



## Race, ethnicity and the city

We write this editorial as the founding editors of the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and the City*. The launch of the journal takes place in the midst of a global pandemic and ongoing widespread protests against police murders of Black people in over 60 American cities. Black communities across the world continue to bear the brunt of systemic racial inequalities. Sustained institutionalized racism continues to negatively affect the daily lives and life chances of Black and racialized ethnic people within the urban realm. Questions of difference are further sharpened due to the resurgence of right-wing populist politics. Political movements are seeking to mobilize ethnic majorities against minorities in support of authoritarian nationalist agendas in many countries around the globe, including Brazil, India, Hungary, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

It is impossible to know what the ~~longer-term~~ impacts of current events will be on daily lives or on our own academic sphere. Many of us are left with uncertainties and increasing pressures from institutions that themselves have been slow to acknowledge their historic role in racist practices and also the environments that scholars of color face. The viability of urban life and the unequal and oppressive conditions many suffer must remain subject to scrutiny. We argue that critically engaged scholarship remains vital work. Racial and ethnic identities are created within structures of oppression. Our work should engage with the complexities of these processes and illuminate how resistance to power forms the basis for constructing shared worlds and hopeful futures. While the pandemic has been talked about by some as a great leveler, this willfully denies the racialized nature of societies and seeks to explain away the multiple interlocking factors that create privilege for Whites and the ruling majorities. We are witnessing firsthand in major urban areas lives being taken from people of color at a greater rate due to long-standing social and material inequalities, structural racism, and direct acts of racist hostility. Black and racialized ethnic minorities—often concentrated in vulnerable frontline services such as nurses, drivers, and care workers—are dying at disproportionately higher rates due to the pandemic. At the same time, they face ongoing political and personal hostility due to their racial identity or presumed citizenship status. The economic impacts are hitting minority communities hardest. Even when economic recovery begins, the immediate positive impact is rarely felt in Black and racialized minority communities. Unequal and segregated, their communities and neighborhoods receive the most dire impacts from health and financial crises, and little respite when they subside.

People of color are most likely to live in urban areas where decades of disinvestment, the financialization of cities, and poor building standards and regulations create intolerable living conditions. They have often been stigmatized as the creators of these conditions and excluded from better neighborhoods by exclusionary planning policies, or by threats and violence, while White communities have directly benefited from state programs that have provided them with subsidized and ~~better-quality~~ public and private housing and infrastructure. The power relations that have favored particular ethnic groups are expressed within the actual processes of city building, through segregation and colonialization, creating segregated and dual cities. However, legacies of these practices have been and continue to be confronted. Movements

such as Rhodes Must Fall, which started in Cape Town, have challenged the veneration of historical figures that promotes settler colonial, imperialism, slavery, and other forms of racialized violence. 45

Planning systems have been utilized to exclude Blacks and racialized minorities, particularly those facing the most economic hardship. The Grenfell Tower fire of 2017 in London was the greatest civilian disaster in Britain since World War II, with 72 lives lost. Many of the dead were people of color, including recently arrived immigrants and other vulnerable people. The disaster emerged from housing deregulation and privatization, disinvestment in emergency services, the willful inattentiveness toward tenants and community activists in the local state arena, and through the overtly hostile policies pursued by national governments. Resistance to inclusionary housing policies in many cities in the United States, inadequate educational and health services in Black communities and those of other ethnic groups and racialized minorities, and systemic denial of access to urban services are often justified by deficiency arguments and are in many cases embedded in planning and policy practices. Time after time, the very structure that is charged with providing safety—the police—has proven itself hostile and unsafe to members of Black and racialized minority communities. An inclusive social contract is built on trust, and that is what racial practices and institutional racism rob from a society. But the question remains, was the social contract ever inclusive and do we need a new inclusive social contract that goes beyond the White male European imagination? 50 55 60

