

# FROM EDI TO LIBERATION AND JUSTICE IN DIETETICS

*Calling in for Collective  
Learning and Action on  
Racism and Settler  
Colonialism*

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# Purpose

- This presentation will explore what equity, diversity, and inclusion mean in the context of dietetics, and propose justice as an alternative and more meaningful orientation to change
- Facilitate individual and collective reflexive thinking on race, racism, and settler colonialism
- Share tools and resources to guide learning and action for change



# Learning Objectives

- Provide some tools and perspective to enhance dietitians' understanding of racism and its impact on and presence in dietetics
- Increase capacity among dietitians and the dietetic profession to individual and collectively enact change
- To spark and support individual and collective efforts to redress racism in dietetics and beyond



# Overview

- Language primer and the value of words
- Racism in dietetics and why it is an urgent concern
- Who has responsibility for change
- Strengths and challenges of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)
- Redressing racism beyond EDI
- Reflexivity and next steps



# Language Primer

- **BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, People of Colour
- **Racism:** “presumed biological or cultural superiority of one or more racial groups used to justify or prescribe the inferior treatment or social position(s) of other racial groups” ([Clair and Denis, n.d.](#))
- **Racialized/racialization:** “the [outcome/] process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life” ([OHRC](#))
- **Oppression:** structural *processes* of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (physical, psychological, spiritual) that inhibit or influence a social group’s participation in everyday life ([Young, 1990](#))
- **Privilege:** safety, security, and benefits (freedoms, rights, resources, opportunities, access, voice, power) based on membership to social groups; often invisible to those who possess it and may lead to complicity and can serve to perpetuate oppression ([NLCYH](#))
- **Justice:** Fairness and equity in the distribution of wealth, opportunities, privileges, benefits, and burden in society via social and structural systems
- **Liberation:** Freedom from oppression
- **Intersectionality:** Coined by law scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1990s to name the unique forms of oppression and privilege that occur where multiple forms of identity meet (i.e. sexism experienced by Black women is different than that experienced by White women and Indigenous women)
- **Settler colonialism:** “a distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty” through violence and dispossession of material, social, and cultural identity ([GST](#))
- For more see [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#)



# Why are there so many words?

- **Bewildering and constantly evolving array of terms that may feel like:**
  - Unnecessary jargon
  - A barrier to well-intentioned engagement
  - Intimidating if you don't know the lingo or feel like you can't keep up
  - Scary if you say the "wrong thing"
- **Language is important to creating change:**
  - Language reflects and shapes how we view the world
  - Justice-oriented terminology names phenomena that are not well described or acknowledged otherwise
  - Orients us to the structural roots and complexity of oppression and privilege in society to target action
  - Shared language for common understanding and thoughtful discussion
- **Language is an important initial step toward engagement and learning**



# It's time to talk about race, racism, and settler colonialism in dietetics.

- There is a significant and telling gap in the data to describe the demographic profile of the profession
- **Brady et al (2012)**
  - 75% of successful practicum candidates in ON 2005-2009 were White
- **Caswell et al (2021)**
  - 81.1% of ON and SK dietetic program graduates 2014-2019 were White
  - 6.3% were Chinese
  - 5.2% South Asian
  - 0% Indigenous or Black
- **Riediger et al (2018)**
  - White graduates at UofM has 3.8x higher odds of securing practicum positions





## Why must race and racism be on the radar of everyone in dietetics?

- Racialized individuals' opportunities are being limited
- Racism, Indigeneity, and other SDoH lay at the root of health disparities
- Dietitians across all areas of practice serve an increasingly diverse Canadian population
- BIPOC students and dietitians experience racism in learning and work places and deserve better
- Systemic racism is embedded across every aspect of the health care system from access to treatment
- TRC calls for more Indigenous health professionals, efforts to redress anti-Indigenous racism, and preparation of practitioners in Indigenous Knowledge
- Black Health Alliance calls for redress of anti-Black racism and tokenism, and support for "the Black leadership pipeline"
- Dietetics is the only regulated health profession in Canada with specialized training in nutrition care and the impact of diet on health; We have an important role to play!

# Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice v3.0 (ICDEP; PDEP 2020)

- Guide and standardize curriculum and assessment
- Program accreditation
- CDRE assessment
- Entry to practice expectations
- Professional development
- See the full ICDEP document [here](#)

1.07	Integrate population health promotion principles and practices	a. Demonstrate understanding of <a href="#">determinants of health</a> , <a href="#">health equity</a> , and <a href="#">social justice</a>	KH		KH
		b. Demonstrate knowledge of frameworks for population and public health	K		K
		c. Demonstrate understanding of <a href="#">capacity development</a> strategies related to community food and nutrition issues	KH		KH
		d. Demonstrate understanding of health promotion concepts and approaches	KH		KH
2.01	Practice within the context of Canadian <a href="#">diversity</a>	a. Demonstrate knowledge of the <a href="#">diversity</a> in Canadian society	K		K
		b. Demonstrate knowledge of <a href="#">health systems</a> in Canada	K		K
		c. Demonstrate understanding of the impact of diverse attitudes and values on <a href="#">health</a>	KH		KH
		d. Identify structures that impact <a href="#">health equity</a> and <a href="#">social justice</a>	KH	D	KH
2.03	Practice in a manner that promotes <a href="#">cultural safety</a>	a. Act with sensitivity and humility with regard to diverse cultural groups	KH	D	KH
		b. Demonstrate awareness of Indigenous values and ways of knowing related to <a href="#">health</a> and wellness	K		K
		c. Demonstrate awareness of the ongoing impact of colonization / residential schools / intergenerational trauma / systemic racism on Indigenous peoples in Canada	K		K
		d. Demonstrate awareness of the role of <a href="#">self-determination</a> in supporting <a href="#">capacity development</a>	K		K
		e. Act with awareness of how one's own biases, beliefs, behaviours, power and privilege may affect others	KH	D	KH
6.01	Assess food- and nutrition-related situation of communities and populations	a. Identify types and sources of information required to assess food and nutrition-related situation of communities and populations	KH	D	KH
		b. Identify stakeholders	KH	D	KH
		c. Access relevant assessment information	KH	D	KH
		d. Interpret food and nutrition surveillance data	KH	D	KH
		e. Interpret <a href="#">health</a> status data	KH	D	KH
		f. Interpret information related to the <a href="#">determinants of health</a> and <a href="#">health equity</a>	KH	D	KH
		g. Interpret information related to <a href="#">food systems</a> and dietary practices	KH	D	KH



# Who has responsibility to create change?

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Traditional notions of responsibility are inadequate when the problems that we collectively face are the result of social and structural systems in which we all participate and for which no one person or group of people are to blame or who could feasibly bring about the kind of change needed ([Young, 2003](#)).



# We all have response ability.

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Having capacity to redress inequity and injustice because of individual and collective knowledge, skills, resources, privilege, platform, and expertise that confers individual and collective roles in and responsibilities for action to redress injustice such as racism and settler colonialism ([Young, 2003](#)).

# Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

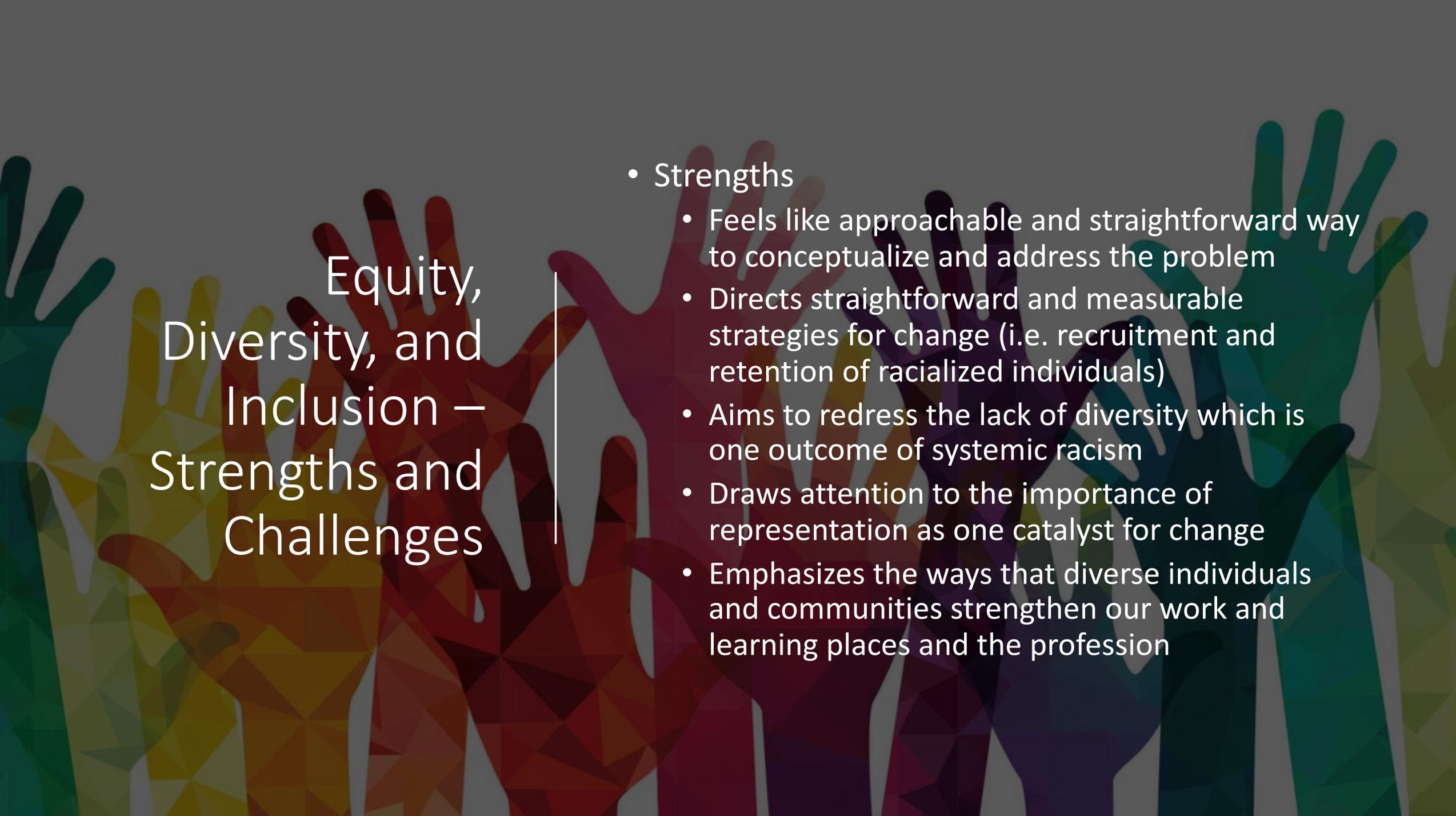
- **Equity:** the fair and respectful treatment of all people and the reduction of barriers to opportunities and outcomes for diverse communities
- **Diversity:** the demographic mix of individuals along differences in race, colour religion, immigration and newcomer status, ability, gender identity and expression, age, and sexual orientation
- **Inclusion:** an environment where difference is valued, and all individuals are welcomed, respected, and able to fully participate



# What does EDI look like in our work and learning places?

- Include images of visibly diverse individuals and communities in communications materials
- Recruit and promote BIPOC dietetic students, practitioners, educators, and decision makers
- Provide scholarships and other supports to racialized students and interns
- Aim to include diverse voices on committees, panels, and within decision making and leadership bodies
- Prepare educators and practitioners in principles of EDI and cultural competence
- Celebrate the ways that racially, culturally, and spiritually diverse individuals enrich our work





# Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion – Strengths and Challenges

