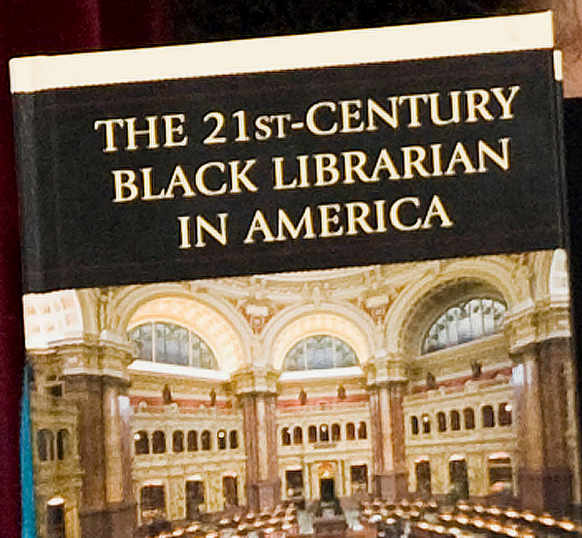


# BCALA NEWS

*Black Caucus of the American Library Association Inc.*



Many residents of the New York City borough of Brooklyn were saddened by last year's loss of librarian Taneya Danyelle Gethers Muhammad (1980-2017) of Brooklyn Library. BCALA Past President Andrew P. Jackson shares a commemoration of the dedicated librarian gone-too-soon in this edition of BCALA News.

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Dear Members,

This is my last column as your president; what a quick two years this has been for me! At the membership meeting in New Orleans, it will be time for me to pass the gavel to Richard Ashby as our new president, and I will serve an additional two years on the executive board as immediate past president. I know that we will be in good hands with Richard’s energy and enthusiasm and new ideas to help move the BCALA another step closer to our vision of being the pre-eminent organization serving African American librarians and information professionals.

What we have accomplished during my tenure represents the healthy synergy of a wonderful team and a vital network of volunteers. I give my heartfelt thanks for their wisdom, service, dedication and camaraderie. And from the bottom of my heart, I thank the BCALA members.

Our most important accomplishments include: Strategic Directions, 2016-

2020 was completed and action plan activated; implemented a membership campaign, 2016-2019 with membership increase to date of 24 percent; hosted successful 10th NCAAL in Atlanta, GA (512 attendees) celebrating 25 years since 1st NCAAL was held in 1992; members completed a comprehensive membership survey via Survey Monkey; the executive board approved funding for BCALA Website Enhancement project contract with DGSNR Unlimited, our current website host with expected completion by October 2018; established the President’s Advisory Council (PAC) made up of the BCALA past presidents with one of its goals to create and fund the President Leadership Grant.

It has been such a pleasure to serve as your president. I look forward to our continued work together to make our association and our profession strong.



Denyvetta Davis,  
President, BCALA  
2016 - 2018

.....  
*TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE MORE!*

# NEWS

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## Darien, CT Librarian Receives State Honor

*By Phara Bayonne, BCALA-CT President 2017-18*

BCALA-CT is thrilled to congratulate our friend and colleague Blanche Parker for receiving the 2018 Outstanding Librarian of the Year Award by the Connecticut Library Association. Blanche’s nomination was submitted by her co-worker, Mallory Arents, who is head of adult programming at the Darien library. Blanche was nominated for providing above and beyond

reference assistance, mentoring support, and compassionate service. Her nomination included a whopping 18 letters of support. Blanche received her award at the annual CLA conference held April 23-24th. The award honors the career accomplishments of a librarian who has demonstrated an outstanding record of service to his or her library and to the

library profession. Blanche has been a librarian at the Darien Public Library for over 35 years! Everyone who has had the pleasure of working alongside Blanche day in and day out knows what she means to the library’s staff and community. Congratulations, Blanche, we are so proud of you!





# Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Inc. BCALA Literary Awards

Press Release  
For Immediate Release  
March 30, 2018

Contact: Tiffany A. Duck or  
[tiffany.duck3@gmail.com](mailto:tiffany.duck3@gmail.com)  
Newport News, VA

## BCALA AND BIBLIOBOARD ANNOUNCE THE 2018 EBOOK LITERARY AWARDS WINNERS

The Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Inc. (BCALA) and BiblioBoard announce winners of the 2018 Self-Publishing EBook Award. Following the model of the current BCALA Literary Awards, the award honors the best self-published EBooks in fiction and poetry by an African American author in the U.S. This is the third time BCALA and Biblioboard have given this innovative award. The recipients will receive awards during the 2018 American Library Association Annual Conference on June 24 in New Orleans, LA.

### FICTION

The fiction category winner is *Sunshine in the Delta* (Palmetto Publishing Group, LLC) by Erica Marisa Sandifer. This book dives into history through a young girl named Neeyla. She comes from a family of sharecroppers, and has only known poverty and dysfunction. Determined to break the cycle, she decides to take a job "in town" as the help to make her own money. Sandifer currently works at Turnrow Book Company and hopes to inspire other writers and citizens for generations to come.

### POETRY

The winner for the EBook Best Poetry Award is *The New Lynching* by Adisa Ajamu. The poems speak to the constant struggle for equality and liberation in the African American community. From 2015 to now he has published six books of poetry varying in content from love, heartbreak, the uplifting of the Black community, depression and many others.

*Members of the BCALA EBook Literary Awards Jury are: Tiffany A. Duck (chair), Suffolk Public Library; Gladys Smiley Bell, Hampton University; Dana Evans, Hampton University; Annie Payton, Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University; Stacy Williams, University of Southern California; and Eddie Hughes, Southern University*

# Midwinter 2018 BCALA Executive Board Meeting Minutes

By Kirby McCurtis, BCALA Secretary

*Hilton Denver City, Gold Coin Room, Friday, February 11, 2018 8:30am-1:00pm*

**ATTENDEES:** Denyvetta Davis, Richard Ashby, Kelvin Watson, Fannie Cox, Kim McNeil-Capers, Vivian Bordeaux, Wanda K. Brown, Cyndee Landris-Sturgim, Andrew (Sekou) Jackson, Rudolph Clay, Fay Muhammad and Jos Holman.

**ABSENT:** Dominique Luster, Bradley Kuykendall, Jason Alston, Brian Hart, Sammie Johnson, Karen Lemmons

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS:** Stanton Biddle, Carolyn Garnes, Dorothy Guthrie, Gladys Smiley Bell, and John Page, Eboni Henry and Angeline Beljour

**GUESTS:** Jodie Gray, Marcellus Turner, Julius Jefferson, Gerald Holmes and Em Claire Knowles

President Davis called meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. and declared a quorum present to conduct business for BCALA.

### APPROVAL AGENDA:

Vice President Richard Ashby moved to approve the agenda as presented. Board member Fannie Cox provided a second and the motion passed.

Board member Fannie Cox moved approval of the Executive Board Minutes of Friday June 23, 2017 in Chicago, IL. Board member Fayrene Muhammad seconded the motion and it passed.

### TREASURERS REPORT (WANDA BROWN)

Board Treasurer Wanda Brown provided a document representing income and expenditures July 2017 to December 2017. Brown also highlighted the total income for the period, NCAAL X expenses, and pointed out the balance in the checking account. Vice President Ashby moved to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Immediate Past President Kelvin Watson seconded the motion and the motion carried.

### VICE PRESIDENT REPORT (RICHARD ASHBY)

For the Vice President's Report, Ashby commented on the work of the Programming committee which handles logistics for BCALA meetings and activities at American Library Association Conferences. Ashby indicated his

request for programming activities is included in BCALA’s 2018 budget. Ashby went on to report about a unique communication with Bernice King who had specific suggestion about libraries being a part of social change. Ashby will make every effort to close out this activity with a formal communication with Mrs. King. Finally, Ashby indicated he received communication related to the public library in Suffolk/Nassau County on eastern Long Island. There is a concern that experienced people of color are being passed over for promotions.

**PRESIDENT’S REPORT (DENYVETTA DAVIS)**

President Davis reported on several items. She mentioned the President’s Advisory Council (PAC) has been meeting for the last two conferences. Any activities will be funded by past presidents. Davis mentioned two initiatives of the PAC. One is short term and is a leadership grant to attend the American Library Association Leadership Institute in August of 2018. The other is a long term initiative to develop and implement a BCALA culturally based leadership institute. XX moved to authorize and accept income and expend it for a Leadership Grant in the current fiscal year for a maximum of \$2,200. Immediate Past President Watson seconded the motion and the motion carried. President Davis mentioned several past presidents will attend ALA activities to represent BCALA. Past President Andrew (Sekou) Jackson will attend the JCLC Steering Committee meeting. Past president Jos N. Holman will attend the ALA OLOS meeting. Also, Jackson will attend a future Wikipedia meeting at the Schomburg Library.

