Preface

The overarching theme of the book is the voices of the women who provide the audience with a connection between the theories of multicultural education and diversity and practices within the halls of Academe where professional women of color had their lived experiences. Like other fractions of the society and the world, theory and practice are still too far apart. Stories shared in the chapters will inspire deeper examination of higher education practices. For individuals aspire to gain an intimate understanding of the complexities of multicultural education and diversity in higher education, they will find this book to be authentic, truthful, and referable both personally and professionally. Readers will leave the chapters with a better understanding of the not always favorable outcomes of policies, behaviors, and perceptions that permeate the very institutions that hold the promise for transforming citizens, communities, the nation and the world. This book will especially motivate those in the fields of gender studies, social and behavioural sciences, and multicultural education for continued discussion on equity and equality.

This work is the result of professional work from 8 individuals who focused on voicing their lived experiences in academic, social, and professional development issues relating to diversity, race, feminism, and pedagogical practices in advancing teaching and learning, diversity, humanity, and justice. There are a total of 10 chapters in the book. Among the 10 chapters, eight chapters were authored by individuals in higher learning institutions in the United States and two chapters were written with a setting and focus on higher learning in Southern Africa.

Chapter 1 is titled “Exemplar of Pearls of Wisdom for the Academy through Dr. Pearlie Dove’s Career in Education.” The chapter was included in the book because it offered a unique story of strength, wisdom, and inspiration. It is impact of the personal story goes beyond paper and words to impact further and more. This chapter sought to promote the overarching professional and personal qualities exemplified by Dr. Dove from 1941-2014. The implication for teacher education in the 21st century intends to advance diversity and humanity in teaching and learning.

The chapter was authored by Dr. Noran Moffett and others. The focus of the chapter reflected the spirit and legacy of a woman of color, Dr. Dove. With courage
and consciousness whose lifework in teacher education started in the segregated “colored schools” of Atlanta, Georgia in the 1920s and 30s. Dove is the focus of this originally conceptualized qualitative narrative which draws its scholarly influence from ethnography, reflective biography, and historiography as well as personal narrative to posit a methodological approach described as ethno-biographical research.

The authors constructed the methodology from selected biographical notes, conversations, interviews and critical theory of the era in which Dr. Dove was educated and lived. The conceptual model describes the foundation for the use of the term Pearlie’s pearls of wisdom as attributes that can be models for men and women who aspire to promote principles over expediency.

Chapter 2 is titled “Full Circle Moments: The Navigation of an Education Journey.” The chapter was included in the book as a reflection of personal and professional growth for further mentoring and empowerment to many others who follow the suit in searching for success. Dr. Taylor authored the chapter based on her own lived experience in high learning, the academy. She reflected on her educational journey that shaped particular cultural ideologies. The pressures that accompanied the journey and the practical lessons learned pertaining to education, culture, and global perspectives are emphasized in the chapter. In addition, her story discussed how her educational journey from elementary school to advanced education has impacted her thought process, which in turn impacted the students she has taught or is currently teaching. This process is one in which we need to consider how different perspectives impact one interacts with others in the learning process (especially as an educator) in a diverse world. The lesson sheds lights on how education in general and teacher education specifically should approach teaching and learning in diversity rich settings in the 21st century.

Overall, the chapter carried out Dr. Taylor’s hopes and inspirations for others, women of color who strive to pursue professional careers (especially in the field of education) through sharing her own experiences. The chapter is also for those who desire to impact others (especially those of color) in similar pathways of career development to themselves, and those who may want to be in the professional community or those who may want to provide a voice for others who are inspired to have a voice in diverse communities by offering motivation and practical implications.

Dr. Lewis authored chapter 3 on “Perseverance: The Dream Will Not Be Deferred.” The chapter was included in the book because its unique perspective and voice on the story of mentoring and silent compromise as insightful recommendation for continued success despite challenges on the academic and career pathway. The chapter chronicled the author’s eight year journey to obtaining a Ph.D. at a large predominately White southern university. Through mentorship, compromise and giving into the system, the author learned the delicate balance between speaking up and using quiet strength. In addition to offering hope, this chapter addresses the familiar
dilemma of doctoral students, especially for those students of color, when faced with opposing committee members, approaching deadlines, and the infamous “clock” in the doctoral study and final dissertation completion. The goal of this chapter is to empower women who are confronted with similar obstacles and to emphasize the need for faculty mentors who look like and understand women of color. Although this chapter is filled with personal and professional trials, it validates the statement that determination will result in the realization of dreams.

