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Isabel Espinal, Tonia Sutherland, Charlotte Roh

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A Holistic Approach for Inclusive Librarianship: Decentering Whiteness in Our Profession

Isabel Espinal, Tonia Sutherland, and Charlotte Roh

Abstract

This paper traces the published literature on whiteness in libraries, identifying major themes in that literature, and then highlights the importance of decentering whiteness for moving the information professions forward. Engaging a dialogic ethnographic methodology, this paper was borne of conversations between librarians of color who worked in the same predominantly white library. The salient themes from those dialogues were the many ways that adherence to whiteness in libraries has had deleterious affective and career implications for librarians of color. The authors argue that to decenter whiteness in libraries and other information centers, it is crucial to center the experiences and well-being of librarians of color; diversify the ranks of librarians through bold initiatives, significantly increasing the numbers of librarians of color; and make large-scale incisive structural change at organizational levels. The paper concludes with an invitation for all information professionals to participate in inclusiveness initiatives by moving from microaggressions to microaffections.

Part I: Overview of Whiteness in Librarianship

In 2000, at the second REFORMA conference—the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish speaking—librarian Isabel Espinal gave a presentation on the importance of recognizing whiteness as a useful tool in promoting diversity in librarianship. The ensuing article, "A New Vocabulary for Inclusive Librarianship: Applying Whiteness Theory to Our Profession," made the argument that "unless we address whiteness, unless we identify and name it, many of the problems that plague us collectively and as individual librarians of color will continue" (Espinal 2001, 132–33).

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Seventeen years ago, librarians of color, including some administrators, enthusiastically greeted this message of whiteness theory as applied to librarianship. But at Espinal's home institution, there was a chilling lack of interest. This disinterest from Espinal's colleagues was emblematic of greater issues in librarianship. In her 2001 article, Espinal cited anthropologist Enoch Page's definition of whiteness; sixteen years later, it remains relevant to the information professions:

> As a generative principle of racism, "ideological whiteness" refers to a dual behavioral process entailing enactments of identity formation and resource access legitimation, both of which were practices once overtly recognized as aspects of "white supremacy," but which now may be more subtly and covertly reproduced as an observable and routine set of implicitly prescriptive, but explicitly disavowed, white supremacist beliefs and practices to which all who identify as "white" (or who behave as "whitened") are expected to adhere—especially white males—if they wish to maintain their own racial standing as members of these two privileged white groups and assert their negotiable right to privileged resource access. (E. Page 1999)

In the intervening years, new vocabulary has emerged to complement Page's definition. The term "microaggressions," for example, highlights how individual practices perpetuate systems of whiteness. Yet as suggested by Espinal in 2001, whiteness is also very much about how collective actions are defined and in many ways disguised. In effect, Espinal argues, libraries and other institutions serve as "white public spaces," both symbolic and material, that are controlled so that the dominant racial group benefits and "things of racial significance are made to seem fair, just, legitimate, and simplistically obvious when the embodied experiences of racial targets scream that they clearly are not (H. E. Page 1997, 108).

There are now more conversations about whiteness in librarianship, and yet the demographics and culture of librarianship have not significantly changed in seventeen years. Her workplace has not been able to retain any Black librarians in the nineteen years that Espinal has worked there, and this is one of many problems of whiteness: homogeneous environments foster homogeneous attitudes and practices. Failing to see or acknowledge issues of inclusion and exclusion is an example of a "white cultural practice"—a behavior that perpetuates whiteness as the norm (E. Page as cited in Espinal 2001, 136). Another example of white cultural practice is defensive responses to having concerns about inclusion raised, and the inevitable trotting out of minor details to prove that those concerns are unfounded, a practice now called whitelash or whitesplaining. On more than one occasion, white colleagues have pointed out to Espinal that her library has hired two Black librarians since 1998—one was an administrator who stayed for a few years in the early 2000s, and the other a library resident who was hired for two years, applied for a permanent position, then left that job after another year. The very real problem of

retention is ignored, and the person of color experiences whitelash rather than an admission that there could be a problem with retention.

