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## From the Associate Editor: A New Era for Social Change and Community Engagement in Higher Education

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# A New Era for Social Change and Community Engagement in Higher Education

From the *JCES* Associate Editor, Special Issues

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As we mourn the passing of John Robert Lewis (1940–2020), a great servant leader, civil rights activist, advocate of the marginalized, and U.S. representative, across the globe we are living in a time of radical social change as community discourse gives rise to the emergence of a new era.

Rep. Lewis modeled the way by engaging in “Good Trouble” to challenge social injustice in every segment of society and by passing the torch to the next generation of leaders (Hayden, 2020). He applauded the radical, but peaceful demonstrations and advocacy of young adults raising their voices in solidarity against police brutality and systemic racism. His strength and tenacity for seeking social justice and equity for all was unwavering into the eighth decade of his life. We are also in the midst of a paradigm shift in our democracy with the first woman of color as a vice presidential nominee for the Democratic Party, Kamala Harris, a U.S. senator, attorney, and a graduate of Howard University, an HBCU in Washington, D.C.

Higher education has a continued responsibility to prepare the next generation of civically engaged citizens of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds who will engage in “Good Trouble” and advocate for the marginalized and challenge institutionalized racism, social injustice, and inequalities that plague our nation. Community engagement in higher education provides a platform that will empower students to gain self-awareness, radical empathy, and compassion, and learn strategies to identify solutions to social injustice issues through critical reflection, advocacy, and action. Moreover, the voice of the community, which was once unheard (Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009), is essential to the mission of higher education through the formation of partnerships working collaboratively to transform society.

Congratulations to Dr. King-Jupiter, professor of education at Alabama State University, and guest editor, for her vision of this inaugural *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship* special issue focused on the role of HBCUs as expressed

in her column “Community Engagement and Social Transformation: Understanding the Need for Change.” HBCUs are an extension of the communities they serve and have been on the forefront of fighting social injustice and inequality for decades (Patterson, Dunston, & Daniels, 2013). The articles in this special issue are inspiring and highlight the great community engagement work at HBCUs, empowering and transforming the academy and surrounding communities.

I am a graduate of Xavier University of Louisiana, an HBCU. The mission of this university is “to contribute to the promotion of a more just and humane society by preparing its students to assume roles of leadership and service in a global society” (Xavier University of Louisiana Mission Statement, 2020). My collegiate experience at Xavier shaped my personal and professional mission to inspire the next generation of change agents committed to improving the lives of vulnerable populations through transformative community-engaged learning experiences. During the past 21 years, I have been a strong advocate of transformative learning in higher education as a research scientist, community-engaged faculty, scholar, and practitioner. I served in a majority research intensive public university for many years and currently serve as an associate professor and director of service-learning in a small private university. Although the academic environments are different, I witnessed the transforming effects of vibrant, reciprocal campus/community partnerships on the university culture, its constituents, and surrounding communities in both institutions.

This special issue features five articles on transformative community-engaged partnerships at three premier HBCUs.

Their titles and the authors are:

- “International Community Engagement: Transforming Students and Residents,” by Colleen Walters, assistant professor of Nursing and Family Medicine at Augusta University.

- “Shaping Lives: The Everyday Hero as Transformative Agent,” by Cynthia Gadsden, assistant professor of art history at Tennessee State University.

- “Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance: Breaching, Reaching, and Teaching,” by Katari Coleman, director of the Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance at Tennessee State University.

- “Building Bridges with Big Brothers Big Sisters: Service-learning Links Between Professional and Civic Engagement Education at a Predominantly Black Institution,” by Susan McFarlane-Alvarez, associate professor in the Department of Communication and Media Studies at Clayton State University and Shandra McDonald, assistant professor in the Department of Visual and Performing Arts at Clayton State University.

- “Rural Healthcare and Telehealth: The Importance of Social Work Departments at HBCUs in Developing a Competent Workforce in the Rural South,” by Dawna Nelson, assistant professor in the School of Social Work at Alabama State University and Katina Lang-Lindsey, assistant professor in the Department of Social Work Psychology and Counseling at Alabama A&M University.

We recommend that you also read two other articles: “Using Community-Based Participatory Research to Assess the Needs of HIV-Related Services for Infected Individuals in Rural Communities” (E. Brown, C. Brown, Johnson, Inman, Briggs, Burrell, Theriot, Williams, & Heaston, 2019); and “Partnering Academics and Community Engagement: A Quality Enhancement Plan for a Diverse and Non-Traditional University” (A. Miller, K. Miller, Bailey, Fletcher, France-Harris, Klein, & Vickery, 2019), which were published in *JCES* Vol. 12, No. 1 as a preview of the full special issue. Special thanks to the guest reviewers for this special issue.

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