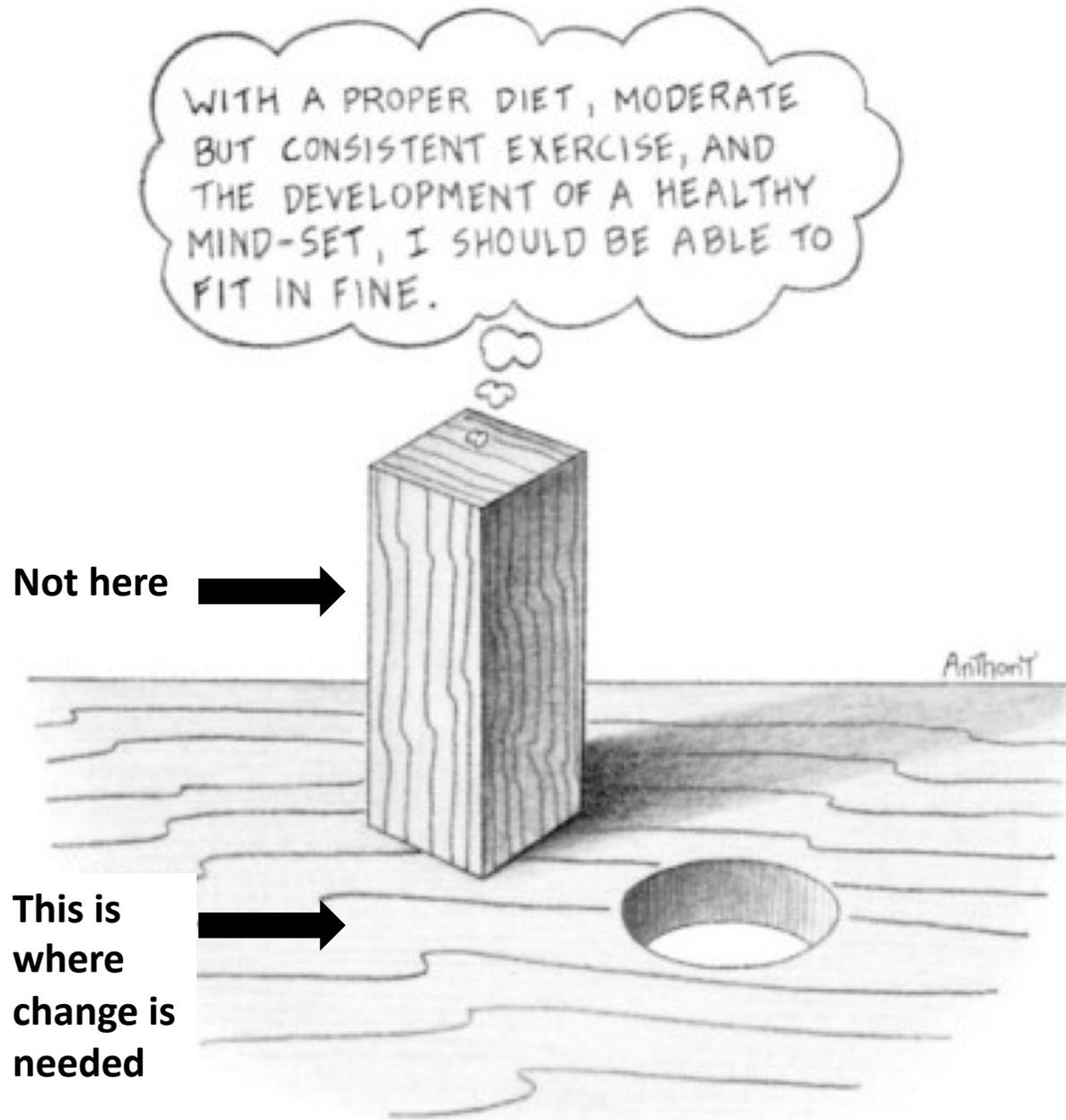
- Strengths
  - Feels like approachable and straightforward way to conceptualize and address the problem
  - Directs straightforward and measurable strategies for change (i.e. recruitment and retention of racialized individuals)
  - Aims to redress the lack of diversity which is one outcome of systemic racism
  - Draws attention to the importance of representation as one catalyst for change
  - Emphasizes the ways that diverse individuals and communities strengthen our work and learning places and the profession



# Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion – Strengths and Challenges

- **Challenges**

- "Downstream approach"
- Visibility of diverse individuals taken as evidence of change and success
- Does little to redress the "upstream" social, cultural, and structural causes of lack of diversity (i.e. white supremacy, epistemic injustice)
- Demands little of those who benefit from privilege (i.e. to acknowledge implicit biases, to learning, to risk using privilege to effect change)
- Ignores and silences the harms done to racialized individuals whose presence is taken as evidence of change (i.e. microaggressions, toxicity of white supremacy)
- Overlooks the ways that racism is intertwined with and reinforced by other forms of oppression (i.e. weight stigma, sexism, trans/homophobia, healthism, neoliberalism)