The complex urbanized dimensions through which race and ethnicity mark and assign differing value to certain lives are central to the scope of this journal. But we are also attentive to how community organizations, political movements, and activism are shaping urban space and challenging academic knowledge, policy, and politics. The city is more than a backdrop, and within the milieu of the urban realm, literary and cultural movements, acts of protest, resistance, and solidarity have brought people together in new cultural and political formations. Yet there are distinct differences in understandings across different geographical regions and the need for greater dialogue and engagement from within and beyond the Anglo-American context. Understandings of how race and ethnicity emerge vary across the globe. How are nationalist and ethnic discourses working through urban space? What understandings can we gain of migrant workers in Singapore or immigrants from former colonies in European cities that attend to the spatial dimensions of their experiences? How might we understand the specific gendered dynamics of South Asian cities? What specific insights might understanding urbanized indigenous community politics in Chile or Canada bring to wider debates? As such, we value interdisciplinary insights that make connections across the field of ethnic and racial studies, but which are focused on cities and urban space. To us, race and ethnic studies are not a subdiscipline, but the metadiscipline that should be central to every aspect of our urban analysis and theoretical discourse. For that reason, we envisage a journal that fully explores racial and social justice empirically and theoretically, across all urban topics. As editors, we want to encourage an international range of contributions that examine the complex relationships between race, ethnicity, and other vectors of identity. We hope that urbanists will use this journal as a forum to advance our knowledge about how these topics have and continue to shape our lives. While race and ethnicity shape societies across the world, their resonances and impacts differ. They intersect with class, gender, sexuality, religion, and caste in distinctive ways, and we welcome work that is attentive to these. 65 70 75 80 85

While interdisciplinarity and intersectionality are important concepts, they are often in danger of being overstretched to accommodate an incommensurate range of meanings. Yet we want to emphasize that scholarship that is able to speak across disciplinary boundaries is absolutely vital in addressing questions of racial justice and challenging power relations. There are many important journals that publish work on race and ethnicity, particularly in the fields of sociology and politics. There are also numerous urban-focused journals, including our sister journal, the *Journal of Urban Affairs*, which address the complexities of the urban condition. However, our journal seeks to address a gap in the material and spatial dimensions of race and ethnicity that are often overlooked or undervalued within the mainstream scholarship of many disciplines. While there have been important challenges to the disciplinary fields to centralize race and ethnicity within academic and professional understandings and future-oriented actions, this work can sometimes be considered as outside the core concerns of disciplines. However, race and ethnicity are fundamental concepts to understanding contemporary and historical urban questions.

As such, we welcome theoretically grounded, methodologically innovative, and empirically rich contributions that challenge current disciplinary orthodoxies. The journal's aim is to enhance our understandings of the urban dimensions of race and ethnicity. A wealth of scholarship exists that explores questions of racial and ethnic formation and difference in the fields of sociology, anthropology, political science, and urban planning. Several journals already exist centered around ethnic and racial studies that contribute important work to the field. However, the interrelated academic disciplines of enquiry from which we hope to draw our future readers and authors have often seen race and ethnicity as marginal or subservient issues of lesser academic importance. While our main content will be scholarly articles, we are also interested in reviews that set out the state of the field, and also interventions and viewpoints as the journal develops.

While we are based within academic institutions, there is great importance in connecting our work with others. We want to provide a forum for public scholarship that connects with policymakers and activists in this important field. We would like to encourage contributions that span academia and activism. The academic field itself is one that reveals significant disparities in the funding of ethnic and racial studies programs. The academic field of knowledge production lacks full commitment to Black, Indigenous, and scholars of color. In the UK, fewer around 140 full professors, or fewer than 1%, in academic institutions are Black. The same pattern exists in American universities. In August 2019, *Inside Higher Ed* reported that only 6% of all college faculty members were Black and 5% were Latino. This is despite the fact that 20% of students were Latinos and 14% were Black. The academic world of publishing needs to do more to engage with how institutional inequalities are reproduced through the composition of editorial boards, the peer review, and the publication process. As academics, we must continue to reflect on our own positionality and the asymmetries of power that exist within research, but also between us. The realm of publishing remains predominantly White, with few Black and racialized minority people in senior positions. There is also unequal access to the production of academic knowledge with a paywall between the public and publicly funded research. We are delighted that Taylor & Francis will make the first volume of the journal freely accessible, and we will explore further ways of sharing content with wider audiences.

