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## EDITORIAL: A CALL TO ACTION FOR SORORITY AND FRATERNITY LIFE

Crystal E. Garcia, Ph.D.

Writing my first Letter From the Editor of the *Journal of Sorority and Fraternity Life Research and Practice (JSFLRP)* feels incredibly important and also daunting at this moment. Our world, U.S. society, the field of higher education, sorority and fraternity life, *JSFLRP*—we are in a moment of precarity and power. The fields of higher education and sorority and fraternity life (SFL) have made important strides over the last few decades and more recent years, in not only recognizing that diversity exists within college campuses, but also that we must be intentional in identifying and calling out inequities that manifest via racism, misogyny, and transgender oppression, among other forms of discrimination. However we cannot stop at identifying inequities; we must also take action to address them, to re-envision how policies, systems, and interactions can be more humanizing for all. At the same time, there are strategic and concerted efforts unfolding across the country to abolish the diversity, equity, and inclusion work that is so needed within educational spaces, including sorority and fraternity life. The evidence of this plan is clear when looking at *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* (2024) website which tracks anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) legislation that targets colleges and universities across the country. As of June 28, 2024, 85 anti-DEI bills have been introduced across 28 states and the U.S. Congress since 2023; 14 have become law.

Some of you may be reading and wondering what all of this has to do with the *Journal of Sorority and Fraternity Life Research and Practice*. Although attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion may not seem connected to sorority and fraternity life, they absolutely are. For one, legislation affects the college students who are a part of our sorority and fraternity life communities. **All students** benefit from attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion within campus spaces, whether directly through the services and supports they provide or indirectly by the positive effects they cultivate within campus environments more broadly. Specifically, many of the identity-based offices and resource centers that current legislation targets serve our SFL students including those that support Students of Color, queer and transgender students, first-generation students, and low-income students, among many others. Furthermore, culturally based sororities and fraternities—organizations that are **integral** to sorority and fraternity life—often receive critical support through these offices and professional staff members, many of which serve as advisors, informal support spaces, and sources of funding, among other resources. As legislation and legislative threats erode diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and result in the firing of professional staff connected to DEI work (see for example, The University of Texas at Austin and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln), current and

future SFL students **will be impacted**. The question then is, what role will sorority and fraternity life communities play in supporting our siblings, our sisters, and our brothers?

I have long served as an advocate for sorority and fraternity life because, through its challenges, I see the possibilities and good that this community is capable of cultivating. SFL members have historically been changemakers within college campuses. For instance, I continue to be inspired by the courage and strength that many NPHC members, in particular, enacted during the Civil Rights Movement and through resistance efforts such as the lunch counter sit-ins. I believe that SFL as a whole has the power to lead resistance against harmful institutional and legislative movements and that change can begin within our respective campuses, but only if we choose to leverage our power to do so. I encourage JSFLRP readers to consider your spheres of influence and what advocacy for our SFL communities looks like for you. The articles in this issue likewise challenge us as readers to consider the multifaceted ways that equity concerns emerge in sorority and fraternity life.

Lofton's article, "When everyone is blamed, are all responsible?: Defining the legal relationship between North American Interfraternity Conference Fraternities/National Panhellenic Conference Sororities and Universities in Harassment Cases" calls us to question the legal complexities surrounding harassment within SFL. Goodman and colleagues encourage readers to consider using critical race theory to examine SFL and engage communities in antiracist practice through their article, "Considerations for Antiracist Practices in Sorority and Fraternity Life: A Critical Race Theory Perspective," while Roland and colleagues provide insight into ways historically White sorority officers perceived the summer 2020 racial events' influence on their leadership in "What's Next?: Historically White Sorority Chapter Officers' Response to 2020 Racial Events." Finally, Githens' article, "Where I Feel Most Accepted": Creating Queer Affirming Fraternity Environments and Experiences," raises questions of how we can ensure queer fraternity members are welcomed and supported within their organizations. Each of these pieces calls for readers to humanize every sorority and fraternity member, recognize their unique social identities, and ensure we are cultivating SFL environments that are safe and affirming for all.

With so much happening and so much change to come, as researchers, SFL professionals, and members of SFL organizations, it can be difficult to pinpoint what is most urgent or most important to attend to. I encourage readers to start here—humanizing SFL and **taking action** to do so. When our organizations engage in this practice, there is no limit to the good they can cultivate.

## Reference

Chronicle of Higher Education Staff. (2024, June 28). DEI legislation tracker. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts?sra=true>