The leadership of many colleges and universities have the arduous task of deciding the best way forward for returning to residential instruction and operations in the advent of the coronavirus. When students officially return to campus, they will have many thoughts and emotional expressions about the litany of health and social issues they have processed over the last few months. In particular, many Black students and students of color have been bombarded with a host of national tragedies that have reinforced years of injustice, pain, and inequality. Many support systems specifically for Black students will have to be revisited, reimagined, and reimplemented with careful thought and creative poise.

How will fraternity/sorority life professionals who advise members of Black fraternities and sororities contribute to being a beacon of inclusivity and equity? How can Black students in fraternity/sorority life communities thrive amidst the systematic structures that have historically undervalued their existence? One solution for the aforementioned pressing questions is to implement an advising strategy that is rooted in cultural ways of knowing, being, and learning. A framework encompassing all of the above mentioned cultural elements is Reality Pedagogy.

Christopher Emdin, a prolific scholar, educator, and pedagogue, developed Reality Pedagogy as a teaching and learning method that serves to provide a space where a student’s cultural and emotional needs are met. Reality Pedagogy uses seven methods that aim to create a more inclusive environment for students of color. The seven methods are cogenerative dialogues, co-teaching, cosmopolitanism, context, content, competition, and curation (Emdin, 2016). The seven methods will allow fraternity/sorority life professionals to have a multi-layered approach for connecting with student members of Black fraternities and sororities and present them with tools to create a greater sense of belonging.

The Methods Explained
Cogenerative dialogues (cogens) are organized student-centered conversations that aim to gain knowledge of the classroom experience from students in order for the teacher to better learn and understand the classrooms they are leading (Emdin, 2016). In co-teaching, the roles of teacher and students are flipped from the usual paradigm of teacher as an expert and student as a novice (Dvorakova, 2017). Cosmopolitanism in Reality Pedagogy is a teaching tool that aims to foster socioemotional connections that lead to a collective sense of responsibility and missional engagement (Emdin, 2016). Lastly, the premise of competition suggests that students gravitate
towards educational environments that are competitive (Emdin, 2016). Competition allows for students to develop critical thinking skills by encouraging them to creatively discover ways to solve problems with the knowledge that other students are engaging in this same process at the same time (Emdin, 2016).

**Reality Pedagogy in Action**

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<th>Method</th>
<th>Professional Action Steps</th>
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| Cogens       | 1. Invite an influencer from each of the Black fraternities and sororities you advise to lunch to discuss their thoughts and perspectives on the effectiveness of your advising, their needs, and any other pertinent information that they believe would be best for the overall community.  
               2. Select a room that is comfortable and conducive for dialogue. A strong recommendation is to let the students select the room if possible.  
               3. Prepare yourself to listen and take notes. Ask for clarity on any point you do not understand.  
               4. After you compiled the notes, respond to them with action steps you will take to address the various topics mentioned in the meeting.  
               5. Repeat every two months.                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Co-teaching  | 1. Allow leaders from each group the space to teach their peers. You can co-teach with students during new member education, informational meetings, and other programs you have oversight of. In light of recent national tragedies, you may want to allow space for students in your community to lead conversations on race and wellbeing.  
               2. You should create educational experiences that center on your communities’ cultural background and context. You can start by asking your students what type of programs would best dignify their culture.                                      |
| Cosmopolitanism | 1. During the new member orientation process, ask members of Black fraternities and sororities to take responsibility for a particular segment of the education. Additionally, you could also organize a half-day program solely led by your students that would cover such topics as leadership, community engagement, academic success, and other student centered topics.  
                 2. Invite student members of your advising community to be a part of the assessment of your advising effectiveness.                                                                                           |
| Competition  | 1. Host regular competitions amongst student members of your advising community. An example is to ask each organization to come up with a theme for the community for the upcoming year. Allow them time to develop the theme and then provide a space for them to present the theme in the presence of their peers and other professionals. |
We Are Sitting on a Moment
Dr. Susan Russell, associate professor of theatre at Pennsylvania State University, often notes that we are “sitting on a moment.” In this time of national unrest, we have an opportunity to turn this epoch into a moment of change, innovation, and elevation. Black students in higher education will be returning to campuses that they may believe have historically marginalized them through various academic and social practices. Higher educational professions in general and fraternity/sorority life professionals in particular should use Reality Pedagogy as an advising framework because it allows for a culture of inclusivity and it promotes indigenous ways of knowing. If we are going to advise Black students in this particular moment, it is vital to do so with tools that center them as the experts of their needs.

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References