Chapter 4, authored by Dr. Molly Zhou, is on “Gender and Education: Equity and Equality in Post Mao China.” This chapter offered a perspective on gender and equality in the Chinese educational system from a much more historical view based on the author’s educational journey from K-12 till college education. The chapter focuses on the discussion of gender and education in Post Mao Era in the Chinese Education System, one of the largest educational systems in the world. As history turns to a new page in China’s development, China of the Post Mao Era features an emphasis on education and respect for intellectuals and knowledge. Access to higher education was reopened to the public in 1979 and Gaokao testing system as the selective assessment system to enter college was reestablished. The K-12 schools were established and expanded to provide basic education for school age children. Educational institutions continued to develop to include regular K-12 schools, vocational schools, 2 year-colleges, and 4-year colleges. However, when increased opportunities become available to the general population through high stake testing-Gaokao system, is gender equality achieved in schooling and higher learning settings? In this chapter, factors that impact gender and schooling and college access are explored and analyzed. As indicated in the chapter Chinese education system is an interesting one as much as any other educational system in the world. Due to the unique nature of the Chinese educational system as the largest educational system, it contributes a large share to education globalization, increasing culture exchange and economic development worldwide. Further research studies could focus more on equity and equality of higher education. More discussions could also focus on how to maintain the discussion on educational access, national curriculum, equity and equality. Gaokao selection system has got the attention of educator and scholars worldwide. How to fine tune its reform in the Chinese education to reflect fairness, equity and equality is something worthwhile of further research. The benefits of this effort will not be only for Chinese test takers, college access to Chinese students, but also for worldwide reformation and reconceptualization of educational testing theories and practices in an increasingly diverse world.

Dr. Smith authored chapter 5 on “Black, Female and Foreign: The Triple-Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean Women in the Academy.” The inclusion of the chapter offered a perspective on women of the Caribbean. The chapter delineated the multiple disadvantages faced by women of color, especially the ones coming from Caribbean.
The chapter drew from rich research findings on women of Caribbean background and focused on the analysis of women of color in a racial society such as the US. Literature affirmed that society has failed to acknowledge intra-group differences, and as a result, disregarded the ethnic distinctiveness, cultural practices, and norms of Afro-Caribbean emigrant as a distinctive cultural and ethnic group that needs special attention and framework for its identity formation and development. In this paper, the author explored the “triple-invisibility” of the Afro-Caribbean woman in the academy within the context of race, gender, and emigrant status. The goals concerning broader definition of diversity as they relates to higher education in the US are shared.

Dr. Molly Zhou authored chapter 6 with the title “Race as a Learned Identity: My Educational Journey in the West.” The inclusion of the chapter in the book offered a significant perspective on diversity: a story of learned identity on race as an Asian American. The chapter focuses on the concept of race as a learned identity based on lived experiences of the story teller. Her experience carried her through academic learning in two higher learning institutions in the United States in the south. Besides her learning of academic knowledge, her discovery of relationships on race in education is chronicled and discussed within the critical race theory and identity development theories. The journey is a process of rediscovery of herself during her search for knowledge from the East to the West. The repositioning of herself in a racially diverse society such as the US sheds light on the complex issues on race, academic learning and issues on support and structure of academic learning and professional development for marginalized populations in higher learning institutions. The finding revealed the question of what race is: it is not the knowledge that matters the most but the process of finding one’s self in diversity that speaks louder on one’s growth and development professionally and personally. It is the process of discovering one’s identity that matters.

Chapter 7 has the title as “Teaching to Digress: Pedagogy, Feminism and the Search for Voice.” The authors are Dr. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, Roselyn Banda, and Sarah Kinley. The chapter is included in the book to show the unique perspectives based on the true story of both faculty and a student. Their chapter explores the challenge of creating a “liberated” classroom, one that digresses from the norm in both content and structure according to feminist principles. The teaching project depicted in the chapter was designed to create a unique learning environment through the use of black feminist pedagogy. Charged with teaching a cross-listed course (Women’s Studies, Black Studies) entitled “Black Feminist Theory,” the teaching team consisted of a professor, a graduate student, and an undergraduate student. The team came together from a diversity of educational experiences in the U.S. and Africa. The chapter offered a thought-provoking reflection on the team’s
experiences of co-teaching a “non-traditional” course as well as a collective inquiry about the strategic importance of incorporating oppositional discourse into the college curriculum in teaching diversity.

