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BCALA Leadership Encourages Multi-Issue Approach to Bettering Our Communities

The leadership of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) is calling for universal action and accountability in response to the recent occurrences of strained community relations between law enforcement officers and African Americans.

BCALA president Kelvin Watson insists that the mission of librarians is not to assign or cast blame at one particular entity or group, but rather to build up and build bridges in communities. BCALA leaders want and will continue to advocate for accountability from law enforcement officers and the justice system. However, the BCALA leadership does not wish the discussion on how to improve the lives of African Americans to end there. Many issues plague African American communities, including education inequities, staggering socioeconomic issues, health concerns, crime, and more. BCALA aims to facilitate and promote continuous dialogue on all of these issues that must improve for the betterment of African American lives and communities.

BCALA will hold its biennial National Conference of African American Librarians (NCAAL) in St. Louis, Mo. from Aug. 4-8, 2015. In the wake of racial unrest in the metro-St. Louis area due to the shooting death of Ferguson, Mo. teenager Michael Brown at the hands of former Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson, BCALA leaders feel an increased need to be active in the broader St. Louis community during conference time.

“The 2015, ninth NCAAL theme of *Reimagining Communities* is timely and most needed more than ever in the St. Louis region and around the country. During our conference we are committed to creating programming that will educate and engage by bringing into conversation our attendees and the local community,” Watson Said. “Our conference will also participate in cooperative economics by partnering with businesses in the Ferguson community. After our conference is over, the work of peace, justice, and equality still continues. To sustain the local collaborations started by the NCAAL conference, the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Inc. will continue to work with those partner organizations and institutions.”

The NCAAL 2015 Local Arrangements Committee based in metro-St. Louis plans to have programs that will reach residents of the metropolitan area and make the Caucus visible to community members outside of the librarian profession. Details for programming aimed at the community at-large will be released to the press and the public once finalized. BCALA will also welcome suggestions from community members who wish to partner with or offer ideas to the Caucus.

“BCALA is showing up in the community because this is the time when our presence is needed there,” Watson said. “We’re not going to be confined to the conference venue, we’re going to go out and participate.”

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Find more information about BCALA at www.bcala.org.