**BUDGET FINANCE COMMITTEE (STANTON BIDDLE)**

Committee chair Stanton Biddle presented a document with the projected 2018-2019 budget. He reviewed the budget process and indicated he interacted with various BCALA members in development of the budget. He reviewed requested expenses and projected revenue. Treasurer Brown moved to approve the 2018-2019 BCALA Operations Budget at a total of \$70,000. Fayrene Muhammad seconded the motion and the motion passed. Ms. Brown then moved to approve \$20,000 for NCAAL seed money and also \$1,000 for the 10th National Conference proceedings. Cyndee Sturgis Landrum seconded the motion and it passed. President Davis presented information and lead a discussion related to upgrade and maintenance of the BCALA website. Past President Watson moved to approve and authorize up to \$40,000 to implement the proposal for Web Development enhancements with funds designated from the NCAAL investment account. Fannie Cox seconded the motion. Treasurer Brown offered a friendly amendment to include overall maintenance of the website. Both Watson and Cox accepted the friendly amendment. The question was called and the motion passed.

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT (PRESIDENT DAVIS)**

President Davis handed out updated copies of the BCALA Strategic Direction Plan. She went over highlights of the plan indicating progress and updates on specific key strategies. President Davis will share a progress report with the membership to let them to know the Executive Board is taking action.

**COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY COMMITTEE (FANNIE COX)**

Professional Development committee chair Fannie Cox shared information results about a comprehensive survey she worked on to learn more about member’s needs as it relates to webinars. Fannie facilitated a brief discussion on potential costs and funding for BCALA sponsored webinars. No action was taken by the Executive Board.

**E.J. JOSEY SCHOLARSHIP**

The EJ Josey Scholarship Committee presented their report. The committee selected two winners: Caira M. Spenrath, a student at Texas Women’s University and Ayoola Maia White, a student at Simmons College. Once contact is made with students, the winners may be announced at the Sunday night membership meeting. The

student’s essays will be published in the BCALA News.

**ODLOS REPORT (JODIE GRAY)**

Executive Director of ALA’s Office of Diversity and Outreach Services, Jodie Gray, visited the meeting to update the Executive Board on the work in her office. Gray shared staff changes within the OLDOS office which including assigning a new literacy officer to encourage additional continuing education. She mentioned successful fundraising with the Spectrum scholarship which is celebrating its 20th year. In honor of the 20-year anniversary, 20 Spectrum scholarships will be awarded. Gray also mentioned a second formal report on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is forthcoming. Finally, she shared information on a million dollar grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation on a Truth and Racial Healing Transformation initiative.

**ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTOR (PRESIDENT DAVIS)**

President Davis updated the Executive Board on the transition of the Organizational Director. Dr. Shaundra Walker is on board working in the position. Walker is interacting with Keshia Garrett and Chris on updating the website. She has also assisted greatly with membership survey. For the time being, Walker will continue in her capacity as chair of Public Relations Committee.

**BCALA ARCHIVES (PRESIDENT DAVIS)**

President Davis provided background information on the BCALA archives, including a previous \$1,500 cash donation by Sam Morrison. An agreement was negotiated with Queens and North Carolina Central University and it appeared the project was moving forward. However, as lawyers got involved in the discussions, things came to a stop. President Davis is communicating with New Dean of NCCU, Dr. Gant, but very little progress is being made. The BCALA papers at NCCU are still not digitized. President Davis and the President’s Counsel discussed and considered who else BCALA can approach to possibly influence the situation. The President’s Counsel suggested BCALA needed to consider is there another option where the archives can be permanently stored. President Davis will continue with communications with Dr. Gant. She will also speak to Loretta Parham to see if her institution might be an alternative. It was suggested BCALA start a campaign to request access to the collection as well.

**BYLAWS AMENDMENT FORM (JOS HOLMAN)**

Past President Holman handed out a form used to submit changes to the BCALA Bylaws. A brief explanation about the form and how it should be used was shared. No action was taken.

**JCLC LIAISON REPORT (MARCELLUS TURNER)**

Marcellus Turner as BCALA’s representative to the JCLC Board of Directors reported on the most recent meeting and activities of JCLC. There is engagement with representatives of all the ethnic caucuses. Registration for this year’s conference should open at end of February. JCLC’s Board is working on their Constitution and Bylaws. Turner reminded everyone JCLC Inc. is not a membership organization. To participate, an individual joins one of the affiliate groups to participate in JCLC. He talked about the strategic direction of JCLC various topics of work for continued progress overall. Gladys Smiley-Bell and Em Claire Knowles are BCALA representatives to the JCLC Steering committee.

**ALA LIAISON REPORT (JULIUS JEFFERSON)**

ALA Executive Board member Julius Jefferson reported on ALA activities. He encouraged BCALA members to be part of discussion of the ALA strategic review. Jefferson mentioned ALA is looking at its internal structure and

overall planning of its financial future. The status of East 50 Huron property is a consideration of ALA’s financial future. Advocacy is a key focus for ALA. Jefferson also referenced Jim Neal’s report on ALA Policy Core. LSTA appears to be intact at this point. Jefferson pointed out the ALA Executive Directors qualification will be on the ballot this spring. There is an approach to consider if ethnic affiliates might become members of ALA. This is a developing opportunity as ALA is looking at ways to be more inclusive. There was general discussion with questions on this topic answered by Jefferson. Finally, Jefferson closed his report by sharing statistics related to midwinter conference registration

**PRESIDENT DAVIS PERMITTED REPORTS FROM VARIOUS COMMITTEE CHAIRS:**

**MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE (RUDOLPH CLAY)**

Rudolph Clay updated the Executive Board with various membership numbers. There are 648 total memberships with 462 as paid memberships. There are 22 paid retiree members along with 51 life members. The four-year membership campaign target is1000 members. Presently, there are 80 student memberships. Clay mentioned BCALA National Conferences makes a distinguishable difference in increased memberships over a six month time frame. Finally, Clay displayed and passed around giveaways produced by the membership committee. These items are to be used and shared perspective members while we are here in Denver. All of BCALA still needs to push to meet the membership goals.

**NCAAL**

President Davis reported plans are developing for NCAAL 11. Conference co-chairs are working on various processes with BCALA leadership. They are also working on getting committee chairs while gaining knowledge by talking with past conference co-chairs.

**NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE (KELVIN WATSON)**

Past President Watson reported he is working on nominations for new BCALA officers and executive board members. Watson will work with Dr. Shaundra Walker after Midwinter and indicated the goal is to complete the spring election by the end of April.

**LITERARY AWARDS (GLADYS SMILEY BELL)**

Past President Smiley-Bell reported the winners of the BCALA Literary Award will be announced at the midwinter Membership meeting on Sunday night.

Under New Business, Vice President Ashby mentioned a possible New Orleans service project while BCALA is at the 2018 Annual Conference. There was interest on the part of several Executive Board members. There was discussion about what does the service project ultimately look like. It was suggested the service project could be Thursday afternoon since BCALA will not hold a new board member retreat. There is a strong preference it be a project that interacts with youth if possible.

Strategic Direction – BCALA webinars. Board members discussed presented documents and offered feedback. Cost was a hot topic. Should BCALA charge? Should there be non-member fees? What is the membership benefit? The consensus is to offer free to membership and minimum charge to non-members, maybe \$25.

Past President Jos N. Holman commented on current BCALA Treasurer and past President Wanda Brown is a candidate for ALA President. Holman cited the BCALA bylaws and indicated there is an option to endorse Brown

through specific action with BCALA members at the Membership meeting. After discussion, there was consensus of the Executive Board that BCALA would endorse ALA candidate Wanda Brown if appropriate guidelines and rules were met. It was decided information will be shared at end of membership meeting. A petition for BCALA members to sign will be available at the membership table outside of the meeting room on Sunday night. Past President Holman will draft a petition document.

ALA Vice President Richard Ashby announced he is planning a reception for BCALA members during the Public Library Association National Conference in Philadelphia. Immediate Past President Kelvin Watson announced he will be running for PLA director at large. Hot Topics / MLS Degree for Executive Director—discussion ensued. Vice President Ashby moved to adjourn the meeting. Past President Watson seconded the motion and it passed. President Davis adjourned the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

# BECOME A BCALA MEMBER!

## BCALA MEMBERSHIP FEES

- + CORPORATE \$200
- + INSTITUTIONAL \$60
- + REGULAR \$45
- + INSTITUTIONS \$60
- + STUDENT \$10
- + RETIRED \$25
- + LIBRARY SUPPORT STAFF \$20
- + LIFETIME \$500

**Please join online ( <http://www.memberize.com/club-portal/ClubStatic.cfm?clubID=2381&pubmenuoptID=25322> ) or use the Membership Form ( <http://bcala.org/members/memberjoin.pdf> ) to mail your membership request and payment to:**

**BCALA, INC. – MEMBERSHIP  
c/o Rudolph Clay Jr.  
Box 7493  
6985 Snow Way Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63130-4400**

**For inquiries regarding membership or anything else about BCALA, please submit queries to <http://bcala.org/contacts/>.**

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- 14 Celebrating the Life of a Liberation Librarian Taneya Denyelle Gethers Muhammad (1980-2017)
- 17 Tribute to a Warrior Sistah—Taneya Denyelle Gethers Muhammad
- 18 Formation of an Activist Book Club in East Orange
- 19 2nd Annual Diversity in Motion Training



AAMLO Awarded “Recordings at Risk” Grant to Digitize Black Panther Party Films

By Oakland Public Library

Web Release: <http://oaklandlibrary.org/news/2018/05/aamlo-awarded-recordings-risk-grant-digitize-black-panther-party-films>

Oakland, CA – The African American Museum & Library at Oakland (AAMLO) was awarded the “Recordings at Risk” grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) to digitize and preserve Black Panther Party and social protest films from the Henry J. Williams Jr. Film Collection.

