We Have Some Reconciliatory Work to Do: Kitchen Table Conversations Between Black and Brown Scholars about Racial Hierarchy in the Canadian Academe

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Abstract: This critically reflexive, conversation-based paper traces the lived intersectional experiences of systemic racism of two racialized women educators (Black and Brown-South Asian settler) at a Canadian university located on the traditional territories of the Anishnawbe, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral peoples. We discuss experiences of navigating whiteness in relation to "model minority" status and the discourses of diversity that permeate academe. We reflect on how racism, and specifically anti-Black racism and whiteness, are embedded in research. Some key questions we wrestled with are: How are the conversations about model minority status really about white supremacy and proximity to whiteness? How are Brown bodies played against Indigeneity and Blackness to further disenfranchise the latter and serve capitalist interests? How have academic institutions co-opted Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policies to benefit the status quo? The spirit of the paper encapsulates the two authors' building solidarity by resisting racist hierarchies enshrined within academia.

Keywords: community psychology, social work, racialized communities, education institutions, resistance

Systemic "-isms"

Racism, sexism, whiteness, and white supremacy go hand-in-hand. One cannot exist without the others. These key ingredients have been used in flavoring and building the Canadian nation-state and settler society. This is imperative to discuss because the broader colonial context is what frames academic institutions' lack of responses to their inherent subscription to white supremacy and perpetuation of racist practices such as research processes. The *dish with one spoon* covenant first struck between Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) people and white settlers in Southern Ontario was trampled upon by white settler societies through colonialism and genocide of Indigenous people, land, and sovereignty. The dish with one spoon characterized the land as an alive entity that needs to be respected and shared. The land was not meant to be instrumentalized for capitalist interests, personal greed, and private ownership. The land provides for everyone and cannot belong to any one white man (Kennedy-Kish (Bell) et al., 2017). Over time, systematically through legislation, paternalistic benevolence, and state sanctioned violence, Indigenous people and land continue to be violated through various mechanisms: for example, the use of residential schools to assimilate, indoctrinate, and abuse Indigenous people, while simultaneously denying them educational and social mobility within the western system; the 60s scoop, millennial scoops, and other efforts that contributed to the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the child welfare system; and the ongoing sterilization of Indigenous women, among other atrocious population control interventions (Rao, 2019). Despite these historical and ongoing events, Indigenous people have and continue to resist against oppression: advocating for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; taking the Canadian government to court to follow through on treaty claims, independence and

sovereignty through land back campaigns; and fighting for sustainability and against the depletion of natural resources (Kennedy-Kish (Bell) et al., 2017; Pieratos et al., 2020; Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

It is within this context of colonial violence that institutional racism and intersectional oppression are experienced by BIR (Black, Indigenous, Racialized) people in Canadian academic institutions; this specific oppression is shaped and fashioned through the colonial dominance of Indigenous land and people through white supremacist discourses (Thobani, 2007; Tuck & Yang, 2012). White supremacy is the mechanism through which norms, ideologies, discourses, and practices uphold and prioritize the white race's belief and value in white superiority and so-called "rightful" domination and oppression of racialized "others," that is BIR bodies and perspectives (Beck, 2019). Whiteness denotes the privileging and adopting of practices, discourses, and beliefs of the dominant norm in everyday life and interactions in academe: for example, privileging of the research, work, and perspectives of white cis-male heterosexuals who are able-bodied and Christian through official institutional recognition. Any analysis of white supremacy and whiteness needs to consider the unjust power relations which exist between white and BIR people due to socioeconomic, historical, cultural, political, and social racisms (Ahmed, 2012).

