# Beyond DEIB
## Bridging to an Equity-Centered Future

*The time for the healing of the wounds has come. The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come. **The time to build is upon us.***

—Nelson Mandela

This special journal issue calls on Organization Development (OD) scholars and practitioners to accelerate our efforts in bridging to an equity-centered future by expanding our inquiries. Amid a world in multiple global crises and transitions, many issues are polarizing and dividing us. In the news, the dinner conversations, the community chatter, social media—the stories of versus dominates. In the versus debates, we are pitted against each other, exist in online and offline echo chambers, and divulge into positional, tribal lines, each looking and speaking about the other with extreme distrust at best and violent rhetoric at worst. Paradoxically, Diversity, Equity Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) efforts and all its analogous acronyms related to anti-racism and anti-oppression are central to many current debates. Despite growing evidence about our dangerously unequal world, legislative debates, actions to roll back equity, and efforts to hold back civil and human rights advances for systemically marginalized groups globally have increased. We are swimming amid polarities like:

*Right vs. Left*
*Black vs. White*
*Boss vs. Employees*
*Religion vs. Religion*
*Immigrant vs. National*
*Conservative vs. Liberal*
*Nationalist vs. Regional/Global Alliances*
*Misinformation/Disinformation vs. Truth*
*Cancel Culture vs. Anti-woke Concerns*
*Climate Action vs. Climate Change Skepticism*
*Counter Terrorism vs. National/Border Security*

What does it look like when we change the *versus* to *and*? What becomes possible when we:

» Engage in dialogue vs. debate?
» Accept each other's positions and identities without forcing our positions and identities on others?
» Seek to understand rather than correct/fix others?
» Trade the anxieties we each hold in the place of trying to control others for faith in our shared humanity?
» Replace the arrogance of trying to teach others our way with openness to learn from others' experiences.
» Are critical of our social and global systems that center power and dominance in some and ascribe marginality to others without levying personal attacks?
» Center humanity in place of political rhetoric to find solutions?
» See organizations and institutions as sites for human flourishing rather than gatekeepers of power and privilege?
» Commit collectively to building a future that works for the betterment of all.

In the place of ***and***, there is an emerging future that we, humanity, must engage in to achieve an equity-centered reality. We, humanity, and the organizations and social systems we have designed are at the center of the various global crises we face, and solving any of the challenges of our era starts with addressing the inequities in our world that are at the roots of the problems we face. Expanding their thinking to our global community, we join Adrienne Maree Brown in saying, "We will not cancel us." The stakes of our human and planetary existence are too high. We must build our bridges.

We believe Organization Development scholars and practitioners must hold the tension between the past, present, and future and determine how we must cross the threshold of these divides together. OD has never been values-neutral and has always used human-centered, democratic values to collaborate in finding solutions; this is the challenge of our times! We are navigating into an unknown future with grey

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zones of change, questioning leadership, norms of the past, and how to survive and thrive in a decolonized future. Organization Development has seen some of these disruptions and changes many times before. We helped in early civil rights endeavors; Lewin began early versions of OD in work in racial conflict situations. We've had major economic jolts and recoveries before. We've seen incredible technological transformations shift how we do nearly everything. And OD has been involved!

So, in our conceptual backpack, methodological toolkits, and behavioral science roots, we have ways to help in any situation. We may not have answers, but that was never our flag! We understand the socio-technical world we live and work in and how humans need to relate, collaborate, connect, and make meaning to align to a shared purpose and well-being for organized systems to succeed. Our work has the potential to impact individuals, teams, organizations, communities, and the world as we inquire into new critical questions to bridge our divides and work towards an equity-centered future.

In this special issue, we invite you to explore and present your research, thinking, practice, case studies, and responses to the questions/topics below to explore how we can bridge to an equity-centered future critically and appreciatively.

Ideal submissions will address paradoxes, bridge tensions across and within worldviews, and advance new ways of thinking, being, acting, and our overall human organizing to grow our capacity for dialectical and complex thought, deliberation, and knowing.

