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From Host to Home: Reflections on Institutional Readiness

Denisse Solis, Dr. Carrie Forbes, and Jack Maness

Introduction

The creation of library residency programs, intended to diversify the library profession, has increased significantly over the last two years; for example, institutional membership in the ACRL Diversity Alliance grew from 36 to 53 from 2017¹ to 2019.² As Dr. Alston notes in his research, “Diversity residency programs have become a popular way for academic libraries to demonstrate a commitment to diversity initiatives and to recruit and retain practitioners of color.”³ However, many host institutions and librarians rarely make significant efforts to deconstruct whiteness within themselves and at the organizational level.

This chapter is a reflective case study of the University of Denver Libraries and its first Residency program intended to help other libraries view their organization’s readiness through the lens of racialized organizational theory. We posit that libraries are racialized organizations and must admit to and grapple with this reality. The authors will draw upon recent work in organizational studies, specifically, Victor Ray’s *Theory of Racialized Organizations* which can inform librarians as they consider beginning or continuing residency programs. We will analyze

¹ “ACRL Diversity Alliance 2017 Members,” American Library Association, January 2, 2018, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/diversityalliance/2017roster>.

² “ACRL Diversity Alliance 2019 Members,” American Library Association, November 26, 2019, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/diversityalliance/2019roster>.

³ Jason K. Alston, “Interns or Professionals? A Common Misnomer Applied to Diversity Resident Librarians Can Potentially Degrade and Divide,” in *Where are the Librarians of Color? The Experiences of People of Color in Academia*, eds. Rebecca Hankins and Miguel Juarez (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2018), 72.

how certain aspects of libraries, at both the micro and macro level, need to be transformed to be conducive to successful residency programs.

As researchers' our beliefs, values systems, and moral stances are fundamentally present and inseparable from the research process. Therefore, it is our ethical duty to intentionally and mindfully make our readers' aware of our racial identities and backgrounds to be fully transparent about how we have approached our experiences with diversity residencies within academic libraries through the following positionality statements.

Denisse

Soy Latina, I am Latina, of Nicaraguan descent. I am a proud daughter of immigrants, bilingual, bicultural, cisgender. I am heterosexual and live with an autoimmune disorder I did not know I had until I was an adult. I grew up in a lower middle-class neighborhood in the primarily Spanish-speaking city of Sweetwater in Miami, Florida. I am the first in my family to be and do many things: to be born in America, to earn a bachelor's and then master's degree, and to earn a higher salary than my father or mother ever made.

It is important to note that as an early-career librarian and woman of color, I am at greater risk of experiencing professional stigma for sharing an honest account of my residency than my co-authors, two white people who occupy positions of power as Associate Deans. Writing this chapter makes me vulnerable to my current colleagues at the University of Denver, who may judge me or even limit future opportunities as a form of retaliation. My colleagues of color may judge me for not being critical enough or perhaps too critical. Potential employers may read this and decide I am not a "good fit" for their institution.⁴

⁴ Sojourna Cunningham, Samantha Guss, and Jennifer Stout, "Challenging the 'Good Fit' Narrative: Creating Inclusive Recruitment Practices in Academic Libraries," in *Recasting the Narrative: The Proceedings of the ACRL 2019 Conference, April 10–13, 2019, Cleveland, Ohio*, ed. Dawn M. Mueller (Cleveland, OH: ACRL, 2019), 12-21.

Jack

As a white, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied man, I have worked in public and academic libraries for twenty years in a wide variety of positions, from shelving to administration. I recognize that my gender and race have advantaged me in my career and the society in which I live, that I have a lot to learn about this privilege and the experiences of those who do not share it, and a moral obligation to help my organization reckon with and remedy this fact.

Carrie

As a white, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied woman with more than two decades of experience providing reference and instructional services in academic libraries, I acknowledge that I approach this work from a place of privilege. As a female administrator, I endeavor to balance my own personal experiences of sexism and misogyny in higher education with the fundamental understanding that as a white woman I often have an unconscious impulse to conveniently separate myself from my power and privilege when confronted with my own responsibilities for racial oppression.