There is considerable literature which discusses social work's willful ignoring of racism and whiteness embedded in its discipline and practice despite calls to action from racialized Indigenous groups to rectify these issues (Blackstock, 2017). One of the core principles of social work and its code of ethics is to work towards social justice and equity (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2005). Social work as a practice and discipline needs to reconcile with its long history of participating in inflicting state-sanctioned violence upon and uprooting and disenfranchising BIR families and communities, and intentionally engage in the long-term work towards eradicating systemic injustices that marginalize BIR students, faculty, and staff (Briggs et al., 2018; Corley & Young, 2018; McMahon & Allen-Meares, 1992). Social work is not alone however, as many academic disciplines have problematically labelled and engaged with BIR communities around the world. For instance, the history of racism in psychology dates back as far as 1843 when the founders of the American Psychological Association (APA) implemented segregation policies in psychiatric care facilities (APA, 2021). In 1851, then-renowned psychologist Samuel Cartwright pathologized Blackness and the human need for a sense of autonomy in coining the term *drapetomania* as the "madness" of enslaved Black people running away from their captors (APA, 2021). In fact, well into the 20th century, the APA oversaw the misdiagnosis of BIR patients as schizophrenic (APA, 2021). This history coupled with the institutional silence on the pressing issue of police brutality towards Black people led to the public call-out in 2020 of the central association for community psychology—the Society for Community Research and Action (a division of the APA)—by BIR and allied scholars for its participation in anti-Black racism and white supremacy (Thomas et al., 2020).

Academic institutions, especially universities, practice token "diversity" by hiring BIR individuals. Over the past few years we have witnessed a proliferation of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion departments, policies, and the targeted hiring of BIR scholars across Canada. However, post-secondary institutions have not done the work necessary to shift university

cultures and are thus unequipped to address systemic white supremacy and racism, which results in the tokenization, marginalization, and oppression of the very BIR scholars they mean to attract and retain (Ahmed, 2012). Microaggressions are very common against racialized individuals in academic institutions, especially in social work and health sciences departments (Harrison & Tanner, 2018; Park, 2005; Pon, 2009; Sharda et al., 2021; Zamudio-Suarez, 2016).

> Academic culture also fails Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) faculty, who receive fewer federal grants due to systemic bias and topic area. BIPOC faculty are most likely to invest substantial time in activities that promote diversity, which are devalued in the tenure and promotion process. BIPOC faculty are further disadvantaged in tenure decisions through cultural taxation of unequal service and mentoring demands. Given these burdens, BIPOC faculty cannot be expected to be the primary agents of institutional change. Instead, those most empowered to make change—non-BIPOC faculty—must join BIPOC faculty in their efforts to prioritize recruiting, supporting, and championing diversity. (Barber et al., 2020, p. 1441)

Multiculturalism and Model Minority

Academic disciplines cannot be separated from the social, political, historical, and cultural context of the Canadian nation-state. Academic institutions and disciplines are informed by multiculturalist discourses which are evident in both Canada and the US, with varying historical significance and emergence (Goldberg, 1994; Gordon & Newfield, 1996; McLaren, 1997). A notable difference between US and Canada is that Canadian multiculturalist discourses are state-sponsored, historically rooted in anglophone-francophone relations, and part of common parlance (i.e., "diversity as our strength") in the building of Canadian national identity. However, in the US context, this term's use is mainly voluntary and individual in nature (Bannerji, 2000). In many ways terms such as multiculturalism, diversity, and people of colour (POC) serve as markers of difference based on skin colour, ethnicity, corporeal-based characteristics (i.e., hair colour, facial features) and concentrate on efforts to include the "other," while not really taking into account the problematic nature of the dominant norm (i.e., white settler society).

These terms propel the myth of meritocracy, which is grounded in the free-rational individualism discourse stipulating that all are equal participants in the market economy and through meritocracy everyone can achieve the Canadian dream through hard work. This myth does not take into account systemic injustices experienced by BIR people, the way in which racism and intersectional oppression are wrought into the fabric of North American society, or the fact that over 500 years of white settler appropriated colonial wealth has produced such disparities between white settlers and Indigenous and Black communities that cannot be undone in a lifetime. These arguments are often devoid of an analysis of the unequal power relations due to unjust resource allocation (local and geopolitical) based on colonial legacies and neo-liberal capitalism (Bannerji, 2000; Little Bear, 2000).