The \$19,950 grant will allow AAMLO to digitize and provide online access to 98 films and four audiotapes documenting Black Panther Party and student and union protest movements from the late 1960s and 1970s.

“We are excited about the opportunity provided by the CLIR grant to bring this raw footage out of hiding and make it accessible to researchers and the public,” said

AAMLO Interim Chief Curator Susan D. Anderson.

The recordings will be cleaned, digitized and prepped for cold storage. Access files of the recordings will be accessible through the internet archive and master files will be preserved in the museum’s digital asset management system (Preservicea).

The films include footage shot by the documentary film collective California Newsreel of the Black Panther Party and its leaders in Oakland in the 1960s; union and student protest films of Vietnam War activists; United Automobile Workers and Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union strikes; Farah Manufacturing Company strike of 1972; and student protests

at high schools in Oakland following the police shooting of 16-year-old Melvin Black in 1979.

AAMLO was one of only 16 recipients that were awarded grants by CLIR in Spring 2018. CLIR is an independent, non-profit organization that creates strategies to enhance research, teaching and learning in collaboration with libraries, cultural institutions and communities of higher learning.

The “Recordings at Risk” specifically supports the preservation of rare and unique audio and audiovisual content of high scholarly value.

# Celebrating the Life of a Liberation Librarian Taneya Denyelle Gethers Muhammad (1980-2017)

By Andrew P. Jackson (Sekou Molefi Baako)

*“I started my career as a journalist but never lost my childhood desire to be a teacher, dancer and an artist. Growing up I envisioned a space where I could combine these loves with transformative social service-and I do that as a librarian. Malcolm X said the library was his alma mater, and still that resonates today. It’s truly the “People’s University.”*



The library profession and New York City’s Bedford-Stuyvesant community lost a glowing comet in the untimely passing of senior librarian Taneya Denyelle Gethers Muhammad (Nov. 2, 1980-Nov. 14, 2017). Only 37 years old, this dynamic young woman inspired and served residents of all ages at the Macon Library of the Brooklyn Public Library, but she focused on the youth. Born and raised in Los Angeles, educated at Spelman College in Atlanta, Ga., Taneya brought light to her duties and passion, compassion and empathy to the children, tweens, teens and adults of all ages she loved and eagerly served. Her husband, Yusef said, “Taneya came from Los Angeles, but had a Bed-Stuy swagger that endeared her to all.”

In a YouTube video interview, Taneya said, “Since childhood, I wanted to be a dancer, teacher and an artist. As a librarian, I get to be all of these.” Her

obituary reads in part, “...she danced with abandon, taught the most sacred virtues by example, and made an art of living.”

Taneya earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Spelman College (2002), where she became a Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., Eta Kappa chapter soror. She earned an MLS from Drexel University (2007) and was an ALA Spectrum Scholar and 2015 Library Journal Mover and Shaker. Following her graduation from Spelman, Taneya pursued journalism in various cities before relocating to Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn with her husband in 2006 and raised a family of four beautiful daughters, Nia Assata, Amina Asantawaa, Chinua Anasa and Anisa Ayinde.

Linda Ellis’s classic poem, “The Dash”, speaks of the most important element of a person’s life is not when they are born or die, but what they do and how they live between those two dates. Taneya certainly filled those years as a true servant to her sorority, profession, community, and especially her family. During her undergraduate years, she was a founding member of Sociological and Anthropological Sisterhood: Scholar Activists for Reshaping Attitudes at Spelman College, (affectionately called “SASSAFRAS”). She was a Spelman Independent Scholar (SIS) participating in the SIS Oral History Project, and her essay, “Bonding with Mrs. Mabel King”,

was published in “Their Memories Our Treasure, Conversations with African American Women of Wisdom.” While pledging to be a Delta, number 5 in her line, she was considered the heart and soul of DI.V.IN.E. 35 and referred to as “Spesh” to many, a beloved link in their Delta family chain.

After Taneya and Yusef settled in his home community of Bed-Stuy, she began making her mark in her new profession. After her tenure in an administrative capacity in the executive office of Brooklyn Library Administration, she became a senior librarian and transferred to the Macon Library - an original Carnegie Library built in 1907, not far from their residence. There, Taneya fused effective literacy practices with cultural celebration and community empowerment. She became known for making every moment a teachable moment. She galvanized a library fundraiser for victims of the 2010 Haitian earthquake, emphasized the importance of global thinking and the connectivity of life experiences across the African Diaspora. She organized a community-based commemoration of Henrietta Lack’s indelible contributions to the advancement of modern day science and promoted campaigns to raise more than \$10,000 through grants and fundraising to buy books for the library.

The people of Brooklyn loved her. At her June 6th memorial, NYC

council member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr. referred to Taneya and Yusef as “family”, not just a local librarian and husband. He spoke of her passion and tenacity in pushing him to direct more city funds to the Macon Library for improved collections, expanded programs and increased services.

Taneya took her Macon Library staff and customers, especially the children, worlds beyond Bed-Stuy through books and history. She was an integral part of the community and used effective outreach strategies to bring the library to the people by reaching out to families, local businesses, elected officials, schools and religious institutions and promoting the library and its services to gain their trust, fellowship and support. She was affectionately known throughout the community as “Ms. T,” and helped to build a cultural collection at Macon Library: the Dionne Mack-Harvin African American Heritage Center.

Ms. T believed everyone had gifts they must use to uplift themselves and their community and especially loved working with the children at the library with lively and creative story hours, cultural children’s programs and encouraging reading with a dazzling smile. She had a knack for remembering the names of those she met only once. She was a true people person, small in stature but a giant in service to her library and community.

Taneya ingrained her passion for her culture and history into her interaction with the youth to promote self-pride, positive identity and making a difference in their family, community and in life. She was a social justice activist and advocated for change and the betterment of life in her community for the future of those she served and loved as family.

In 2010, Taneya’s essay, “The 21st Century Black Librarian: Renewing Our Commitment to Liberation and Cultural Activism” was published in the award winning book, “The 21st Century Black Librarian: Issues and Challenges”. In 2014, her essay, “Knowledge My Public Library Kept Secret: The Urgent Need for Culturally-Responsive Library Services” was published in the anthology “Informed Agitation: Library and Information Skills in Social Justice Movements and Beyond”. A prolific writer, she was published in the Kansas-City Star, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Belleville News-Democrat and on

AUCAumni.com.

Taneya was a scholar, a story teller, a culture keeper, mentor, writer and community educator, wife, mother and librarian’s librarian, all in one small but dynamic package. The Macon Library will honor her contributions by dedicating a children’s book collection, a children’s program and annual celebration in her name. Her June 6th memorial was attended by more than two hundred library patrons, community residents, members of the New York Black Librarians Caucus, Inc., personal friends and in and out-of-state family members.

The memorial celebration opened with the Pouring of Libation in tribute to the Ancestors by Imani Fisher and a heartwarming remembrance by Brooklyn Library president Linda E. Johnson. BCALA past president and Queens Library trustee Andrew ‘Sekou’ Jackson offered Tribute to a Warrior Sistah, (included in this article). The evening also included African drumming and dance by

Tamara & Co., tributes by library staff, a DC-37 Union representative and local residents. The YouTube interview entitled ‘Taneya Gethers’ was screened before the event ended with a soul stirring rendition of Taneya’s favorite song, “Ribbon in the Sky” (Stevie Wonder) by vocalist Stacia Hobdy.

You will be missed, Taneya, but your passion for serving your community and love of librarianship will be remembered. We are blessed to have had you in our lives. Thank you Yusef, Nia, Amina, Chinua and Anisa for sharing Taneya with us. Our lives are mo’ betta for having known and worked with her.