The institutional setting for our journal is based in the United States and the United Kingdom, both highly racialized societies but with different enduring legacies and realities. U.S. debates have been central to pushing forward our understandings of race and ethnicity through examining and elucidating the complex and contested dynamics in operation. But we are mindful of the importance of engaging with international scholarship from outside the Anglo-American context and the importance of doing so to expand our understandings. International conversations bring with them debates that may take different approaches to race and ethnicity given their differing histories and politics. We also acknowledge that the language and concepts differ across regions and continuously contested areas. These differences in the grammars of debate require our careful attention and thoughtful reflection to understand the important articulations of race and ethnic identity. These material realities are complex and embedded; discrimination and devaluation are also forcefully mediated through language, specific terms, and taken-for-granted concepts.

While there is fierce debate within many academic disciplines, race and ethnicity are particularly contentious issues. We appreciate that they directly shape the lives of many of those writing for the journal and are a key dimension of the work of our editorial board. We are grateful to the scholars who have agreed to serve on our editorial board and whose collective work has made vital contributions to our own understandings. We appreciate the time and intellectual energy that scholars within the Urban Affairs Association (UAA) have given to the development of the journal. We are pleased that UAA identified not only the gap in scholarship that led to the creation of the journal, but also that it has championed the importance of race, ethnicity, and urban affairs, something that lies at the heart of the organization. We are also appreciative to our publisher, Taylor & Francis, who has supported this journal's creation. Of course, academic work is not produced within the academy only, and we are tied to an increasingly marketized higher education "industry" that places unequal demands on those within it. Inequality and racial questions lie even at the heart of academic publishing, and much work for academic journals is "offshored" from the Global North to India and elsewhere, reinscribing complex racial dimensions of power. There is always a tension at the heart of the work we do. We are mindful of this, and the incompleteness and inequities which mark academic work even within our aspirations for racial and ethnic equality.


In addition to this introductory editorial, we will be publishing a series of commentaries and critical interventions alongside our peer-reviewed articles. The first by Margaret Wilder, Executive Director of UAA, provides an important set of reflections in relation to UAA and its role in founding this journal in the context of current events. Wilder goes on to raise five important challenges to the field of research on race and ethnicity and for researchers. The second contribution is from Michael Leo Owens, a former UAA Governing Board chair and member of our editorial board. He directly addresses questions about policing and incarceration informed by his extensive research in the field. Professor Henry Louis Taylor Jr. offers his thoughts on the racialized production of space in the USA in the third contribution. We appreciate their insights and hope that they will stimulate discussion and debate, alongside critical reflection. Together, we hope these pieces further articulate the importance of continuing academic research and debate on race, ethnicity, and the city and raise thought-provoking questions. We welcome continuing dialogue within the pages of this journal and within future UAA conferences.

## About the authors

**Yasminah Beebeejaun** is Associate Professor of Urban Politics and Planning at the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London. She is one of the founding editors of the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and the City*. Her work focuses on racial and ethnic inequalities in urban planning and the construction of racialized identities, feminist critiques of urban planning, and the production of knowledge within public participation. She has held visiting fellowships at the University of Michigan, University of Illinois at Chicago, and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. 180  
185

**Ali Modarres** is Dean of the School of Urban Studies and Assistant Chancellor for Community Engagement at the University of Washington Tacoma. He is one of the founding editors of the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and the City*. From 1999 to 2017, he served as the Editor-in-Chief of *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*. He has published in the areas of social geography, immigration, urban development, planning, and policy. He has focused a significant portion of his recent public scholarship on economic development through an equity lens that includes global labor migration within the larger political and economic discourses. 190  
195

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Yasminah Beebeejaun  
University College London  
 [y.beebeejaun@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:y.beebeejaun@ucl.ac.uk) 195

Ali Modarres  
University of Washington Tacoma,  
 [modarres@uw.edu](mailto:modarres@uw.edu)

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