Furthermore, multiculturalism and other such terms do not account for nuances in the experiences of systemic injustices experienced by Black individuals and communities, yet paint

everyone *of colour* as same or similar in their understanding and experiences. Anti-Black racism, for instance, is prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping, dehumanization, and discrimination that is uniquely directed at people of African descent and demarcates them as "inferior" to individuals higher in the racial hierarchy (Bowden, 2021). Anti-Black racism in Western society is deeply rooted in the belief that Black people are genetically, evolutionarily, and intellectually inferior, and thus somehow devoid of full humanity. This dehumanizing and racist thinking justified for colonists the enslavement of people of African descent across the Atlantic in the largest transnational human trafficking scheme in recent history, and their treatment likened to livestock and property. Anti-Black racism is systemically entrenched and deeply embedded in Canadian institutions, wrought from the free labour of enslaved African peoples (Centennial College, 2021). Much like the entire British North American empire, Canada would not have the wealth and privileges it continues to enjoy today were it not for the free labour of stolen African peoples on stolen Indigenous land (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009).

Model minority is a term that refers to typically Japanese, Chinese, other Asian, and South Asian communities who have developed several resource capitals within society (i.e., economic gains) over the years and, at times, more cultural and social currencies than Indigenous or Black communities in Canada (Dennis, 2018). This development of resource capital is a result of privilege due to such groups' proximity to whiteness and ability to partake in the spoils of neo-colonialism and capitalism: for example, migrating with some degree of affluence or educational elitism and/or having privileges to accumulate some resource capital (i.e., socioeconomic gains) since migration (Hartlep, 2017). These socio-economic gains provide these groups a mix of systemic privileges within the social and racial hierarchy.

One only has to look at the history of the United States, where, at different points, groups of people who were able to build capital wealth were either given the privileged title of being labelled white, or they went to court to argue for the legal status of whiteness (i.e., Armenian and Japanese Americans) (Hartlep, 2017). So powerful and quality of life-defining was the status of whiteness, as juxtaposed to Blackness which was systemically made synonymous to poverty and socio-economic disenfranchisement as a result of the exclusion of Black people from participation in the very institutions established through the enslavement era. Black communities have been systemically excluded from home ownership, participation in the banking and education systems, and thriving Black communities have been bombed, burned down (i.e., Tulsa, Oklahoma), and bulldozed (i.e., Africville, Halifax, Nova Scotia; Hassen, 2021). We see similar trends in Indigenous communities, which were annexed from their territories to make way for white settler development. Indigenous reservations continue to be systemically deprived of resources, services, educational, and healthcare institutions. As recently as 2020 in Nova Scotia, thriving Indigenous businesses such as Indigenous fisheries were burned down as a result of white rage.

In this competing market society, marginalized groups are pitted against one another. Often, this racist question is posed: If the South Asian community can make it somehow in Canada, then what is morally and inherently wrong with Black and Indigenous communities—why can't they make it? There is enough evidence of systemic racism against Indigenous and Black individuals in education, employment, housing, and healthcare (Kohli & Pizarro, 2017; Love, 2014). Model

minority and multiculturalist discourses are often deployed to further locate the "social issues" experienced by Black and Indigenous communities as personal failings, rather than recognizing systemic anti-Black racism and Indigenous erasure in Canada.

> The idea was used by opponents to the civil rights movement who said if Black people shifted their values and focused on education, they could succeed too. Pitting races against each other has been a common strategy used by colonizers: divide and conquer. To this day, it serves the same purpose: reinforcing a system of racism that keeps white people at the top. (Francis, 2021, para. 4)

Our Process

In the section below, we engage in a reflective and dialogic exchange that centers our lived experiences as a queer, Muslim, South Asian scholar and a Black woman scholar who've had similar, different, and intersecting experiences within academia. As outlined above, these conversations are nested within a larger context of conversations and critiques about white supremacy, colonialism, systemic oppression, racial hierarchy, model minority status, anti-Black racism, and Indigenous erasure.

We chose to engage in this dialogic model that centers our personal stories as a humanizing and decolonial approach to writing about these topics that we have direct knowledge of as the nuances of intersectional oppression, racial hierarchy, and white supremacy are not merely concepts, but forms of power that pervade our realities.