In 2001, a search revealed no articles in the library literature that addressed whiteness, white privilege, or the concept of systemic white supremacy. It seemed that no one was writing about whiteness in librarianship. This dearth in the literature offers some explanation of why Espinal's work received both welcome positive attention from librarians of color at professional gatherings as well as uncomfortable reactions from the white librarians with whom she worked daily. Today, however, it is clear that the information professions are now in the midst of a conversation about whiteness, although not everyone is participating, and many remain unaware that the conversation is happening. From 2006 to 2016, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA) lists nine articles on whiteness in the information professions, and from 2014 to 2016 alone, six articles (Blackburn 2015; Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro 2015; Galvan 2015; Hathcock 2015; Ramirez 2015; Schlesselman-Tarango 2016). The database may lack in some key writings—for example, Todd Honma's (2005) influential article is not included—and for that matter neither is Espinal's. Additionally, librarians have published blog posts on the subject of whiteness that also are not indexed in the database, as in Chris Bourg's (2014), b. binaohan's (2014a and 2014b), and Max Macias's (2016) recent writings. Although the articles varied in their focus and general approach to the topic of whiteness in the information professions, generally they underscored that (1) whiteness is a default—yet unspoken—phenomenon and that (2) whiteness is not a biological reality but rather a social and ideological construct.

Jody Nyasha Warner (2001) outlined major areas in which whiteness dominates North American libraries, with a focus on collections, staffing, and cataloguing. John Berry's 2004 article on white privilege is a librarian's version of Peggy McIntosh's knapsack of white privilege (1989). For example, you can be certain of your white privilege if you can answer affirmatively that "if I should need to change jobs, I can be pretty sure of working in a position in a library professionally staffed primarily, if not exclusively, with people of my race," or "I can be pretty sure that the person in charge will be a person of my race," or "I can go home from most professional meetings or conferences feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared." For most librarians of color, including the authors, none of these statements have ever been true.

Various writers have taken a historical and structural approach. Todd Honma (2005, 4) outlined how "libraries have historically served the interests of a white racial project by aiding in the construction and maintenance of a white American citizenry as well as the perpetuation of white privilege in the structures of the field itself," asserting that "the theoretical investi-

gation into histories of whiteness is a crucial intervention within the LIS field." Supporting this view, Christine Pawley (2006, 162, 163) advocated for "decentering whiteness in the LIS imagination" as "an urgent priority," pointing out that this would require huge changes and bold action but also reminding librarians that the "LIS field is indeed capable of radical transformation; we can tell this from the example of recent technological change in librarianship." In another historical account, Hand (2012, 37) drew on whiteness studies to assert, "Children's librarians . . . ironically fostered the cultural transmission of a nineteenth-century white racial ideology memorialized within books sitting on the library shelf." American Studies scholar George Lipsitz began his essay for *The Progressive Librarian* (2009, 3) with the observation that "Red Cliff Lake Ojibwe activist Walter Bresette found it remarkable that white Americans had such great libraries but such poor memories. He felt that with the Ojibwe it was the reverse, that they had virtually no libraries, but possessed great memories." Lipsitz gave examples to show how "the indirect, institutional, and inferential racism [is] encoded within . . . [a] possessive investment in whiteness" that permeates our society (4). Chris Bourg (2014) used US Census figures to demonstrate that librarianship is overwhelmingly white, asserting that the lack of diversity in a profession that claims it as a core value "is embarrassing": the population of white librarians is 88 percent, while the US population is only 63 percent white.

The authors of several articles elaborate on how librarians of color are subject to—and then fall short of—the idea of a performative white librarianship as neutral, professional, and/or more valuable in the workplace (Galvan 2015; binaohan 2014b; Hathcock 2015; Blackburn 2015). b. binaohan focuses on the gendered aspects of librarianship's demographic whiteness as well as a structural analysis, making "a plea . . . for these white women to remember that they are not the default librarian. That their experiences within the field . . . are not universal and that treating them as such erases the reality and lives lived by women of colour" (2014b). Galvan (2015) asserts that "the whiteness of librarianship" is upheld by the job application process as well as how librarians of color are evaluated: "We choose people like us because it is easy, rather than advocating for different views by picking 'unfamiliar' candidates who might interrogate the processes. . . . Our reviews are full of words like 'shrill,' 'abrasive,' 'hard to work with,' 'not a team player,' and 'difficult.'" Galvan ends her article with a list of thirteen suggestions that can be adopted to "interrogate whiteness." Hathcock (2015), also a librarian of color, maintains that even so-called diversity programs recruit individuals of color who can demonstrate whiteness. As a white librarian, Fiona Blackburn (2015) wrote a first-person accounting of the ways she became cognizant of whiteness and the systemic advantages it provided her, detailing when she was taken more seriously than her colleagues of color just because she was a white woman.

Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazarro (2015), also identifying as white librarians, elaborated on "the culture of Whiteness in academic libraries in three major areas of public services: space, staffing, and reference service delivery," attempting to show how racism is embedded in these areas of librarianship "through the presumed and oppressive 'neutrality' of Whiteness" (248). They offer a list of suggested actions in each of these areas as necessary antiracist measures. Ramirez (2015), writing as a male archivist of color, sees the same patterns in his subfield, citing as an example an article by a white male archivist who has no awareness of his white male privilege in his defenses of professional neutrality and thus boasted that "one of his proudest moments" was when a prospective donor assumed that he was politically conservative given what he articulated as his "polite distance" from conversations involving such topics and his "respectfulness" toward the differing opinions of others (9). Ramirez analyzes such a statement via the lens of unacknowledged whiteness—a false neutrality.

In Espinal's 2001 article, she suggested that librarianship as a focus for studying whiteness can help us examine how sex and gender operate in relation to whiteness since it is a profession demographically dominated by white women although managerially dominated by white men. Schlesselman-Tarango (2016) answered her call directly with a study of the persistence of the unspoken (white) "Lady Bountiful" persona as a primary role model for all of librarianship, whose genealogy traces to at least the nineteenth century and is a kind of ancestor to today's "Nice White Lady," cited by binaohan (2014a). Schlesselman-Tarango summarizes the history of this particular intersectionality, and maintains that "due to its limited engagement with whiteness, LIS diversity literature also has rendered it implacable and without meaning, contributing to the silence that normalizes and subsequently reinforces and maintains it" (2016, 669).

Taken together, these articles can create a kind of whiteness syllabus, a curriculum for understanding how whiteness impacts librarianship and the information professions writ large. Yet there are still gaps in the literature. This discussion must continue and must include a multitude of voices and perspectives. The Library of Congress recently rejected (for the second time) the proposal for the subject heading "White privilege," stating: "LCSH does not include specific headings for groups discriminated against. Numerous works about white privilege have been assigned the headings Race discrimination and Whites—Race identity, and the meeting wishes to continue that practice" (SACO 2016). This refusal to officially name the concept despite the vast amount of literature around the term "white privilege" centers race discrimination as an ethnic minority problem rather than a white problem, further distancing white people from the problem of institutional whiteness.

In the late 1990s, librarians interested in diversifying the profession used the motto "Stop talking and start doing" (St. Lifer and Rogers 1997;

Reese and Hawkins 1999). In that spirit the authors here will focus on actions that library institutions and librarians across the USA can take today. Nevertheless, the authors do not discount the importance of communication, especially talking with other librarians of color about the impacts of whiteness. When Espinal penned her 2001 article, she did it alone and related actual work experiences as autoethnography. Years later she had conversations with Tonia Sutherland and Charlotte Roh, who were both research library residents at the same institution as Espinal, but have both left that workplace. Drawing on many in-depth conversations between Espinal and Sutherland over several months, the authors have employed dialogical analysis as their methodology. Dialogical analysis is based on the theoretical work of George Herbert Mead (1934) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) and is an interpretive methodology that analyzes spoken and written utterances for their communicative significance. The next section offers insights from that dialogue that inform the authors' proposals for future action.

Part II: The Affective Implications of Whiteness in the Workplace

> *I don't want to speak for all librarians of color, but these general practices need to be brought out—how are librarians of color being treated? I am tired of holding this up. Giving voice to concerns we have seen over and over and over again that have not been heard or addressed. This is a moment for real activism and action.* —Isabel Espinal

> *I view my love as a radical act of solidarity and my unwillingness to surrender that love as an act of defiance against a system that would otherwise silence and dehumanize me.* —Tonia Sutherland

> *Just because you're magic doesn't mean you're not real.* —Jesse Williams

Writing this article began with a conversation about "decentering whiteness." In conversation, it became clear that one effective way to decenter whiteness in LIS is to center the needs of information professionals of color in our search for solutions to the problems caused by whiteness ideologies. In that spirit, the authors have opted to literally place the themes from a conversation between and among people of color (POC) at the center of this article.