*(details in this narrative are taken from the Obituary from Taneya’s Homegoing Service held in the Sisters Chapel on the campus of Spelman College, Atlanta, GA. on Nov. 27, 2017)*

06/08

# Tribute to a Warrior Sistah— Taneya Denyelle Gethers Muhammad (11.2.80-11.14.17)

*Macon Library-African American Heritage Center, Brooklyn Public Library—June 6, 2018*

“*The Beginning of Wisdom is Knowledge of Self.*”—*Kemet*

The World is a Better Place because of the Life and Works of Taneya D. Gethers Muhammad. Macon Library-African American Heritage Center better serves this community because of the dedication of Sistah Taneya. Brooklyn Public Library is a better system because of Sistah Taneya.

*A bright light in a dark world. Grounded in Africana history.*

*Proud Black Librarian. A Librarian’s Librarian. Cultural Activist Librarian.*

*Liberation Librarian. Custodian of Unlimited Knowledge.*

*Conscious Librarian. Keeper of Our Culture Rememberer of our rich past. Contributor to our present and promising future.*

*Intelligent. Professional. Dynamic. Leader. Teacher. Role Model.*

*Dedicated servant to her library community.*

*Loving wife. Proud Mother of three beautiful daughters. Loving family*

*Sistah Taneya-*

Today we celebrate your life and legacy. Your transition to the Spirit World is your final Rite of Passage as you now sit alongside the Ancestors. Dr. Maulana Karenga’s Farewell Statement for Kwanzaa reads in part “Build where you are and dare leave a legacy that will last as long as the sun shines and the waters flow.” Taneya has done this. Her contributions are reflected in the Macon Library’s collections, programs and services, in the lives of those she served and in the lives of her beautiful daughters.

As long as we speak her name, remember her in our thoughts, and keep her in our hearts, Sistah Taneya Danyelle Gethers Muhammad lives on.

Asante Sana Taneya! Thank you for being such a special part of our lives Peace and Blessings. Sekou Molefi Baako.



# Formation of an Activist Book Club in East Orange

*By Matt Powell, East Orange (NJ) Library*

Earlier this spring, the American Library Association observed the 60th anniversary of National Library Week, celebrating the contributions of our nation’s libraries and their library workers. While 60 years is an accomplishment to behold, adult services librarian Nathalia Bermudez refuses to rest on her laurels and continues to push forward in keeping her efforts within the East Orange Public Library progressive.

In January 2018, Bermudez evolved one of her current monthly adult book clubs toward a proactive direction, highlighting current social and political issues. This new direction ultimately culminated in an evolution of a club as an activist book club. “Throughout 2017, our adult book club would constantly veer off into political discussions,” explained Bermudez. “Since we are such a tight-knit group, it’s really a safe space to have these types of conversations.”

Bermudez noted her club members’ zeal for discussing social issues as their conversations permeated their general book discussions, so directing that intensity toward a constructive goal seemed ideal. “Not only were the book club members looking for

an outlet for their concerns and frustrations, I could sense that they could be encouraged to participate in some positive and cathartic service projects,” said Bermudez. That intense engagement led to the group choosing to become more socially and politically aware by reading books detailing current hot topics in the media and participating in different service projects complementary to the books’ subjects. “This pairing was really so that our conversations went beyond just ‘screaming into the void’ and ‘preaching to the choir,’” said Bermudez. “I wanted us to have projects that gave us some hope and a sense that we could put something positive into the world.”

The club’s selected books focus on relevant sociopolitical topics, including racism, sexism, #BLM, #MeToo, DACA, deportation, and more. “These are all topics we wanted to learn more about so we could talk about them and get each other’s perspectives,” explained Bermudez. Bermudez’ ultimate goal for the club is to bring awareness and empower her patrons as they collectively navigate complex and emotionally charged issues. With the addition

of their service projects, Bermudez hopes her members’ participation with non-profit organizations will lead to more support for some of the most vulnerable members of society.

Past titles reviewed by the club and available at the library are “The New Jim Crow” by Michelle Alexander, “The Color of Law” by Richard Rothstein, and the most current, “Down Girl” by Kate Manne. These titles inspired the group to donate material to Books Through Bars, a New York City-based, volunteer-run group that sends donated books to incarcerated people across the nation. Additionally, the group has donated to the Fair Housing Council of Northern New Jersey and is currently collecting items to donate to Oasis Haven for Women and Children.

The club held a meeting on May 10 at 6 p.m. discussing “Detained and Deported” by Margaret Regan, a subject that is very personal for Bermudez. “My parents came to this country on student visas from Colombia in the ‘70s,” revealed Bermudez. “They were able to gain their citizenship legally as were my sister and I, but the choices they

made were out of our hands. I have a tremendous amount of empathy for the families being torn apart by ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] because of choices their parents may have made.” The poignancy of this subject moved Bermudez to contact the book’s

author, who was scheduled to join the book club via a live Skype conference.

Among the fervor of emotion at each meeting, Bermudez does find comfort and purpose in the club and the members’ level of continued engagement. “Book club

members bring articles, photos, family and personal experiences to the conversation that enhance the experience for all the participants, including myself,” explained Bermudez. “They’ve always been like this, so it’s not surprising as it is deeply rewarding.”

## 2nd Annual Diversity in Motion Training

*By Roland Barksdale-Hall, Quinby Street Resource Center*



Quinby Street Resource Center hosted the 2nd Annual Diversity in Motion Community-Building Forum. The 2018 program theme was “Working with Difficult People.” In partnership with the Urban League, local senior employment, AmeriCorps, counseling services and human service providers, the library director developed Diversity in Motion to focus upon developing solutions to diversity in community. Pictured (left to right) Bonita Dickson, health outreach educator; intern; Veral Adair, Jr. keynote speaker; Roland Barksdale-Hall, library director; Renea Ingram, senior employment coordinator; Janet Jackson, community leader; and Kavon Wright, health outreach educator.

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# Joining the Generations: A Proposal for Promoting Age Diversity at the Schlesinger Library

*By Ayoola Maia White, Simmons College*

*(Editor’s note: this essay is an E.J. Josey Scholarship Award essay)*

Since June 2017, I have worked as a manuscript assistant at the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. Located in the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University and housing the papers of such influential individuals as Flo Kennedy, Amelia Earhart, Betty Friedan, and Pauli Murray, the Schlesinger Library attracts many researchers from near and far. In fact, over 3,000 people visited the Schlesinger in the year 2017, with over a third of those being registered researchers (See Appendix, Figure 1). When I interviewed for the job at the Schlesinger, Amber Moore, one of my interviewers and the person who would become my supervisor, informed me that the library was in the process of changing its collection policy to be more inclusive. Specifically, Schlesinger has a legacy of primarily housing the records and papers of white women from upper class backgrounds. In light of this shift in priorities, their efforts to

promote diversity and inclusion are already quite robust. From my coworker Kenvi Phillips, the curator for race and ethnicity, I have learned that the Schlesinger Library’s outreach actions in recent years have hinged upon relationship building with Harvard organizations, Boston-area organizations, and national organizations. These organizations include Spelman College, the Digital Transgender Archive, the National Park Service, and Howard University. Moreover, endeavors to diversify the staff and highlight the Schlesinger Library’s commitment to diversity have become a priority. The creation of Phillips’ job title is reflective of that prioritization. So is the implementation of sensitivity training among all levels of the library’s operation. With these relationships and adjustments to employee culture, the Schlesinger Library has organized such programming as a Wikipedia edit-a-thon focused on indigenous women, a panel discussion about the legacy of Pauli Murray, and a lecture on African women’s liberation

(Phillips). Clearly, there is already a great deal of momentum in advocating for diversity and inclusion with regard to employees, users, collections, programming, and the overall institutional culture. In light of the accomplishments that the Schlesinger Library has already made in the realm of diversity and inclusion with regard to race and gender identity, my proposed outreach strategy emphasizes another form of diversity: age. To provide an overview, this strategy seeks to connect high school students of color with senior citizens who have an established familiarity with the Schlesinger Library. This familiarity may have developed as a result of having donated materials to the library or simply being aware of the people and events represented in its holdings. The strategy centers around creating a summer buddy program in which a total of ten high school girls will each be paired with ten senior women based on personal interests that they share. Throughout June and July, participants will meet

once a week to engage in dialogue-based activities that allow them to be familiar with one another, with the Schlesinger Library, and the benefits that the archives can offer to their lives. This outreach program will be called “Joining the Generations” (JtG).