Our Experiences of Othering

Maryam: As someone who identifies as a South Asian Muslim queer woman, my marginality and resistance are very much tied to my positionality. I am often chosen to be a part of research grants and committees due to the varying intersections I carry, as if I can speak for all of those intersections in a wholesome way. For example, I am called upon if there is a need for a "racialized other" to be a part of these events and committees within academe because somehow it is seen that I can speak for all queer Muslims. In a white settler society, token representation is important and, therefore, I usually find myself selected for committees based on my physical appearance and the cultural and ethnic stereotypes about South Asian Muslim women (passive, need to be saved from brown Muslim men, and oppressed by faith). Because of my straight brown hair, lighter complexion, having no accent, and embodying queerness, I am considered more proximate to whiteness. I am less threatening. Yet, my ethnicity, race, and religion make me unacceptable. My racial and ethnic construct is situated in Orientalist, Islamophobic, civilizational discourses that make me less threatening than Black and Indigenous bodies. I am not a visible Muslim, but my name gives me away. Even though I am a threat to academe because of my identity facets and politics, I am not considered "dangerous."

I recall being politely "voluntold" to sit on a committee due to the "representation issue." The representation issue is code for "we have too many white people" and are in desperate need for a tokenized ethno-racial body. At the very first meeting, upon entering the meeting room, one of

the white male committee members jokingly said, "I thought you were bringing the samosas!" My response to him was: "'No, I left those on the boat." Everyone laughed, and my satirical retort went unnoticed.

The academic system is based on competition to aspire to whiteness standards and norms through performance (dress, talk, work, appearance, and so on). I use the Orientalist discursive constructions to play the system—my personal and professional politics are different and that's how I challenge white supremacy.

Ciann: It is so interesting to hear your testimony of navigating being a model minority. I feel I can relate to that on some level in that although I am of Afro, Indo, and Euro-Jamaican ancestry, I phenotypically pass as Black and have a Black politic in terms of my analysis on the world. As such, in the simple white mind I am categorized and taken up uni-dimensionally as being Black. However, being multi-racial, in many ways I am the "exceptional negro" they allowed into their fold. As a young and emerging scholar, there were aspects of my mannerisms and my physical appearance that were unassuming, non-confrontational, and clearly unthreatening enough at the time for my hire to be the result of a unanimous vote. In a work environment with a history of friction between white cis men and white cis women, my hire was considered a "unifying decision" that was boasted about often.

I now look back at that and all that has transpired, from the blatant white fragility by both my white male and female counterparts, to the racialized sexism exhibited by all but mostly by a white queer colleague who proclaimed to be an ally only to expose themselves as a fragile and undermining ball of insecurity. Throughout my first few years, I often wondered, at what point are these white folk going realize that this isn't just a deep tan, that I am Blackity Black and I didn't come here to be their "yes person"? And that I have thoughts and opinions of my own that are likely incongruent with their perspectives on the world?

While there are handfuls of racialized people scattered throughout the Faculty of Science, I remain the first Black faculty hired. In 2022, we hired the first person of mixed Indigenous and Black ancestry in the Faculty. However, I know if I were not here, even those strides would not have happened because that is the level of complicity to white supremacy of the broader academy. Hiring anyone who isn't white still seems to some like a "hand-out" under the guise of affirmative action, or more recently Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion policies. Let us ignore the over 355 years of cluster hiring almost exclusively white faculty in the history of the Canadian academe—no critiques or issues raised by the status quo there. It doesn't matter how many awards I win, how many grants I bring in, how "excellent" I am. My accomplishments still just make me an exception to the rule, the exception to the norm of what is expected of people who look like me.

To be Black is to disrupt, or at least that is what the long history of political activism led by brave and bold Black people has taught me. While people from other cultures have trained themselves to turn the other cheek, Black folks—and especially those in diaspora throughout the middle passage—have had to fight for our survival so long it has become a way of life. It is our bodies and lives that time and time again have been put in the line of fire. Whether that was

fighting for our freedoms as formerly enslaved subjects, to Civil Rights struggles, to the more recent Black Lives Matter protests. Time and time again, our bodies and lives are put on the line and the benefactors of those struggles (i.e., Affirmative Action policies and more recently, EDI policies) have been by and large non-Black folks. For years it was white women who were hired under Affirmative Action and in large part due to second wave white feminism and then non-Black and non-Indigenous POC who were palatable to white hiring committees.