It is important to acknowledge that diversity and inclusion mean not everyone is the same. People come to information professions and to information centers (libraries, archives, museums, etc.) from a host of different backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives. One thing that whiteness and whiteness ideologies do is foment conformity, so it is even more important to underscore that not all POC have the same experiences in the work-

place. Recently, a person in a position of power said to one of the authors: "I don't know what culture you come from, but the sooner you get to know the culture here the better off you'll be." This pervasive assumption that employees of color will conform to an existing culture rather than attempt to include multiple perspectives in an evolving workplace culture is one key way that the information field can change. When true cultural inclusion is celebrated instead of persistent expectations of conformity, the profession stands to learn and expand.

For some, a culture of "presence equals performance" is deleterious. So many POC suffer daily barrages of microaggressions and the oppressive burdens of emotional and affective labor that being physically present in the office may equate with trauma. In fact, a decade-old study on racial bias on college and university campuses suggests that victims of racial microaggressions are stressed in ways similar to soldiers at war (W. A. Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano 2006). Unfortunately, the way one is taught to think about work in the United States is a throwback to the whiteness ideologies of the 1940s and 1950s. Managers are still invested in this idea that people must be at work to be working, and at the same time they refuse to acknowledge that the workplace is hostile for many employees. Instead, productivity is measured in time served rather than goals accomplished. As a result, there is no pain barometer; there is no escape clause that says if your workplace is hostile because you are a racial minority under siege that there will be support for you when it becomes too much. There is no room in cultures of whiteness for emotions and certainly no room for anything that might be perceived as weakness on the part of POC. The end result is often a slow ride toward catastrophic disagreement and disengagement wherein POC either speak up or step down. In either case, the profession loses another nonwhite voice and POC are further characterized as not being "a good fit" or "a team player." Again, by refusing to accept a plurality of opinions and recognize a plurality of experiences, whiteness ideology destroys true inclusion and pluralism.

As it stands, there is often absolute cultural erasure, and work that is done and done well is often ignored or attributed to white colleagues. On the other hand, one doesn't want to be tokenized or asked to contribute or participate because of ethnic or racial identity (particularly when this work is emotionally demanding and the aforementioned erasure is sure to follow). There is a tension between erasure and tokenism that is unresolved here. For example, on search committees POC are often asked to appeal to other POC to apply for the open position or asked how to best get more POC through the door. Why is this not the responsibility of the entire committee? Or the entire faculty and staff? That the person making these requests doesn't recognize his/her behavior as problematic, as inappropriately racialized, or as a microaggression is deeply concerning. And, quite frankly, exhausting.

In her pivotal essay, "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," Audre Lorde states:

> My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight. My fear of anger taught me nothing. Your fear of that anger will teach you nothing, also. Women responding to racism means women responding to anger; Anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation. (1984, 124)

One of the explicit hopes in writing this article is that a space can be created for both the anger and sadness of POC. Very often, these emotional investments are culturally informed. Asking POC to remain emotionless is a form of cultural bias and cultural imperialism. It's one of the ways whiteness maintains power: power structures are maintained by policing emotions and the responses of people of color to hostility in the workplace. Decentering whiteness means embracing a culture where emotions can be expressed at work and not relegated to a therapist's office. As Warner wrote in 2001:

> Up until very recently university culture was predominantly white, male and middle class and the vestiges of this are still very present. For instance, one who is not a white male may have trouble feeling at home with the typical communication style at my institution. I find it very devoid of emotion, personal experience, colorful language and any kind of give and take rhythm, which I attribute to cultural differences. (169)

Racial violence and police brutality have a library and information correlate. Those are the tips of the iceberg— horrendous, physically violent, and visible—part of the emotional violence that many LIS people of color experience. Yet acts of violence don't always look like a bullet. When you erase a colleague's work, that is a violent gesture: it causes emotional, psychological, and spiritual damage. That violence, combined with the trauma of being a woman of color in the world, in a national moment when trauma is omnipresent and literally worn on the body, leaves no emotional space to heal from the institutional violence that is part of the system of white supremacy.