Background

The University of Denver (DU) is a private, predominantly white research university in Denver, Colorado, on Cheyenne and Arapaho land, whose history and founding are inextricably linked to the Sand Creek Massacre.⁵ In recognition of this history DU has placed strong emphasis on organizational practices which reflect Inclusive Excellence. Inclusive Excellence (IE) is the recognition that a community or institution's success is dependent on how well it values, engages and includes the rich diversity of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and alumni constituents. More than a short-term project or single office initiative, this comprehensive

⁵ John Evans Study Committee, "John Evans Study Report," University of Denver, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://portfolio.du.edu/evcomm>.

approach requires a fundamental transformation of the institution by embedding and practicing IE in every effort, aspect, and level of a college or university.⁶

Subsequently, the University of Denver Libraries has an organizational commitment to Inclusive Excellence,⁷ but we have had difficulty fulfilling that mission, particularly in terms of hiring and retaining diverse faculty and staff. As of Fall 2019, only 10% of the library faculty identify as people of color. The Inclusivity and Diversity Committee at the library had long been advocating that we join the ACRL Diversity Alliance and create faculty positions as part of a residency program. Due to a librarian retirement in the summer of 2018, we had an open faculty line that would allow us to create a Resident Librarian position. The timing also aligned well with shifts in both University and Library senior administration who were committed to diversity efforts.

While both the university administration and the library administration and faculty were in favor of creating the position, there were undoubtedly concerns, particularly because we could hire only one resident. If possible, we would prefer to create a cohort model, which would foster a more supportive environment for librarians of color.⁸ Several library faculty expressed their reservations about whether residency models are effective in recruiting and retaining librarians of color or whether they are a band-aid approach that fails to address underlying systemic issues of institutional racism in academic librarianship. We had several fruitful, but difficult conversations within the library about these issues, but ultimately decided inaction could only

⁶ "Inclusive Excellence at DU," University of Denver, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.du.edu/cme/resources/inclusive-excellence.html>.

⁷ University of Denver Libraries, "Inclusive Excellence at the University Libraries," University of Denver, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://library.du.edu/inclusive-excellence.html>.

⁸ Laura Tadena, "Guest Editorial: From School Librarian to Diversity Resident," *Library Diversity and Residency Studies (LDRS)* 1, No. 1 (2020), <https://librarydiversity.institute/2020/guest-editorial-from-school-librarian-to-diversity-resident/>.

lead to more of the same, that a residency program would be an important step toward change, but that we would need to be open to learning from the process as an organization. The position would be broadly based on a rotation in both technical and public services, and most importantly, based on the interests of the candidate. We were committed to providing a positive experience for a person of color, hopefully opening opportunities for them and helping the larger effort of the Diversity Alliance. We had no expectation that the person hired into the position would focus on diversity issues; it would not be posted as a “diversity librarian,” as it is not the job of resident librarians to “fix” a library’s existing culture and climate. We needed to have these conversations to make sure that we were all in agreement about our purpose for participating in the ACRL Diversity Alliance. These conversations are ongoing as we continue to reflect on how to improve our culture and climate to try to dismantle white hegemonic structures.

Literature Review

In order to assess the “readiness” of an institution for a diversity residency, it is necessary to understand how white supremacy, embedded within social institutions like higher education and libraries, has facilitated institutional racism and the oppression of people of color. This literature review will examine the research on institutional whiteness and the characteristics of racialized organizations that delve deeper into structural arrangements and processes which privilege white people.⁹ Paying attention to the racial mechanisms present in our racialized institutions enable us to understand how structures perpetuate overt and subtle forms of white supremacy so that we can work collaboratively to dismantle them and create more welcoming and inclusive educational and library environments.¹⁰

⁹ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Victor Ray, “A Theory of Racialized Organizations,” *American Sociological Review* 84, no. 1 (2019): 26–53, doi:10.1177/0003122418822335.

