Silenced and Siloed:

Racism, Rankism and the Age of COVID

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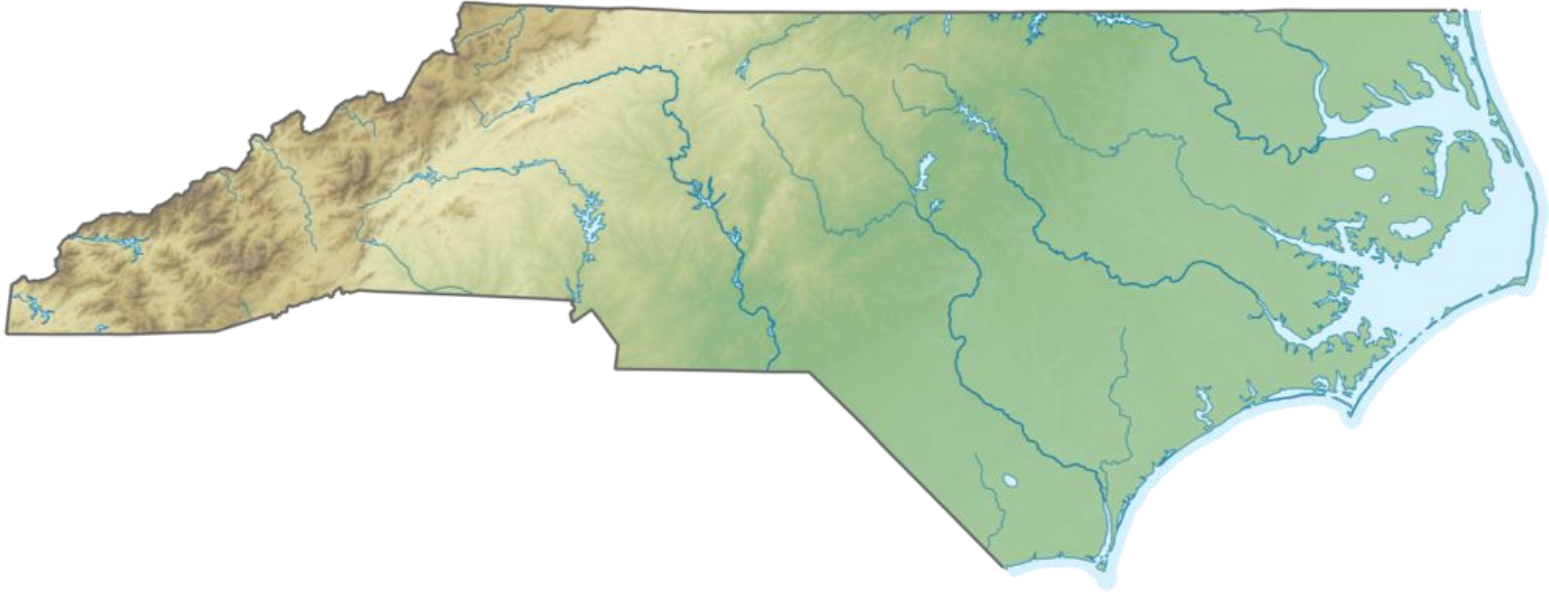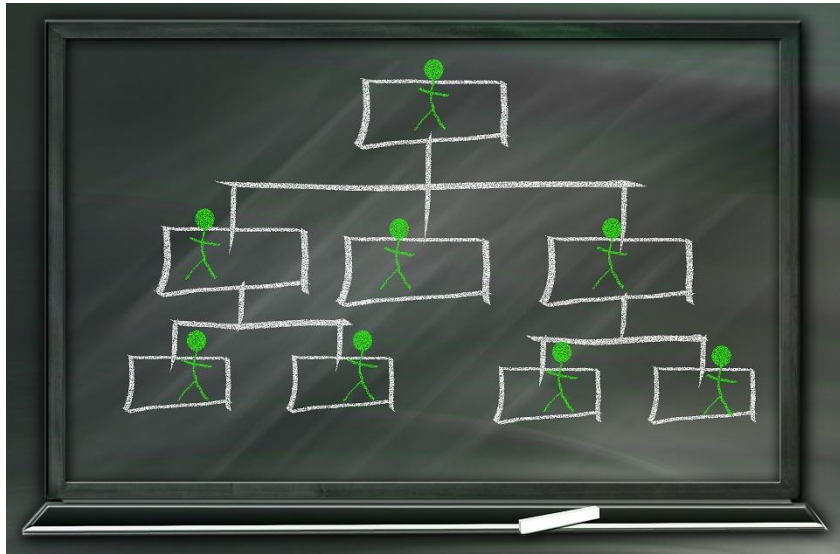# Land acknowledgment

