FOREWORD: COMBATING DE-DIVERSIFYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Let me begin with a personal note. I attended what would be labeled as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS) for my graduate studies many years ago at Arizona State University. Since I completed my undergraduate degree and credentials abroad in the Middle East, I had to spend a few years doing "practical training" during and after my graduate studies while I was learning about the American educational system and the function of PreK-12 schools. The credential requirements were embedded in my program of studies. Simultaneously, I was developing as a teacher as well as a teacher educator throughout the coursework and field experiences for several years while coping with the multiple burdens of my identity, nationality, culture, language, and other factors. In fact, a major requirement for entry to the doctoral program and qualifying for a Title VII Bilingual Fellowship was to enroll in a practicum every semester throughout my graduate studies. By the time I finished the program, I met all licensure state requirements but never officially applied for the credentials since I transitioned seamlessly to the world of higher education. This format allowed me to develop teaching experience and afforded me multiple opportunities to work in schools.

These models of "on-the-job training" have long been around under various names, albeit the subtle differences in connotations, such as clinical practica, field-based internship, clinical ghetto training, in-service training, teacher induction, co-teaching, professional development schools, and teacher residency programs among others (Badiali & Titus, 2010; Bullough et al., 1997; Rutten & Badial, 2020; Suleiman, 1998; Suleiman, 2000). For example, over three decades ago, the most common practice in teacher and educator preparation in many institutions, including the research university I attended for my graduate work, revolved around long-term clinicalization of teacher education programs (Bullough et al., 1997). As a byproduct of such programs, I found this approach to be immensely rewarding to me personally and professionally for many reasons. On the one hand, the process of clinicalizing my program of study helped me achieve a delicate balance between the conceptual knowledge and pedagogical skills needed for successful teachers and educators in diverse settings. On the other hand, the firsthand exposure and participation in the clinical training sensitized me to the school realities, allowed me to experience authentic learning-teaching contexts, and gave me the opportunity to work with the unique diversity of the

student populations, their families, and communities at large. Moreover, the intentional staffing in the program seemed strategic in attracting faculty who represent the student diversity in the PreK-20 schools and communities. I had the honor to be mentored by a group of faculty that included Latinx and Native American instructors among others. I reaped the benefits of having someone whose experiences and world views intersect with mine; for example, their mindsets reflect the historical literacy and cultural competence about the Arab and Muslim civilizations that lasted for several hundred years of reign in Andalusia, modern-day Spain since the "… east/west contact bore the most fruit wherever Arabs and Europeans lived or worked together" during which "Muslim Spain was one of the most cosmopolitan and multicultural societies in human history" (Schwartz, 2001, pp. 68-69). This global cultural proficiency helped me in connecting with students who shared my instructors' backgrounds that are different from mine (and vice versa) especially as an Arab American, a group that "America loves to hate" (see Orfalea, 1998; Suleiman, 2004) and has long become its "new scapegoats" given "the anti-Arab hysteria [that] has been building in this country for many years" (Abourezk, 1993, p. 26). Most importantly, my culturally responsive mentors and teachers helped me heed the importance of students seeing themselves in the schools they attend including institutions of higher education. Sadly, throughout my professional life, I have seen in many instances the continual attempts to de-diversify programs, curricula, and the culture in the academy including efforts aimed at de-Hispanizing the faculty and staff even when the vast majority of the students are of Latinx heritages.   Even in publicly declared HSIs, many programs are still suffering because of the institutional failures that create barriers, close doors, and deny access to diverse populations, which include Latinx students and faculty. The current pronouncements towards diversity, equity, and inclusion have become no more than checklists and numbers. The academy still has a long way to go to embrace minoritized populations, including Latinx students and all other marginalized groups since the dominant culture in higher education continues to be negatively skewed against People of Color and positively favoring the mainstream White privileged populace.