Before I elaborate on the details of how this program would be set up, I will provide a basis for why I am focusing on age diversity. A key first step in designing a diversity and inclusion program is defining what is meant by diversity and inclusion. Often, diversity efforts are synonymous with efforts to change the racial makeup of a group or institution so that it is more reflective of the racial makeup of the surrounding community or the nation as a whole. This is certainly a pressing need in the archival science field, where, according to an American Archivist study, over 97 percent of archivists are white (Banks 396). As I discussed in my presentation at the 2017 Diversity, Equity, Race, Accessibility, and Identity in LIS (DERAIL) Forum, the decision to focus on race or ethnicity as the only dimension of diversity can be limiting if it does not take into account the intersectionality of other social identities (White). For example, a poor transgender woman’s experience of being Black will likely differ from a middle-class cisgender man’s experience of being Black (See Appendix). Furthermore, as Jaeger, Bertot, and Franklin articulate,

*No meaningful attempts have been made to determine the representation in librarianship and LIS of many diverse populations—including persons with disabilities; the socioeconomically and geographically disadvantaged; and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) individuals, among others. (176)*

The amount of diversity represented within a single racial identity is worth considering in diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Another rationale for centering age in this project is to lessen generational isolation. One does not have to look far for newspaper and Internet articles that pit the millennial and younger generations against baby boomers. Along with the generational divide that has been a facet of human society since time immemorial, a factor that creates an even bigger challenge in this day and age is the digital divide, which further

separates the young and the old. The Joining the Generations (JtG) project will work to combat this trend. For the high school students, it will instill a value for the archives early in life and influence them to find ways to preserve their own histories. For elders, it will provide an opportunity to share their expertise and connect with younger people on shared interests. In that sense, the project that I am proposing has value not only for Schlesinger Library, but also for the social cohesiveness of the surrounding community as a whole.

Of course, in order to implement this program, there must be participants. To attract interested high school students, I propose adapting a strategy used by Yale University archivists in their program to introduce students at a local high school to the archives. These archivists built relationships with the principal and with high school teachers for the purpose of including projects related to family and community history in the curriculum for the academic year. Moreover, they specifically chose to work with a racially diverse magnet school (Hartwig and Weideman). Because the project that I am proposing is a summer program, including it in the curriculum is less necessary. Still, working with teachers, as well as coaches and advisors for student organizations will be effective because these individuals will have insight on which students will be most interested in the program. Likewise, it would still be feasible

to focus on a racially diverse high school in the Cambridge area—such as the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School—and specify in the program application that JtG is designed for girls of color.

Creating incentives for students to participate is another challenge. Students have many possibilities for what they might do over the summer, whether it is academic enrichment, travel with family or friends, working, or simply relaxing. The acknowledgement of all of these competing time commitments is part of the reason why I envision this program as taking place once a week. Students could be incentivized with the promise of gift cards after completing the program. Program organizers might also work with teachers to arrange extra credit or some other reward upon students’ return in the following school year.

Attracting senior citizens to this program would probably be easier than attracting students, considering that the Schlesinger Library can pull from preexisting relationships, namely people who have donated materials before. The Schlesinger could also reach out to senior centers and retirement organizations in the area. In addition to gathering applications from potential participants, it will also be important to perform background checks, since they would be working with minors. The primary incentives for older folks to participate in this program would be the possibility of mentoring young

people and widening their social circle.

Once people have applied and been selected, it will be necessary to sort out some logistics, chief among them being transportation. A feasible solution to this issue would be to give all participants Harvard ID cards. That way, they could all be eligible to use Harvard shuttle busses, which operate throughout Cambridge and Boston. Food during the program would be another issue. I would propose that the Schlesinger Library allot a portion of their budget to providing catering through campus dining services.

Another significant consideration will be the activities in which students and seniors will engage throughout the summer. Each week’s meeting of the program will focus on a specific theme, such as science, art, or activism. The theme could be illustrated using a few different archival materials that participants can touch, listen to, or watch, depending on the format. These materials would serve the basis for interpersonal conversations with the student-senior pairs and with the wider group. Throughout the program, participants would be encouraged to take any inspiration they have from their discussions or from the archival materials to create writings, artwork, music, and more.

At the end of JtG, there would be an opportunity for participants to evaluate their experiences. Written

evaluations would help program organizers determine what was beneficial about the program, what needs to change, and whether it should ultimately be replicated in the future. Organizers should also make space for participants to share their impressions verbally within the wider group. A good way of closing the program might be to have the senior partners present the students with a certificate or plaque.

The purpose of archives and libraries is for the materials within them to be used. In order to ensure that they are used, it is necessary for would-be users to find value within the materials. With the JtG project, the value that is being produced comes not only from the materials themselves, but also from the social ties that the participants will create with one another.

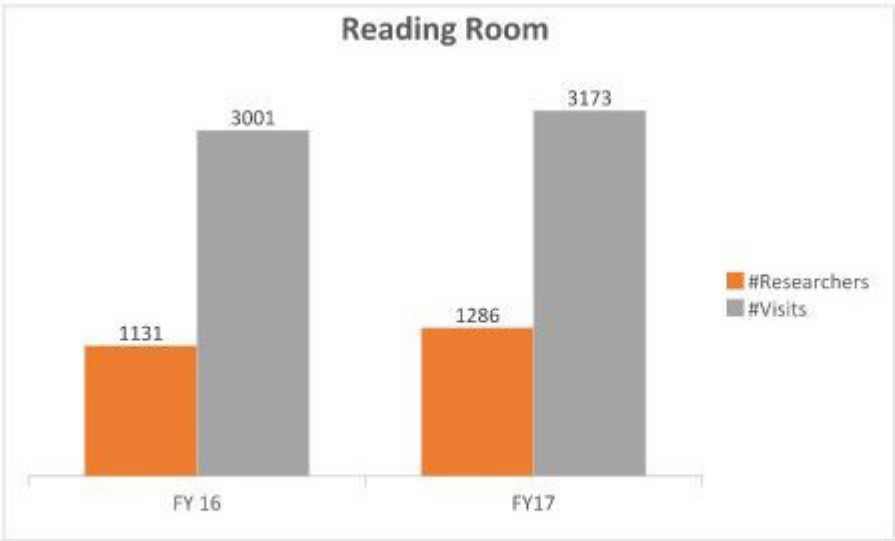
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APPENDIX

Figure 1: The following graph is part of a Schlesinger Library report entitled FY17 Research Services Statistics. This report was sent to me via an email from Ellen Shea, cited above.



It was a busy year in the Reading Room. The number of research visits reached a five-year high (3173) and we had a 14% increase in the number of registered researchers.

11th National Conference of African American Librarians

*Culture Keepers XI | SANKOFA EXPERIENCE:*  
*Inspired by Our Past, Igniting Our Future*

August 5-9, 2020  
Hyatt Regency Hotel  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

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Keith Jemison, Tulsa, OK | [kjemiso@tulsalibrary.org](mailto:kjemiso@tulsalibrary.org)  
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# Are Libraries Neutral? Have they ever been? Should they be?

By Kelvin Watson, Broward County (FL) Libraries



*(Editor’s note: this is one of three essays submitted to BCALA News from Black LIS professionals who participated in the 2018 ALA Midwinter President’s Program on library neutrality)*

I’ve considered for years the role of libraries and librarians, that we don’t allow ourselves to make decisions based on our views, but that we work diligently to make all resources and information available to library customers. These information sources and resources span a variety of opinions and ideas. My experience started

in the book distribution arena, where we made virtually everything available to cover every interest and walk of life. I believe in the right of intellectual freedom, so regardless of my point of view, I believe there should never be a suppression of ideas. The library is, after all, the place where our citizenry can have access to and discovery of differing views. Being afforded the right to information and resources on diversity and equity, for example, have helped move marginal ideas from the fringes to the forefront, and this is where I diverge from the posture of libraries and librarians neutrality.

Archie Dick wrote, “In the neutral professional model, librarians are seen as value-neutral, and objectivity is highly valued; this leaves a greater emphasis on the delivery of information over the result, regardless of the morality of the end product.”

Across the board neutrality gives the information profession, libraries, and librarians, the ability to take a non-stance on important issues and avoid

accountability by abdicating any ethical responsibility. Claiming neutrality endangers us as an institution by resulting in an unconscious adoption of the values of the dominant political model and framework.

Simply put, colleagues we can’t be neutral on social and political issues that impact our customers, because, to be frank, these social and political issues impact us as well. I’ve continually witnessed and participated in a moving away from rigid objectivity and towards a more socially responsible mindset. For example, looking at the equitable distribution of resources and privilege, it is apparent that our libraries even facilitate social services.

The definition of neutrality is the absence of decided views, expression, or strong feeling, but this definition is not set in stone for the information professional. Though definite values can be applied to it, it is difficult for humans with bias and lived histories to actually adhere to practicing and applying neutrality

as defined. We might try to maintain objectivity and be neutral, but we instead find ourselves taking a side on social issues as well as political and otherwise.

In my opinion, libraries and librarians cannot be neutral because the social environment we live and work in and the patrons we serve are not.



# Remarks from ALA Midwinter 2018 President’s Program: Library Neutrality is a Myth

By Emily Knox, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign



*(Editor’s note: this is one of three essays submitted to BCALA News from Black LIS professionals who participated in the 2018 ALA Midwinter President’s Program on library neutrality)*

Should libraries support Black people? Sure. Well, what about “Black Lives Matter?”

