Reimagining Historically Black Colleges and Universities
Great Debates in Higher Education is a series of short, accessible books addressing key challenges to and issues in Higher Education on a national and international level. These books are research informed but debate-driven. They are intended to be relevant to a broad spectrum of researchers, students, and administrators in higher education, and are designed to help us unpack and assess the state of higher education systems, policies, and social and economic impacts.

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Edited by Kate Carruthers Thomas and Amanda French
Timely is the best caption to summarize *Reimagining HBCUs: Survival Beyond 2020*. In a watershed moment in world history, this volume captures the unique role of HBCUs beyond 2020. The contributors to this volume discuss a wide range of social issues which include the role of HBCU’s amidst COVID-19 and racial injustice. *Reimagining HBCUs: Survival Beyond 2020* is a must read for those concerned with social justice! It offers a unique perspective that juxtaposes the historical with the contemporary role of HBCUs in preparing leaders to address the most pressing challenges in the 21st century.

—Abul Adonis Pitre, PhD,  
Professor & Chair of the Department of Africana Studies,  
San Francisco State University

In this very timely work, Dr. Crosby and his colleagues encourage us to reimagine HBCUs by incorporating a triad of perspectives – reflection, introspection, and projection – to provoke thought. The collective insights herein, if embraced, offer us viable considerations that will ensure that HBCUs remain as options for our children’s children.

—Eurmon Hervey, Jr, EdD, MBA,  
Special Assistant to the Chancellor and SACSCOC Liaison,  
Southern University at New Orleans

*Reimagining HBCUs: Survival Beyond 2020* is an exciting new volume that pushes the next generation of HBCU leaders and scholars to reconsider what is necessary to ensure the vitality of HBCUs in the future. HBCUs have a storied history of advancing educational outcomes for black people in the face of great odds. However, the challenges in continuing to fulfill the HBCU mission has become increasingly difficult in recent years, given enrollment challenges, resource constraints, and racist political structures. To emerge successfully from the COVID-19 pandemic, HBCUs will need to reconsider practices in all areas. This volume can serve as the impetus for action and a guidebook for those who are committed to ensuring that HBCUs exist and thrive in the 2020’s and beyond.

—J. Luke Wood, PhD,  
Vice President of Student Affairs & Campus Diversity,  
Chief Diversity Officer,  
Distinguished Professor of Education,  
San Diego State University

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in America have a long, remarkable history that celebrates their undeniable past contributions to the advancement of every field of human endeavor, like art, history, music, politics, and religion. The preponderance of published works, to date, acknowledge this timeless fact. Commendably, this new book builds upon that unshakable foundation to make an important, fresh contribution to knowledge. The authors show through each chapter that the future of HBCUs can be even brighter than their illuminating past. Read and see.

—Terrell L. Strayhorn, PhD,  
Provost & Senior Vice President, Academic Affairs,  
Professor and Director, Center for the Study of HBCUs,  
Virginia Union University
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Reimagining Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Survival Beyond 2021

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In the dimming of the Age of Pisces,
In the dawning of the Age of Aquarius,
In the moment of the Grand Conjunction,
In the cycle of the Triple Conjunction,
In the pandemonium of the COVID-19 Pandemic,

In the chaos of the unprecedented deadly assault on the bastion/symbol of Democracy: The Capitol of the United States of America, the business of the people, the lives of the people are evolving since human beginnings in ways with losses and gains, and with prospect and promise, yet to be realized. Whether one believes in these ages, cycles, pandemonium, insurrection, matters not.

Out of such conditions and circumstances of great adversity, human accomplishments are achieved. So, it is that: what we know, understand, and believe about historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) is encapsulated in our direct, indirect, and peripheral, if you will, experiences with these forging institutions.

Someone once said that the most important resource of every organization/institution is “the right people, in the right place, at the right time, with the right skills.” This is a valid assertion that must simultaneously acknowledge and incorporate the essential need and availability of appropriate organizational tools/systems for the “right people” to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of those for whom they provide services and support.

In retrospect, 1865 marked the instance when four million emancipated slaves, ninety-nine percent of whom were illiterate, found themselves in need of an education. Spawned from this unparalleled and unprecedented state of human need is what we contemporarily call HBCUs. Emerging in the first ten years following emancipation, early institutions founded by various religious denominations, supported by northern philanthropy/largesse, some private, some public, poorly supported, but were not colleges or universities in our contemporary senses of these terms. Long denied regional accreditation, when finally admitted it was to an inferior status than institutions with much fewer consecutive and cumulative years of service or scope of academic programs. Evolving over time and through circumstances succumbing and surviving, and sometimes thriving in spite of the odds against them. Paradoxically, it was desegregation that did the most damage
to the then-emerging potential power of these colleges and universities as they were coming fully to be in their own right. While these institutions struggled through uncountable troubles and torments and destructiveness both man-made and natural, they continue to aspire and compete successfully in an increasingly, reshaping environment where bold and visionary, engaging, and inclusive leadership must be demonstrated and sustained.

It is leadership and management that must come together, always reaching to advance while also reaching back to pull another up and or maintain a path where others may follow as they so choose and move forward. It will require a recognition that the ebb and flow of learning and teaching and teaching and learning is foundational to longevity and contribution. It is in recalling, recognizing, and remembering that it is as in a baby’s first movement after birth/the essence of one’s success in any life endeavor.

HBCUs have remained and maintained viable roadways to achievement and success for any who seek what they have to offer in an increasingly complex and conflicted world. Within the DNA of this essential community, resource is a resistance and concomitantly boundless sustenance for well-being. This aspect of the HBCU DNA was forged when enslaved people were forced into this land. It is self-perpetuating by preparing for future political and sociocultural pitfalls through facilitative and enabling learning, knowing, and internalizing the rich competitive enhancing and enlightening historical nature of education/teaching and learning in the HBCU community.

In the 156 years since the Emancipation Proclamation, 54 years after publication of his seminal book, a few days after insurrectionists stormed the Capitol killing and injuring, six days before Dr Martin Luther King, Jr’s Holiday Observance, and a week before the inauguration of the 46th President of the United States, I am STRUCK surprisingly by the CONTEMPORARILY questioning title of Martin Luther King, Jr’s 1967 Book: CHAOS or COMMUNITY, Where Do We Go from Here?

John T. Wolfe, Jr, PhD