# Moving Beyond EDI to Liberation and Justice

- **EDI perpetuates a "language of appeasement"** ([Stewart, 2017](#))
  - Appeases pressures to redress racism by making change about visibility rather than transforming the deep roots of inequity and white supremacy
- **EDI encourages tokenism**
  - The practice of doing something (such as hiring a person who belongs to a minority group) only to prevent criticism and give the appearance people are being treated fairly
- **EDI creates an implicit expectation that racialized individuals have to "fit in"**
- **EDI leaves individual biases and the cultural and structural roots of racism and white supremacy unchanged**

# What does liberation and justice look like?

- Who and what knowledge is left out of dietetics?
- Whose presence in dietetics is under threat of erasure?
- Whose ideas, experiences, and worldviews aren't taken seriously because they aren't of the majority?
- What conditions have we created and that we individual and collectively benefit from that maintain certain groups as the majority?
- Whose well-being is threatened when diversifying dietetics means that myself, my colleagues, and my workplace aren't expected to change?
- How can we reduce harm to BIPOC clients, colleagues, and communities and appreciate the value of diversity?

Adapted from [Stewart, 2017](#)



# Perceptions of Preparedness for Socially Just Practice and Advocacy

Prompt	Strongly disagree + disagree	
	n	%

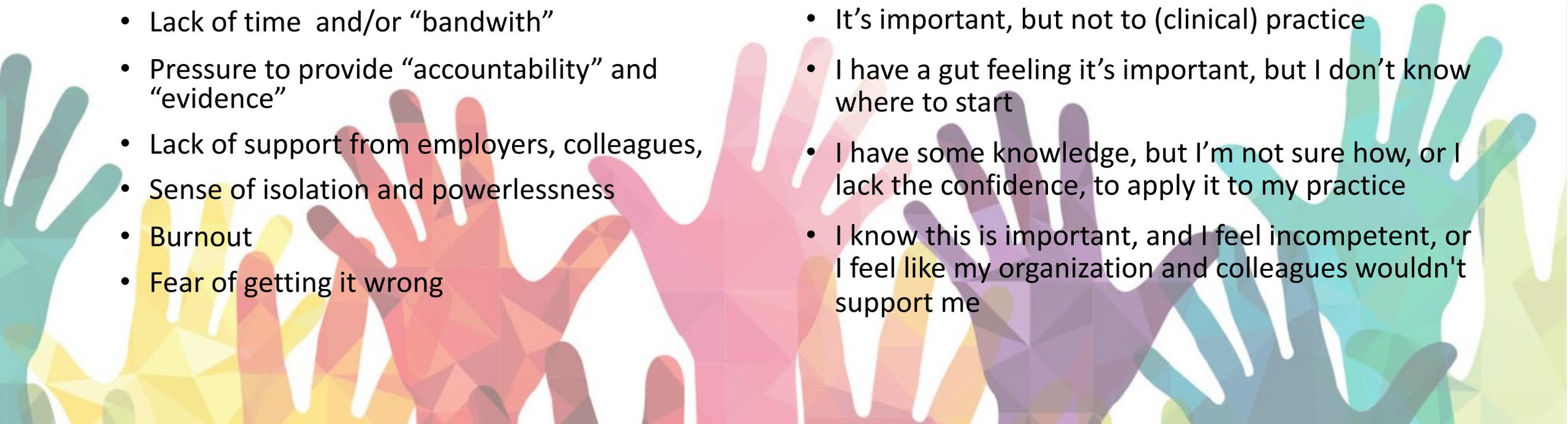
# Perceptions of Preparedness for Socially Just Practice and Advocacy

## Some common barriers

- Lack of knowledge, skills, confidence
- Emotional toll of work
- Threat to job security
- Lack of time and/or “bandwidth”
- Pressure to provide “accountability” and “evidence”
- Lack of support from employers, colleagues,
- Sense of isolation and powerlessness
- Burnout
- Fear of getting it wrong