Whiteness and Institutions

Whiteness can be defined as a socially constructed phenomenon that reflects historical cultural practices and beliefs that give a structural advantage to those with a lighter skin tone. Such practices or physical traits of those deemed white are assumed as the norm against which others are measured in a way that assumes them to be culturally deficient or lacking.¹¹ Because it is embedded in the social, economic, and legal structures of the United States, whiteness has become a normative phenomenon that affects all people regardless of their awareness of it.¹² Likewise, the concept of white institutional space facilitates an explication of how race privilege is produced and reproduced in organizations and institutions by illuminating the interrelated mechanisms of racialized structures and everyday practices to the ideologies and discourses that work in conjunction with one another to maintain the status quo, or white supremacy.¹³ These spaces provide a “white habitus,” an uninterrupted haven that not only promotes white supremacy, but also provides a relatively “safe” space in which whites are able to reify their racialized understanding of their world.¹⁴ These safe white spaces exist within seemingly more “progressive” institutions, such as higher education and academic libraries.¹⁵

Institutions of higher learning are regularly identified in scholarship and conversation by their racial composition, which generally reflects a distinction between predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and minority-serving institutions (MSIs). The term “predominantly white

¹¹ Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*.

¹² Louwanda Evans and Wendy Leo Moore, “Impossible Burdens: White Institutions, Emotional Labor, and Micro-resistance,” *Social Problems* 62, no. 3 (2015): 439-54.

¹³ Evans and Moore, “Impossible Burdens.”

¹⁴ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and David G. Embrick. ““Every Place has a Ghetto...”: The Significance of Whites' Social and Residential Segregation,” *Symbolic Interaction* 30, no. 3 (2007): 324. <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2007.30.3.323>.

¹⁵ Matthew W. Hughey, David G. Embrick, and Ashley Woody Doane, “Paving the Way for Future Race Research: Exploring the Racial Mechanisms within a Color-blind, Racialized Social System”, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59, no. 11 (2015): 1347-57.

institution" is often designated without thought. Oversimplified, "predominantly white" can signify that more white students are enrolled at the institution than are students who are members of underrepresented racial groups. The designation of PWI does not represent actual demographics, but rather they signify the extent to which whiteness is embedded throughout the interconnected organizational practices.¹⁶ In fact, white supremacy is woven into the very structures and systems on which higher education functions.

While enjoying a reputation of being open, progressive, and democratic, the academy often fails to recognize the injustice and subtle acts of white supremacy or microaggressions that are experienced by BIPOC within PWIs.¹⁷ The literature provides significant documentation of the ways in which issues of marginalization can be manifested as unintended barriers to full inclusion of faculty and students of color in higher education.¹⁸ Unexamined, white cultural ideology embedded in the language, cultural practices, traditions, and perceptions of knowledge allow these institutions to remain racialized, as a result, PWIs become alienating spaces of hegemonic power.¹⁹ When white people neglect to identify the ways in which white ideological homogenizing practices sustain the structure of domination and oppression, they allow institutional policies and practices to be unproblematic or inevitable, thereby perpetuating hostile racial climates.²⁰

¹⁶Brian Bourke, "Meaning and Implications of Being Labelled a Predominantly White Institution," *College and University* 91, no. 3 (2016): 12-18.

¹⁷ Diane Lynn Gusa, "White Institutional Presence: The Impact of Whiteness on Campus Climate," *Harvard Educational Review* 80, no. 4 (2010): 464-90.

¹⁸ Ibrahim Mohamad Karkouti, "Black Students' Educational Experiences in Predominantly White Universities: A Review of the Related Literature," *College Student Journal* 50, no. 1 (2016): 59-70.

¹⁹ Gusa, "White Institutional Presence."

²⁰ Bonilla-Silva and Embrick, "Every Place has a Ghetto..."

Libraries as White Spaces

Recent research has illustrated specific racial mechanisms that speak to how white spaces are created, recreated, and maintained within academic libraries. In particular, scholars have noted how these racialized practices work together to maintain sanctuaries for whiteness.²¹ Indeed, they work to not just maintain exclusivity, but also to limit the experiences of library workers of color, such as residents, who are welcomed into organizations as guests but not as permanent employees. Libraries are distinct from typical white spaces due to the exclusivity of the space, i.e., the ease in which some groups can freely enter and navigate the space, while controlling those who are visitors, i.e. residents.

