



July 2020

It takes a Neighborhood to Nourish a Children's Librarian

Hello neighbors,

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, we want to use our platform to unequivocally state that Black Lives Matter and commit to continually dismantling our own internalized racism, and supporting anti-racism work. While we have many sections this month on racism in libraries, we sincerely hope this will be in ongoing discussion. We want to highlight and support librarians of color as well as continue to have the hard discussions in future newsletters. If you would like to contribute, please reach out.

I can't believe I'm about to write this, but this will be our last newsletter via Mailchimp! The Cardigan is moving to a website: www.thecardigannewsletter.com. All of our previous newsletters will be housed there, as well as our new content! Neighbors, thank you again for the support you have given us over the last year and a half. You all have made us better librarians. We're excited about this new adventure and sincerely hope you will follow us to the website.

If you haven't already, click on the URL, and subscribe by clicking on the big red "follow" button. This will ensure you get an email notification when a new newsletter is uploaded.

We will see you next month on the website.

Thanks,

Allie

Learn

Structural Racism in Libraries

Deepen your knowledge on a topic related to Children's Services.

Katherine

My homework for myself this past month has been to revisit the article "[Trippin' Over the Color Line: The Invisibility of Race in Library and Information Studies](#)" and I was struck by how relevant Todd Honma's commentary remains, 15 years after it was written. This is, of course, a reflection of my own privilege as a white woman. In particular, I felt convicted by his statement "*representation alone cannot solve the problem of white privilege in LIS any more than self-congratulatory visions of inclusive multiculturalism can defeat historical legacies and institutional manifestations of racial*

discrimination.” Representation is incredibly important and worthwhile work - however, librarians of color and anti-racist writers have identified the need for a fundamental rethinking of library services and library education. Representation needs to be a part of a larger reform. Librarian Sharona Ginsberg sums it up well in this tweet:



I sought to compile a list of ways libraries as an institution uphold systemic racism. This list is obviously not exhaustive, but I hope it will get a conversation started here, in your workplace, with your coworkers, friends, and patrons. Many of these points are lifted from the Racial Equity Alliance’s 2018 report called “[Advancing Racial Equity in Public Libraries](#).” Other points were crowdsourced on our Instagram. Thank you to everyone who contributed!

- **Fines:** “[libraries’] enforcement of fines has a disproportionate impact on people of color, who are overrepresented among low-income populations due to the racial wealth gap.” At a structural level, “whenever libraries rely on revenue from fines to cover general operating expenses. To the extent that people have difficulty paying these fines, negative consequences (e.g., being blocked from library and computer use, or being reported to a collections agency) are compounded across multiple institutions, contributing to systemic barriers.” (quotes from the [Racial Equity Alliance](#))
- **Lack of diversified workforce.** “88 percent of librarians are white, as are 73 percent of library assistants. Nearly three-quarters of librarians are white women.” (quotes from the [Racial Equity Alliance](#)). As one of our readers pointed out on Instagram, requiring a master’s degree creates further barriers to achieving a diversified workforce.
- **Collection development policies and practices:** not providing sufficient access to materials in languages other than English, personal biases of material selectors, collection lacking diversity. This also ties into larger issues within the publishing industry.
- **Program content and scheduling:** program times do not accommodate caregivers with varying schedules, accompanied by content that does not reflect the lived experiences of patrons, or uses materials with harmful stereotypes of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)
- **Classification systems that center whiteness as the norm.** Anna Gooding-Call wrote a nice summary of the problems with the Dewey Decimal System [here](#).
- **Barriers applying for diversity scholarship programs.** “Only an applicant with access to the privileges of whiteness would have the tools needed to engage in the requisite work and volunteer opportunities called for by the diversity program, have the high-level of educational achievement required, possess the close relationships with individuals of power needed for stellar recommendations, and be able to provide all the documentation necessary to complete their application through the online form.” (quote from “[White Librarianship in Blackface](#)”)

