

In response to anti racist efforts, as a library, we plan to increase the variety of materials and services offered and displayed. This includes continuing to offer an anti-racism tract with summer and winter reading challenges, continuing our partnership with Middletown Community College, and developing our collection to highlight and offer more CRT items; however, we will not offer an anti-racism tract for children under 8 and our anti-racism marketing will be reframed as promotion for the variety of services and collection we offer.

Our goal is to demystify CRT by focusing on counternarratives and transforming our library into a place that is welcoming to all people despite their backgrounds, beliefs, or culture. First, we must reimagine what CRT and anti-racism are. Some of the language surrounding these two are that they are divisive, promote anti-white rhetoric, makes BIPOC into a monolith, and deny the chance for conversation (Katiti). However, CRT and anti-racism the opposite of these things.

CRT is a framework that “embraces subjectivity of perspective and openly acknowledges that perceptions of truth, fairness, and justice reflect the mindset, status, and experience of the knower” (Taylor); it acknowledges race as a social construct; acknowledges that racism exist and is apart of society, even if not seen; rejects color-blindness; and promotes dialogue (Lantz).

While anti-racism is “that which promotes equality of opportunity among ethnoracial groups, and contend that the key goal of anti-racist praxis is equity rather than equality. Direct anti-racism encompasses efforts to promote equal treatment that results in equal opportunity, while indirect anti-racism is defined as unequal treatment that results in equal opportunity” (Berman and Paradies).

These definitions of CRT and anti-racism are important to understand because they give direction to the future of our library. MPL is keeping up with the national trend of diversity by race. So, by silencing the perspectives of non-whites, we are silencing close to half of our community and mitigating the impact of what our library system can do. If we do this, we create stereotypes and a narrow view of reality.

“The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story... so that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become” (Adichie).

We have been attempting to fight this phenomenon by continuing to develop an antiracist tract for summer reading, allowing anyone to book our meeting room as long as they don’t promote hate, collaborating with MCC, but it’s not enough.

We will look to increase our collection of CRT items, our offerings in Mandarin, Vietnamese, Spanish, and offer more books that feature BIPOC protagonist and from BIPOC authors. Our current collection is roughly 80% white (author or protagonist) and less than 10% non-English, so this focus on BIPOC protagonist, authors, and

non-English languages will start to help us better reflect our community. We plan to: apply for grants such as Institute of Museum and Library Services and Grants to State Library Administrative Agencies; partner with local colleges to create a consortium that would allow for items to be ordered from their academic library; and host a community book-drive.

Many of our CRT materials are already being checked out by MCC students so an extended partnership with Southeast State University will help circulation and offer a new patron base. Also, by obtaining more items in different languages we will help more of our community to feel welcome and seen. The book-drive is an attempt to get the community involved as stake holders for our library.

Even before we receive these materials we will look to display more of our CRT and non-English language materials. This will be a more intentional approach than that of the past, where we will offer staff on a monthly basis the opportunity to create a display based on their chosen topic. This is key to allow for collaboration, boost morale, and allow staff to share about topics they are passionate about. Also, by doing this we will be able to diversify the part of the collection that we offer, with hopes that some CRT materials will be further highlighted but not as a revolutionary display but as the norm of what the library offers. "We must be cautious to not send the message that [BIPOC] visitors are merely niche or annual visitors. Instead, what can we do to ensure that visitors of color are long-term invested stakeholders with a unique set of values whose narratives are celebrated as equally as important and complimentary to the system of values which permeate the traditional white mainstream" (Moore). The idea is to rewrite what we see as the norm in displays, this is an intentional approach that will require changes in language, how we classify our collection, and how we serve BIPOC who enter our library.

Despite these movements toward a more anti-racist library, we will be removing the anti-racist tract for children under 8 and rethinking our marketing strategies. The idea behind removing the tract for those under 8 is to focus more on developmental skills and just to encourage the love of reading. Yes, cultural empathy and competence are important skills to develop, but it is more important that our younger customers are able to build their own sense of urgency. Staff will be encouraged to show our collection to guardians and children, but it will ultimately be for the child and the caregiver to decide what books they want to read. A byproduct of diversifying our collection is that we will have more stories to offer that may build cultural empathy and competence. We will also rethink our internal marketing strategies as anti-racism is neutrality. Anti-racism is about promoting equal opportunity, so again by highlighting our display as the norm we will be able to rewrite how it is advertised. We will advertise under the pretense that we have these materials, not in a way that emphasizes it is non-white. The goal is not to be less white; it is to make sure all historical voices are heard and that there is a wide gamut of information available.

As further evidence for these approaches I cite the Library Bill of Rights:

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves.

Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

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