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## Temporary Invitations to the Party: Reflections on Recruitment as Performative Action in Diversity Residencies

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# Temporary Invitations to the Party: Reflections on Recruitment as Performative Action in Diversity Residencies

Amanda M. Leftwich, Jessica Y. Dai, and Mallery  
Rawls

*“Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.” - Vernā Myers*

## Introduction

If diversity is an invitation to the party and inclusion is being asked to dance, what happens when the invitations have an expiry date, but only for some and on the basis of race? Party goers with regular invitations celebrate the good turnout, while those with temporary invitations have to negotiate unspoken social contracts, respect the social order, and depart at the designated time, all while maintaining a respectful amount of gratitude for receiving an invitation. This tiered party metaphor underscores how the narrow focus on recruitment in diversity library residencies can appear to diversify librarianship, yet when left unchallenged, replicates the same social inequities that originally necessitated the need for residencies. Academic librarians who develop diversity residencies need to critically reflect on the rules and priorities which developed this invitation system in order to reimagine what racial equity could be outside of existing frameworks and norms.

Academic libraries in North America have historically been white-centered<sup>1</sup> institutions in terms of collections,<sup>2</sup> services,<sup>3</sup> and staff,<sup>4</sup> reflecting the larger landscape of higher education in which whiteness and white institutional presence<sup>5</sup> dictate norms and expectations for all who occupy academic spaces. Previous works on whiteness in academic libraries have examined the impact of whiteness on diversity initiatives,<sup>6</sup> called to decenter whiteness in LIS,<sup>7</sup> and analyzed the way whiteness is implicitly bound into the rhetoric of neutrality.<sup>8</sup> This chapter specifically uses Critical Race Theory (CRT)<sup>9</sup> to examine the impact of whiteness on the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) librarians in diversity residencies. In order to diversify the profession and “emphasize the need and obligation to serve and advocate for racial and ethnically diverse constituencies,”<sup>10</sup> one way academic libraries address the hegemony of whiteness in the field is to develop library diversity residencies to recruit people from traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Though librarians may have

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<sup>1</sup> Todd Honma, “Trippin’ Over the Color Line: The Invisibility of Race in Library and Information Science,” *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 1, no. 2 (2005): 1–26.

<sup>2</sup> Sofia Leung, “Whiteness as Collections,” September 30, 2019, <https://www.sofiayleung.com/thoughts/whiteness-as-collections>.

<sup>3</sup> Freeda Brook, Dave Ellenwood, and Althea Eannace Lazzaro, “In Pursuit of Antiracist Social Justice: Denaturalizing Whiteness in the Academic Library,” *Library Trends* 64, no. 2 (2015): 246–84, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2015.0048>.

<sup>4</sup> 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/>.

<sup>5</sup> Diane Lynn Gusa, “White Institutional Presence: The Impact of Whiteness on Campus Climate,” *Harvard Educational Review* 80, no. 4 (December 2010): 464–90, <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.80.4.p5j483825u110002>.

<sup>6</sup> April Hathcock, “White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS,” *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, October 7, 2015, <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/lis-diversity/>.

<sup>7</sup> Isabel Espinal, Tonia Sutherland, and Charlotte Roh, “A Holistic Approach for Inclusive Librarianship: Decentering Whiteness in Our Profession,” *Library Trends* 67, no. 1 (2018): 147–62, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2018.0030>.

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Brown, Jennifer A. Ferretti, Sofia Leung, and Marisa Méndez-Brady, “We Here: Speaking Our Truth,” *Library Trends* 67, no. 1 (2018): 163–81, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2018.0031>.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel G. Solórzano and Tara J. Yosso, “Critical Race Methodology: Counter-storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 8, no. 1 (2002): 32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103>.

<sup>10</sup> American Library Association, “Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries,” Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), May 4, 2012, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/diversity>.

good intentions in developing diversity residencies and residents depart these programs with valued experiences and skills, it is naive to assume that good intentions automatically result in good outcomes. This line of thinking is an extension of vocational awe,<sup>11</sup> which assumes that librarians are inherently good and fulfill a savior role.<sup>12</sup>

In this chapter, we take a people-centered rather than an institution-centered approach when examining the impact of diversity residencies on BIPOC. We do this while simultaneously acknowledging that systems rather than individual people are the cause and mechanism of systemic oppression in libraries. We will provide our counter stories, analyze the current dialogue surrounding diversity residencies, and urge those in charge of diversity residencies to challenge the ways in which oppressive systems such as whiteness hinder the success of library residents. Through critiquing the dominant narrative around library diversity residencies, we hope to make the implicit explicit, so that we can collectively better recognize, understand, and combat oppressive structures that impede racial and ethnic diversity in academic librarianship.