Let’s think about this a bit...

What does it mean to support the BLM movement? Maybe by inviting local leaders to speak? Or by having a display? Or some other programming?

Does not supporting the Black Lives Matter movement make the library neutral? No.

It means you have made a decision not to support the movement and making a decision is never neutral.

Is this decision not to support the movement less controversial? Does it protect your library? Perhaps but at what cost– and also, less controversial for whom?

If you have a Black History Month display in your library, then the library has already stated that, in fact, Black Lives Matter. Those historical figures being celebrated were the Black lives matter of their time.

Neutrality does not really exist. As Barnard College librarian Jenna Freedman once said, “you can be non-judgmental but not neutral because you are always making a choice.”

It may seem like these kinds of choices don’t matter but the so-called “neutral choice” is almost always the choice for the status quo. Even in the case that I gave–though it may seem like it is a choice to protect the library.

It can actually give cover to those who say that Black Lives Matter is a terrorist organization or that they are “uneasy” with the movement. They might say “Well, if it’s too controversial for the library then my uneasiness makes sense.” Does it make sense to support people who feel that way?

At the same time, you are also saying that those voices matter more than people who say that, you

know, my life matters.

That may seem stark, but as Steven Joyce notes in his article collected in Library Juice Press and Progressive Librarians’ ‘Questioning Library Neutrality’ “neutrality is a form of fence sitting, a form of silence.”

This is not always an easy stance to take and you must weigh pros and cons but I would say that it is the

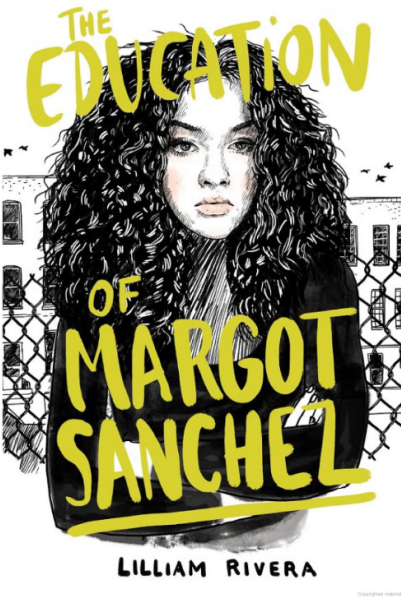
right one.

When I consider my primary area of research, intellectual freedom and censorship, I note that libraries have long taken a strong position in opposing censorship and supporting intellectual freedom. As Robert Wengert noted in 2001, “Saying censorship is wrong is not a neutral position—libraries have taken a stand.”



# Book Review: The Education of Margot Sanchez, by Lilliam Rivera

By Jina DuVernay, Alabama State University



The Education of Margot Sanchez; 2017

304 pages  
\$18.99 Hardcover.  
ISBN 13: 978-1481472111

A teenage Puerto Rican girl is caught in the middle of two boys, new and old friendships and family.

Margot Sanchez must spend her entire summer working in her father’s grocery store in the Bronx as punishment for stealing his credit card to buy clothing to impress her new prep school friends. Lilliam Rivera’s debut novel is filled with stark contrasts such as Margot’s domineering father and her passive mother, her blonde, blue-eyed prep school crush and Moises, a young activist fighting to stop gentrification in his Bronx neighborhood and her former best friend, Elizabeth, and her new friends from school.

Margot’s sole goal is to work to repay the money that she stole so that she can go to the much anticipated

Libraries, any library, cannot presume to be a hub for a community by being neutral.

If libraries are about people then they must take people’s lives seriously. Even when supporting those lives might court some controversy.

Deciding not to support marginalized people is never neutral. It is always a choice.

end-of-summer pool party with her new friends in the Hamptons. She constantly denies the beauty of the Bronx, her curly hair and her growing feelings for Moises but soon finds out that the things that she is running away from are the very things that she never knew she wanted. This coming-of-age novel explores the struggle between being yourself and trying to be who others want you to be. In dealing with her parents strained marriage, her brother’s violent outbursts, her father’s secret, her unfulfilled friendships and her boy crushes, Margot begins to truly value those who love and care about her as she finds the courage to love and value herself, curly hair and all.

This young adult novel is a riveting must-read about betrayal, love and redemption.

# Can libraries be neutral? Should they strive to be neutral?

By Em Claire Knowles, Simmons University

*(Editor’s note: this is one of three essays submitted to BCALA News from Black LIS professionals who participated in the 2018 ALA Midwinter President’s Program on library neutrality)*



The short answer is yes. The long answer: It’s complicated.

As someone who has been a library professional for 40 years, and who has served for 10 years as a commissioner of libraries in my state and who now serves as vice president of the Freedom to Read Foundation, I am strongly committed to the core value of intellectual freedom. I further believe that we can achieve, or aspire to achieve intellectual freedom only by beginning with a commitment to neutrality.

Too often “neutrality” is presented as if it is what occurs when we don’t do or think anything. It’s called an

intermediate state or condition, not clearly one thing or another, a middle ground where we don’t take a side; where we have an absence of decided views, feeling, or expression. Synonyms for neutrality are indifference; impartiality, dispassionateness.

I would suggest quite the opposite. Neutrality is a process to which libraries and librarians must actively commit, a goal that must be continually sought, an aspiration that must be regularly renewed and reimagined so as to remain relevant to the institution and to the community it serves. There is nothing, to my mind, dispassionate about neutrality.

Heather Douglas, an authority in shaping policy on issues of great moral and cultural significance, illustrates my point about active neutrality. She argues against a passive version of neutrality because it is not adequate to meet the challenges of, for example, racist or sexist speech. She urges us instead to take a “balanced”

position with respect to a spectrum of values. We - and I include ALA and libraries in that “we” - can establish a set of core values and implement respect for those values in such a way that we ensure respect for all members of our constituencies.

To be specific, we must promote the importance of reading and learning to keep our residents informed;

we must respect people’s cultural views and understanding, but we must also help users to explore new perspectives;

we must be open to reasonable accommodations to concerned patronage, and be prepared for any controversy created by those accommodations; and

lastly, we must use all the available PR and marketing efforts to get our message out to the widest audience and to emphasize the positive role libraries and librarians play in a civil society.

Another thought leader in information literacy, Laura

Saunders, suggests that an aspiration to neutrality be coupled with an attempt to achieve “objectivity” in our practice. What she means by “objectivity” is this: we must be able to consider or represent facts, and other information without being influenced by personal feelings or opinions.

Clearly, libraries are experienced in information assessment, and our capacity for presenting valid and vetted materials, even when they do not comport with our personal opinions, is a key requirement for a successful career in the profession.

Neutrality of this sort, coupled with balance and objectivity, is in my opinion, the best position to work from to foster intellectual freedom and to observe both the Library Code of Ethics and Library Bill of Rights.

So how do we work toward neutrality?

I believe we need to focus our attention on three matters of open access: equal access to materials; equal access to meeting space; and equal access to services.

Equal Access to materials: In libraries, when we select materials, we should strive for balanced and unbiased choices. In doing so, we must use not only the traditional selection tools and commercial resources, but we must consult alternative tools, including recommendations from the public.

A good starting point would be with a plan, or a collection development policy, which explains our process. It has been documented that a clearly stated, unbiased and balanced collection policy statement may prevent challenges to library materials.

In selecting materials that describe the making of America, for example, many diverse authors should be included. We must not shy away from controversial topics such as hate speech, religion, science, materials that provide clearly delineated issues.

If materials are inaccurate or products of fake news, they must be excluded, of course. But we must explain, and justify, their absence if challenged. If we should explain those absences too. In collection development, then, a clear plan and a transparent implementation of it contribute to a neutral environment. Our role as librarians should be to allow users to access and explore all ideas without judgment and to balance it with the understanding of difference of opinions and resisting censorship.

Equal access to meeting space: we also must make sure that our libraries are safe spaces for diverging opinions. We must further acknowledge that our provision of access is not an endorsement of content or of the host group. Many libraries provide space for groups that might be quite controversial, but it is important

that these groups are using the meeting spaces. As long as they understand the regulations for using the space. In this way, the space is being open to the full community and all groups using it are abiding by the value of equal access.

Equal access to services: We must offer access to service to all people in the community and sometimes beyond. As we do so, we must demonstrate respect for cultural expressions and understandings while we also offer new ideas and help to explore new ways of thought. Thus, we are providing help while we are also engaging in an exchange of information and gaining new insights that could benefit and sere other users in our communities.

And again, let me emphasize that strong policies will be the most effective guide for the implementation of open access so that the materials provided are vetted and inform rather than stoke passion, so that one person or group’s access to library space doesn’t close the door on another’s, and so that library workers attend to all needs equally.

But here is where things get complicated.