Organizational Structure of Academia...

- Hierarchical and Rankist

- Colonialism and Paternalism

- Trickle-down communication styles

- Siloes are inherent to libraries
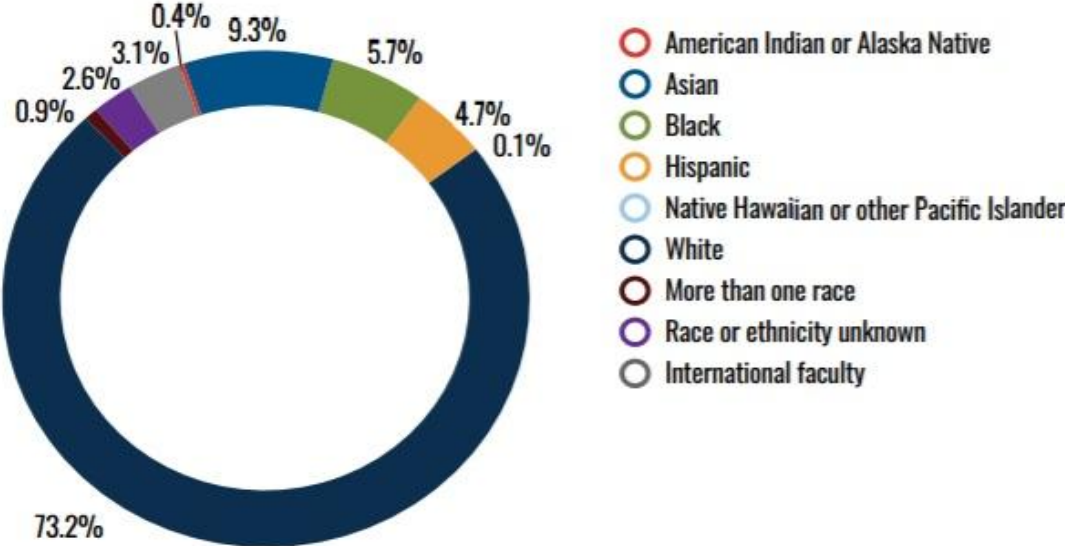
- Leadership is white and often male

In 2010:
82.8% of all working librarians were women
17.2% were male

40% of academic library directors were male

Racism in Higher Education

Figure 10.1: Total Full-Time Faculty, by Race and Ethnicity: Fall 2016

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- More than one race
- Race or ethnicity unknown
- International faculty

0.4%
3.1%
2.6%
0.9%
9.3%
5.7%
4.7%
0.1%
73.2%

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016
Note: Data reflect full-time faculty at public four-year, private nonprofit four-year, public two-year, and for-profit institutions. Institutions were categorized into sectors based upon control of the institution and the length of the predominant award granted.