- **Hiding behind the language of neutrality to avoid addressing structural racism.** Not making a statement against racism. [David James Hudson](#) points out that libraries's use of the term "diversity" also becomes a means to avoid addressing structural racism.
- **Problematic and insensitive marketing.** A large library system recently posted an image on Instagram using the "Straight Outta Compton" logo, changing "Compton" to the name of their city. This was intended to recruit local artists and business owners to participate in a virtual fair. While the program itself sounds great, the marketing borrowed and appropriated Black culture. Other examples might include using stereotypical illustrations or images of certain groups.
- **Make up of board or commission members**
- **Treating kids differently** ("these kids are being unruly" vs. "kids being kids")
- **Police guests reading at storytime.** We know this one is particularly touchy, but it's important to think about how a police presence might make certain customers feel, especially those who may have had negative experiences.
- **Lack of speakers of materials/signage in your community's dominant second language.**
- **Not thinking outside of the box when choosing outreach events to participate in.**
- **Excessive force of security guards**
- **Prioritizing calling the police over de-escalation attempts**
- **Implicit bias in recruiting and hiring practices**
- **Absence of strong leadership in this area by regional and national library associations.**

Combing through the Racial Equity Alliance's document on racism in libraries, I was struck by all of the features of libraries that have committed to addressing structural racism and have been working towards solutions for years. They have goals, plans to reach the goals, a timeline, and measures. Other libraries are working towards anti-racism, and it's time for it to become a priority.

Plan

Sparking Conversation about Race in Programs

Learn about an interesting program you can easily replicate at your library
Allie

While I know many in-person programs are on hold, it's still important that we brainstorm ways to spark conversation about race and racial injustices in our children's programs. Research indicates that children notice racial differences from a very young age ([Winkler, 2009](#)) and it is important that caregivers openly talk about race with children because without open dialogue, children can make up their own, often incorrect, meaning from the world around them. As librarians, we can play an important role in helping families have these discussions about race. Not only can we provide resources that reflect diverse communities, but we can model to our families how they can talk about race at home.

Inviting a Speaker

In Oklahoma City we are lucky enough to have an organization called "The Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice" that focuses on encouraging conversations about race with youth. They have developed a program for 1st-3rd graders that helps students identify, talk about, and prevent prejudice. The program is called "Different and the Same," and includes six, child-friendly videos developed by the company affiliated with the highly-regarded children's program "Mister Rogers'

Neighborhood.” The videos utilize a diverse group of puppets and live actors to teach lessons about differences, respect, and getting along with others. Before the pandemic, we partnered with this organization and had a 4-week program where a representative from the organization came and led 1st-3rd graders and their parents through not only the videos, but also activities that sparked conversation about race and prejudice. I stumbled across them at a local school fair, but I encourage you to look for organizations in your community that might have something similar. Just by listening to their presentations, I learned that we shouldn’t be afraid of using big words with our kids. They can understand words like racism and prejudice and actually have a lot to say about it.

Storytime

If you haven’t already checked out Jessica Anne Bratt’s Google Drive: [Talking About Race In Storytimes](#), there is no time like the present. She gives some great tips about how to incorporate having open conversations about race during storytime. Remember: when you talk about race, it gives the parents in your storytime an example and model to have those conversations at home too. Bratt stresses that tone matters. If you talk about race in an uncomfortable manner it is reinforcing that race is something that is to be avoided.

Another helpful tool I have found is the National African American Museum of History and Culture (NAAHMC) web portal: [Talking About Race](#), that has resources to help parents and teachers navigate the discussion with concrete tools.

We’d love to hear how you spark conversation about race in your programs and the tools and tips you use. Email us at thecardigannewsletter@gmail.com or message us on Instagram: @thecardigannewsletter.

Consider

Where are all the Black Librarians?

Libraries are for everyone!