We recently had the opportunity to work together on a research project led by a white, gay man wanting to do work with racialized queer newcomers. For me, I knew I was brought onto that project as the token racialized person at the time, and I told them about you, Maryam, which is when the Principal Investigator (PI) reached out to you. In fact, to be totally truthful, the PI of the study ended up submitting the grant to the funding agency, and I was the only investigator on the team who was not asked to review the grant before it was submitted. Mind you, I was the only investigator on the grant at the time of its submission that had any lived experience of being a racialized newcomer. When the issue was pointed out, the PI apologized profusely for his oversight. In the end he got the grant. Lo and behold! You don't have to respect the perspective of, know, or belong to racialized communities in Canada to be funded as a researcher to do work on our communities because you know, that's Canadian white supremacy in the academy for you. My Blackness in addition to my outspokenness meant that I was shut down and ignored at almost every turn in the project. I was labeled problematic. I was brought on for the optics, not for any substance, analysis, or content I could offer the project. That would be too inclusive for the white leads of the project. I'd love to get a sense of your experience of that project. Could you share?

Maryam: I was hired in July 2018, and being a new faculty member, I was trying to establish my research program in order to pursue the tenure dream. So, it was really helpful when a white gay colleague asked me to be a part of the research project. I was really excited because this work was right up my alley. Primarily my research program involves working with and creating critical knowledges about racialized sexually and gender diverse people and communities that exist at the intersections of religiosity and spirituality. I did not know at the time that it was you, Ciann, who had suggested my involvement. I didn't know anything about the history of the project or the power dynamics between the research team members. I was a bit naive I must say. I readily accepted. However, after joining and attending some meetings, it was very clear to see that there were two camps, one racialized and the other white. The differences in approaches and perspectives were evident in discussions about recruitment strategies, theoretical orientations, and just basic praxis on how to work in solidarity with racialized communities.

I was excited about an intersectional approach which would permeate all areas of the research. Unfortunately, intersectionality was used in a very token and minimalist sense. It was just there to look good. A buzz word. There was little to no engagement with the critical ontological and epistemological underpinnings of intersectionality and what it meant to use this in research with racialized queer participants. The critical positionality aspects which value intersecting lived experiences of everyday acts of resistance and agency that come from interactions with systemic whiteness and racism, everyday injustice and marginalization, and everyday success was daringly absent. Essentially intersectionality as situated in the everyday lives of Black women

and people, knowledges that are grounded in Black communities, as well as the responsibility to communities was absent. How can intersectionality be used in any research without acknowledging the fact that intersectionality is grounded in the blood, sweat, tears, joys, and the lived experiences of Black people, especially women? Would the use of intersectionality as a vacant concept removed from its history, ethics, and politics be considered cultural appropriation? Who has the right to research with racialized queer communities? Who can speak on their behalf? What is the accountability of white and racialized researchers to the racialized queer community when using an intersectional analysis?

Ciann: These are all such important questions. I recall very early on in the project having to raise for the PI that he could not strip intersectionality from an analysis of race. Boy, that conversation did not go over well! A lot of white fragility and then he went on to do whatever he pleased. Which, quite frankly, is often how this plays out. White entitlement.

I genuinely feel that a movement as pivotal as that spawned by intersectional theory in and amongst the lives and legacies of queer Black, Indigenous, and racialized people genuinely loses its heart, soul, and effectiveness when these ideas are co-opted in an academic space that sanitizes them and strips them of their realness. I look at the work of EDI, which is this institutionalized and sanitized version of anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice, and the way it is being co-opted in university institutions to "civilize" BIR scholars and students, professionalize us. I have a colleague and fellow academic who has had not one but two EDI consultants write reports that essentially say she needs to learn to "behave and act more civilly." What kind of 21st century colonial racist BS is that?