## Some common thoughts and feelings

- I am not a social justice warrior
- I wasn't taught this in undergrad!
- It's scary, confusing, unsettling, unfamiliar, too big
- It's important, but not to (clinical) practice
- I have a gut feeling it's important, but I don't know where to start
- I have some knowledge, but I'm not sure how, or I lack the confidence, to apply it to my practice
- I know this is important, and I feel incompetent, or I feel like my organization and colleagues wouldn't support me



# Reflexivity to #DoTheWork

- **Reflexivity:** examination of one's worldviews, beliefs, values, and patterns of thought, and emotions to understand where these come from and how they inform your positionality within systems of power
- What has been going on in your brain and body as we've been exploring this topic?
- Reflexivity is a starting place for individual and collective action

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WHAT WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT WHITE FRAGILITY IS—



THE PHRASE "WHITE FRAGILITY" SOUNDS RACIST TO ME.



SURE, WHATEVER. WHAT WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT WHITE PRIVILEGE IS—



I DON'T LIKE THAT TERM, "WHITE PRIVILEGE." CAN'T WE JUST SAY "RACISM" INSTEAD?



OOO-KAY. WHAT WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT RACISM IS—



THE WORD "RACISM" IS BULLYING AND SHUTS DOWN CONVERSATION!



I'M GETTING THE IMPRESSION YOU'D RATHER NOT HAVE THIS CONVERSATION.



WHAT A GREAT IDEA! LET'S DO THAT.



Leftycartoons by B. Deutsch

# Questions for Reflection



## Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

[McIntosh, 1989](#)

- If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
- I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
- When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization,” I am shown that people of my color made it what it is. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world’s majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
- I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to “the person in charge,” I will be facing a person of my race.

# Questions for Reflection



## Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

Adapted from [McIntosh, 1989](#)

- When I look at materials that represent and set standards for healthy eating I see foods that are familiar to me and that reflect my cultural food ways.
- The foods that I enjoy are not assumed to be unhealthy due to cultural stereotypes about what I eat.
- As a student, I had fellow students and educators who looked like me. In class, I was never called upon to describe what all people of my nationality, culture, religion, or race eat.
- I submitted my internship application without concern that my race or presumptions about my English skills may impact whether I was accepted.
- I have colleagues that look like me and can assume that my knowledge and expertise will not be commended or discounted because of my race.
- I see clients in my practice without fear that they will question or reject my competence based on my race or cultural background.
- The worldview that I bring to understanding food, nutrition, and health is largely taken for granted and does not need to be singled out as specified learning such as through the ICDEPs.

# What next?

- [#DoTheWork](#)
  - Self-reflexive learning and unlearning in your personal and professional life
  - Respect, listen, and learn from the expertise and emotion from racialized clients, communities, and colleagues
  - Accept discomfort and imperfection as part of the process...and it is a process
- **Identify the structural embeddedness of racism and colonialism in dietetics, and food and health systems**
  - Ask why the profession is dominated by white faces
  - Internship/practicum selection; knowledge base and ways of knowing
  - Support efforts in your workplace to address racism
- **Hold decision makers and the profession accountable**
  - Familiarize yourself with decision making structures in dietetics, ask for change, and expect leadership
  - Education and training programs, Dietitians of Canada, Partnership for Dietetic Education and Practice, provincial regulators/The Alliance of Canadian Dietetic Regulatory Bodies



