Changing Academic Libraries' Cultures and Empowering Minority Employees in a DEI World

Dr. Theresa S. Byrd
Dean of the University Library
University of San Diego, USA
August 18, 2023

IFLA WLIC 2023
ROTTERDAM
World Library and Information Congress
88th IFLA General Conference and Assembly
21/25 August 2023, the Netherlands

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- About USD

- Introduction

- Antiracism and Whiteness Defined

- Demographics of Library Profession

- Creating a New Culture

- Microaggressions and Different Styles

- Deans Diversity Tips

- Librarians of Color Survival Tips

- White Librarian Allies Tips

ABOUT USD

- A Roman Catholic University

- Strong emphasis on liberal arts

- Ranked #1 most beautiful campus on The Princeton Review

- Ranked #4 in participation in study abroad among Doctorate-granting Universities by the Institute of International Education (2019/20)

- U.S. News & World Report ranked USD as one of the top 100 universities in the nation

- Earned the Ashoka U designation as a Changemaker campus, one of only 44 universities in the world to earn this distinction

- Student enrollment (Fall 2022): 5,669 Undergraduates, 2,336 Graduate/Paralegal

- 810 Law/JD Graduate

- Five Schools, Law School, and the College of Arts & Sciences

INTRODUCTION

Anti-Racism Defined

Ibram X. Kendi in *How to Be An Antiracist* defines antiracist as:

"One who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and none needs developing, and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity."

Source: Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be An Antiracist*. One World, 2019, p. 24.

INTRODUCTION

The travesty of our profession is that we have not learned how to hire and retain librarians of color or how to create organizational structures that these librarians can feel comfortable in and respected.

WHITENESS DEFINED

Robin DiAngelo in her article "White Fragility" in *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* cites Frankenberg (1993) who defines Whiteness as multi-dimensional:

"Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a 'standpoint,' a place from which White people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, 'Whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed."

Source: DiAngelo, R. "White Fragility." *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy,* vol. 3, no. 3, p. 56.

WHITENESS DEFINED

Michelle Fine in "Witnessing Whiteness" said:

"I find myself trying to understand how whiteness accrues privilege and status; gets itself surrounded by protective pillows of resources and/or benefits of the doubt; how whiteness repels gossip and voyeurism and instead demands dignity."

Source: Michelle Fine, et al., editor. "Witnessing Whiteness." Edited by Michelle Fine. *Off White: Readings on Race, Power, and Society*. Rutledge, 1997, p. 57.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF LIBRARY PROFESSION

"The Department for Professional Employees AFL-CIO in its '2023 Library Professionals: Facts and Figures' states 'The librarian profession suffers from a persistent lack of racial and ethnic diversity that has not changed significantly over the past 15 years.'"

Source: Department for Professional Employees AFL-CIO. 2023 Library Professionals: Facts and Figures. https://www.dpeaflcio.org/factsheets/library-professionals-facts-and-figures. p. 3.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF LIBRARY PROFESSION

"Just over 82 percent of librarians identified as white in 2022. . . . In 2022, only 4.3 percent of librarians identified as Black or African American, a steep decline from 9.5 percent in 2020. Librarians who identified as Hispanic or Latino (of any race) numbered 8.0 percent, and those identifying as Asian-American or Pacific Islander made up 5.1 percent."

Source: Department for Professional Employees AFL-CIO. 2023 Library Professionals: Facts and Figures. https://www.dpeaflcio.org/factsheets/library-professionals-facts-and-figures. p. 4.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF LIBRARY PROFESSION

"Women represented 82.2 percent of graduates in Master of Library Science (MLS) programs in 2018-2019. However, Black women only accounted for 4.5 percent of all MLS graduates, while Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander women made up 7.8 and 2.5 percent of the 2019 class, respectively."

Source: Department for Professional Employees AFL-CIO. 2023 Library Professionals: Facts and Figures. https://www.dpeaflcio.org/factsheets/library-professionals-facts-and-figures. p .5.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND STRUCTURE THE PROBLEM

When we look at the context of libraries, the demographics of library workers, the fact that libraries adhere to best hiring practices, along with the collective failure of library leadership globally to diversify and retain librarians of color, I must ask this question: **Are library organizational cultures and structures racists?**

CREATING A NEW CULTURE COPLEY LIBRARY

▶ Included diversity, equity, and inclusion in our mission, vision, and strategic plan.

