

The Intersection of Racial Justice
& Intellectual Freedom in Libraries:
*Moving From Performative to
Transformative Action*

Presented by Sabine Jean Dantus
Florida Libraries Online Conference



In 1959, A 9-year-old boy
tried to check out math and
science books in a
segregated library.

Terms

- **Performative Action**
- **Transformative Action**
- **Intellectual Freedom**
- **First Amendment**

Terms

- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**
- **Social Justice**
- **Racial Justice**
- **Anti-Racism**

Discussion Points

Does libraries' support of intellectual freedom and performative support of anti-racism books really spark racial justice?

Decolonization of bookshelves has been a clarion call this past year since the rise of anti-racism book lists after George Floyd's death

Libraries are deemed neutral entities, and in an era of canceled culture, book censorship, and book banning

What is the libraries' role in developing an open forum for intellectual freedom and racial justice?

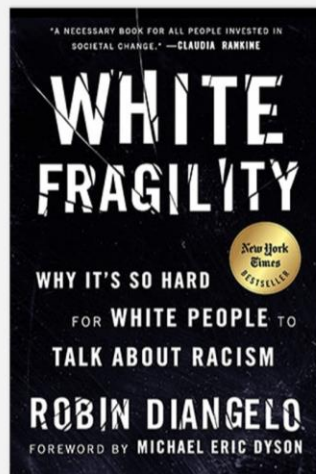
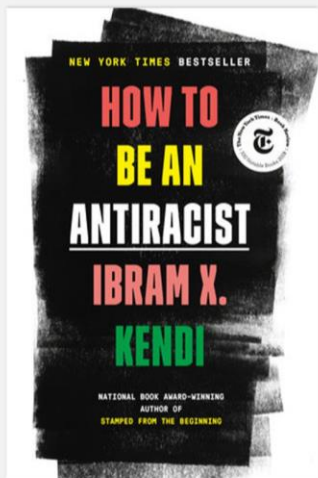
Let's discuss what libraries and librarians can do to promote transformative equity, diversity, and inclusion practices



In 2011, to mark the anniversary of his death, Dr. McNair's childhood library was renamed after him.