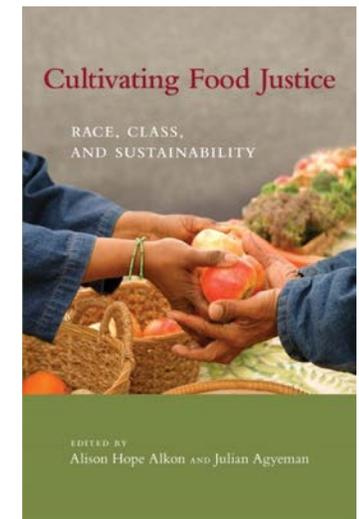
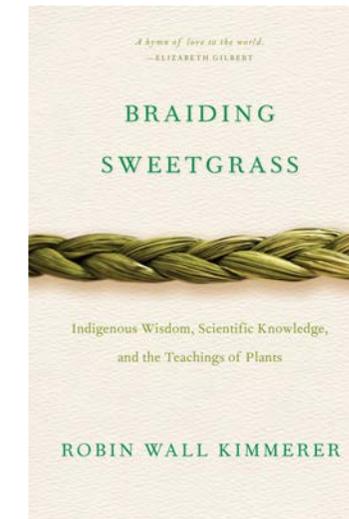
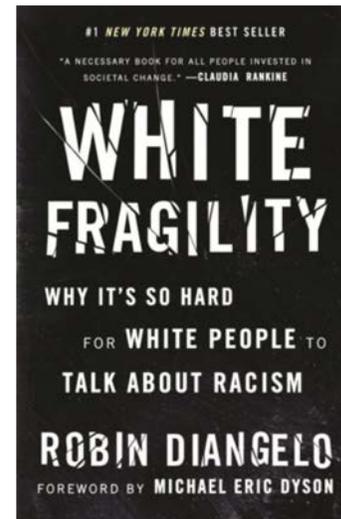
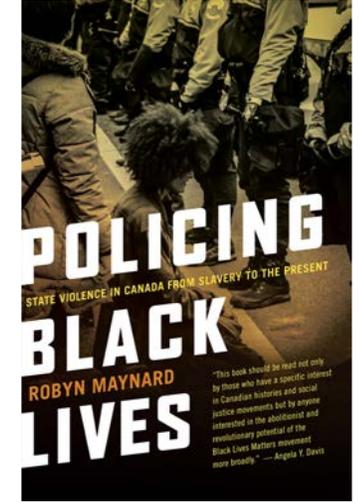
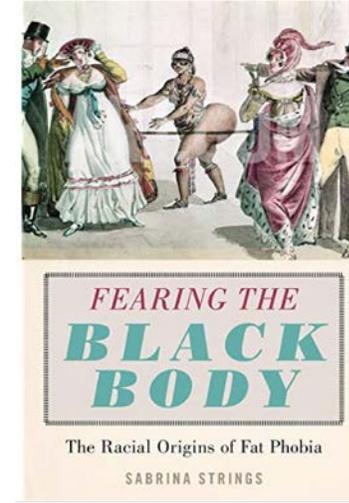
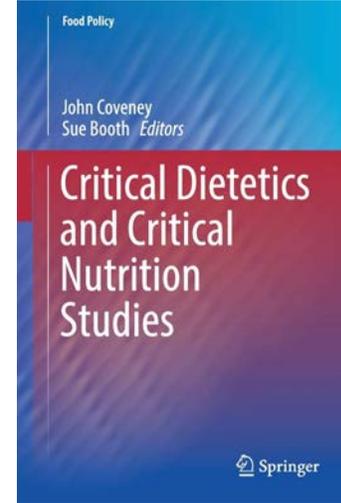
# What else?

- Support efforts for urgently needed research on race and racism in dietetics
  - Demographic data to benchmark and evaluate initiatives to diversify the profession
  - Experiences of BIPOC students, interns, practitioners of racism
- Review recruitment, hiring, and retention processes across all sectors of the profession (i.e. student recruitment, intern selection, practitioner hiring)
- Address barriers to internship and licensure
  - Cost and ethical concerns with unpaid internships
  - Address the unspoken expectations about "the fit"
  - Facilitate licensure for internationally trained RDs
- Create social and professional mentorship and networking opportunities for BIPOC students, interns, and practitioners
- Support outreach to students in racialized neighborhoods to nutrition and dietetics
- Critically explore dietetics' knowledge base and identify gaps in knowledge and ways of knowing



# Where do I start?

- Not really a wrong place to start
- Some options
  - [Rachel Cargle's 30-day Course](#)
  - [Tribunal on Racism in Dietetics](#) – 2020 World Critical Dietetics Conference
  - [World Critical Dietetics](#) and [Journal of Critical Dietetics](#)
  - [Reading list on food and racism](#) by the Canadian Association for Food Studies
  - Truth and Reconciliation Commission's [Calls to Action](#)
  - National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls [Final Report](#)





# Thank you

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