



The Michigan Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics opposes racism and denounces all forms of racially motivated violence. Recent events have highlighted once again that racism exists; it is both systematic and pervasive in the US. We recognize that structural racism is ingrained in our society's institutions, including our health care industry and food systems. RDNs are uniquely situated to see the physical effects of systemic racism and are thus very important to effect meaningful change through our food and health systems.

As clinicians, RDNs have long witnessed the disproportionate impact of chronic disease on black Americans.¹ We have struggled to assist our fellow Americans by treating the symptoms of structural racism – the myriad of chronic diseases prevalent in poor and minority communities. We must recognize that these diseases are the result of systematic policies and take action to effect positive change. To see the deadly effect of these structural health disparities, one only has to look at the significantly disproportionate number of deaths from COVID-19 among black Michiganders, those who suffer from chronic diseases, created by systematic racism.²

RDNs are well positioned to address these social injustices and to take a stand against racism and discrimination. To effect change, our members need to move beyond cultural competency to a deeper understanding of the structural inequities in our society. This will not be easy and will require all RDNs to work for structural change within their institutions and workplaces.

The Michigan Academy stands in solidarity with all black Americans in the fight against racism in the US. We are committed to making change by first looking at our organization. To that end, the Michigan Academy has:

1. Jointly signed a letter to the leadership of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics urging meaningful change to build a stronger more inclusive profession.
2. Committed to providing members with continuing education sessions on Diversity, Inclusion and Structural Competency at all conferences, including a free CPE session in our Fall Webinar Series for members.
3. Designated one Michigan Academy funded Scholarship specifically for Black/African Americans, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) members to make education and internships more accessible

4. Begun collaborations with Diversity and Inclusion Organizations with the leadership of our Diversity Liaison, Leatta Byrd.

I challenge all Michigan Academy members to recognize the abundant evidence of structural racism apparent in their daily lives, to envision a future free from these structures, and to take action to make the future happen – now.

As President of The Michigan Academy, I can assure you that this issue is a top priority for this year. Please feel free to contact me if you have ideas on how we can stand together against racism and support a more inclusive profession going forward.

Laura Freeland Kull, MS, RDN, FAND

lkull@madonna.edu

734-432-5519

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/publications/index.html>
2. https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98163_98173---,00.html