Exposing the often-hidden racial mechanisms within white library spaces allows us to identify who is included and who is not in order for us to challenge the status quo. It requires rigorous work of informed critical introspection examining the performance of whiteness within oneself and others. Creating an inclusive work climate is not about developing a checklist or creating a residency program. As we uncover core assumptions of white institutional presence critically examined through multiple worldviews, we can develop and implement viable solutions and foster emotional safety, trust, belonging, empowerment, and integration.

The following sections will detail our reflections of the institutional culture and climate of the University of Denver Libraries through the framework of Victor Ray's "A Theory of Racialized Organizations."²² We begin by sharing our personal reflections on how we see the four tenets at work in our organization and our continuing efforts to mitigate these injustices. Given the limits of space, it is not possible for each of us to reflect on all four tenets, so we have noted the

²¹ Gusa, "White Institutional Presence."

²² Ray, "A Theory of Racialized Organizations," 26.

primary reflective voice(s) for each tenet to allow our readers to better understand how we have each approached this project.

Racialized Organizations and the University of Denver

Wooten states, “we have unnecessarily conceptualized race as a construct that operates only on the individual, that is, individuals have race and this influences their careers, or firms must employ individuals of a certain race. We should also seek to understand race as diffuse property that operates at many levels.”²³ Victor Ray builds upon Wooten’s idea and re-defines racialized organizations as “meso-level social structures that limit the personal agency and collective efficacy of subordinate racial groups while magnifying the agency of the dominant racial group”.²⁴ Ray posits four tenets of a racialized organization; “(1) racialized organizations enhance or diminish the agency of racial groups; (2) racialized organizations legitimate the unequal distribution of resources; (3) Whiteness is a credential; and (4) the decoupling of formal rules from organizational practice is often racialized.”²⁵ We situate the library as an organization within this meso-level and the university as an institution at the macro level, describing evidence of how these tenets may be experienced in libraries by BIPOC, especially those in a residency position.

Tenet 1: How does your organization enhance or diminish the agency of racial groups? *Denisse’s Reflection:*

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) have become buzzwords and commodified as white people and predominantly white institutions use residencies or other surface-level DEI initiatives

²³ Melissa E. Wooten, “Soapbox: Editorial Essays: Race and Strategic Organization,” *Strategic Organization* 4, no. 2 (2006): 193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127006064068>.

²⁴ Ray, “A Theory of Racialized Organizations,” 36.

²⁵ Ray, 26.

to try to elevate their status or demographic statistics.²⁶ Being mindful of this, I went through the university and libraries' web page looking for a strategic plan, a DEI statement, or anything else of interest before I applied to the position. The University's Impact 2025 plan and an open letter from library faculty written in solidarity with students, faculty and staff against racial discrimination across higher education reassured me when applying because I felt I could hold them accountable to their commitment to DEI.²⁷

The residency position at DU has a less prescriptive commitment to diversity work than other advertised residency positions. While it did require me to work with faculty and staff in the Interdisciplinary Research Institute for the Study of Racial (In)Equality, (IRISE), I was able to retain my agency when it came to DEI work within librarianship through my involvement with REFORMA, The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking. My work with REFORMA helped me retain my agency and sense of self even though the profession pushed me to assimilate to largely white organizations such as the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and the American Library Association (ALA). Participation in ALA further legitimizes the unequal distribution of resources, in this case, professional development funds which are used for membership, conference fees, and the pursuit of other professional opportunities. Little is left to support organizations such as REFORMA where I and others truly find community. The profession's dependence on ALA for service and publishing opportunities force Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), to seek out committee appointments or attend conferences within ALA where we experience racism instead of investing in our own communities and organizations of color.

²⁶ Sarah Mayorga-Gallo, "The White-Centering Logic of Diversity Ideology," *American Behavioral Scientist* 63, no. 13 (2019): 1789–1809, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219842619>.

²⁷ University of Denver Libraries, "Inclusive Excellence at the University Libraries."

Tenet 2: How can your organization create equitable access to resources?

Denisse's Reflection:

Resources are not just money but include people, and space, and time. Overall, this means providing robust professional development funds, mentorship, and access to communities of support. In a profession where 87% of librarians identify as white, who are more likely to have access to generational wealth than BIPOC, additional funding is required to make it equitable.²⁸ For a residency program, this also means libraries should pay for expenses directly or offer residents a corporate credit card, rather than assuming we have the money to participate in reimbursement. My professional development funds are \$5,000, which include membership fees. As someone who grew up with an immigrant mother who cleaned hotels and houses, the luxury of finally being able to reserve my own hotel room for a conference as a resident librarian was not lost on me.