Administrative Leadership

Figure 10.12: College and University Administrators, by Position and Race and Ethnicity: 2017
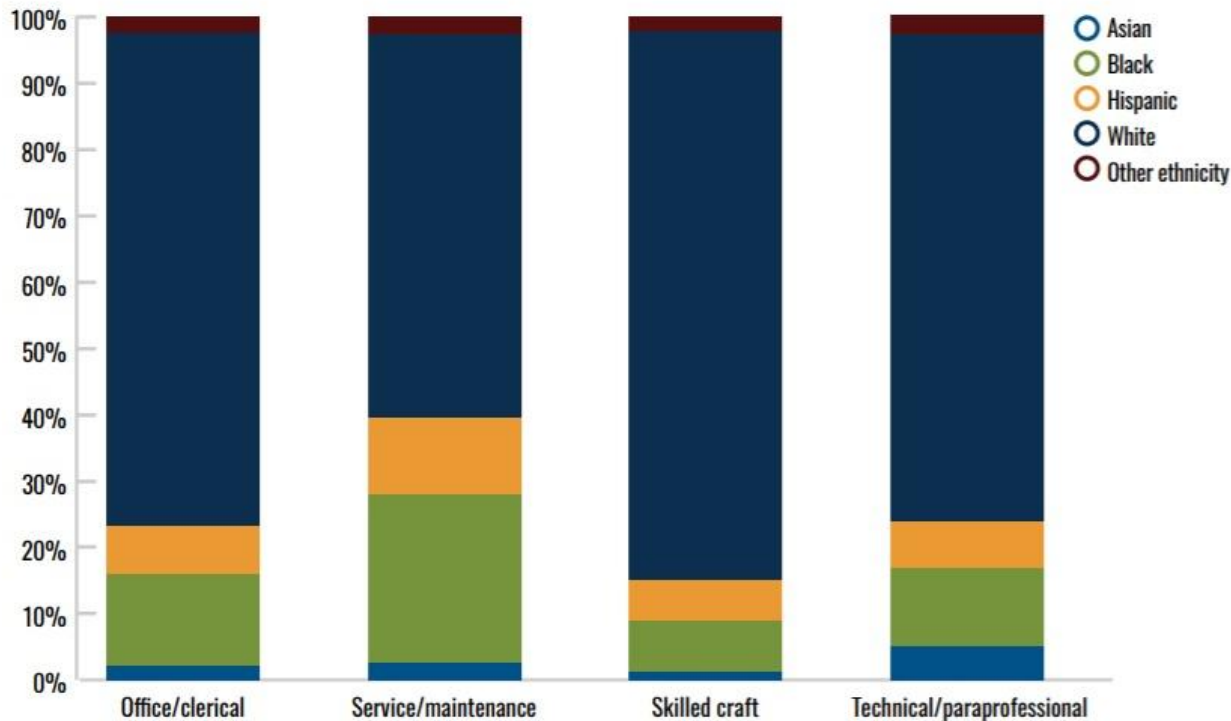
Racism in Higher Education

Figure 10.14: College and University Staff, by Position and Race and Ethnicity: 2017

Legend: Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, Other ethnicity
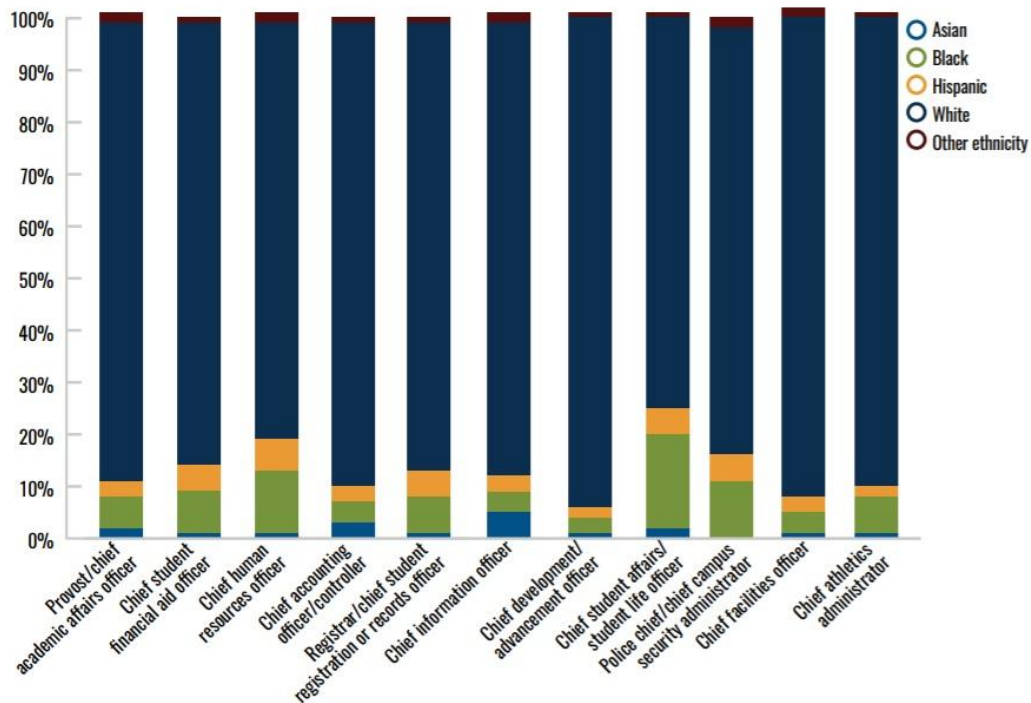
Source: Bichsel, Jacqueline, Jingyun Li, Adam Pritchard, and Jasper McChesney. 2018. *Professionals in Higher Education Annual Report: Key Findings, Trends, and Comprehensive Tables for 2017–18 Academic Year*. Knoxville, TN: CUPA-HR.