In conversation, Sutherland inquired, "What does it mean to try to cross the threshold from information professional to information administrator and be confronted with whiteness ideologies/being perceived as threat to white identity?" This is an area that is underdiscussed in library diversity, inclusion, and antiracism literature and presentations: there are barriers created by whiteness for librarians of color who want to move into administration. It starts with biases that position POC as less competent than white counterparts; these are the same biases that keep POC from entering the profession, and they are also related to the biases that keep

POC students underperforming in K-12 environments. The goals for diversity and inclusion in librarianship *must* be expanded to include recruitment, retention, and promotion. White biases, coupled with complacency, results in librarians of color not being given access to the tools necessary to move into administration: librarians of color are not being groomed for administration, and then, as it follows, they are not given those opportunities and are not seen as leaders. When POC dare to try for leadership roles, eyebrows are raised and surprise comes across faces: librarians of color are made to feel as if they are overly ambitious and stepping out of line—that they don't know "their place." Librarians of color tend to recognize each other's leadership skills and celebrate it, while their white counterparts tend to do the opposite. Espinal noted, "There's a part of me that doesn't want to dwell on this. Yet I want to find the space to share my story because I wonder how many other librarians of color have had similar roadblocks in their careers due to whiteness ideology and whiteness practices and yet don't speak of it." This is due perhaps to a "tyranny of silence," a concept Smith utilized when writing about conversations between law professors of color:

> Why hadn't we told anyone? Why did each of us feel that we were alone? Why were we so ashamed of our experiences? Why were we so afraid to speak? . . . We were silenced, feeling alone and feeling ashamed because of the tyrannies of silence, which demand silence and fear in exchange for the tenuous promise of tenure at some point in the future. . . . Individually we learned the heartaches that go along with fear, the isolation that is its companion. The attendant belief that it was you rather than your institution. The attendant demand that one has to remain emotionless and forgiving in the face of continuous racial aggressions. Together we learned that it was not us, that we were not alone and that the very institutions that were harming us were the same ones depending on our silence. (P. J. Smith 2000, 1107)

Part III: Moving Forward: Decentering Whiteness and Centering Librarians of Color

Because of the slow rate of change in the information professions, it is difficult to find examples of strategies that have worked to combat the dominance of whiteness. What has *not* worked is forming committees or writing policies and other documents that are eventually suspended or simply forgotten based on the trends of the organization. Another ineffective practice is tinkering at the edges rather than taking large-scale actions. Libraries have been national leaders in innovating how spaces and technology can be reconfigured, but not so in diversity and inclusion initiatives. Librarians of color often experience a personal sense of betrayal when there is a betrayal of diversity and inclusion efforts in their institutions and their profession.

Much more and creative recruitment is necessary, to be certain, but

recruitment is not enough. Even retention is not enough. For librarians of color who are retained, it is difficult to gauge how happy and fulfilled—and even well utilized—they are. Further, few librarians of color who are retained are also supported for advancement in the organization. People of color are saying, See us, highlight us, mention us—not just when you are mandated by law to find people like us on search committees or when you need a black or brown face on a publicity brochure. Justice needs to be a bigger part of this conversation. Part of justice is acknowledging what has not worked in the past and the righting of wrongs. It is time to move beyond both white fragility and self-congratulatory whiteness.

There is a need to intervene early and often. Max Macias notes that the problem of whiteness is generational. Children of color get the message of whiteness early, that "European people and European culture are more important than other people and other cultures" (2016), reinforced in every book they read. It is critical to intervene before another generation of children learn to prioritize whiteness and whiteness ideologies. Intervening in children's and young adult librarianship, insisting on representation in youth literature and programming is a key task. Interventions in public libraries, academic libraries, law libraries, and medical libraries are also needed, sending a strong message that equity and inclusion are library values. Interventions are also vital in archives and digital spaces; it is critical to document historically significant events and vulnerable communities as well as to hold perpetrators of violence accountable.

Here are some suggested actions to improve diversity and inclusion and fight whiteness ideology in librarianship:

1. Associations and library schools can do the following:
   a. Allocate long-term funding for ethnic caucuses. Because diversity is a core value of ALA it would be entirely consistent and beneficial to the work of diversity for ALA to support the associations of librarians of color in much greater sums than it currently does. Given that ALA's budget is in the millions, it would be appropriate and within its means for ALA to allocate $500,000 directly to the caucuses, distributed either evenly at $100,000 each or based on the figures from the US Census demographic data.
   b. Promote and advance the understanding of whiteness in librarianship. Every library school should offer a course on whiteness in librarianship; associations should offer professional development seminars, workshops, and the like. A whole book could be published on whiteness in librarianship, even culling together the articles we reviewed. Understanding the impacts of systematic whiteness is key to understanding the library profession. Since the profession is so predominantly white, this is also a key place from which many librarians can start a conversation about race.