## Unpacking the Complexities of Diversity Residencies

Residencies are defined as “post degree work experience designed as an entry-level program for recent graduates of an MLIS program,”<sup>13</sup> but not all residency programs have a diversity focus nor are they built the same. The goal of diversity residencies is to build pathways for BIPOC librarians into academic librarianship. While

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<sup>11</sup> Fobazi Ettarh, “Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves,” *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, January 10, 2018, <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/>.

<sup>12</sup> Gina Schlesselman-Tarango, “The Legacy of Lady Bountiful: White Women in the Library,” *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016): 667–86, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2016.0015>.

<sup>13</sup> Julie Brewer, *SPEC Kit 188: Internship, Residency, and Fellowship Programs in ARL Libraries* (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 1992): 4.

most diversity residency programs recruit librarians from BIPOC groups, others recruit people from the LGBTQIA2S+ community and disabled people. Some residencies emphasize the departmental rotational experience, while others hire for functional positions such as cataloging or special collections. Additionally, there is variance in duration, cohort experience, mentorship, administrative support, structure, supervision, coordination, research focus, and professional development support. Residencies can be especially attractive as they propose to provide entry-level librarians time and support to develop skills.

Diversity-focused library residencies began in 1984 with the Pauline A. Young Residency Program at the University of Delaware (UD).<sup>14</sup> Following UD's lead, many academic libraries developed diversity residencies to recruit BIPOC into librarianship with the intention to "improve employability of minority librarians in academic research libraries."<sup>15</sup> These residencies focused on eliminating barriers faced by underrepresented groups in librarianship, primarily in academic institutions.<sup>16</sup> These types of recruitment initiatives fell in line with affirmative action initiatives at the time, yet the field of librarianship remained overwhelmingly white decades later.<sup>17</sup> Given the fact that one of the American Library Association's (ALA's) core values is diversity,<sup>18</sup> libraries contribute to the diversification of the field through recruitment and training

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<sup>14</sup> UD Library, Museums and Press, "Program History," University of Delaware, accessed on February 4, 2020, <https://library.udel.edu/residency/history/>.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph A. Boissé and Connie V. Dowell, "Increasing Minority Librarians in Academic Research Libraries," *Library Journal* 112, no. 7 (April 15, 1987): 53.

<sup>16</sup> Janice Beaudin, Em Claire Knowles, Edith Maureen Fisher, and Ichiko Morita, "Recruiting the Under-represented to Academic Libraries," *College & Research Libraries News* 51, no. 11 (1990): 1016-29, <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.51.11.1016>.

<sup>17</sup> Boissé and Dowell, "Increasing Minority Librarians in Academic Research Libraries," 52.

<sup>18</sup> "Core Values of Librarianship," American Library Association, July 26, 2006, <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues>.

initiatives. However, most diversity initiatives almost exclusively focus on recruitment and training initiatives without articulating clear intentions or strategies to retain BIPOC librarians.

The dominant narrative around diversity initiatives in academic libraries largely takes an institution-centered approach in which values such as objectivity and neutrality<sup>19</sup> are implicitly bound into the operationalization of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Library EDI initiatives exclusively informed by values and norms steeped in whiteness obscure the values and norms of BIPOC and ultimately deem the success of these initiatives as the successful assimilation of BIPOC into whiteness. The reality is that many BIPOC library workers experience racial microaggressions,<sup>20</sup> cultural taxation,<sup>21</sup> isolation,<sup>22</sup> tokenism,<sup>23</sup> as well as invisibility and hypervisibility.<sup>24</sup> Davis Kendrick and Damasco found that stereotype threat, deauthentication, diversity rhetoric, whiteness, white supremacy, racism, career or environmental landscapes, politics, and collegiality contribute to the low-morale of racial and ethnic minority librarians, which in turn impacted their career trajectory, mental health, and physical health.<sup>25</sup> Though residents may leave their program with valuable professional

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<sup>19</sup> Nina de Jesus, "Locating the Library in Institutional Oppression," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, September 24, 2014, <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2014/locating-the-library-in-institutional-oppression/>.

