

Foreword

It is for the cost of loving this country, of finally feeling like I fit in, like I have found the people to whom I belong.

~Arhm Choi Wild (2019)

It is an honor and privilege to provide this foreword to Dr. El-Amin's collection on this critical focus of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). Recently, she contributed a definition for DEIB to a recent text I edited that focused on social justice research methods where she noted organizational efforts "to promote awareness of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural identities within diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives" do so "with intentionality and a desire for change" (El-Amin, 2022, p. 221). Perhaps most distinct within this definition is the companion of *belonging* included with the now often seen diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This collection tackles these challenging constructs specific to DEIB as related to organizational performance to further inform the recent trends across many organizations to undergo a fundamental shift in focus and intentionality to foster and empower DEIB leadership and action. Without which, these efforts may appear artificial, superficial, and lacking substance. If the workplace is a microcosm of the society-at-large, executive organizational leadership must embrace the advantages of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce, even when concurrently deconstructing their privilege. The beneficial paradox may emerge when they also understand the employee need for belonging and the serendipitous survival and transformation gained through this organizational evolution.

Organizations that embrace DEIB must look through the high-powered lens to examine the hierarchical dominance inherent to the organization. It requires a critical interrogation of these complex, multi-layered, intentional and unconscious, and too-long-held infrastructures that singularly, and sometimes with imminent and predictable resistance, impede actions toward effective workplace DEIB. The authors in this collection provide a variety of perspectives, strategies, and activities that may allow contemporary organizations to take these steps toward diversity and inclusivity and deconstruct the policies and practices that have upheld them for far too long. These efforts require action beyond employee diversity training and conceptual understanding as organizational performance cannot be impacted by special projects and an annual video training course. Instead, we have come to know from the research that the initiatives must be led by executive leadership who effect substantive over cursory change that can lead to measurable performance improvement. These changes typically involve leaders with a depth of DEIB

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knowledge and human resource leaders ready to address the demanding philosophical and hierarchical changes needed organizationally and stand prepared and equipped to aid organizational leadership to enact significant and necessary change.

Solutions to accomplish vibrant organizational DEIB that fosters a safe, inclusive, and productive workplace, specifically to seek improved organizational performance as a motivation to do so, remain in the debate between scholars and practitioners, academic perspectives, and executive leadership. Yet, these disparate and debated perspectives may likely agree on stakeholder engagement with DEIB across the rich field from which to greenstart many DEIB initiatives and gather organizational data to inform changes and continued action needed for change. For if these changes are to be enacted and sustained, stakeholders must have their voice restored be able to share uncomfortable, even treacherous organizational experiences. Leadership must acknowledge that the lack of inclusivity, equity, and diversity has impeded stakeholder sensemaking and sense of belonging: indeed, no easy process to navigate for any organization but vital more than ever. Congratulations to Dr. El-Amin and the chapter authors for bringing light to better envisage these essential organizational needs.

Fortunately, the chapters in this collection highlight this continued debate and ongoing organizational challenges to offer research-based solutions and recommendations to improve DEIB within these workplace environments. This collection focuses on the various research into both the individual and collective examination of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, as well as multi-faceted change management initiatives, strategic management, collaborative leadership needs and actions, DEIB-specific executive leadership, organizational learning and development, organizational and shared leadership, and stakeholder engagement, development, and deployment:

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