2. Associations and institutions can do the following:
   a. Rethink, re-envision, and revise the residency. The ACRL's Diversity Alliance program calls for the creation of residencies by each alliance member library. This call can go further and expand beyond ACRL to encompass other library categories and services via PLA, YALSA, etc. Libraries should take actions to increase the numbers of graduates of library schools eligible to apply to jobs as librarians. Specifically, we propose the creation of positions that do not require the MLS and that actually would pay employees to obtain the MLS on the job. There are possibilities for partnerships between college libraries and library schools. As diversity in LIS education increases, diversity in the profession(s) increases. Public libraries should encourage promising nonlibrarian staff of color to obtain certification through scholarship programs and time to pursue education. To be successful this would require thousands of libraries to participate. It can be done.
   b. Allocate funding for librarians of color to attend conferences of librarians of color. Do not make us choose between attending to our cultural needs and attending to functional areas in our work. Since librarians of color have to do double work in the engagement with racial battles, provide separate funding to attend meetings of REFORMA, Black Caucus of ALA, APALA, AILA, Joint Conference of Librarians of Color. Also allocate funding for white librarians to attend these, but the priority should be the mental and professional health of librarians of color as a way to decenter whiteness.
   c. Create programs for the veterans of the racial battles of whiteness. Now more than ever, the political environment has laid bare the racist realities of daily life for people of color. Yet in our work environment no one carved out space for us to grieve and deal with this fatigue and feeling of being under siege by the greater society. Part of seeing us is to see that POC experience both individual and collective trauma in this country. We can't be expected to produce, produce, produce without any acknowledgement of the horrors that POC in general and librarians of color in particular are having to process on a bodily level. There aren't resources for librarians of color who have endured years of microaggressions. Such programs would address how to apologize and how to make amends with us. How to clear the air and start fresh? How to heal? Perhaps ACRL, ARL, ALA, LLAMA can create conference programs that would teach white librarians how to address the aggressions of the past. Another possibility is a mentoring program for the previously unmentored and/or a mentoring program specifically for those of us who have been in these battles. These would not be programs that put more burdens on us to act white, but rather help take the weight off that we've already

been carrying. Additionally, it would be great to survey librarians of color who've been in the profession over ten years to see what other ideas emerge.

3. Institutions and libraries can think creatively to do the following:
   a. Combine technological and "cutting edge" librarianship with diversity librarianship. We should not have to choose between technological focus and a diversity focus: both are future oriented and work well together. Open access projects are a good example, as are digital/data curation roles and media/digital literacy efforts. So many communities in crisis are finding that they need social media and digital curation skills to capture the digital culture emerging around issues such as #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName.
   b. Infuse more flexibility in hiring practices, more agility, risk-taking, and commitment. As Warner suggested, "This might mean paying a little more money to hire a person of color whose credentials are slightly higher than what we were looking for, or setting aside a little more staff time to train a person of color whose credentials were slightly lower than what we were looking for" (2001, 170). Warner also suggested mentoring programs, promotion opportunities for librarians of color, and "on-going anti-racist training" (170). Similarly, Brook, Ellenwood, and Lazzaro make helpful suggestions that can be greatly expanded (2015, 268–69). These measures are not a burden. What a rare opportunity to hire, retain, and promote us!
4. Individuals in work environments can do the following:
   a. Move from microaggressions to microaffections. It's up to every librarian to break the affective implications of whiteness in the workplace. There's been talk and writing of late on microaggressions in librarianship (Wheeler 2016; Alabi 2015a, 2015b), with an extensive website—Microaggressions in Librarianship (http://lismicroaggressions.tumblr.com)—dedicated to documenting examples. While it's important for librarians to have awareness of the microaggressions they commit, in order to decenter whiteness in libraries, all librarians can engage *microaffections* toward librarians of color. Burklo (2015) defines a microaffection as "a subtle but endearing or comforting comment or action directed at others that is often unintentional or unconsciously affirms their worth and dignity, without any hint of condescension." Even though the aim is for these actions to come spontaneously, it would take some commitment and thinking about the behavior and culture that many librarians have assumed is the default in order to move into this more affective and effective mode: "The cultivation of microaffection: priming ourselves for moments when, spontaneously, we go out of our way to make others feel like they are dignified, respectable, truly beloved members of society. It takes forethought in order to be able to offer kindness without fore-