Dr. Nonofor Losike-Sedimon from the University of Botswana in Southern Africa authored chapter 8. Her chapter is titled “Theoretical Discussion of Gender and Power Structure: The Case of the University of Botswana.” This chapter was included in the book because it revealed an important aspect of diversity and multiculturalism in Southern Africa, a different perspective on gender and power struggle in higher learning institutions. It is interesting for the author to point out that women are at the concrete ceiling, which is even more vulnerable than the glass ceiling in the setting. The author firmly stated that for any work place that intends to support multiculturalism, its organizational culture must consider gender diversity. Such organizational culture should support the ability of women to reach top management on equal footing with their male colleagues. In addition, it should enable a gender equality system that works and a gender-diversity friendly working atmosphere. As more literature and research needs to be available to address gender diversity in higher learning institutions, the organizational culture should encourage new mindsets of gender equality for inequality perpetrators, such as UB. A concepts heavily introduced and discussed in the chapter is Gender Mainstreaming (GM). Gender mainstreaming is a contested concept and practice. It is fought in various ways by governments, institutions, and departments. In Botswana, a national agenda exists from which institutions such as the University of Botswana (UB) have used to come up with their institutional gender policy. The University of Botswana has a concerted effort to fight gender issues. Several structures are in place to guide how gender may be mainstreamed. However the management needs to do more in the line of power structure. Being female and/or male is the problem. The problem arises along with issues of using patriarchy in power structures. When gender roles construction tends to impose importance and status on one sex at the expense of the other, the problem arise and resides. From the author’s perspective, gender discrimination seems to be deeply rooted in both the organizational and societal culture of the observed institution. Women still have difficulty reaching top management positions even with equal skills and qualification as their male colleagues in the institution.

Chapter 9 is titled “Building Bridges: Using Life Lessons to Inform Our Work with Students.” The chapter is authored by Dr. Mahauganee D. Shaw and Modinat Sanni. The chapter was included in the book because its emphasis on much needed modeling, advising, and mentoring in facilitating the professional development of students, especially for students of color in higher learning. As time and space move to a broader discussion of cultural nourishment and mentoring on Predominately White Institution (PWI) campuses, the authors shared their own experiences as stu-
dents and employees to help contextualize the research findings on mentoring and cultural starvation in higher learning. The stories shared in the chapter are written as first person narratives, which provide a unified voice of experiences as Black women. Through personal stories as students navigating PWI campus settings, the authors shared their own challenges and successes seeking out sources of cultural nourishment, and being introduced to meaningful mentoring relationships. Their narratives moved from their days as students on PWI campuses into their experiences of navigating similar environments as professionals who serve higher learning through both formal and informal avenues. As sources of cultural nourishment for current students, the findings and the implications of the lived experiences displayed fully. Descriptions of the lessons learned by the authors, tips implemented into their daily practices, and suggestions for practices that may be transferrable for professionals on other PWI campuses, are embedded throughout the chapter.

Chapter 10 is titled “Through the Eyes of the Beholder: Experiences of a Woman living in a Patriarchal Society.” The chapter was included in the book as it expands the content and meaning of diversity targeted for the book. With an authentic setting in Africa, the chapter presents experiences of an elderly woman living in Africa from a Feminist theoretical perspective. Feminism is a theory that argues both men and women should be treated equally in political, economic, and social settings. The discussion of the chapter includes issues of sensitivity on all sorts of gender biases such as excluding voices of women in life debates. The aim of this chapter is to map the challenges and constraints posed by patriarchal value system, as they relate to the right to reproduction, child rearing practices and legal connotation. The discussion also includes opportunities in socio-cultural, educational, economic, and political participation. The experiences are situated in both public and private life. As voiced in the chapter, a narrative such as this one would need much more resources and it was rare to find. It is valuable to have a story such as this one in the chapter.

The ten chapters composed the main body of the book project. Each chapter pays attention to its analysis of diversity and multiculturalism from a unique perspective. The voices embedded in the chapters lend themselves to the strength and beauty of diversity and multiculturalism. It is my hope you enjoy each chapter and the story of each individual in the book. Upon completing your reading, you may already have a story of yourself on humanity and diversity in higher learning.

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