▶ Ensured the playing field is level for all employees and promote professional development.

▶ Used organizational and individual librarian goals to move an organization forward (negotiate goals).

▶ Created a Collections, Access, and Discovery Department.

▶ Promoted engagement through cross-functional committees for librarians and staff.

▶ Created the Coordinator of Graduate Programs and the Coordinator of Instruction and Undergraduate Learning, which cut across the traditional structure lines to bring librarians together.

- Expanded the Dean's Council to include key representatives from across the building.

- Hired an Associate Dean for Student Success and Diversity.

- Used the DEIA Committee to assist with diversity training, programming, and work.

- Supported a DEI collection audit that removed offensive cataloging headings.

- Reorganized the organization.

- Established an Artwork Committee to bring diverse art into the library building.

DEI ARTWORK

DEANS

If you want to create a diverse, inclusive organization, you need to:

- Commit to creating a diverse, inclusive antiracist organization, and develop an action plan.

- Ensure your library's mission, vision, and values statements mention diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- Diversify your management team with at least two ethnic librarians/people (change will start to happen automatically).

- Expand your management team meetings beyond Associate University Librarians (AUL) and alternate which non-AUL librarians are selected every two years.

- Consider implicit biases in your and other library employees' decisions and disputes, especially when a librarian of color is involved.

- Give librarians of color the benefit of the doubt. Stop them when the AUL talks with you about the horrible librarian of color. If a POC librarian is upset, there's a reason. They are not crazy. It's a sign you should dig further. Invite the librarian to your office for a conversation.

- Meet with all new librarians as a group for one hour three times per year.

- Ensure growth and development for all employees.

- Ask a librarian of color to chair a committee or significant task force. This may mean not giving the task to an Associate University Librarian (AUL).

- Provide opportunities for people from across the organization to collaborate.

- Challenge hiring committee on choosing people like them.

- Confront departments or AULs about a librarian of color revolving door syndrome. Demand accountability and change.

- Use the Associate Dean or the DEI Committee to introduce readings and antiracists training to all library personnel.

- Eschew putting a person of color in a dysfunctional department or assigning them to the library's bully.

- Learn about black and white styles and microaggressions.

- Experiment with a new organizational structure to create more cohesion and inclusiveness.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Racial microaggressions are subtle, denigrating messages directed towards people of color.
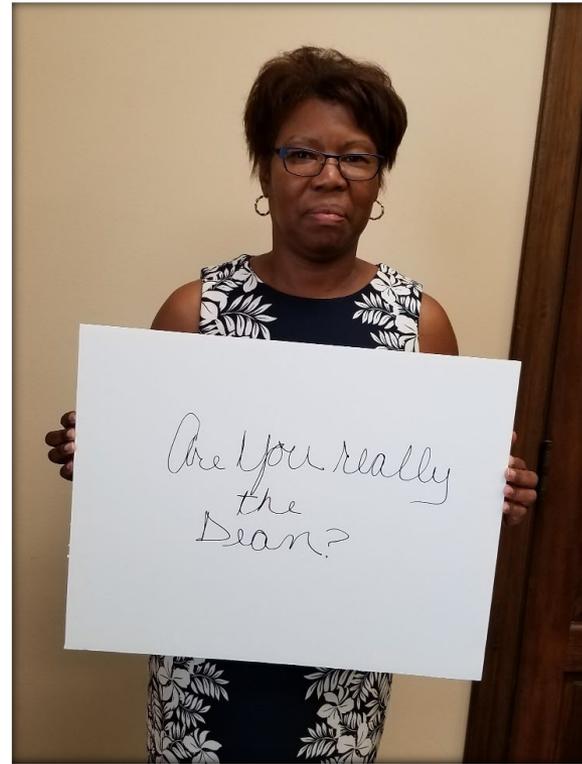
MICROAGGRESSIONS

Nigatu, Heben. "21 Racial Microaggressions You Hear On A Daily Basis." *BuzzFeed*, 9 December 2013, https://www.buzzfeed.com/hnigatu/racial-microaggressions-you-hear-on-a-daily-basis. Accessed 17 August 2023.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Nigatu, Heben. "21 Racial Microaggressions You Hear On A Daily Basis." *BuzzFeed,* 9 December 2013, https://www.buzzfeed.com/hnigatu/racial-microaggressions-you-hear-on-a-daily-basis. Accessed 17 August 2023.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Nigatu, Heben. "21 Racial Microaggressions You Hear On A Daily Basis." *BuzzFeed,* 9 December 2013, https://www.buzzfeed.com/hnigatu/racial-microaggressions-you-hear-on-a-daily-basis. Accessed 17 August 2023.