88%
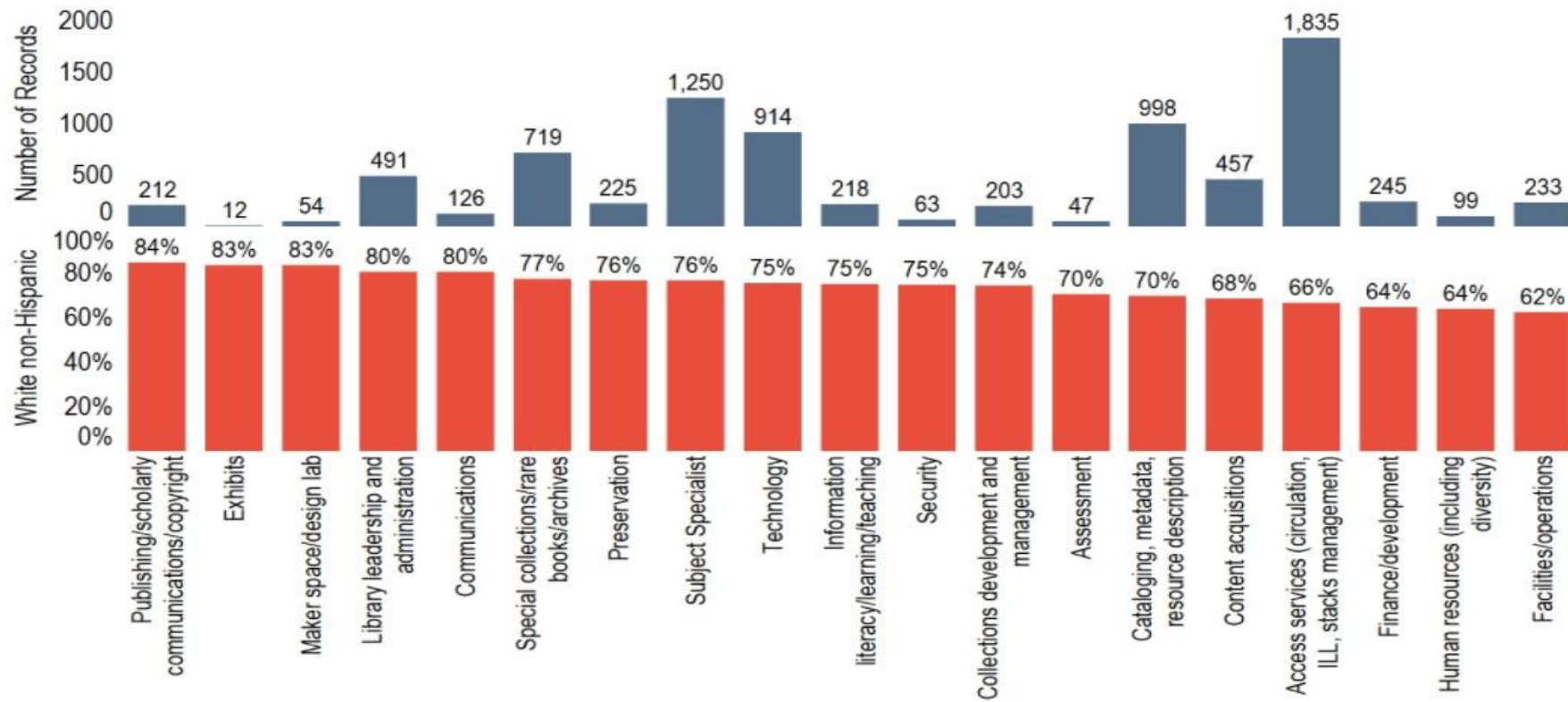
White Represensentation in Librarianship