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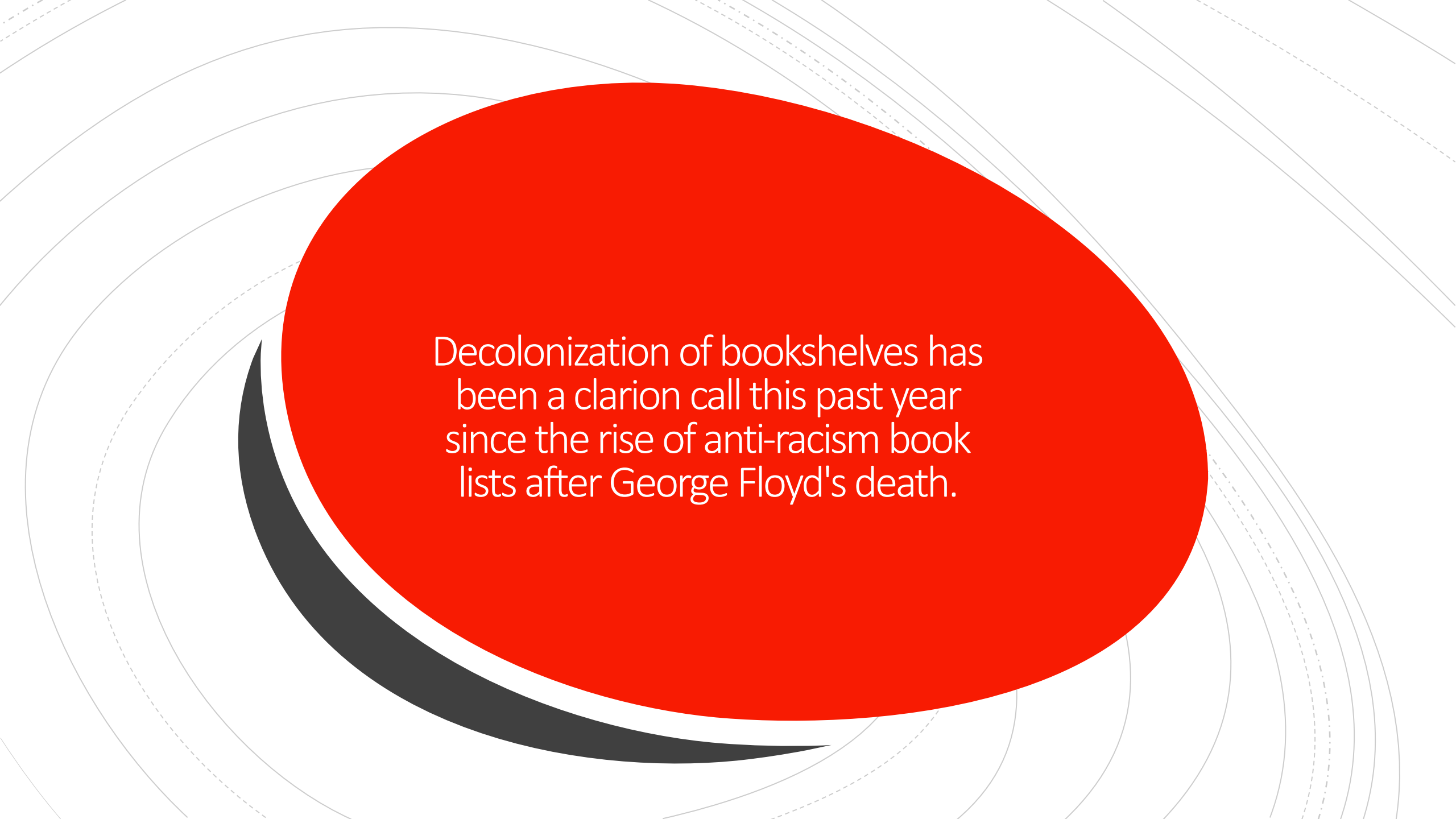


Reading as
Resistance

Reading as Resistance

Anti-Racism book lists:

- What have you done? would seem much more meaningful than "What have you read?" (Grundy, 2020).
- Cultivating consciousness and articulating it gives it meaning beyond mere rhetoric (Grundy, 2020).



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Decolonizing the Bookshelves?

There has been a significant increase of book challenges in the number of children and young adult books that are being challenged for their anti-racism and anti-immigrant messages.