Socialization programs and networks further help faculty of color build support in traditionally white organizations.²⁹ I was intentionally introduced to these networks early on in my residency through the Library Diversity Residency Institute and was able to connect with faculty of color on campus through university affinity groups. If a resident is the only or one of a few in the organization these networks become crucial for survival as they are more than just support systems, they are places of healing and self-care in an otherwise oppressive space. As a Latina woman, I also found support through identity specific institutes on campus, such as The University of Denver Latino Center for Community Engagement and Scholarship (DULCCES)

²⁸ Fabian T. Pfeffer and Alexandra Killewald, "Intergenerational Wealth Mobility and Racial Inequality," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 5 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023119831799>.

²⁹ Tarida Anantachai and Camille Chesley, "The Burden of Care: Cultural Taxation of Women of Color Librarians on the Tenure Track," in *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*, eds. Rose L. Chou and Annie Pho (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2018), 301-327.

and IRISE. However, there is no similar center, to my knowledge, for Black or Indigenous people.

In one of his last lectures before his sabbatical, Dr, Frank Tuitt, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor and Provost on Inclusive Excellence, discussed what conditions need to be in place at DU in order to nurture and value Black Excellence, specifically calling on the following forms of capital; Human, Knowledge/Intellectual, Social/Cultural, Organizational, and Relational. He emphasized the need for more courses that center Blackness, invest in a Black centered infrastructure charged with nurturing and valuing Black Excellence and prioritize the recruitment, hiring, and retention of Black Faculty. As of the last statistics, out of 767 full time instructional faculty, 19 identify as Black or African American, three of which are full professors.³⁰ Lastly, he called on DU to build capacity to create, acquire, and disseminate knowledge by and for the Black community. All of which illustrate ways in which DU has under-resourced these efforts relative to the rest of the organization.

Tenet Three: How does Whiteness operate as a credential in your organization?

Jack's Reflection:

My experience is that whiteness is undoubtedly a credential “providing access to organizational resources, legitimizing work hierarchies, and expanding White agency.”³¹ I have seen these three benefits to whiteness feed upon and reinforce one another, often cloaking the racialization of the institution. As I have advanced in my career, I have worked with many individuals with the impressive titles, advanced degrees, years of experience, and undeniably hefty responsibilities valued in meritocracies. It is also true that as I have advanced I have access to more resources, and am surrounded by more white people with discretionary power,

³⁰ MCEatDU, “Dr Frank Tuitt - Where Do We Go From Here?” August 26, 2020, Video, 1:18:44, <https://youtu.be/BjqnmD9dx4A>.

³¹ Ray, 42.

more bureaucracy left unquestioned with a critical eye, and more white people using both those bureaucracies and that power to give more resources to yet more white people.

I have benefitted from this in my career and at DU, and I have almost inevitably, though unintentionally, perpetuated it. I have made and accepted search committee appointments, requested and granted assignments and budgets, obtained and required degrees and experience in vacancy postings; and with few exceptions, the assignor and assignee of the benefit in these transactions was a white person. Sometimes they were following a protocol (written mostly or exclusively by other white people). Other times they were ignoring one. I would estimate I have served on approximately twenty-five search committees for faculty librarians, and while every single one of them has taken various measures to avoid bias in their process, all but two managed to hire a white person, all but three a white woman, and one of the two faculty of color was a resident, Denisse.

As a white librarian I have come to accept that my race has benefitted my career. This is not an easy admission for many white people to make. We all like to think we deserve what we have accomplished. It is also true that, if we are white, our race played a significant part in our success. For me, the only male author of this chapter, it is important to note that my gender plays a role as well. Nearly thirty years ago Williams used the term “glass escalator” in part, to describe the experience of male librarians who reported they feel their gender benefits them.³² A decade later an empirical study largely supported their feeling.³³ More recent work “concludes that the glass escalator is a racialized concept and a gendered one,” and that “undoing the glass escalator requires not only blurring the lines between masculinity and femininity but also

³² Christine L. Williams, “The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the “Female” Professions.” *Social Problems* 39, No. 3 (1992): 253-67, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3096961>.