Because policies have to be written by people, and librarians cannot check their opinions, priorities, and passions at the door to their institution.

So it is in the writing of policy that we have to be most actively striving for neutrality.

In order to write good policy, we must ensure that librarians are well-trained and attentive to the importance of open access to materials, space and services.

We also must ensure that there is diversity of opinion among those writing the policy, and we must ensure that policy is written in a work environment where differences of opinion can be freely expressed and ultimately included in the final product. Even with the best of policies, however, we have to acknowledge that community passions may hamper the library’s ability to implement policy.

I am sure all of us can think of examples challenges that threatened our ability to be balanced! But there are also examples of good policy that has been able to withstand

the challenges. Let me give you one example from my home city of Boston.

A branch library in the Boston Public Library system once served a white, immigrant Irish population. It was given an endowment that would serve the community for years to come. A policy was written to guide the way funds would be used to purchase materials for the community. It was a good - and neutral - policy. The community served by that branch library is now predominantly African –American, and the acquisitions policy now serves their community needs and priorities. Not only did this policy easily translate its service from one population to another, but it also protected the endowment from being diluted to pay for services beyond its scope.

We all can agree that what we do as librarians is guided by our

passionate commitment to educate, inform, and enrich library users. How we do that, though, must be guided by sound policy which ensures we are open to and useful to all members of our community.

That’s what I mean by being a neutral organization.

I am not suggesting that we do not have social goals. I don’t think we should ever be indifferent to injustice. We do not have to be all neutral or all for advocacy/social justice.

I can imagine that there is an idle ground, but I would err on the side of neutrality as a starting place for all communities. In fact, I want to go a step further and say that I think an active, engaged, and continually reaffirmed neutrality is the first rung on the ladder to advocacy and social justice.

# A Review of “When the Negro Was In Vogue” by Langston Hughes

*By Tahira Ahmad*

This poem is more of an evaluation of the relationship between Negroes and whites during the Harlem Renaissance, right up to slavery.

Two things are very distinct: first, Hughes’ repetition of “it was a period when” in almost every long passage/ sentence. Why did Hughes depict such grandeur of that particular period in the “uprising” of Blacks (the affluence of emerging Blacks?). He most likely was trying to introduce the “negative aspects” of the New Negro and the “supposedly progressive movement” .... (the superficial parties and the delusion of the people-Blacks in particular).

Were there any significance changes? Yes ...changes in ways which allowed the Negroes to develop their communities enough to intrigue the whites? The deep meaning of the “Negro in vogue” is illustrated in the narratives that express the Negro feelings toward all things intriguing to the Whites. On a deeper note, Hughes excludes almost all nostalgic feelings about the past ...he introduces a harsh kind of reality that exposes the “new –age Negro” as being more

interested in carrying out favors for the Whites, than caring about building a political and artistic advancement of the African Americans.

Hughes’ anger or perhaps, frustrations are expressed in: ”At every Harlem upper-crust dance or party, one would be introduced to various distinguished white celebrities there as guests. It was a period when almost any Harlem Negro of any social importance at all would be likely to say casually: 'As I was remarking to Heywood—,' meaning Heywood Broun. Or: 'As I said to George—,' referring to George Gershwin”.

(Hughes’ example of “social climbing” was Blacks who were more interested in name-dropping and hobnobbing with White celebrities, than in advancing their own people’s political agenda....how could/can something as insidious as racism be fought head on if those with the “most money and power” are more interested in “personal connections” with the “well-connected White”?)

How is Hughes’ writing style?

For starters, his style describes

Harlem of the 1920s. It starts out all positive and somewhere in between, the real truth is fully introduced, which chatters the reader’s fresh romantic notions of the Harlem Renaissance. Finally, the end of the passage is more fascinating. Instead of using the original phrase “New Negro”, Hughes ends the paragraph with the phrase, ‘when the Negro was in Vogue. While “in vogue” has some similar connotations to “New” ....a sort of chic, kinky phrase usually used to describe “fashion trends”. Using the word “Vogue” to describe freed slaves must have a significance that expresses nothing more than the fact that, the Blacks involved in the movement simply couldn’t live up to their own “social and political ideals”.

**HIS STYLE  
DESCRIBES  
HARLEM OF  
THE 1920S**

# Hands-On with History in San Antonio

By Caira M. Spenrath, Texas Woman’s University

(Editor’s note: this is an E.J. Josey Scholarship Award essay)

## INTRODUCTION & OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

For many people, thinking about a library often comes with the stereotypical idea of a quiet space with stacks of old books and a grumpy librarian that organizes them. As library professionals we know this misconception to be the ultimate untruth. As an aspiring special librarian who has worked with countless books, audiovisual media and personal artifacts, I’ve come to discover how dealing with items that tie directly to real-world people or events can speak powerfully to the diversity of thought, action and representation that libraries hope to maintain for patron education, inspiration and use.

As the population of the United States becomes increasingly diverse, educational and social boundaries within many regions may not evolve to reflect that

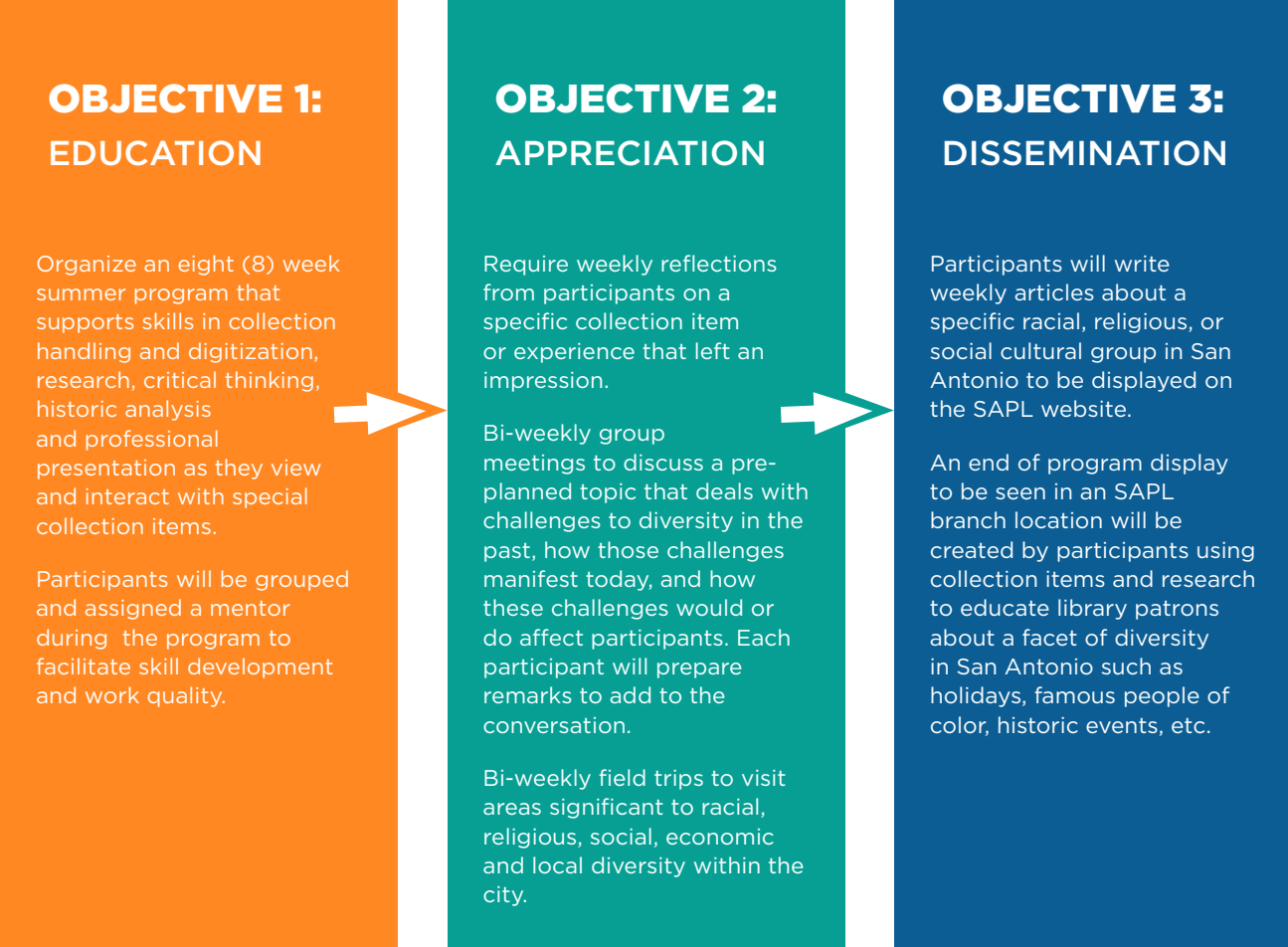
diversification. My hometown of San Antonio, Texas is extremely diverse— in 2015 the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that almost 75 percent of San Antonio’s population is part of a recognized minority group. It was also estimated that almost half of the city’s population speaks Spanish at home, as well as languages such as German, Tagalog, Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi and African languages such as Igbo, Swahili and Bantu (Statistical Atlas). These findings indicate that there is a whole spectrum of diversity in San Antonio! However, a map created by researchers at the University of Virginia Center of Public Service demonstrates that despite such diversity, the racial disparity in education, economic prosperity and residential is stark (Parker), (McNeel).