Case Study

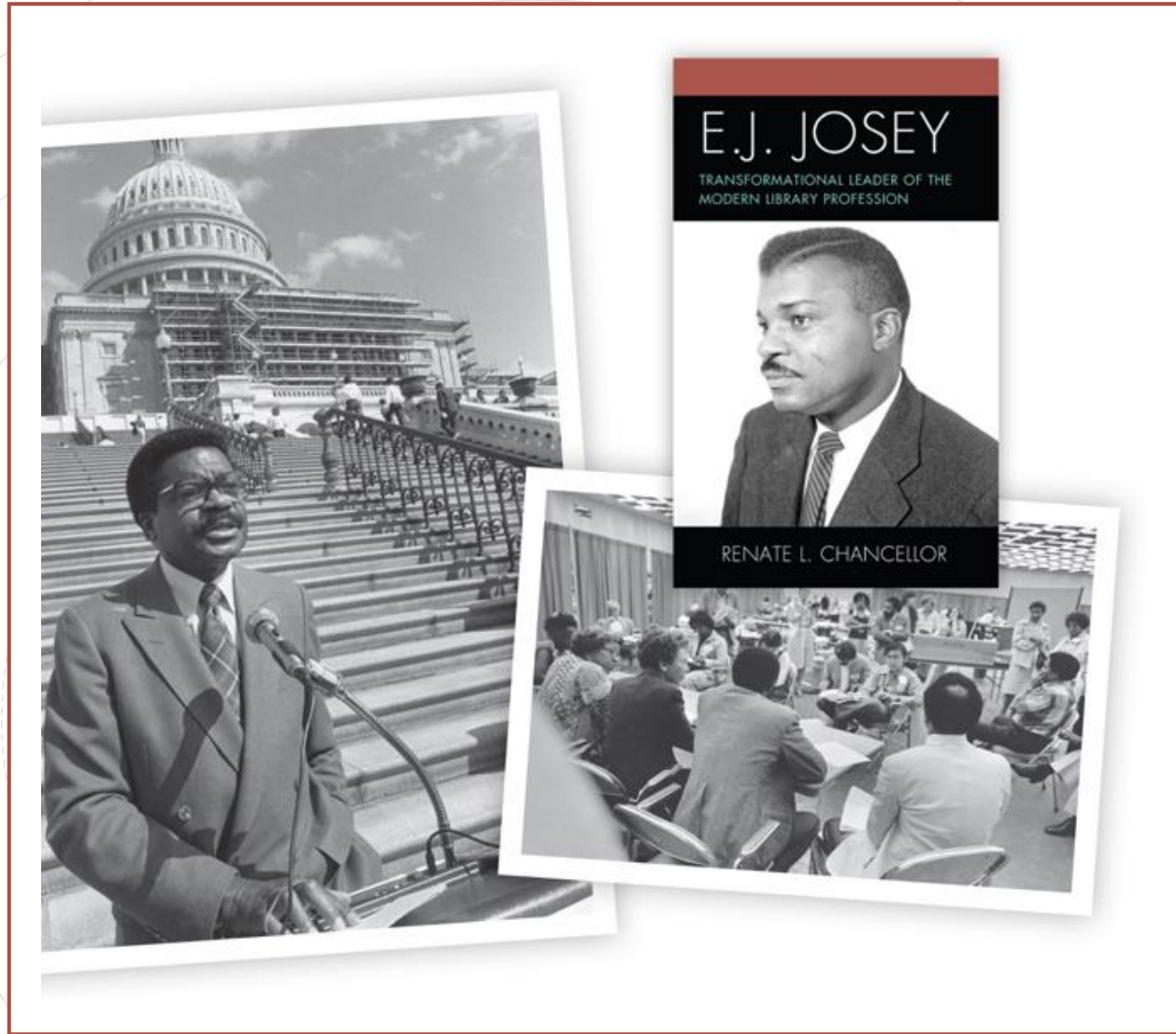
Minnesota Police and Peace Officers
Association (MPPOA)

AND


Minnesota Department of Health and
the Minnesota Department of
Education



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Historical Perspective



What is the library's role in
developing an open forum
for intellectual freedom and
racial justice?



Case Study

Ferguson Municipal
Public Library



Case Study


Amy Dodson, the director of the Douglas County Public Library posts statement "We support #BlackLivesMatter" to social media

Intellectual Freedom and Social Justice

Intellectual freedom and social justice are not interchangeable (Knox, 2020).

Sometimes it is at odds with each other because of the values of librarianship (Knox, 2020)

Emergence of Critical Librarianship



Let's discuss what libraries and librarians can do to promote transformative equity, diversity, and inclusion practices

What Can Be Done?

Plan programming

Plan exhibits

Online library guides, handouts and brochures

Document past and present history e.g., Oral history projects



What Can Be Done?

Making textbooks more affordable

Advising and mentoring students

Archives projects led by the user community

Book displays showcasing diverse voices
(BIPOC, LGBTQ+ etc.)