We are asking: ***In terms of DEIB work: What is working? What is not working? Where to from here?***

1. How should OD respond to various court and legislative actions that appear to be taking steps backward?
2. How can OD respond to the "woke" label?
3. How can OD respond to cancel culture?
4. How can the "container" for DEIB work be systemically created and maintained?
5. How are values and political beliefs operating paradoxically in terms of DEIB?
6. Is DEIB apolitical? Should it be?
7. How can dialogue and deliberation be applied in a polarized world to bridge divides?
8. What is the place of DEIB in the scholarship and practice of OD?
9. What is the return on investment and impact of DEIB in organizations?

10. What is the future of DEIB?
11. What's not working in DEIB? Why? And how can it be resolved?
12. What are examples of DEIB's impact?
13. How should OD transform the language of DEIB to retain a seat at the table?
14. Where is the work of DEIB in relationship to maturity models?
15. What is the role of DEIB champions and sponsors in an organization? How can they be leveraged to affect change?
16. How can we build on the strengths of OD, developed over our history, to serve the needs of the future?
17. How do we lead/facilitate transformation in these times?
18. What new or reimagined OD practices are already impacting the context of DEIB? (Case studies)
19. What does "use of self" mean in the current state of complexity, and how is it showing up?
20. What role(s) can OD take on going forward?
21. We encourage submissions from around the world and inclusion of global perspectives.

The manuscripts submitted can be:
» Regular-length articles (up to 5,000 words); a blind peer-review option is available.
» Shorter articles (1,500–2,000 words)
» Brief notes/thought pieces/provocations (approx. 600 words)

**Deadlines:**
» **Submit a brief abstract or proposal of your intent by January 15, 2024**
» Feedback to authors on abstracts and proposals by **February 28, 2024**
» **Manuscript submissions are due May 31, 2024**
» Feedback to authors on manuscripts by **June 15, 2024**
» **Final manuscript revisions are due August 15, 2024**

Follow the General Guidelines for *OD Review*
*https://www.odnetwork.org/page/submissions-odreview*

Submit all to Dave Jamieson at *editor@odnetwork.org*, John Bennett at *bennettj@queens.edu*, and Yabome Gilpin-Jackson at *yabome@sldconsulting.org*

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**Special Issue Guest Editors:**

**John L. Bennett, PhD**, a professor of business and behavioral science at the McColl School of Business at Queens University of Charlotte, holds the Wayland H. Cato, Jr. Chair of Leadership. He teaches graduate courses in executive coaching, leadership, understanding social identities, and interpersonal and group dynamics. Before forming Lawton Associates, an executive coaching and consulting firm in 1997, John was an executive with the American Red Cross. He taught in the American University MSOD program for more than ten years. He is a scholar-practitioner who has written four books, including *Coaching for Change*, and numerous articles. In addition, John is on the editorial board of two journals. He is a past president of the Graduate School Alliance for Education in Coaching (GSAEC), and in 2010 was named a Charter Fellow by The Lewin Center and Founding Fellow of the Institute of Coaching, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School. In 2023, he was named a Noble Fellow. He serves on the Board of Trustees of Fielding Graduate University and the Board of Directors of Rowan Education Partners. He can be reached at *bennettj@queens.edu*.

**Yabome Gilpin-Jackson, PhD**, is a scholar-practitioner who enjoys applying the behavioral and organization sciences to leadership development, organization development, facilitating strategic change, and systematic organizing for social change and transformation. She has worked internationally with corporate, non-profit/social profit and public sector organizations. She is the first Vice-President for People, Equity, and Inclusion at Simon Fraser University and associate faculty member of the Beedie School of Business. In addition to many academic peer-reviewed articles and book chapters she has published, her publications include *Transformation After Trauma*, *The Power of Resonance*, co-editor for the *Palgrave Handbook of Learning for Transformation*, and the *We Will Lead Africa* book series and short story collections about global African experiences: *Identities, Ancestries, Destinies*. Yabome was named International African Woman of the Year by UK-based Women4Africa and was the first recipient of the US-based Organization Development Network's Emerging Organization Development Practitioner award. She also received the prestigious Harry Jerome Professional Excellence Award in Canada. She is a past Chair of the Organization Development Network Board. She can be reached at *yabome@sldconsulting.org*.