<sup>20</sup> Jaena Alabi, "Racial Microaggressions in Academic Libraries: Results of a Survey of Minority and Non-Minority Librarians," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 41, no. 1 (January 2015): 47–53, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2014.10.008>.

<sup>21</sup> 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), 301–27.

<sup>22</sup> Ione T. Damasco and Dracine Hodges, "Tenure and Promotion Experiences of Academic Librarians of Color," *College & Research Libraries* 73, no. 3 (2012), 279–301, <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl-244>.

<sup>23</sup> Espinal, Sutherland, and Roh, "A Holistic Approach," 153.

<sup>24</sup> Jennifer Brown and Sofia Leung, "Authenticity vs. Professionalism: Being True to Ourselves at Work," in *Pushing the Margins: Women of Color and Intersectionality in LIS*, eds. Rose L. Chou and Annie Pho (Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, 2018), 329–47.

<sup>25</sup> Kaetrena Davis Kendrick and Ione T. Damasco, "Low Morale in Ethnic and Racial Minority Academic Librarians: An Experiential Study," *Library Trends* 68, no. 2 (2019): 174–212, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2019.0036>.

experiences and skills, they may do so with significant risk. More research into the impact of diversity residencies is needed, so that BIPOC can better understand and weigh the risks and rewards of accepting precarious employment that promises entry into an historically exclusionary profession.

## Counter Stories

Reflective practice focuses on the present moment and actions to make effective and lasting change for the better. Any process that can be done intentionally should be honed and crafted. Library residencies need to challenge dominant norms, which reinforce the perspectives and values of those with the most power<sup>26</sup> through the use of counter-storytelling as a method to amplify voices previously ignored,<sup>27</sup> as counterstories inherently challenge “traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories.”<sup>28</sup> By sharing our counterstories, we work in solidarity with other voices of color and analyze the roots of programs, ideas, and structures that harm BIPOC working in academic libraries. Storytelling plays an important role within many BIPOC cultures and histories,<sup>29</sup> as these acts reflect stories of racial injustice, microaggressions, macroaggressions, and violence in the workplace. We leverage our counterstories to build a critique of current institutional policies informed by historic racial inequities. Importantly, our counterstories are influenced by cultural intuition, which is “achieved and can be nurtured through our personal experiences (which are

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<sup>26</sup> *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “Narrative,” accessed February 4, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/narrative>.

<sup>27</sup> Rachel Alicia Griffin, LaCharles Ward, and Amanda R. Phillips, “Still Flies in Buttermilk: Black Male Faculty, Critical Race Theory, and Composite Counterstorytelling,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 27 no. 10 (2014): 1355. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2013.840403>.

<sup>28</sup> Solórzano and Yosso, “Critical Race Methodology,” 24.

<sup>29</sup> Solórzano and Yosso, 32.

influenced by ancestral wisdom, community memory, and intuition)...thus, cultural intuition is a complex process that is experiential, intuitive, historical, personal, collective, and dynamic.”<sup>30</sup>

In this chapter, we aim to provide nuance around the dominant narrative about library residencies using our counter stories. Given the fact that diversity residents make up a small and highly identifiable percentage of the profession, this power dynamic makes speaking our truths complicated and difficult, especially within a feminized profession that has historically valued niceness and civility.<sup>31</sup> We ask readers to recognize and understand the risk that we take as early career BIPOC librarians in providing our counter stories. Through our whisper networks and experiences, we know that there are repercussions for speaking up. On countless occasions, we have been told to be grateful when we call out inequities, that we lack professionalism, that our voices are unwanted, and that our work is valued less in comparison to our white colleagues. The collective impact of these microaggressions and macroaggressions signal that we don't belong, and ultimately, that our best recourse may be to leave the field in order to preserve our personal wellbeing.<sup>32</sup> Our personal stories hold similar threads of disillusion, lack of communication, diversity rhetoric, mismanagement, and narrow focus of recruitment efforts, yet we emphasize that we do not speak for all BIPOC in diversity residencies.

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<sup>30</sup> Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research," *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no. 4 (1998): 567-568. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.68.4.5wv1034973g22q48>.

<sup>31</sup> Schlesselman-Tarango, "The Legacy of Lady Bountiful."

<sup>32</sup> Jarrett M. Drake, "I'm Leaving the Archives Profession: It's Better This Way," *Medium* (blog), June 26, 2017, <https://medium.com/on-archivy/im-leaving-the-archival-profession-it-s-better-this-way-ed631c6d72fe>.