5.2% Black

3.1% Hispanic

2.7% Asian American/Pacific Islander

Racism in Academic Libraries

Figure 9: Race/ethnicity— by job types

COVID's Impact on Library Workers

Deaths per 100,000 people by race or ethnicity through March 7, 2021

Race or Ethnicity	Deaths per 100,000
Black or African American	178
American Indian or Alaska Native	172
Hispanic or Latino	154
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	144
White	124
Other	97
Asian	95
Two or more races	18
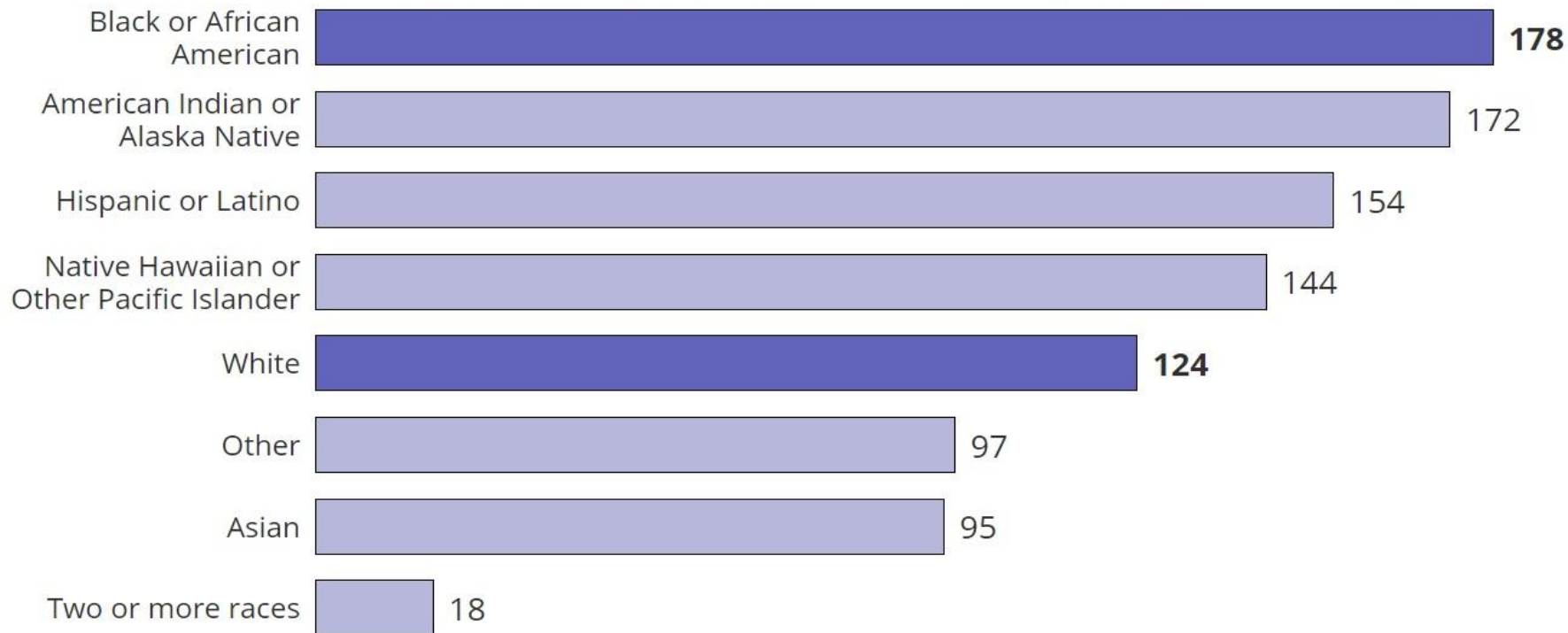
Library Staff Take Action
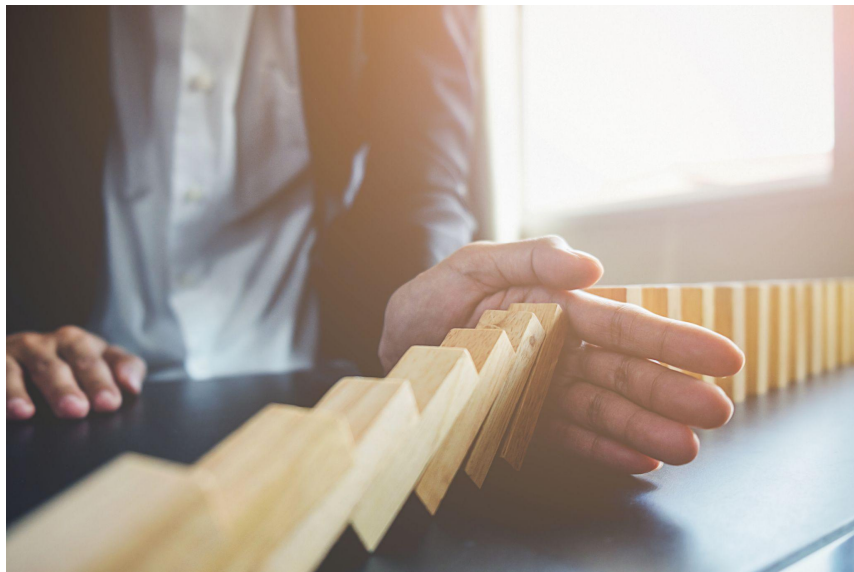
UNC employee lawsuit

