

**FOREWORD: UNDER ATTACK AND COUNTER
VOICES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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As the voices of ignorance continue to attack democracy and social justice, we will continue to serve as a platform to counter those perspectives through the Center for Leadership, Equity and Research (CLEAR). Activism, anti-racism, and advocacy for the oppressed will continue to be the mission. We embrace Critical Race Methodology and Praxis that remain the driving epistemologies for the stories, research genres, authentic narratives, and counterstories of those who have been largely marginalized, racialized, and underrepresented.

Through *JLER*, we are keenly aware of the realities and challenges of today's America. We also see the resistance and ambivalence around us, both from friends and foes alike. Simultaneously, we are determined to continue working on changing the reactionary mindsets and passive, and often destructive, roles through empirical data dissemination and action research projects. *JLER* and CLEAR will continue to provide a forum for those who “do diversity, equity, and social justice” despite the resistance, complicity, and barriers facing them.

In this volume, the authors engage readers in thoughtful discourse regarding some of the timely and pressing issues in a racially and culturally divided society. The collection of articles includes a rich account of educational phenomenon coupled with valuable insights that engage all who are serious about their intentional efforts and strategies to cope with the challenging realities around us. Join us in the journey to dismantle educational inequality.

Mica Pollock and Colleagues provide a phenomenological analysis of educators' lived experiences in light of the dominant anti-diversity in educational settings especially related to race and gender/sexual identity that ultimately affect learning and teaching outcomes. They point out that educators' “recent experiences with *talking* about race and LGBTQ lives, with many emphasizing threatened punishment by critics for discussing these topics” (p. 6). Their findings reflect that “While some educators enjoyed support and freedom in race and diversity-related discussion and learning, other educators described intensive restriction effort emanating from local, state, and national pressures” (p. 6). These alarming trends may “suggest that the nation may be heading toward two schooling systems: one where children and adults get to talk openly about their diverse society and selves, and one where they are restricted or even prohibited from doing

so” (p. 48). This call to action transcends educators and administrators to embrace all participants in society both locally and nationally.

Using a duoethnographic approach, **Danielle Ligocki and Tim Monreal** share their experiences and roles as educators and parents with school-age children in public schools while tensions and emotions are high all around. While their vision revolves around advocacy for public education and its promise, their “inquiry took a reflective nature as we worked to gain clarity into and highlight the differences between the pushes and pulls we feel given the intersections of our personal and professional roles” (p. 59). They state that “our vision of [our children’s] education goes beyond ‘academic’ success, for we also see ourselves as cultural and political workers, committed to a critical, anti-colonial, and democratic project of public schooling” (p. 60). Their contribution has immediate implications for not only advancing civil discourse but also pragmatic action needed to advance freedom and empowerment for all participants in society’s social and educational institutions.

Rebecca Covarrubias and Colleagues offer data-driven actionable lessons gained from mentoring programs at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). Focusing on *servingness* as a multidimensional framework, they illustrate how Hispanic Serving Institutions “can shift from merely *enrolling* to meaningfully *servicing* students holistically” (p. 75). To do so, they argue that there is an urgent need to critically examine “how institutional structures facilitate or inhibit servingness” as educational leaders seek to improve success through adequate mentoring. They identified six structural challenges to servingness that must be overcome to promote a sense of belonging for historically minoritized students which can be achieved through “*implementing high-impact mentoring practices.*”

Talisa Sullivan and Peter Flores explore the marginalization of minoritized students in U.S. society and its educational system that is in need of a structural redesign. They view the intentional implementation of ethnic studies approaches as helpful for affirming the intellectual, cultural, social, and historical being of all students in schools. They further argue that “demographic and cultural differences require culturally competent educators capable of leading change through *praxis*” (p. 95). Accordingly, through social justice leadership and inclusive pedagogical approaches, students see themselves represented in the process, and included are their own stories that reflect the “complete truth of their cultural and ethnic imprint within the history and fabric” of the American democratic institutions, such as schools.

In her *testimonio* as a Latina school leader, **Carmen Ponce Beck** cultivates her cultural heritage, social capital, and unique perspectives about how to engage “the people in her charge to imagine a compelling future for the organization that would guide their efforts” (p. 105). She illustrates and details a set of experiential strategies that would guide improvement efforts to transform schools and the academy. Grounded in the power of authentic *testimonios* and storytelling, Beck’s account can have far-reaching implications for all leaders including educators from historically minoritized populations.

David Sandles provides an eloquent and powerful review of the recently published book by Rene Guillaume & Edna Martinez, *Bounding Greed: Worklife Integration and Positive Coping Strategies Among Faculty of Color in Early, Middle, and Late Career Stages at Comprehensive Universities*. Sandles points out that the authors “Guillaume and Martinez artfully craft an instructive template for faculty of Color in coping with the distressing culture of many comprehensive universities and the achievement of work-life balance” (p. 124). Capturing the main premise of *Bounding Greed*, Sandles pointed out that the contributions in this edited book chronicle authentic and rich testimonios that amplify how “considerable difficulty and an often

unmitigated microaggressive strain, faculty of Color experience a wave of personal and professional challenges that leave many disillusioned and emotionally traumatized” (p. 124.). As a faculty of Color himself, Sandles has interacted with this book and meaningfully identifies with the various themes and domains that are steeped in the realities of universities and the academy at large.

Yet again, readers of this profound edition will find a thought-provoking collection that have pragmatic values for teachers, educators, and leaders whose vision and mission are grounded in antiracism, diversity, equity, and social justice.

Finally, on behalf of the JLER’s entire team, we are grateful to all partners for preparing this issue as well as the contributors, reviewers, and everyone who assisted in the production of this rich edition.