Allie

Booktuber, [Bookish Realm](#), posted a timely video on May 23, 2020 discussing the reasons the field of librarianship is lacking black librarians. You can check out her video below to learn more.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZrFGkOpCoU&t=639s>

We really like and feel convicted by so many of Bookish Realm's videos. I also encourage you all to watch her other video titled [I don't trust you, I don't want your sympathy, and I don't believe you](#) on June 7, 2020 where she discusses how the current conversations about racism are affecting librarians and booktubers. In this video she points out that her subscriptions to her YouTube channel have increased, but she's afraid that these subscriptions are a result of the fad and not of pure intention. In a month, will these same new subscribers be watching her content? **As white librarians do not just subscribe or inhale content created by black librarians to just say you are "subscribed" or you have "read" it.** While we as white librarians want to continue to learn, we also don't want to stop our learning after this month. Dear neighbors, as you consider how you will continue to educate yourself and advocate for minority communities as a part of your daily life, we ask that you keep us accountable as well.

Connect

Truman and Kiwi



Truman (left) and Kiwi (right)

Our scheduled author for the month was unable to do a write-up, so we thought you all might enjoy connecting to our dogs and their favorite books.

Tell us about yourself.

Truman: The most important thing to know about me is that I love having fun, whether it's chasing rabbits in my backyard, meeting new friends, or chewing up Katherine's pillows. I have a lot of energy and sometimes it overwhelms people so much she has to lock me in her bedroom until I calm down. We found each other in Blacksburg, VA in 2013 and have been joined at the hip since. I also love bird watching and going on walks, and working my eyes just right so she takes pity on me and gives me food from the counter.

Kiwi: I was adopted by Allie late January 2020. When she adopted me I had heartworms so I've had to stay inside and rest while I recover. That's okay with me though because I'm scared of everything outside! I have a lot of anxiety about new people and dogs, but Allie continues to tell me that I don't have anything to fear. My favorite past-times are looking out the window, napping, and getting out every toy and bone and hiding them throughout the house.

What are some of your favorite books and why?

Truman: I relate a lot to [Bark, George](#) because he eats stuff he's not supposed to! [The Runaway Bunny](#) is also a favorite; it's about a bunny who tries to leave home but his mama keeps looking for him. It reminds me that no matter what I do or how much trouble I get into my mom will always love me.

Kiwi: I need some books that calm me down because of my anxiety. I have really enjoyed [Gloria's Big Problem](#) because I like to see someone conquer their fears! [I Used to be Afraid](#) and [Calm with the Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) are also stories that help me be brave. [Breathe Like a Bear](#) is my absolute

favorite because it has mindful exercises in it. Allie tries to do them with me, but I like to tease her and just run away and grab a toy to hide for her to find later. She doesn't know that I do these exercises while I wait for her to come from work.

Read

Librarianship and Race

Some of our favorite books.

Allie

The ALSC has released [its yearly recommended reading book lists](#) for children! Our patrons love these and they can be a great starting point for new summer reading participants.

While we typically use this section to highlight children's books, we also want to use this section to highlight resources for librarians on a variety of subjects. Below are some resources on librarianship and race. It is important that we take the time to educate ourselves on the library's history of racism, as well as how the libraries can be a safe space for everyone.

Articles and websites are in order of year published.

- [Disrupting Whiteness in Libraries in Libraries and Librarianship: A Reading List:](#) (last updated June 2020) This bibliography is number 89 in the series "Bibliographies in Gender and Women's Studies," published by the University of Wisconsin System Office of the Gender and Women's Studies Librarian. This bibliography contains citations and links (when available) to resources focused on race, racism, and disrupting whiteness and white supremacy in libraries.
- [Radical Collections: Re-examining the roots of collections, practices and information professions:](#) (2019) From the publisher: "This book brings together some key papers from those proceedings. It shines a light on pressing topical issues within library and information services (LIS)- to encompass selection, appraisal and accession, through to organisation and classification, and including promotion and use. Will libraries survive as victims of neoliberal marketization? Do we have a responsibility to collect and document 'white hate' in the era of Trump? And how can a predominantly white (96.7%) LIS workforce effectively collect and tell POC histories?" This book is available as an open access ebook.
- [Freedom Libraries: The Untold Story of Libraries for African Americans in the South:](#) (2019) From the Publisher: "As the Civil Rights Movement exploded across the United States, the media of the time was able to show the rest of the world images of horrific racial violence. And while some of the bravest people of the 20th century risked their lives for the right to simply order a cheeseburger, ride a bus, or use a clean water fountain, there was another virtually unheard of struggle—this one for the right to read. Although illegal, racial segregation was strictly enforced in a number of American states, and public libraries were not immune. Numerous libraries were desegregated on paper only: there would be no cards given to African-Americans, no books for them read, and no furniture for them to use. It was these exact conditions that helped create Freedom Libraries. Over eighty of these parallel libraries appeared in the Deep South, staffed by civil rights voter registration workers. "
- [Intersectionality at the Reference Desk: Lived Experiences of Women of Color Librarians:](#) (2017) The authors explore the experiences of women of color librarians through interviews. I also highly recommend the authors' website and project: [LIS Microaggressions](#) to see a