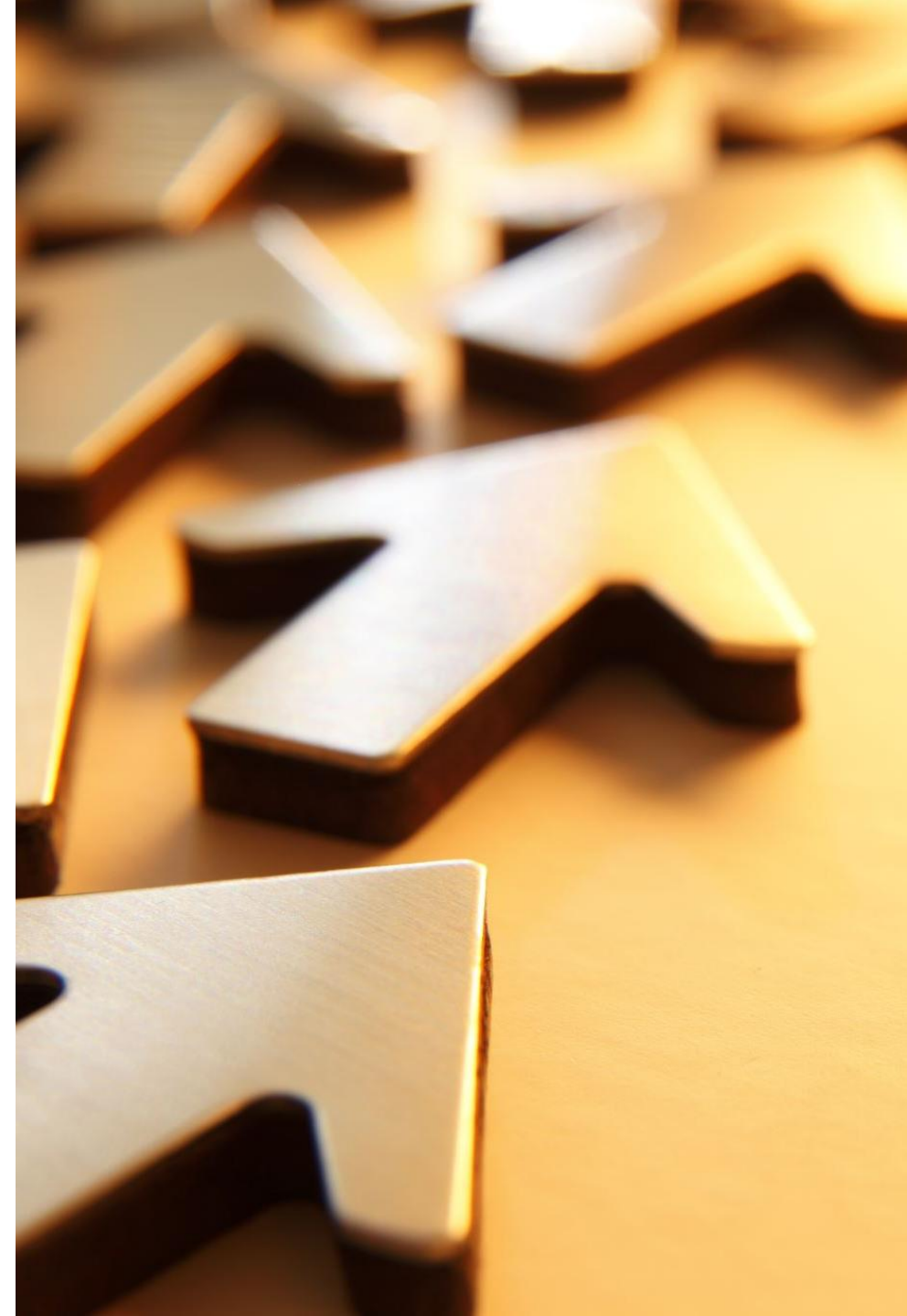
What Can Be Done?

Community forums, events, and lecturers with diverse people on diverse topics

Evaluate general policies, fines policies, & patron codes of conduct

Purchasing books

Professional library organizations to advocate for change



What have you done or will do in your library to promote transformative equity, diversity, and inclusive practices?

(Feel free to use the chat or speak)



Any Questions?

Resources

- Office For Intellectual Freedom (OIF) Resources:
<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/resources>
- OIF's Intellectual Freedom Blog:
<https://www.oif.ala.org/oif/>
- Advancing Racial Equity in Public Libraries: Case Studies from the Field: https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/GARE_LibrariesReport_v8_DigitalScroll_WithHyperlinks.pdf
- ALA Office of Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services (ODLOS) Intersections
Blog: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/odlos-blog>



Thanks for
attending!

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