Our identities and narratives shape our experiences professionally and personally. As three women of color, it is important that we unapologetically address the issues regarding diversity residencies and challenge the current discourse that ignores the reality of how challenging diversity residencies can be. In doing so, we resist current practices, while rooting our own in CRT and reflective practices. By sharing our narratives, we hope diversity residencies will expand the narrow focus on recruitment to include the long-term retention of BIPOC librarians. In addition, we hope our stories will inspire reflective and critical dialogue about strategies to evaluate and assess residencies for effectiveness. The time is now. We stand in solidarity with past, current, and future residents.

Amanda M. Leftwich

As I write this, I am currently a tenure-track librarian at my fellowship institution. Prior to obtaining this position, I'd heard whispers of residency programs in librarianship. I worked as a paraprofessional in various library roles for several years, and therefore thought I wouldn't be eligible for a program for *new professionals*. I was surprised to learn that my work experience prior to obtaining my degree wouldn't be counted as they were *only paraprofessional positions*. With this in mind, I applied for an institution-wide fellowship program at a two-year community college. The two-year fellowship offered me the chance not only to research, but to develop as a professional faculty librarian.

After beginning the fellowship I learned that outside of instruction, reference, and collection development, I had no other job tasks. Therefore, I created my own professional development outline and job tasks related to the needs of the Libraries, the College, and my resume gaps. Although this gave me some guidance, it was an

isolating and hollowing experience. Donaldson highlights the importance of a well-documented plan prior to the fellow/residents' first day.<sup>33</sup> Although my colleagues never referred to me as the "intern,"<sup>34</sup> they were unclear about my position and the need for a fellow in the Libraries. Furthermore, although the fellowship cohort was institutionally supported and recognized, there was no real Community of Practice (CoP). After some reflection, I shifted my focus to amplifying past and current fellows' voices through an oral history project, creating fellow-led panels and discussions, and creating spaces for fellows rooted in CRT and CoP for support and solidarity.

All fellows are provided with mentors inside and outside of their departments throughout their appointments. During this period, fellows are encouraged to present externally, while supporting and creating initiatives beneficial to the College internally. Upon completion of the fellowship program, fellows are asked to interview again for a full-time role. If rehired, the former fellows begin their tenure-track positions at the end of their fellowship contracts. The main goal of the program is to retain faculty of color to better reflect the diversity of the student population. This key point is where my fellowship and diversity library residencies differ. Although the departmental onboarding process left something to be desired, it was clear from day one that my institution wanted to retain me. Unfortunately, this wasn't the expectation for my residency cohort. Further reflective practice makes me question why library residences and fellowships exist as a diversity initiative. If the goal of these initiatives aren't to retain the residents,

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<sup>33</sup> Katherine S. Donaldson, "Recruiting Diverse Librarians: Residency Programs as an Entry Point to the Academic Librarian Profession in the United States," paper presented at IFLA WLIC 2018: Transform Libraries, Transform Societies, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 29, 2018, <http://library.ifla.org/id/eprint/2223>.

<sup>34</sup> Jason Kelly Alston, "Minerva's First Born: My Experiences as UNCG's First Diversity Resident Librarian," *North Carolina Libraries* 68, no.1 (2010): 14-16, <http://www.ncl.ecu.edu/index.php/NCL/article/view/303>.

what is the purpose of hiring residents and fellows for a hiring pipeline that doesn't account for the long-term retention of these residents? How can academic libraries be taken seriously in their mission to enrich diversity in the field when relying on a handful of temporary positions? Success appears to be the completion of individual programs. What does this mean for my colleagues in residency programs that are structured differently from my own?

Jessica Y. Dai

At the time of this writing, I am in the last year of a three-year residency at a large R1 university. Before applying for this position, I wasn't aware of diversity residencies nor did I understand the nuances of EDI work in libraries. Though I had outgrown my previous position as a reference and instruction librarian, making the decision to become a resident was not without privilege and risk. I traded a permanent job for a temporary one, moved states, and disrupted my personal life and financial situation in order to access an opportunity only available to BIPOC who are willing and able to take a temporary position.

For most of the residency, I've gone through a self-reflective process questioning what it means to be a diversity resident. How do library workers conceptualize diversity? Do EDI frameworks work towards liberation or merely uphold the status quo? What does it mean to be an Asian American woman working in libraries? How has being a resident made my race and ethnicity more salient in my work? How has my silence and complicity perpetuated systems that favor white, heteronormative, and neoliberal values? And most importantly, how can I build solidarity with other BIPOC and others working towards liberation?

