racism is our problem because it has affected the development, success, and retention of Black faculty who can directly contribute to cultural awareness in the profession. Racial marginalization impacts the scholarly (research, teaching, publication) and administrative (promotion and tenure) success of Black academicians. Few faculty in the academy will admit to possessing racist beliefs, but many nonetheless are implicitly biased, prejudiced, and stereotypical toward their Black colleagues (Hamedani et al., 2020, Warren, 2020). More specifically, in CSD Black PhDs are not recruited, supported, or employed at the faculty level enough within institutions where the majority is predominantly White. Currently only approximately six percent of Black individuals with a PhD in CSD as compared to eighty-five percent of White PhDs work in United States higher education (ASHA, 2019). Because of this disproportionate representation, the discussion of cultural and linguistic diversity in CSD is most often presented from the perceived and biased perception of White PhDs who were taught about culture and linguistic differences from other White PhDs.

Moreover, when Black PhDs are recruited and employed in institutions of higher education, a derogative approach to practicing switch culture seems to prevail. Switch culture is a phenomenon of shifting from one cultural mindset to another because of recent exposure to a cultural "prime" (No, 2013). Switch culture occurs in academia due to a practice of thinking there is only one way to exist and succeed in the academy. When switch culture is practiced there are significantly diminished opportunities to increase the Black voice within the academy, produce research that supports and protects the lives of the Black population, and develop a curriculum that is organically designed with cultural awareness. For example, we see this problem in research studies produced by both Black and White scholars where the discussion of the Black population is often framed in a manner that consistently highlights the negative experiences of living in a racially charged world. Rarely do publications from this field highlight positivity or discuss the alternative to the challenges of being a Black person with a communication disorder in a society that is not designed to protect them.

II. What Happens to the Profession and Communities We Work with If We Don't Address This Problem?

It is projected that the demographics of the U.S. will change dramatically by the year 2050 with persons from racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds becoming the majority population (Vincent & Velfkoff,

2010). In particular, African Americans are expected to increase in number by 56% (Passal & Cohn 2008). With this changing demographic, it is likely that CSD graduate programs will diversify significantly and consist primarily of the persons who have historically been the subject of racism and marginalization. Overlooking or denying racism in CSD programs results in White scholars who will not be prepared for the change in demographics leading to a perpetuation of cultural incompetence when educating Black CSD students, and when interacting with Black scholars and thus, maintaining the cycle of educational inequity and unjust practices toward students.

In addition, not addressing racism in CSD means the research will continue to lack the representation of culture from Black academicians and the acceptance of publications that address Black persons from the viewpoint of Black scholars will continue to decrease. The Black community, who make seek and/or need clinical services, is significantly affected when Black academicians are not considered or included in the research produced within our field, contributing to cultural incompetence and insensitivity of the profession.

III. Why Should We All Take Ownership in Solving this Problem?

Addressing racism in CSD requires we take ownership and responsibility for the history of practices that marginalize Black academicians and discourages Black PhDs from publishing in the field. To solve this problem, we must challenge the existing beliefs about Black academic potential and ability. We must also challenge the dominant paradigm or mindset that prevents anyone from challenging the traditional way of thinking and doing in the academy. The solution will require both predominantly White institutions and historically Black colleges and universities, to rise to a level of respecting cultural differences equally and giving space for Black voices to coexist. When we take ownership and look at the problem from the top-down (university/college to community), we can address racism by changing the academies' intrinsic strong automatic preference for European American [academicians] compared to [Black] academicians (Gibson et al., 2017).

IV. How Would Our Voices and Knowledge Contribute to Accomplishing the Goal of Ending Racism in CSD?

When we say, "our voices", we are not only speaking about the collective voice, but specifically about creating space for the amplification of the Black voice. To end racism, we must rewrite the narrative that one cultural set is the precedent and bar that other cultures must rise to. Solutions to changing the narrative include:

CSD programs reviewing and revising their practice of actively supporting Black academicians through the collaboration and support of major publications, external grants, and promotion and tenure.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) revisiting its implicit process of marginalizing support to Black academicians when they operationally define "minority" to the benefit of whom and what they want to fund and elevate. For example, in a review conducted by the current author(s) of the number of previously funded research projects on Multicultural activities, six out of ninety-six ASHA-grant-unded projects were specifically related to African American populations (ASHA, 2020). Further, less than four percent of the funded projects were submitted by Black primary investigators. Black academicians should not have to create "racially safe" project proposals in the hopes that their research is funded and supported.

White scholars must retire the practice of believing that speaking on the awareness of their privilege as a White, upper class, heterosexual male/female is all that needs to be done to erase racism, implicit bias, and prejudice. Deeper conversations reflecting on privilege and how it has oppressed and harmed the success and progress of Black scholars is required.

Predominantly White institutions must recognize that the creation of "anti-racist" syllabi is not enough. Nor is it enough to continue to claim "cultural diversity" is interwoven into every class. Every CSD curriculum must develop a dedicated course addressing the confluence between communication disorders, **culture, and social justice**.

Overall, CSD academia must uncover hidden biases and embrace fear of the unknown over comfortability. For decades racism has remained the dividing factor in the profession because we have chosen to do what makes us comfortable rather than facing our unwarranted fears of change and accountability.

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