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Media Contact:
Jason Alston
jasonalston@gmail.com
803-822-3075

BCALA Mourns for Charleston, Pushes for Unity

The Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) mourns the passing of the nine victims of last Wednesday's church shooting in Charleston, S.C. The senseless act claimed nine precious and irreplaceable lives, including that of a well-respected member of our own professional community.

Among the victims was Cynthia Hurd, a 1989 graduate of the School of Library and Information Sciences at the University of South Carolina. Hurd dedicated roughly three decades to serving the people of Charleston, S.C. as a librarian, holding the status of branch manager of the St. Andrews Regional Library in the Charleston County Public Library system when she passed away. CCPL will reportedly rename the branch in Hurd's honor. Hurd also was a part-time librarian at the College of Charleston.

Also lost during the massacre were: State Senator Rev. Clementa Pinckney, 41, Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, 45, Tywanza Sanders, 26, Ethel Lance, 70, Rev. Depayne Middleton-Doctor, 49, Susie Jackson, 87, Rev. Daniel Simmons Sr., 74, Myra Thompson, 59. Arrested and charged with nine counts of murder for the mass shooting was Dylann Roof, 21, of Lexington, S.C.

While BCALA is saddened by the losses of all nine victims, the organization still sees a glimmer of hope for a more united future after seeing a nation that overwhelmingly responded with disdain for the actions of Roof and what he represents. Our fellow librarians, inside and outside of BCALA, took to social media immediately to express dismay over the loss of Hurd and others. And in South Carolina where the massacre occurred, an estimated 1,000 people gathered on the grounds of the State House Saturday night to protest the presence of the Confederate Battle Flag on the State House grounds. And yesterday, South Carolina governor Nikki Haley asserted during a press conference that she would call for the state legislature to remove the flag from the State House grounds.

What BCALA sees in the wake of this tragedy is a desire for unity and progress among many people within and outside of our profession. This is also what BCALA always has and always will stand for. It is what Cynthia Hurd and others at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church stood for when they welcomed Roof, presumably a stranger, into the house of worship last Wednesday night. And it is what BCALA will continue to stand for and work towards in the library profession and in the communities we serve.

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More information about BCALA is available at www.bcala.org.