

# The Vermont Connection

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Volume 42 *Black Lives Matter: Centering Black Narratives in Higher Education*

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## Executive Board Editor's Note

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## EXECUTIVE BOARD EDITORS' NOTE

The Vermont Connection is excited to publish the 42nd volume of our higher education and student affairs journal. The journal is a space for authors to co-create knowledge and engage with the journal's theme through traditional scholarly works, personal stories, and creative pieces. This year's theme is Black Live Matter: Centering Black Narratives in Higher Education. What follows are messages from TVC 42's Co-Content Editors about the journal, making meaning of the theme, and our experiences.

### *Janelle*

After the numerous tragedies of 2020 and continued violence against the Black community and BIPOC community as a whole, we as the Executive Board felt the need to take action and represent our commitment to uplifting Black lives, experiences, voices, and stories through TVC 42. Thanks to the amazing leadership and energy of our Executive Director, Chantel J. Vereen, along with support from our HESA and TVC community, we co-created the journal theme of Black Lives Matter: Centering Black Narratives in Higher Education. For me, this theme focuses on naming the systems of oppression, racism, and anti-Blackness that exists in all aspects of our lives, whether at work, at school, or at personal spaces. At the same time, the theme calls us to celebrate Black lives and Black narratives. I offer a more in-depth reflection in my own contribution to the journal as an author, but my identity as an Asian American and Filipina woman who has been complicit in anti-Black racism felt salient for me as I reflected on this theme. Although I am still learning and unlearning, I hope that by sharing a part of my journey of self-work, others might be encouraged to engage in centering Black narratives as non-Black individuals as well.

As one of the Co-Content Editors of TVC 42, I am proud to present our authors' work in this year's journal and share the beauty and brilliance of Blackness in and out of higher education. The words of our author's are powerful. We ask that you, the reader, see them and take them to heart. Continue to reflect on how you can

use this knowledge in your own self-work to dismantle white supremacy and anti-Blackness and uplift the Black community in your personal and professional lives.

*Jo*

I echo many of Janelle's points and too feel a need to reflect on my past complicity and how to push for change and the uplift of knowledges that dismantle anti-Blackness. For myself and other white people within higher education, this moment serves as an alarm for an emergency that has been building up for a very long time. Now, we can no longer ignore the call to hold ourselves, our white colleagues, and our institutions and systems accountable. My hope is that this journal can begin a pivotal shift, particularly within The Vermont Connection, to celebrate and uplift Black narratives, knowledges, and lives—but to also embrace the discomfort of challenging ourselves to dismantle anti-Black ways of continuing higher education. Saying Black Lives Matter is only a beginning step for TVC. Black Education matters; Black Joy matters; Black Futures matter.

As a proudly queer and nonbinary person who works to center queerness in the academy and a point of liberation in higher education, I would be remiss to neglect how queerness, even in higher education, is whitewashed and leaves out Black queer and trans people. Black Queer hxstorical<sup>1</sup> figures continue to go under the radar, Black queer men continue to be disproportionately affected by an ongoing HIV/AIDS crisis (Thrasher, 2018), and Black Trans Women face medical violence during the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to escalating murder and physical aggression— leading to the tragic deaths of Brayla Stone, Merci Mack, Shakiie Peters, Draya McCarty, Tatiana Hall, and Bree Black within just nine days (Devin-Norelle, 2020). To fight and advocate for Black racial justice and equity is to fight for queer and trans justice and a system of higher education that is equipped to serve and uplift our most minoritized.

Now is the time to speak up, act up, directly support Black people, and to actively fight against anti-Blackness in all of its forms. This especially includes higher education as a whole and the The Vermont Connection/UVM HESA Program. We hope this volume of The Vermont Connection inspires you to think critically about your own ways of knowing and doing as well as take action to promote Black racial justice and equity worldwide.

**In Community,**

The Vermont Connection Co-Content Editors

Janelle Raymundo & Jo D. Wilson

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<sup>1</sup> I am choosing to differentiate between 'history' (pertaining to systems of oppression and domination) and 'hxstory' (pertaining to the existence and persistence of people with minoritized identities) (Sambile & Hornig, 2019)

## References

- Devin-Norelle. (2020, July 14). Six Black Trans Women were found dead in nine days. *TheM*. <https://www.them.us/story/six-black-trans-women-were-found-dead-in-nine-days>
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