thought" (Burklo 2015). Many microaffections took place between Espinal and Sutherland and between Espinal and Roh, and a look at the list-servs and social media spaces of librarians of color will find many examples of encouraging and loving interactions that create loving environments. But microaffections between librarians of color are not enough to make libraries hospitable to POC. Librarians of color need their white colleagues to step up, to perform small acts that demonstrate understanding and moment-by-moment allyship. Coogan writes that "affection probably scales up and permeates social networks in the same way that aggression does, if not more so. At least to the extent that microaggression can crush, microaffection can liberate" (2016).

b. Educate themselves about whiteness via readings, workshops, and lectures as a part of their professional development and civic responsibility.

In short, we need to implement big, bold programs to diversity our profession. Based on recent statistics (Bourg 2014), we would need 11,640 more African American librarians than the 6,160 we have currently to make the profession representative of the African American population. Similarly while the US population is 17 percent Latino, the population of librarians is only 3 percent Latino; to bridge that gap, we'd need 16,512 more Latino librarians than the 3,661 that we now have. We'd need 3,029 more Asian Pacific/Islander librarians than we currently have, and 1,239 more Native American librarians (we currently only have 185)! And if two-thirds of MLIS degrees are earned by white students and one-third of all librarians are POC, as noted in a recent review of the ALISE statistics (2014), we definitely don't see numbers like this represented in our libraries. Where are all the librarians of color?

The list of things to do may be daunting, and for good reason: it's no easy task to upturn the entrenched system of white supremacy that permeates every part of our culture. To acknowledge this problem in our beloved profession of librarianship is not easy, and to change it is to acknowledge this problem in each of us, in our hearts and minds. Certainly, none of us are perfect, and every one of us can perhaps think back to a cringeworthy moment where we misstepped culturally. But we ask that rather than stagnating in discouragement, apathy, or procrastination, we engage together in a radical transformation as to how we perceive and act toward each other. White librarians in particular: reach out to your colleagues of color, reach out of yourselves and toward another person, toward another culture, another way of doing things. We struggle with how to get white librarians to see themselves in whiteness and perpetuators of whiteness, without getting defensive, or shedding "white tears." Decenter whiteness by decentering the white experience. Those of us, librarians of color, who

are here already in the profession need outreach too. Some of us have been in these battles for decades already, and we are tired. Library administrators across the country can reach out to the librarians of color within their own institutions. Let us know that we are supported. Show us. Ask what can you do *for* us. When it comes to diversity in libraries, we are the "customers" too. Everything that is asked *of us* with regards to how we serve and work with students and faculty in an academic library or with community members and organizations in a public library should also be offered *to us*. Black Librarians Matter. Latinx Librarians Matter. Indigenous Librarians Matter. Asian Librarians Matter. Librarians of Color Matter. We matter. Our mental health matters. Our careers matter.

Love us. Love librarians of color. Don't just tolerate us. Love us and celebrate us. In our conversations, we did share when white colleagues reached out to us with affection or positive recognition or moments of inclusion that did not demand assimilation. They stood out to us as radical, much-needed acts, but isolated ones. We need more of those moments, rather than complacency in the face of injustice. There are concrete actions every librarian can do.

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Dr. Isabel Espinal is the librarian to the Afro-American Studies; Anthropology; Latino Studies; Native American & Indigenous Studies; and Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies departments at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. A past president of

REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking, she has written and given presentations on whiteness and diversity in librarianship, Latinos, information literacy, the climate crisis and libraries, and Latino literature, among other topics.

Dr. Tonia Sutherland is assistant professor of library and information studies at the University of Hawaii. Global in scope and decolonial in nature, Sutherland's research and teaching focus on community engagement and entanglements of technology and culture.

Charlotte Roh is the scholarly communications librarian at the University of San Francisco, a Jesuit university next to Golden Gate Park with a social justice mission. This allows her to work at the intersection of social justice, scholarly communication, and information literacy.