I rotated through four departments in my first year, the first of which was instruction-focused where I intentionally spent time learning about critical pedagogy and critical librarianship. The time that I spent reading about how librarians can leverage their positions as educators to challenge students to think about issues of systemic inequities was formative. My approach to critical librarianship is one in which I recognize my complicity in supporting oppressive systems that favor some social groups over others. I have a lot of work to undo the ways I internalize and contribute to oppressive systems, so it's important to center anti-racism, anti-oppression, and the humanity of people in my work and understand that learning is a lifelong and iterative process. Though I'm often tempted to engage in image management, I know that centering myself in discussions about systemic oppression distracts from the conversation. My individual efforts will never be enough, so I look for ways to build solidarity with other librarians who wish to effect change. In a similar vein to Honma's critiques of multiculturalism in LIS,<sup>35</sup> I find myself increasingly disappointed with the operationalization of EDI that centers the concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion rather than people with social identities that are underrepresented in LIS. I strongly believe that anti-oppression should inform library work, from how we collect, catalog, and circulate materials to how we develop our services and design our buildings.

As part of my residency, I've had the opportunity to explore my professional interests and received support in the form of mentorship, rotational experiences, and professional development. These privileges are not available to most early career BIPOC librarians, a discrepancy which frames my perspective on the value and purpose

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<sup>35</sup> Honma, "Trippin' Over the Color Line."

of diversity residencies. How can we diversify academic librarianship through more inclusive ways that hire BIPOC that don't rely on term-limited positions, while providing early career support and training? How can we collectively build an anti-oppressive profession, especially one that does not center whiteness or result in BIPOC feeling the need to assimilate or leave the field?

## Mallary Rawls

At the time of writing this I'm currently in a permanent position at the same institution where I did my residency. Previously, I worked as a Youth Services Librarian at a large public library where I focused on early literacy programming and collection development. Though there were many issues working at the public library, the issues of labor and pay motivated me to find other employment.

When I interviewed for the residency, the majority of the questions centered on how the residents would help diversity efforts within the LIS field and at the university. This was a flawed approach, as residents were tokenized and expected to pay cultural taxation. I was hired in the first cohort with three other residents. The diversity residency program looked great on paper as we were hired for three years, had faculty status, and had a residency coordinator, but there was no structure to the program. When we began, we were given a list called "The Catalog of Possibilities," from which we were supposed to choose a random project of interest. The library intended for the residents to complete rotations, but since these rotations were not planned, the residents chose a department to work in and for the most part, stayed in that department throughout the duration of their residency. I co-taught and worked on collection development projects. When I reached out to a faculty member in one department, my colleague informed me

that I was “not allowed to talk to [her] faculty without [her] permission.” By the end of 2018, one of the librarians responsible for a large humanities department left the institution and I took this opportunity to expand my liaison areas. While change is a lot for an early-career librarian or resident librarian, this is the work our white counterparts with permanent positions are able to do: learn librarianship through experience.

I’ve tried to push the conversation about the precariousness of residents and the problem of contingent labor at my institution. Based on my experiences, I go back and forth between the value and effectiveness of diversity residencies as the impact of residencies on the demographics of the profession is unclear. First, people in the profession need to have honest conversations about the infrastructure and proliferation of whiteness within librarianship. Instead, librarians have skipped the foundational work of understanding whiteness and assume that talking about diversity will produce diversity. Institutions and large professional organizations such as ALA and ACRL need to assess the work they’re doing—or not doing—to better understand residents’ experiences during their precarious positions, as opposed to focusing solely on institutional needs. I’ve learned a lot during my residency about being a subject liaison, but I could’ve learned the same skills in a permanent position. Why am I the one told to move on at the end of my three-year contract, while my white counterparts hired right out of library school are given the opportunity and the agency to choose to stay or leave? This is the reality of diversity residencies; while some residents like the short-term option to learn and leave, some of us would like the opportunity to stay, learn, and

grow in our careers where we are. Since our institutions have already invested in these diversity programs, why not keep us at these institutions?<sup>36</sup>

## Diversity Residencies as a Recruitment Initiative

Though the terms “underrepresented” or “minoritized” may cover social groups defined by parameters such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or other identities, most library diversity residencies focus on recruitment based on racial diversity. The lack of racial and ethnic diversity is one of the most salient indicators of homogeneity in librarianship in North America, reflected by ALA’s statistics, as the number of white librarians was 86.7% in 2017<sup>37</sup> and 89% in 2000.<sup>38</sup> Understandably, looking at these stagnant numbers, libraries focus on recruitment efforts through valuable scholarships such as the ALA’s Spectrum Scholarship and the Association of Research Libraries’ (ARL) Kaleidoscope Program and programs such as the ACRL Diversity Alliance, which put substantial resources such as time, money, and effort into recruiting BIPOC into librarianship.