Inferred throughout these expressions but never actually named is the trope and stereotype of the angry and mad Black woman who is "hostile," "abrasive," and "aggressive"—these are all racist pathologizations and stereotypes that have been uttered about me by some of my white peers. To be clear, these stereotypes are deeply rooted in racism where Black people are always imagined to be aggressors. These very stereotypes are still used to justify police killings of unarmed Black people because the colour of our skin makes us a threat in the white imagination. One white colleague referred to me as a "hazard to white men" as if I were made of nuclear material or something. This is all incredibly dehumanizing and reeks of anti-Black sexist violence. It always amazes me the number of negative connotations and attributes that are ascribed to my name by some of my peers—many of whom have had minimal to no interactions with me since I started at this university.

To vividly illustrate the insidiousness of racialized sexism here I want to share one pointed example: This situation left me depressed and discouraged. I took the time to painstakingly and candidly share with one of my colleagues over the course of a three-hour conversation the ways he had played on his power and privilege to overstep and undermine my right to self-determination, and frankly my academic integrity, over the years I'd worked with him. These instances mainly revolved around him essentially pushing me to artificially inflate the grades of the students he supervised, even when it was super clear a student didn't earn a given mark. All of the students I was asked to do this for were white students, not that this would have been any less problematic were they BIR students.

When I finally mustered up the courage to share with him my experiences over the years and highlighted the problematic nature of this behaviour, my colleague tried every way to avoid being held accountable and take responsibility for his actions. Devastatingly, he then resorted to re-narrativizing our conversation, problematizing me with other colleagues, typecasting me as essentially a "crazy Black woman" who accused him of racism and was aggressive in tone and temperament (harkening on the angry and mad Black woman stereotypes), thereby effectively silencing and disempowering me and allowing him leverage to dismiss and undermine the validity of the very serious nature of the concerns I had raised about his actions over the time we'd worked together.

For daring to challenge his authority, this was my white male colleague's way of reminding me of my place in the racial, gendered, and social hierarchy within the university infrastructure— which he was able to do without fear of repercussion because that is how white privilege and power operate in this space. Needless to say, this colleague continued to bully me by maligning me at every table he sat, revealing the true magnitude of his white rage and entitlement. This entire experience has been incredibly painful, triggering, and harmful to my mental health and left me depressed for months because it signified yet again, a huge loss of someone I trusted enough to confide in about my experiences as the lone Black person in my faculty, only to have that weaponized against me.

We often wonder why BIR people who do not have the social capital of our white counterparts remain silent about our experiences of oppression, even when confronted with harmful people who swear to the high heavens they can't possibly be guilty of racism, transphobia, xenophobia, and homophobia. Harms such as racism, transphobia, sexism, etc. are rarely about intention, they are about impact. The actions on the part of white faculty that serve to undermine, socially isolate, and stereotype racialized faculty contribute to our silencing and erasure.

I don't think folks fully appreciate the way white faculty have used their power and social capital in the professional space to run to their peers in ensuring their side of a situation is shared broadly in the workspace. Those one-sided narratives about the "white victim" and the aggressor who is often a minority are very palatable for a predominantly white audience in the academy. Black people rarely get the opportunity to just be human and vulnerable, always imagined as the magical, powerful, intimidating Black person. As a result, those narratives that weaponize and reinforce racist stereotypes quickly become "official facts," even when no actual evidence is presented, that lay a moral judgement on BIR students and faculty, and this fosters a toxic work and learning environment for many of us. Even worse is when the individuals spinning the problematic stories, rumours, and gossip mill about us are members of equity-deserving groups themselves (i.e., they are racialized, queer, trans, disabled, etc.).

