

The *We Need Diverse Books* Campaign and Critical Race Theory: A Call to Action for Library and Information Professionals

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Abstract

The author will explore the ways in which Critical Race Theory (CRT) is used in the *We Need Diverse Books* (WNDB) campaign, targeting children's literature. By examining WNDB through the lens of CRT (and expanding it to Critical Theory), the author will contribute points of action for Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals to help support WNDB's momentum.

The author wishes to incite a sense of urgency in LIS professionals to better utilize the depth of CRT's power to create a more equitable society for the community of youth that LIS practitioners serve. The push for diverse books is not a new one and has been championed by many for decades. However, only recently has the diverse books issue achieved traction, thanks, in part, to the efforts of WNDB. What can LIS scholars and practitioners do to ensure that this traction continues?

Keywords: Diverse children's literature; youth services; LIS education; Critical Race Theory; social justice

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1 Introduction

The *We Need Diverse Books* (WNDB) campaign is a thriving movement to publish children's and young adult books by and about diverse people in American society. Critical Race Theory's (CRT) purpose is to explore and challenge the white normative power structure prevalent in our society through cross-disciplinary activism.

The goal of this work is three-fold. First, it will explore the ways in which CRT is used in the WNDB campaign. One of CRT's tenets is the call for social justice action; WNDB has uniquely embodied this tenet from the beginning due to its grass roots mission. In addition, WNDB has uniquely connected with its community, both online and in person from the beginning. By examining the dynamic example of WNDB through the lens of CRT, the author will contribute points of action for Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals to help support WNDB's momentum. Another purpose of this work will be to explore other areas of subaltern marginalization in children's literature—including, but not limited to, underserved populations, such as LGBTQIA and differently-abled youth.

A secondary goal is to incite a sense of urgency in LIS scholars and practitioners to better understand and utilize the depth of CRT's power to create a more equitable society for the community of youth that LIS practitioners serve. The push for diverse books is not a new one and has been championed by many for decades. Yet, not until recently, has the diverse books issue achieved traction, thanks, in part, to the efforts of WNDB. What can LIS scholars and practitioners do to ensure that this traction continues? What can we learn from the scholarly work of those who focus on CRT as it pertains to LIS?

2 Conclusion

Finally, the author hopes to get feedback from current LIS CRT/Critical Theory scholars and LIS educators/practitioners.

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