- Unsafe conditions
- Heightened health risk

Concerned Black Workers of Free Library of Philadelphia Open Letter

- Ongoing racism in library
- COVID's effect on Black population
- Staff security risk

Rankism in Academic Libraries

"Rankism is the exploitation or humiliation of those with less power or lower status. Simply put, rankism occurs when the somebodies of the world use the power of their rank to take advantage over those they see as nobodies."

–Robert W. Fuller

Rankism may affect…

- Access to information
- Mentoring or professional development
- Workspace
- Representation in leadership
- Access to social and professional networks
- Feedback mechanisms/accountability of leadership
- Performance and promotion assessments

"[E]liminating rankism doesn't mean eliminating rank any more than getting rid of racism means getting rid of race. Rank can be a useful organizational tool that, used properly, helps us achieve group goals. It is the abuse of rank that cries out for our attention."

Robert W. Fuller

ALA Code of Ethics vs. Librarianship in Practice

"Vocational awe describes the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in notions that libraries as institutions are inherently good, sacred notions, and therefore beyond critique. I argue that the concept of vocational awe directly correlates to problems within librarianship like burnout and low salary."
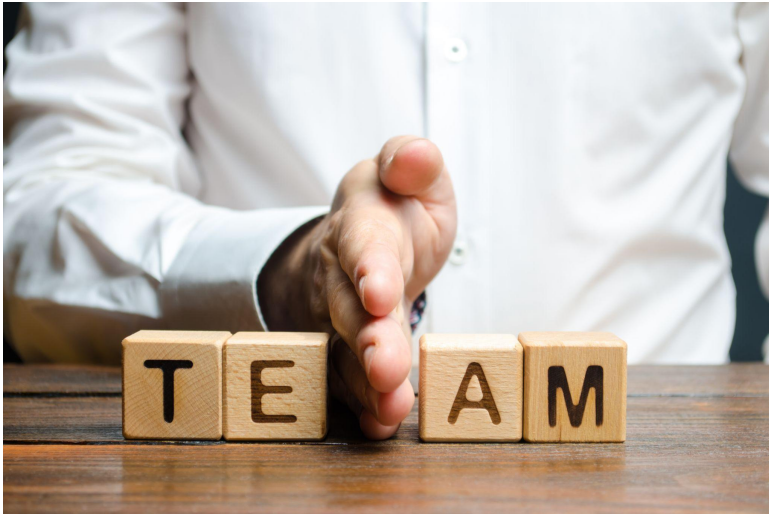
- Fobazi Ettarh