collection of microaggressions in the LIS workplace. From the article: Through interviews with women of color librarians working in academic, public, and school libraries, we learned about the lived experiences of women of color librarians who interact with the public in the workplace. The major themes we will explore in this chapter are labor, perceptions of competency and authority, questioning personal identity and sexual harassment, and self-care."

- [White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS:](#) (2015) April Hathcock digs deeper into the inherent problems of diversity initiatives in LIS. From the author: "This article examines the ways in which whiteness controls diversity initiatives in LIS, particularly in light of the application requirements set upon candidates. I then suggest ways to correct for whiteness in LIS diversity programs by providing mentorship to diverse applicants struggling to navigate the whiteness of the profession and concurrently working in solidarity to dismantle whiteness from within."
- [The 21st-Century Black Librarian in America: Issues and Challenges:](#) (2012) From the publisher: "... This collection of poignant essays covers a multiplicity of concerns for the 21st-century Black librarian and embodies compassion and respect for the provision of information, an act that defines librarianship."

Also be sure to check out ALA's Libraries Respond: Black Lives Matter.
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/librariesrespond/black-lives-matter>

Reflect

Low Morale

Where we reflect on the deeper questions.
Katherine

Dean and Librarian Kaetrena Davis Kendrick recently gave [an interview with Library Journal](#) about her research on low morale among librarians. Her takeaway: morale among librarians is low, and even more so [for racial and ethnic minority librarians](#). Contributing factors include: "***a disturbing level of abuse coming from patrons, a lack of institutional support to help librarians resolve such issues, and a mindset in which librarians view surviving such abuses as "earning their stripes."*** Librarians of color "***bear the brunt of emotional labor of the planning and implementation of EDI [Equity Diversity and Inclusion] initiatives and associated work on their campuses. Ironically, they also face professional consequences and collegial invalidation if they choose to focus on these initiatives as part of their research and scholarship goals.***" I think there's a real lesson for managers and administrators here: are you relying on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) to "fix" institutional racism without acknowledging personal complicity and implicit bias? How are EDI champions in your library recognized and celebrated for their work? And from a more general standpoint, why is harassment still not recognized as a serious problem affecting staff?

I think [Fobazi Ettarh's work on vocational awe](#) and burnout is really helpful here: librarians' painful and emotionally draining experiences are not taken seriously because the profession expects them to be cheerful, available, and even "motherly" towards patrons. **A push for solutions such as mindfulness and "whole person librarianship" ignores structural problems that contribute**

to burnout, and instead places the burden for change on the individual staff member. As we grow in our understanding and recognition of structural racism in libraries, it seems inevitable to also talk about burnout and low morale which affects BIPOC more severely.

Follow up about REALM project

Allie

Last month we shared about the [REALM \(REopening Archives, Libraries, and Museums\) project](#). REALM has had some significant updates over the past few weeks. Not only did they finish their [literature review](#) of relevant COVID-19 sources, but they also released their [test results](#) of COVID-19 on five different library materials: 1) Hback book cover (buckram cloth) (2) Softback book cover (3) Plain paper pages inside a closed book (4) Plastic book covering (biaxially oriented polyester film) (5) DVD case. **The Results showed that the SARS-CoV-2 virus was not detectable on the materials after three days of quarantine.**

On June 23 they began their [second round of testing](#). The tests will examine the length of time the COVID-19 virus may live on the materials, and the results are expected to be released in late July 2020.

You can [sign up to receive project updates](#) to get the most up-to-date information about their research.



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