"BLACK AND WHITE" STYLES

In Classrooms "When blacks and whites engage each other in public debate about an issue, they are divided not only over content–the issue itself–but, more fundamentally, over process: how disagreement on an issues is to be appropriately handled."

"The black mode–that of black community [inner city] people–is high-keyed: animated, interpersonal, and confrontational. The white mode–that of the middle class–is relatively low-keyed: dispassionate, impersonal, and non-challenging."

Source: Kochman, Thomas. *Black and White Styles in Conflict.* University of Chicago, 1981, pp 17-18

LIBRARIANS OF COLOR SURVIVING IN A DEI WORLD

If you want to survive and thrive in the workplace, you need to:

- Get a MENTOR.

- Learn about the library head or library's reputation before accepting a position. Because you have been offered employment, don't let your ego get the best of you. Tap your network. If you don't have a network, ask pointed questions about the organization's culture and inclusiveness during the interview.

- Select an organization whose mission statements mention diversity and inclusion.

- Negotiate for professional development during the hiring process. Invest in yourself (professional development) until you can get a job that will pay for it.

- Understand that the academy is a place for privileged people (students and faculty). Become secure in who you are as a professional.

- Stop focusing on naysayers and do your job. You do not need to be affirmed by others. The enemy incapacitates you when you pay attention to what they are saying.

- Consider the spectrum of libraries for a career. You can work in a small or medium academic library, a research library, a public library, and a special library (rural vs. urban).

- Serve on library committees and take "stretch" assignments. Don't isolate yourself.

- Join an ethnic caucus, a space for librarians like you, and identify a few white librarians (allies) who you can trust. You need both perspectives to grow and survive.

- Move to get a better job. In the U.S. and perhaps other parts of the world it is necessary to move to get a job or promotion.

- Seek a community on campus and off campus as soon as you arrive in a new town.

- Learn the culture of your departments, library, and institution, and the written and unwritten rules of your library environment and university.

- Avoid stereotype threat.

WHITE LIBRARIAN ALLIES

If you want an equitable and fair workplace, you need to:

▶ Give BIPOC librarians the benefit of the doubt.

▶ Serve as a mentor or invite a librarian of color to coffee or lunch. Stop by their office to periodically say hello.

▶ Participate in search committees with a goal of evaluating all candidates fairly and creating a comfortable environment for them during the process, especially for BIPOC candidates who don't look like you.

▶ Avoid participating in white racial bonding acts. Speak up when you hear unfair judgmental statements about a minority colleague.

▶ Commit to being honest with a BIPOC colleague rather than cuddling them. Otherwise, you sabotage the librarian's development.

24

- Read the antiracists and librarians of color stories in the literature. This will help some, but the lived experiences of BIPOC cannot be replicated.

- Pay attention to how women and BIPOC are treated in meetings.

- Join your library's DEI Committee or create one. We need white librarians on these committees.

- Avoid being intimidated by BIPOC candidates or labeling them during the interview process.

- Explain the profession and/or library organization to new BIPOC librarians and assist them with joining professional committees.

- Volunteer to work in a minority community service organization to broaden your understanding of a different culture.

- When you witness discrimination, don't approach the victim later to offer sympathy. Give him or her your support in the moment.

A CALL TO ACTION

A CALL TO ACTION: Globally libraries must dismantle our cultures, policies, and organizational structures to create anti-racist organizations if we want to retain librarians of color to meet our patron needs.

CONCLUSION

Kendi reminds us, "the heartbeat of racism is denial, the heartbeat of anti-racism is confession."

Source: Kendi, Ibram X. How to Be An Antiracist. One World, 2019, p. 235.

REFERENCES

Alabi, Jaena. "Racial Microaggressions in Academic Libraries: Results of a Survey of Minority and Non-minority Librarians." The Journal of Academic Librarianship, vol. 41, issue 1, (January 2015), pp. 47-53.