V. "We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions"

American Library Association (ALA) Code of Ethics
ALA Council
Adopted June 28, 1995

Practices in Opposition to ALA Ethic

Unrealistic
- Ignores racism and rankism

COVID Mismanagement
- Primarily frontline staff required to work
- Inadequate PPE & building security for staff
- Working w/ limited information
- Reduced/non-existent remote work opportunities

VI. "We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions."

ALA Code of Ethics
ALA Council
Adopted June 28, 1995

Practices in Opposition to ALA Ethic
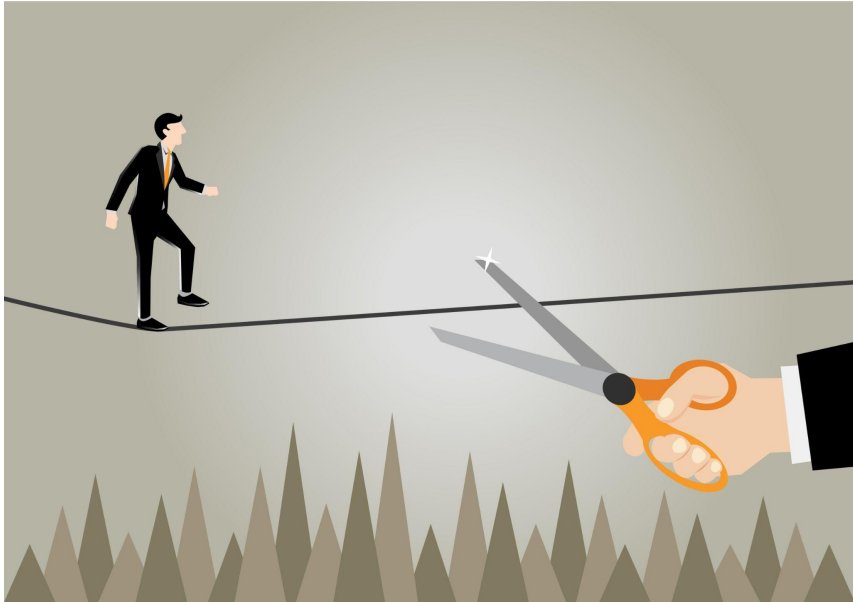
- "Managing up"

- "Need to know" basis information sharing

- Paternalistic decision-making

VII. "We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources."

ALA Code of Ethics
ALA Council
Adopted June 28, 1995

Practices in Opposition to ALA Ethic

Biased

- Values rooted in Whiteness and White supremacy
- Frontline staff rarely represented in institutional aims

Ignores past and present

- History of racial and class discrimination
- Current practices of librarianship within the academy

VIII. "We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession."

Practices in Opposition to ALA Ethic

- Inequitable professional development funding

- Inequitable opportunities for education and training

- Lack of release time for professional development

What Can We Do?

We do not profess to have all the answers but wanted to put forward suggestions for action steps that libraries can take beyond self care. While self care is important, it does not alleviate the systemic issues that are causing the need for so much self care.
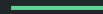
It begins with leadership!

- Acknowledge that systems of oppression are present in every organization

- Create a sustainable long-term action plan

- Be committed to the plan and stay the course

Recognize

Recognize and support leadership at all levels

- Equitable assessment

- Root out favoritism

Request

Request frontline staff feedback

- Multiple methods of data collection

- Do not call out individual staff

- Manager accountability

- Implement

Remove

Remove silos

- Create spaces for BIPOC frontline staff voices

- Open meetings

Reconsider

- Be mindful of toxic positivity

- Learn to receive negative feedback

- Do not engage in respectability politics

Raise

Support professional development

- Funding
- Release time
- On the job training
- Mentorship

Support career advancement

- Training beyond the job role
- Informal mentorship - keep the conversation going

Questions?

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Resources

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