Though library residencies were not developed with the explicit intent to recruit people from traditionally underrepresented groups, the development of the Diversity Alliance provided some codification around library diversity residencies as a recruitment program. In its purpose statement, the Diversity Alliance notes that it “unites academic libraries committed to increasing the hiring pipeline of qualified and talented individuals

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<sup>36</sup> April Hathcock, “Why Don’t You Want to Keep Us?” *At The Intersection* (blog), January 18, 2019, <https://aprilhathcock.wordpress.com/2019/01/18/why-dont-you-want-to-keep-us/>.

<sup>37</sup> Kathy Rosa and Kelsey Henke, “2017 ALA Demographic Study,” American Library Association, accessed February 4, 2020, <http://www.ala.org/tools/sites/ala.org.tools/files/content/Draft%20of%20Member%20Demographics%20Survey%2001-11-2017.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> Denise M. Davis and Tracie D. Hall, “Diversity Counts,” American Library Association, last modified January 2007, [http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/diversity/diversitycounts/diversitycounts\\_rev0.pdf](http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/diversity/diversitycounts/diversitycounts_rev0.pdf).

from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups” without mention of retention efforts. Between 2017 and 2018, the number of institutions that participated in the Diversity Alliance grew from 36 to 53. Anecdotally, institutions appear to be relying on diversity residencies as their de facto diversity initiative. This approach is deeply flawed and indicates a superficial understanding of institutional racism.

What is the financial commitment from institutions to their own residents’ success? Membership for the Alliance costs \$500 annually,<sup>39</sup> but where does that money go and who benefits from this membership? As we write this, membership seemingly covers the privilege of affiliation with the Alliance, participation in a diversity recruitment effort, and access to a member’s only listserv for coordinators.<sup>40</sup> Most glaringly, the Alliance doesn’t acknowledge whether or not the programs themselves are successful. Have programs been evaluated by the Alliance prior to their addition into the list? Even if a dean or director signs an agreement form,<sup>41</sup> that does not ensure that the institution will follow suggested guidelines nor does it mean the institutions will provide an equitable and anti-racist environment for their residents. What oversight or support does the Alliance provide? What does success in a residency program mean—not only to the residents or their host institutions—but also to the Alliance and the profession at large?

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<sup>39</sup> American Library Association, “ACRL Diversity Alliance,” Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), September 22, 2016, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/diversityalliance>.

<sup>40</sup> American Library Association, “ACRL Diversity Alliance.”

<sup>41</sup> American Library Association, “ACRL Diversity Alliance.”



## Mentorship and Professional Development

Mentorship is vital at any stage of a librarian's career. Residents require strong, formalized mentors inside and outside of their departments to strengthen their knowledge of library and institutional culture,<sup>42</sup> as well as serve as fierce advocates on their behalf.<sup>43</sup> Lack of support in residences designed to support BIPOC is harmful for any long-term career goals in librarianship due to experiences of isolation and lack of marketable skills provided during the program.<sup>44</sup> Organized structures for residencies with proper formal mentorship are essential for the success of residents<sup>45</sup> and requires commitment from the library administration and a people-first model. Clarifying and defining the role of the resident within the organization, as well as the structure of roles supporting the residents is key.<sup>46</sup>

While having a formalized structure assists with setting a supportive environment, it doesn't address all issues within the residency. If the resident is the first and/or only BIPOC in the department, the resident might feel pressure to assimilate into the existing culture and suppress aspects of their identity in order to fit in.<sup>47</sup> The concept of "fit" is highly contextual and problematic and, which affects how hiring is

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<sup>42</sup> Lorelei Rutledge, Jay L. Colbert, Anastasia Chiu, and Jason Alston, *Developing a Residency Program: A Practical Guide for Librarians* (Lanham: MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 56.

