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Nebraska Library Association Statement Condemning Racism and Violence against Black People and People of Color

Nebraska Library Association, Diversity Committee

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NLA Statement Condemning Racism and Violence against Black People and People of Color

The Nebraska Library Association condemns racist and violent acts against Black people and all People of Color (POC). Racist oppression has been with us since before this nation was founded and has been highlighted again by the recent killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and James Scurlock -- and these are only the most recent, high-profile cases. On behalf of the NLA Diversity Committee and of the NLA as a whole, we cannot be silent at this time.

It is not enough for us as individuals and as a profession to be passively non-racist: we must be actively anti-racist, as librarians, as members of our communities, and as human beings. Libraries often promote neutrality as a professional value, and there is good intention in this: we seek balanced and open access to knowledge and information for anyone who uses our services.

However, librarianship does not have a neutral history in matters of justice, from Melvil Dewey to the segregated libraries of Jim Crow, we have seen the ways that passivity and overt oppression have played out in our profession's history and present day. Though in many ways we have made progress, we still have much work left to do. Now is the time to be unwavering and persistent in our solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and POC colleagues, patrons, and community members. Librarians cannot hide behind the shield of neutrality on matters of human rights.

Active anti-racism requires us to examine ourselves and our institutions, even when that is challenging, both personally and professionally. The rallies and protests we are seeing today do not occur in a vacuum. We must learn the history of our nation from the perspective of the oppressed. Commit to learning how to confront and change systemic racism in ourselves and our institutions so that we may facilitate long lasting equity and racial justice. As a predominantly white profession in a predominantly white state, this can seem difficult or less than urgent, but it is our responsibility to work side-by-side with Black, POC, and other librarians from diverse backgrounds to make our institutions, communities and our nation a better place for everyone. We must intentionally listen to and believe the stories our fellow Americans are telling us about their lived experiences. Promote Black voices and voices from all marginalized communities and speak and act in solidarity and humility.

In practice, educate yourself, educate your staff and coworkers, and build relationships with all people in the communities you serve, especially those targeted by racism. Take care of your colleagues and coworkers who are experiencing the impacts the most. Take time to listen and be willing to sit with personal discomfort as you learn more about the lived experiences of Black and other POC. Let us stand together and support those who need it most.

#blacklivesmatter

Below are a few resources to help you get started. We also encourage you to support or join the Diversity Committee of the NLA for more ways to learn and get involved. We need *you* as we work to transform our profession, our communities, and ourselves.

Antiracism: A Starter Booklist <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=antiracism-starter-booklist>

Disrupting Whiteness in Libraries and Librarianship: A Reading List (2019)

<https://www.library.wisc.edu/gwslibrarian/bibliographies/disrupting-whiteness-in-libraries/>

Scene on Radio "Seeing White" podcast (2017)

<https://www.sceneonradio.org/seeing-white/>

Black Lives Matter Meditations

<http://www.kzoo.edu/praxis/blm-meditation/>

[This document drew on input from a wealth of sources and individuals, including but not limited to: the American Library Association ([ALA](#)) statement condemning racism; The Black Caucus of the ALA's ([BCALA](#)) statement; The Oregon Library Association ([OLA](#)) and their recommendations for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI); The Texas Library Association ([TXLA](#)) statement; and several others. This statement was a collective effort from Anneka Ramirez, Micki Dietrich, Angela Kroeger, Scott Childers, Billie Cotterman, Laura England-Biggs, Michael Straatmann, Ginger Jelinek, and the NLA Board as a whole.]