Maryam: It is so important to value, truly listen, and bear witness to your experiences of anti-Black racism and colonialism. Your experiences mark the insidious ways that racism and whiteness operate and bond together for effective oppression and violence. Yet these also speak of your resistance and agency. "Talking back" to systemic injustices is taxing and all-consuming. For me in social work, there are a lot more racialized bodies. There is some faculty representation from Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian diasporas. Mainly this

diversity is evident in the part-time pool of instructors who carry approximately 60 percent of the teaching load. During faculty meetings, it is common to hear experiences of microaggression against the racialized faculty members, orchestrated by the largely white student body. These violent comments range from "you are the first queer Muslim instructor I've had" and have heard from my Black colleague "you are the first Black instructor." What is one supposed to make of this? These play out in faculty meetings and on committees. There are also pay inequities between whites and racialized faculty members. The list and go on and on. On top of this institutionalized violence, there is lateral violence which transpires and plays out between racialized bodies (i.e., Indigenous faculty further marginalized by non-Indigenous racialized faculty and racialized faculty oppressing other racialized faculty). An example is the diverging histories of colonialism pitted against one another: "India's colonization was not as bad as African colonization" or "All the queer people in South Asia are North American transplants." The list goes on.

Even though there are some small gains made at the faculty level to address systemic whiteness and injustice through EDI policies and issuing of statements against anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, these are a mere drop in the big soup pot. Organizational changes and structural changes need to be made. Where's the accountability of institutions of going beyond hiring Black and Brown token bodies to embrace cultural transformation?

Building Alliances

Institutional racism, whiteness, and white supremacy are activated and performed through multiculturalist, diversity, and model minority status discourses in academe. Our experiences are testimonials for the everyday and real existence of colonial discrimination and racism, which is based in race and ethnic discourses of difference and othering. All of these discourses fail to account how embedded white supremacy really is entrenched in everyday transactions and research activities (work) within academic institutions. In being a part of many BIR activist circles, we see time and time again Black and Indigenous folks—often the most vulnerable—putting themselves on the line to name uncomfortable truths. Meanwhile, non-Black racialized folks and white folks who consider themselves allies remain silent or in the background out of fear of confrontation or vulnerability and exposure. This dynamic can't keep playing itself out if solidarity work is to have grit, teeth, and movement.

It has been said many times before, and we are going to say it again. For Black and Brown people, building alliances in solidarity across colonialism, racism, among other -*isms,* is something which is fraught with many challenges. A main challenge remains that one cannot take anyone at face value. Since people who look like you can also be the oppressors. It is the politics and the ways in which one walks in this world that are important. Often, we have been sidelined by assumptions based on sameness as it relates to gender identity and expression, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and so on. Instead of assuming sameness under the larger umbrellas of Brown and Black, one way of building allyship and politics of equity can be to follow in Razack's (1998) footsteps. The author proffers that "patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism interlock to structure women differently and unequally" (p. 159). Therefore, the aim

here is to examine the unique ways racism, and anti-Black racism, structures Black women and Brown women in academe based on individual unique facets of identity and lived experiences.

This entails a deep commitment to understanding the ways that we are each complicit in each other's oppression as BIR peoples, and how we can minimize harm to each other. For instance, how are Black and racialized people complicit in ongoing colonization on unceded Indigenous territories? In participating in the Canadian nation-state, how do non-Indigenous people benefit from the spoils of white settler appropriated wealth? How are racialized and Indigenous folks complicit in anti-Black racist violence, and a socio-economic system that excludes Black people? How might racialized model minorities benefit from the back breaking labour of Black people for rights, representation? How are Black and Indigenous folks complicit in Orientalist racism towards racialized folks?

Another way to foster a critical alliance is to practice what Cindy Blackstock (2017), a Gitxsan First Nation Indigenous woman refers to as *moral courage*. Blackstock (2017) argues for social workers to have moral courage in telling the truth about how the discipline and its rise (historical and ongoing) has played a role in the genocide and subjugation of Indigenous People on Turtle Island. Following Kidder (2003), the components of moral courage are about exposing lies and engaging in truth-telling about injustice. "[M]oral courage is the ability of an individual to take a public stand on an issue when he or she will likely experience some personal or professional harm" (Blackstock, 2017, p. 122).

It takes moral courage to share personal experiences of institutional racism and to challenge whiteness in all its forms in academe. Taking these actions and speaking out comes with costs, and building alliances across difference and sameness is not easy. If everyone had the moral courage to take a stand, wouldn't this work become easier? We hope this to be the case as we imagine possible futures.

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