³³ Michelle J. Budig, “Male Advantage and the Gender Composition of Jobs: Who Rides the Glass Escalator?” *Social Problems* 49, No. 2 (2002): 258–277, <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2002.49.2.258>.

challenging the processes of racial inequality.”³⁴ That has been a part of my experience: I was encouraged to apply for graduate school and then to seek leadership positions very early in my career. Several of the people of color I have known along the way were not similarly encouraged.

As a white administrator I can do something about it. I can hold myself accountable and my organization and help create conditions for those questions to be addressed within the organization. I have learned to practice questioning decisions through the lens of racialization. Understanding *that* (and a little about *how* and *why*), whiteness is a credential in your organization is critical if you are to begin a residency program. If you are like me, a white man helping to coordinate the program and supervise a resident, you must be willing to ask yourself questions regarding racialization when you participate in making decisions about the program. In fact, they are worth asking whenever you address important decisions about anything in your organization:

- How is the formal rule that applies to this decision, intentionally or unintentionally, biased?
 - As a part of this consideration, can and/or should it be changed? How would bending this rule align with my/our values of equity, fairness, and transparency?
- Are the requirements for this program going to help us attract candidates that will make us a better organization, or are they coded or unintentional assurances we will reinforce the racialized hierarchy in which we already operate?

³⁴ Adia Harvey Wingfield, “Racializing the Glass Escalator: Reconsidering Men’s Experiences with Women’s Work,” *Gender & Society* 23, no. 1 (2009): 5, 24, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243208323054>.

- Do people of color at my library have access to hierarchy and the resources that go with it? How does that access compare to that of white people?

Perhaps most importantly:

- How is my positionality informing me in this decision, as I make it?

If you are white and you apply this last question to your desire to start a residency program, you may find it was born at least in part by your desire to feel better about yourself. You may find as you critically examine discussions or your own internal dialog, Galvan's words ring true: "White Savior narratives are found throughout librarianship, where white librarians are framed as benevolent actors toward people of color."³⁵

Accepting that your library, your college or university, has been invariably a part of a racialized society, that it can only follow that it too is a racialized organization, and that you must ask the questions that help you recognize how you are a part of it, means you are ready enough to be a part of meaningful change. And if you are an administrator, we may all find Galvan was correct in suggesting "this process will move faster with individual voices in power interrogating bias in their practices."³⁶

Tenet Four: How does race factor into how formal rules are decoupled from practice in your organization?

Carrie's Reflection:

For the last eight years, I have been studying critical pedagogy and the research about students of color in PWIs as part of my doctoral coursework in education. Through this study

³⁵ Angela Galvan, "Soliciting Performance, Hiding Bias: Whiteness and Librarianship," *In the Library with a Lead Pipe*, June 3, 2015, <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/soliciting-performance-hiding-bias-whiteness-and-librarianship/>.

³⁶ Galvan, "Soliciting Performance, Hiding Bias."

and dialogue with colleagues, I noticed that I often struggled with noting tangible examples of how white supremacy was at work in everyday library practices. I *believed* institutional racism existed, but I didn't really get *how it was enacted*. However, as a woman, it's always been clear to me how misogyny operates within institutional cultures, even within female-dominated professions like librarianship. So, why did I/do I have such trouble truly believing the experiences of my colleagues of color?

In fact, feminist scholars have generated many useful analyses about white women's investment in patriarchy, the class structure, the racial status quo—underlining the material benefits that racial identity politics offer white women. In the nineteenth century, when modern notions of race and sex difference were solidified, a wide variety of scientists, writers, and reformers articulated full sexual differentiation as the unique achievement of the “civilized.” The binary entities of man and woman were newly understood as thoroughly distinct in terms of mental, physiological, emotional, and psychological capacity. Sex difference was presented as the singular attainment of positive evolution moving toward ever greater specialization. The “primitive races,” by contrast, were cast as unsexed, as insufficiently evolved in both anatomy and character. The category of womanhood emerged as a unique quality of civilization.³⁷

This legacy of womanhood still serves as a stabilizing structure of whiteness, particularly within higher education and academic libraries. In describing the cultural applications of *Lady Bountiful* to library and information science, Gina Schlesselman-Tarango writes, “Early librarianship also turned to white women for their assumed moral superiority; as cultural guardians these women embodied the library's alleged social value as a civilizing institution...”³⁸

³⁷ Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

³⁸ Gina Schlesselman-Tarango, "The Legacy of Lady Bountiful: White Women in the Library," *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016): 674. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2016.0015>.