In this situation, what can a library do to promote diversity and inclusion for the community?

How can a library reach out to its community and encourage its patrons’ understanding of the community as a whole?

## PROJECT PROPOSAL: “HANDS-ON WITH HISTORY AT THE LOCAL LIBRARY”

To promote diversity and inclusion for my community of users, I propose a summer program that would recruit a diverse group of teens or adults to analyze, digitize and interact with collection items from the San Antonio Public Library (SAPL) system that present unique opportunities to explore the diversity of race, religion and history in San Antonio’s past and present. The ultimate goal is to educate community members as to San Antonio’s diversity and to expose them to information that lends to the development of cultural intelligence, empathy and a sense of social justice. In order to realize this goal, there are three objectives



that would need to be met:

As you can see from the chart above, in order to facilitate these objectives their corresponding actions place an emphasis on hands-on experience, group-oriented activities and putting their newfound knowledge to use in the community. So, why the need for hands-on learning? As scary as it may seem to let teens and young adults view and handle various forms of artifacts, research has shown that there are benefits to doing so. Many recent academic papers have examined just what makes hands-on learning (also known as kinesthetic learning) a worthy consideration: some researchers came to conclusions that it can facilitate greater interest in the subject as it

translates abstract concepts into practical use (Yoke), it promotes skill development in analyzing, organizing and synthesizing various forms of information (Horowitz), and an article on “repair cafés” states that such kinesthetic learning creates an atmosphere that promotes community bonding (Cottrell).

Additionally, it should be noted that each group of participants would be guided and trained by a special librarian mentor, who would not only train and assist the participants with collection handling and digitization, but also assist with discussion and presentation facilitation, answering questions regarding historic context, and ensuring professionalism. Some studies have

shown that mentor-mentee learning has many benefits such as increased learner confidence and professional development (Eroglu), (Vetter). The hope is that through kinesthetic learning with a mentor, these community members will discover the depths of diversity within San Antonio’s history and present day, develop skills necessary for academic achievement, and forge community bonds.

Facilitating the Program  
Participants would be determined by a short survey and one page essay on their motivations to learn more about their community. This application information would be disseminated to high schools, all universities, social and cultural groups within San Antonio. Ideally, this summer program would

comprise of no more than twenty (20) community members from various racial, religious, and social groups who come from a variety of economic backgrounds.

This eight week program would be free of charge to limit as many barriers to learning as possible, and would be overseen by the Special Library Collection Manager of the SAPL system. Four additional special librarians from the SAPL system or from various institutions around the city would be necessary to act as group mentors.

The program would be active three days a week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday), with (short) weekly written reflections to be published on the SAPL website, bi-weekly discussion groups, bi-weekly outings to places of local diversity significance, and a culminating project to be displayed to the public as a SAPL branch at the end of the eight weeks.

OUTREACH EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

To gauge if this pilot program to increase diversity and inclusion has had the intended effect, a survey will be administered to participants on the first day of the program and on the last day of the program. Using Likert scales, the short survey will ask questions regarding a participants’ knowledge of local history and cultures, a participants’ knowledge of digitization technology, a participant’s research ability, and a participants’ overall thoughts on the program.

Each choice on the Likert scale will have its own numerical value, which will enable the quantification and rating of participant responses. If a participants’ overall score increases by the end of the eight week program, then this proposal will have been considered a success!

Budget and Special Considerations

In order to minimize as many barriers to attendance, this program will be offered free of charge. Though it may require the hiring of one or two temporary special librarians to act as mentors during the summer, almost every need of the program will be provided within the library itself. The training by mentors will be at the library conference rooms, the resources to conduct research and digitization activities (scanners, subscription services to databases, OPAC, etc.) are available at the library, and the display of the final project will be at the library as well. By limiting the duration of the program (in days of the week and in length of overall time), I hope to minimize the cost of implementing the program. As you can see, the majority of the program will be conducted with items and space that the library already has as an asset—for future implementation of the program, a technology inventory should be conducted prior to determine if the library in question has everything it needs.

There are some special considerations to be made that could impact the program as well

as its participants, primarily in transportation and participant well-being. In the pursuit of seeking a truly diverse group of participants, one must consider that not all participants may have the means to transport themselves, eat lunch every day or to use technology in writing their weekly reflections at home. To limit these barriers, I would highly recommend that a transportation service with handicap-accessibility be implemented through either a bus rental or purchase, providing a nutritional lunch every day, and providing each participant with a notebook or journal to keep track of their experiences and work as a means to ensure every opportunity for full participation.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the goal of this outreach proposal is to inspire young community members through kinesthetic learning and empower them through education, professional skill development, and reflections upon San Antonio’s diverse populations and their histories. By being able to interact with collection items from the past, I believe participants will be able to fully develop a sense of appreciation, empathy and social awareness that will continue to develop through academic pursuits or personal pursuits. While the assessments would conclude as to the overall success of the program, I hope that by offering this program these participants will then go on to educate others, be empathetic to

others, and appreciate the different aspects of local, state and national diversity. Most importantly, I believe that this program will allow the participants themselves to come face-to-face with diversity through their program peers, and lay the groundwork for a greater appreciation of diversity as a whole.

Thank you very much for your consideration!

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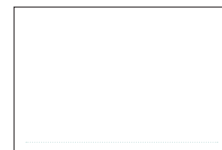
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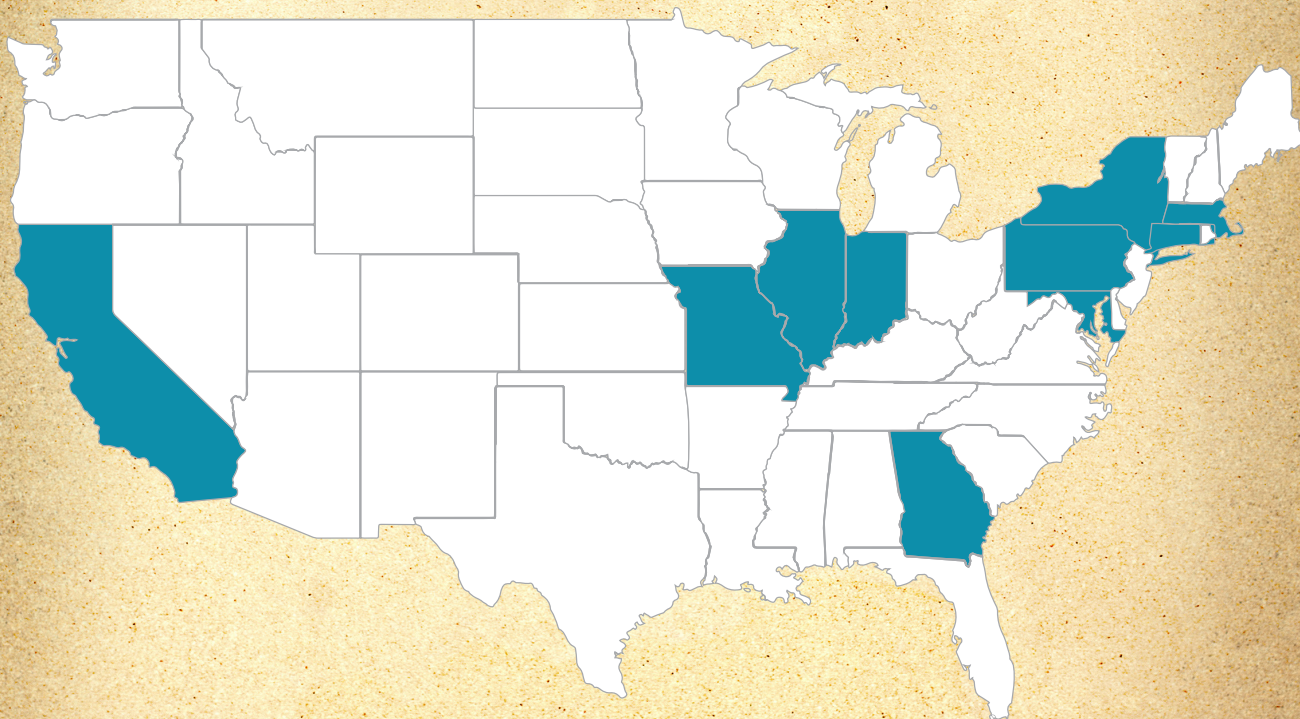
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