

# BOLD Ideas, ESSENTIAL Reading

## Diversity Regimes

### Why Talk Is Not Enough to Fix Racial Inequality at Universities

JAMES M. THOMAS

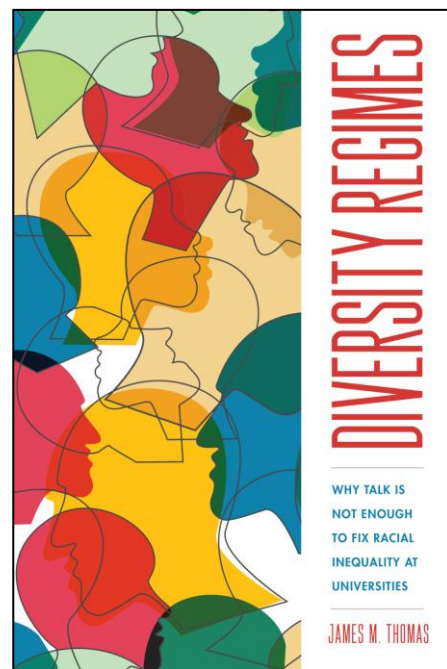
"Thorough and insightful on many levels, *Diversity Regimes* provides a unique exploration of how the approaches taken to diversity work in higher education can reinforce instead of redress racial inequality on college campuses."

—W. Carson Byrd, coeditor of *Intersectionality and Higher Education: Identity and Inequality on College Campuses*

As a major, public flagship university in the American South, so-called "Diversity University" has struggled to define its commitments to diversity and inclusion, and to put those commitments into practice.

In *Diversity Regimes*, sociologist James M. Thomas draws on more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork at DU to illustrate the conflicts and contingencies between a core set of actors at DU over what diversity is and how it should be accomplished. Thomas's analysis of this dynamic process uncovers what he calls "diversity regimes": a complex combination of meanings, practices, and actions that work to institutionalize commitments to diversity, but in doing so obscure, entrench, and even magnify existing racial inequalities. Thomas's concept of diversity regimes, and his focus on how they are organized and unfold in real time, provides new insights into the social organization of multicultural principles and practices.

**JAMES M. THOMAS** is an associate professor of sociology at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. He is the author of *Working to Laugh: Assembling Difference in American Stand-up Comedy Venues*, and the coauthor of *Affective Labor: (Dis)Assembling Difference and Distance and Are Racists Crazy? How Prejudice, Racism, and Antisemitism Became Markers of Insanity*.



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