In so many words, when white female librarians uphold the values of libraries as places of neutrality and bastions of free speech we are in fact upholding not only patriarchal systems, but white hegemonic structures.

This better understanding of how patriarchy and racism are bound-up in each other has been extremely beneficial for helping me to recognize my own responsibilities for contributing to and reinforcing racialized practices in my work as an administrator and the subsequent changes that I must enact to correct those mistakes and mitigate future injustices. Reflecting on my own personal biases seems simple and wholly inadequate given the level of oppression being experienced by librarians of color, but as Schlesselman-Tarango notes that these conversations can “act as sites for those in librarianship to reflect on the forces that have shaped their roles in the profession and ultimately to resist the Lady Bountiful archetype and narratives that impel it.”³⁹ For example, by asking, “How does race factor into how formal rules are decoupled from practice in your organization?” I now more clearly see the problematic aspects of our hiring and mentoring processes at the library. As one example, despite policies and practices put in place to ensure equity in hiring, much of the work of search committees’ decision-making processes are still heavily influenced by implicit bias and looking for a librarian who “fits” within an organization. As indicated by Cunningham, Guss, and Stout, “The idea of the ‘good fit’ is indeed only good for one thing: replicating the status quo and allowing us to not work on a problem many of us clearly see.”⁴⁰ It is my responsibility to work to not only change hiring practices and procedures but also to push back on search committee decisions so that future librarians of color will not need to ask why we only hire white librarians.

³⁹ Schlesselman-Tarango, “The Legacy of Lady Bountiful,” 683.

⁴⁰ Cunningham, Guss, and Stout, “Challenging the ‘Good Fit’ Narrative,” 18.

Conclusion

Residency programs are not the answer to diversifying our institutions. Systemic issues need addressing before such a program is created, or else residents are “canaries in the coal mine,” traumatizing BIPOC and making a temporary position even more problematic. If librarianship as a profession is ever to become more compositionally diverse and inclusive, a reckoning must happen across the profession and within higher education. The title of this chapter reflects that hope, that these residency programs will no longer be needed, that these institutions could become home institutions where BIPOC no longer feel like guests, no longer just survive, but instead where we all thrive. Where BIPOC are no longer required to be on the diversity committee or other DEI initiatives, are supported, both financially and professionally, can be their whole selves, and where reports of racism and discrimination are believed, and harms are addressed.

We confess that amid a global pandemic and Black Lives Matter protests, we struggle to write a conclusion because we know there is still work to do and our approach is unique to our own organization. Yet, much like other organizations, our library created a set of commitments to support the Black Lives Matter movement. This has led to our forming a Task Force on the Antiracist Library, which we are in the process of convening as we finish this chapter.⁴¹

Comprising of library leadership, volunteers, and solicitations, we will ask it to be visionary and bold in interrogating our policies and practices. We also have the opportunity to hire two more residents, and we are asking ourselves if we should move forward with our residency program. Are we ready to accelerate our efforts? Can we create positive, meaningful experiences for residents while also rethinking much of what we do and how we do it? Have we learned from

⁴¹ University of Denver Libraries “University Libraries Statement in Support of Black Lives Matter,” University of Denver,” June 5, 2020, <https://library.du.edu/blacklivesmatter.html>.

Denisse's experience? What we do know is that if we do move forward, we will continue to provide robust professional development, refrain from expecting the resident to do diversity work, help them build support networks, listen if they experience racism or discrimination, and act swiftly and decisively to address it. Ultimately, we must find a way to do better, even as we acknowledge that it may be that, in the short term, the best we can strive for is to mitigate harm to residents and members of our university community.

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