Brooks, Freeda, et al. "In PursuLibrary Tit of Antiracist Social Justice: Denaturalizing Whiteness in the Academic Library." *Library Trends*, vol. 64, no. 2, Fall 2015, pp. 246-284. Project MUSE, https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2015.0048.

Crenshaw, Kimberle' W. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." 1989 U. Chi. Legal F139 (1989). Available at   https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/3007/. Accessed 21 July 2023.

Department for Professional Employees AFL-CIO. 2023 Fact Sheet – "Library Professionals Facts and Figures." https://www.dpeaflcio.org/factsheets/library-professionals-facts-and-figures.

 DiAngelo, R. "White Fragility." *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 54-70.

Espinal, Isabel R. "A New Vocabulary for Inclusive Librarianship: Applying Whiteness Theory to Profession," 2001, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Available at https://works.bepress.com/isabel_espinal/5/. Accessed 24 July 2023.

Espinal, Isabel R., et al. "A Holistic Approach for Inclusive Librarianship: Decentering Whiteness in our Profession." *Library Trends* vol. 67. no. 1, Summer 2018, pp. 147-162. https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2018.0030.

Ferretti, Jennifer A. "Building a Critical Culture: How Critical Librarianship Falls Short in the Workplace." *Communications in Information Literacy*, vol.14, no. 1, pp. 134-152. https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2020.14.1.10

Fine, Michelle, et al., editors. "Witnessing Whiteness." Edited by Michelle Fine. *Off White: Readings on Race, Power, and Society.* Routledge, 1997, pp. 57-65.

REFERENCES

Galvan, Angela. "Soliciting Performance, Hiding Bias: Whiteness and Librarianship." *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. June 3, 2015. https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/soliciting-performance-hiding-bias-whiteness-and-librarianship. Accessed on 3 July 2023.

Garnar, Martin L. "Lessons From the Experiences of Academic Librarians of Color." ACRL Conference March 15-18, 2023. Pittsburgh.

Grow, Gerald. "Kochman's Black & White Styles in Conflict." https://longleaf.net/wp/teaching-articles-resources/kochmans-black-white-styles-conflict/. Accessed 3 August 2023.

Hathcock, April. "White Librarianship in BlackFace: Diversity Initiatives in LIS." *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. Oct 7, 2017. https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/lis-diversity/. Accessed on 4 February 2023.

Honma, Todd. "Trippin' Over the Color Line: The Invisibility of Race in Library and Information Studies," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2005), eScholarship University of California, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4nj0w1mp.

Huggins, Melanie. "Becoming an Antiracist Library." *Public Libraries*, July/August 2021, pp. 3-4.

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be An Antiracist*. One World, 2019.

Kochman, Thomas. *Black and White Styles in Conflict*. University of Chicago, 1981.

Kuo, Leslie. Pankow District Library System, Berlin, Germany." Barriers and Bridges: Lived Experiences of Immigrant Staff in German Libraries." IFLA Section 32: Library Services to Multicultural Populations. 28 August 2018.

Melaku, Tsedale M. and et al. "Be a Better Ally." *Harvard Business Review*, November-December 2020, https://hbr.org/2020/11/be-a-better-ally.

Nigatu, Heban. "21 Racial Microaggressions You Hear On A Daily Basis." *BuzzFeed,* 9 December 2013. https://www.buzzfeed.com/hnigatu/racial-microagressions-you-hear-on-a-daily-basis. Accessed 17   August 2023.

REFERENCES

Prellwitz, Gwendolyn. Assistant Director, Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services at American
Library Association and Spectrum Scholar Coordinator. Telephone Interview with author. July 2018

Prentiss, Erin. "Alternative Voices: An Interview with April Hatchcock, Scholarly Communications
Librarian at New York University." 9 January 2017.
https://www.nmrt.ala.org/notes/alternative-voices-an-interview-with-april-hathcock-scholarly-
communications-librarian-at-new-york-university/.

Warner, Jody Nyasha. "Moving Beyond Whiteness in North American Academic Libraries" *Libri* , vol. 51,
no. 3, 2001, pp. 167-172. https://doi.org/10.1515/LIBR.2001.167.

Williams, Monnica T. "What is Whiteness*?" Psychology Today*, 13 June 2020, pp.1-8.
https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culturally-speaking/202006/what-is-whiteness.
Accessed 29 July 2023.