The roots of the problem are multi-faceted. One lies in the fact that such institutions were established and designed to serve the "best and leave out the rest." The foundations of schools were never built with the pillars of pluralism that require multiple levels of inclusion and acculturation based on the fabric of the American society and its cultural makeup (Cortes, 1990; Grant & Gomez, 1995; Little & Mohanty, 2010; Wise, 2015; Yosso, 2005). Additionally, they were established with provincial mindsets with a large neglect of the global and international frameworks and contexts (Suleiman & Huber, 2022). Thus, students and faculty of color will have to overcome the burdens of their backgrounds to find their way into the academy by initially shattering the glass fences and ceilings facing them. Nonetheless, once they set foot into the door, they soon realize that they are not truly *members* of the institutional culture but *numbers* and statistics to satisfy system guidelines and protocols such as Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity policies. Historically, such policies have evolved as reactive measures; thus, the need for them, as some people argue, in society's institutions including PerK-20 schools is a crime; i.e., they should never have been needed in the first place. Notwithstanding, these are considered a set

of dangerous tools and sharp knives especially when they fall in the wrong hands because they have the tendency to harm innocent people (Lehman, 2010). Examples of the "sharp knives" in higher education abound and include search committees, honors and awards committees, cluster hire committees, performance review committees, tenure, and retention and promotion committees among other tools that are traditionally dominated by the mainstream members whose perspectives and expectations are at odds with students and faculty of color (Little & Mohanty, 2010). Consequently, without having to deconstruct the institutions and get rid of the systemic racism, students and faculty of color will continue to be alienated and upon entry, they become aware of the internal barriers that they must overcome in their attempt to "fit in" and develop a sense of belonging. In fact, they continue to become "relatively less secure, less embedded in the mainstream of departmental and university life" (Cantor, 2010, p. 30) which ultimately pushes them away and forces them to move on. I have seen many of my Latinx, Black, Native American, and other minoritized colleagues who left prematurely since they found themselves in the academy full of those with a "we are stuck" attitude since they feel they "have to work with those" minority peers. Thus, faculty of color have essentially been successfully "pushed out" by a system, full of dangerous tools and irresponsible interactions, that devalued their cultural and intellectual capitals.

Building upon the vision and mission of the Center for Leadership, Equity and Research (CLEAR), through JLER, we continue to amplify the realities around that exist by providing an inclusive and comprehensive vision that seeks to materialize democracy and pluralism in schools and beyond. The work is far from being complete and the march continues on as activists and social justice leaders share their experiences and speak out in face of systemic flaws and inequities that have plagued society's institutions at all levels. These voices are amplified through research and their experiences are reflected in epistemological accounts that call upon everyone to take active steps to empower all participants in the academy.

Focusing on the plight of Latinx students and faculty of color in higher education, this JLER formidable Special Edition provides a kaleidoscope of powerful accounts that highlight the experiences of Latinx populations and their long, hard struggle toward equity and social justice. These accounts reflect juxtapositions outlined in a previous special edition focusing on the place of Latinx students in PreK-12 settings. Together, these empirical artifacts are steeped into the social stratification and sociocultural phenomena that illustrate how all sorts of system gaps continue to deprive People of Color of their basic rights to integrate in America's pluralistic institutions. The stories of the contributing scholars focusing on Latinx struggles speak of the bigger narrative that the deficit models and provincial mindsets continue to harm everyone who is outside the privileged mainstream affiliations and tribal belongings. At the same time, we are all called upon to reject provincialism and promote global perspectives (see Suleiman & Huber, 2022) in order to become effective local-global action-oriented professionals.

Readers of this special edition will find a rich collection of thought-provoking articles on issues with which everyone can identify unless they are numb to the passive empty rhetorical pronouncements about equity and social justice. More importantly, readers who are in leadership positions should heed the implications gleaned from each article and leverage their positions, roles,

and responsibilities to take concrete action instead of using their positions as sharp knives and tools for maintaining the status quo of inequities and injustices.

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

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