<sup>43</sup> Chanelle Pickens and Ashleigh D. Coren, "Diversity Residency Programs: Strategies for a Collaborative Approach to Development," *Collaborative Librarianship* 9, no. 2 (2017): 105, <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol9/iss2/7>.

<sup>44</sup> Jason Kelly Alston, "Causes Of Satisfaction And Dissatisfaction For Diversity Resident Librarians – A Mixed Methods Study Using Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2017), <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/4080>.

<sup>45</sup> Angela Boyd, Yolanda Blue, and Suzanne Im, "Evaluation of Academic Library Residency Programs in the United States for Librarians of Color," *College & Research Libraries* 78, no. 4 (May 2017): 479-480. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.78.4.472>.

<sup>46</sup> Rutledge, et al., *Developing a Residency Program*, 57.

<sup>47</sup> Jennifer Brown, et. al., "We Here: Speaking Our Truth," 174.

operationalized to uphold the status quo;<sup>48</sup> however, these expectations of fit also impact how BIPOC librarians navigate their daily professional lives. This type of fit is seen as “something to be aspired to if students and faculty of color are to succeed in higher education. While students and faculty of color frequently subvert those norms, and make spaces their own, such actions are frequently in opposition to a white norm and entail the duress of opposition to accepted ways of being.”<sup>49</sup> If we don’t address these issues of fit and assimilation honestly, the resident will suffer.

As residencies are developed to help BIPOC build strong resumes, coordinators need to question how residents are honing skills inside and outside of their institutions. How do institutions adequately provide support to their residents? Most programs encourage professional development, but there’s no guarantee that the resources for professional development are fully funded.<sup>50</sup> Who decides which type of professional development is worth their time? If the resident has no coordinator, mentor, or any official oversight besides their direct supervisor, the decision will be up to the resident. If residents rely on institutional or departmental norms for advice, most residents will revert to striving.<sup>51</sup> Strivers are low-income, first generation, students of color, and/or immigrant students who attend college hoping to change their “life circumstances” and improve through higher education.<sup>52</sup> Although most research on strivers focuses on

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<sup>48</sup> Sojourna Cunningham, Samantha Guss, and Jennifer Stout, “Challenging the ‘Good Fit’ Narrative: Creating Inclusive Recruitment Practices in Academic Libraries,” paper presented at the ACRL Conference, Cleveland, OH, April 2019, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/confsandpreconfs/2019/ChallengingtheGoodFitNarrative.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> Brook, et. al., “In Pursuit of Antiracist Social Justice,” 257.

<sup>50</sup> Rutledge et. al., *Developing a Residency Program*, 145-146.

<sup>51</sup> Jennifer M. Morton, *Moving Up Without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Cost of Upward Mobility*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 4.

<sup>52</sup> Morton, *Moving Up Without Losing Your Way*.

high-school students, we believe that this term is especially applicable to diversity residents who fit the model. For example, the requirement to prove yourself in academia is ever-present through the publish or perish culture.<sup>53</sup> For residents, who are sometimes seen as interns or the diversity hire, the stakes are higher for them to prove themselves. What resources are available for residents to professionally thrive and develop?

Our institutions encouraged us to attend the University of North Carolina Greensboro's (UNCG) Diversity Institute, a grant-funded leadership style conference for residents from institutions in the Diversity Alliance.<sup>54</sup> Attending the Institute provided us the opportunity to network, discover shared interests, and develop an informal cohort. As a cohort, we continue to talk about common trends and unique challenges we face as residents. This type of support needs to be embedded at a larger level, especially if institutions are only able to financially support one resident at a time. The Institute, although helpful in many ways, was grant-funded<sup>55</sup> and relied on the passion and work on the part of the grant's principal investigators.

## What is Success?

Success will depend on varying factors such as the stated goals of the program, the goals of the resident, and the amount of support for the resident.<sup>56</sup> Those developing residencies should define goals in iterative and holistic ways, while building

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<sup>53</sup> Ushma S. Neill, "Publish or Perish, But at What Cost?" *Journal of Clinical Investigation* 118, no. 7 (2008): 2368, <https://doi.org/10.1172/JCI36371>.

<sup>54</sup> "Library Diversity Institutes," UNC Greensboro, accessed on February 4, 2020, <https://library.uncg.edu/info/diversity/institutes/index.aspx>.

<sup>55</sup> "Library Diversity Institutes," UNC Greensboro.

