



DR's Diversity Committee's Newsletter Spotlight presents three of our newest committee members. For this Spotlight we asked each of them to describe their background and share *why* they have chosen to lean into this critical work.



Dr. Ching-Yi Liao is a postdoctoral scholar in the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the *University of Central Florida*. Her current research interest focuses on culturally responsive approaches for culturally and

linguistically diverse caregivers to use communication interventions, including augmentative and alternative communication when applicable, to work with their children with complex communication needs in natural settings.

My Why? I believe that family and cultural factors should be seriously considered when developing intervention plans for CLD individuals with special needs and their families. Encouraging and motivating more families with diverse backgrounds to participate in special education research is an important part of my research, as well as the major reason why I am contributing to DR's Diversity committee work.



Dr. Federico R. Waitoller is an associate professor at the Department of Special Education at the *University of Illinois at Chicago*. His research focuses on understanding and addressing racial inequities for students with disabilities. His research agenda has two strands: teacher learning and pedagogies for inclusive education and market-driven educational policies. His latest book, *Excluded by Choice: Urban Students with Disabilities in the Education Marketplace*, examines the experiences of urban Black and Latinx students with disabilities with school choice.

My Why? I joined the Diversity committee of the Division of Research of CEC to expand the frameworks and methods traditionally used in special education research.

Dr. Brandy Gatlin-Nash is an assistant professor in the School of Education at *University of California, Irvine*. She is affiliated faculty in the *Center for Creating Opportunities through Education* and the Department of Language Sciences in the School of Social Sciences. Her research explores relations between language and literacy among culturally and linguistically diverse students. She is a former K–12 special education teacher.



My Why? I've spent 20 years as an educator, researcher, and advocate for children and adults with special needs. The need to understand exceptionalities among those from diverse backgrounds is perhaps greater now than ever before, as the nation's schools become more and more diverse. We also need to partner with families in order to better understand the needs and wants of individuals and communities in an effort to build a more equitable society.