

To Whom It Should Concern,

Over the past year we have labored to curate this special issue of the *Journal of Effective Teaching in Higher Education* titled *In The Along: Curricular and Pedagogical Imperatives for Black Mattering*. This process began during a global health pandemic and the already ongoing assault on Black people and lifeways, and we complete the issue in the same, if not more precarious place. While we know the elusive and insidious nature of antiblackness transcends the bounds of education and the academy, our hope is that this special issue contributes to disrupting and ultimately eradicating this violence one day. As Bey (2020) reminds us, there are actions we can take that are on the way to our desire for Black mattering and Black freedom, that is, “there are things to be done in the interim,” which may lack complete fulfillment of our efforts but are “nonetheless in the service of that end” (p.103). It is in this spirit we deliver this issue to you.

In the opening article that immediately follows this letter, we situate context to define and refine our call for Black mattering in teaching, pedagogy, and education; in addition to recounting the unique offerings each of the authors provide. However, our intention for this letter is to briefly offer gratitude to all who made the special issue possible. First, we acknowledge the collective of beautiful, brilliant, and Black scholars who gave of their time and capacity to serve as reviewers for *In The Along*. During a time when so many Black people were working tirelessly to embrace our lives, our work, our joy, and our pain, service in this way was an added stress on already limited energy and time: we thank you for gifting some of yours to us. We also acknowledge James DeVita and Colleen Reilly for the invitation to serve as guest editors for the issue and for allowing us the freedom to vision and shape the work without restriction or hinderance; we thank you. Finally, we would like to thank the authors for contributing their work to this project and their patience as we worked our way through the process to get the issue to this place; thank you for trusting our vision for what this project might be.

As we turn to the issue, we know in academe, education, teaching, and pedagogy, scholarship not only structures our work, it signifies it. With white supremacy as the pretext, Yancy (2012) offered “it is white meaning making that creates the conditions under which black people are always already marked as different/deviant/dangerous” (p. 5) and which informs violence against Black people in pedagogy and praxis. These same logics animate what is often stressed or repressed within research and writing. More than

mere words, the ideas we champion or abandon implicate how and if Black mattering might ever materialize. Toni Morrison (1993) warned that “oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge” (para 13). She specifically ensured to name the “proud but calcified language of the academy” (para 13) as a place this violence can readily occur, and further implicates the literature which begets knowledge production which in turn begets praxis. Holding the fullness of these realities, we position *In the Along* as a counter, a resistance, a disruption to this prevailing imposition. A moment to try and reject being defined by antiblackness; that which seeks to victimize us; to kill us. A moment to embrace ourselves as we hope to be, an attempt to call ourselves by the names we hear in our dreams.

In solidarity and Black love, ase.

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References

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- Yancy, G. 2012. *Look, a White!: Philosophical essays on Whiteness*. Temple University Press.