<sup>56</sup> Rutledge, et al., *Developing a Residency Program*, 42.

safe ways for the resident to provide input. The institution should have a developed vision of success<sup>57</sup> in order to articulate the various roles of departments in the library and across campus, provide support for professional development opportunities, identify core competencies, and develop evaluative measures. The success of each program is highly contextual and dependent on a number of factors such as institutional priorities, institutional culture and norms, and the goals of the resident.

In alignment with CRT, the resident should have agency, conceptualized as “intentional, purposive action, which is the ‘continuous flow of lived-experience,’”<sup>58</sup> in defining success for themselves and the residency. Programs should recognize the unique perspectives and skills residents bring to the library. Rather than using rigidly prescriptive approaches, coordinators should advocate for some level of negotiation so that the residency is mutually beneficial for the institution and the resident. If retention—either within the library or the profession—is the goal of the residency program, institutions should provide support, develop a clear path towards that goal, and enable the resident to map the residency goals to long-term professional goals. The library culture will shape the experience of the resident, which will in turn, impact success. For example, if the institution has not prepared, assessed their readiness and ability to support the resident, or worked with their current library staff to develop buy-in for the residency program,<sup>59</sup> then the program will not be successful and the institution is

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<sup>57</sup> Rutledge, et al., *Developing a Residency Program*, 43.

<sup>58</sup> Reginald Leamon Robinson, “Human Agency, Negated Subjectivity, and White Structural Oppression: An Analysis of Critical Race Practice/Praxis,” *American University Law Review*, 53, 6. (2004): 1404.

<sup>59</sup> Jason Alston, “Recommendations for Diversity Residency Programs Summary of a Mixed Methods Study,” *Library Diversity and Residency Studies (LDRS)* 1, no. 1 (May 2020), <https://librarydiversity.institute/2020/recommendations-for-diversity-residency-programs/>.

putting BIPOC librarians in harm's way, potentially causing burnout, stress, anxiety, and psychological harm.

Institutions need to identify benchmarks and goals, especially when the contract of the resident is coming to an end. Residency coordinators, in conjunction with mentors, supervisors, and others affiliated with the resident and the program, should provide support and resources for job searching and interview practice. The resident and the institution should assess the type of job, its match to the resident's goals, whether it will improve their quality of life, or whether they are accepting a permanent job due to the pressure of their current job precarity and/or anticipation to leave their residencies. The institution should have an assessment plan in place that can help both the resident and the institution when it comes to defining success.

## Call to Action

We advocate that those developing, supporting, or sustaining library diversity residencies need to engage in critical reflection to understand and counter how the normalization of whiteness actively and passively harms the success of diversity residents. Though the three of us are committed to improving diversity residencies for BIPOC library workers, the onus of doing so ultimately falls with decision makers. We were conflicted about how to conclude this chapter. On one hand, we have a lot at stake and would like to suggest concrete actions. On the other hand, it is not our responsibility nor are we in positions in which we can effect substantive change.

We put out a call to action for deans, directors, program coordinators, program supervisors, direct supervisors, mentors, and other decision makers to examine how the expectation of whiteness can counteract the goals of diversity residencies. We provide a

list of open-ended questions that we hope will prompt critical analysis in order to improve residencies.

1. Are you discussing the ways whiteness informs organizational culture throughout your library before hiring a BIPOC librarian? If not, why?
2. How are you centering the experiences and goals of diversity residents in your program?
3. What are the goals of your diversity residency and how do they relate to the goals of the Diversity Alliance?
4. What is considered a successful residency for the profession, the library, and the resident?
5. How are you assessing your residency program and the effects of participating in the diversity residency on residents?
6. What are your institution's reasons to join the ACRL Diversity Alliance?
7. Can you do more to recruit and retain BIPOC outside of diversity residencies?

## Conclusion

Diversity residencies in academic libraries in North America have largely focused on the recruitment aspect without much substantive thought into the long-term retention of BIPOC into librarianship. We are at a tipping point, as more institutions are developing diversity residencies, yet questions about the efficacy of diversity residencies on the long-term retention of BIPOC in academic librarianship remain unanswered. Academic librarians must critically identify and address how whiteness has informed its practices of EDI. Through sharing our counter stories and posing this call to action, we hope that the future of academic librarianship is one in which stopgap

measures such as diversity residencies are no longer necessary. We hope that future BIPOC librarians don't have to rely on a temporary invitation to the party, but rather that we can collectively build librarianship to be more inclusive than it has ever been.

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