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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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When we began this journey to share the experiences of Black housing professionals, it came with an indescribable weight of getting it right. This project would allow and give permission to non-Black people to access the triumphs and trauma of working as a Black professional in campus housing. All of this started with a series of conference presentations on “Housing While Black,” which allowed us to share best practices, from the mouths of Black professionals, with our colleagues on how they could provide support, challenge, and environments that allow Black professionals to thrive.

There was a lot going on in 2016. You could not turn the channel or visit a social media app without being subjected to headlines about acts of violence against Black men and women in the United States. The feelings and emotions were raw and real and led us to frequent conversations about the challenges of being Black in our country and Black in our workplace. “If we were feeling this way, surely other Black professionals were feeling the same.” We decided it was imperative to invite others to engage in dialogue about this topic as both an outlet and educational opportunity to increase the understanding and support needed for Black staff in the campus housing profession.

When the call went out for guest editors for a special issue of *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, we both felt the need to expand the conversations that had started in 2016 and proposed a special issue focused on all things “Housing While Black.” Our goal was to seek stories and scholarship that provide a comprehensive examination of what it means to be a Black student or staff member living, working, or both living and working in residential communities on all types of college and university campuses. As our profession seeks to enhance diversity, inclusion, and equity efforts, it is imperative to learn about different experiences and analyze data that can inform our approach to truly create inclusive living and working environments for Black people.

As two Black scholar practitioners, we recognize the absence of Black voices in the academy all too well. It goes beyond being Black and writing about Black experiences. We set out to bring a community of scholars together to share their work. In the process of doing that, several things became abundantly clear. Whereas there was a lot of interest and we wanted to include all who submitted ideas and abstracts, only a few articles actually had the kind of data or had engaged in the kind of research required for *Journal* submission. This led to some really hard conversations about who and what topics to choose. We

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wanted to elevate the Black voices from Black scholars, but the task was not as easy as we thought it would be. Additionally, we wanted to make sure that we were not only telling the story of trauma, which is ever present when discussing Black people in any context. In no way did we downplay the realities of the Black experiences—but we are more than our trauma. We knew we would get questions as to why some of the manuscripts chosen are not by Black scholars. The mounting pressure of getting it right was ever present, but we were committed to highlighting many different aspects of Black lives as told to and researched by authors from all backgrounds.

We know that things are missing from this snapshot of Black professionals in campus housing, specifically as it relates to the experience of those Black professionals working at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Interviews were conducted with the hope of including their story, but time and transition impacted the ability to be fair and just to their experience. Our hope is to share their lived experiences in another way with the information that was collected.

Within this special issue of *The Journal of College and University Student Housing*, “Housing While Black,” readers will find articles that center the experiences of Black students, student staff, and professional staff working in college and university housing. Christen Priddie, Bridgette L. Holmes, and Robert M. Gonyea discuss the experiences of Black undergraduate students living in campus housing by examining within-group differences. Laura Arroyo examines the difference in how Black students in and outside of an identity-based living-learning community made meaning of their sense of belonging in residential communities. Gudrun Nyunt, Dianne Hoekstra, Bethany Geiseman, and Lauren Teso-Warner explore how race shapes motivations to pursue the RA position and the experiences of Black RAs at a public research university where students of Color make up about half of the general student population and more than half of the residential population. Jaymee Lewis-Flenaugh and Chandra Myrick share the experiences of Black women senior housing officers at historically White institutions. Janine M. Weaver-Douglas discusses the lived experience of Black housing professionals, which has led to the Black Exodus, the departure of Black professional staff from campus housing.

We thank those who contributed to this special issue, and we thank the participants in the studies presented for entrusting us with sharing your lived experiences. We would also like to thank ACUHO-I and *The Journal of College and University Student Housing* for seeing value in this topic for the special issue.

LaFarin Meriwether and Chandra Myrick, Editors
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