

Dear Colleagues,

The Florida Library Association stands with library workers, with library users, and with members of the communities we serve who are vulnerable to acts of prejudice, violence, and discrimination. The insidious and persistent racism present in our nation denies its residents equal rights, equal access and basic humanity. We at FLA are anguished and outraged by the recent deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and many other Black people killed by those who are supposed to function as our community partners to ensure safety, security and justice.

Today, we grieve with their families and communities, and we stand in solidarity with them against police violence inflicted on Black people. These actions stand in complete opposition to the goals of this association and to everything that libraries stand for, which should explicitly demonstrate that Black lives matter.

We are deeply concerned about the toll these racist acts are taking on Black communities, and we support all who peacefully demand an end to police brutality, mass incarceration, and racial violence. In our lives and work, we aim to provide access to these voices and look for ways to dismantle the racism embedded in American institutions, including our own.

While we often understand that libraries should be neutral organizations, that taking a stand is not appropriate, there is no neutral here. Constant terror, discrimination and exclusion of people based on race is not a political argument; there are no sides to this debate. Freedom from oppression is a human right. Access to opportunity, peace, and prosperity should be available to all.

Every day, Florida Libraries do vital work to serve our diverse communities. Through these difficult times, we continue this service but we must also strive to uplift our communities through intentional, anti-racist actions. I urge all Florida libraries to provide resources for those

who wish to educate themselves and continue to provide safe spaces and to support those who rely on us. You can count on FLA to work with all in our library communities to proactively instill and deliver on the promise of library ideals for all people while confronting the ways in which library policies or practices exclude people of color. I hope that you will reach out to the FLA Board and share your actions and ideas as we work together to reaffirm our commitment to our communities.

As part of the 2020-2023 FLA strategic plan, we had arranged to embed the values of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility into our work by appointing a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility task force to develop these statements and key strategies to impact our work. The time is now to do this. We seek your input and ask you to volunteer to be a part of this approach to improving FLA and contributing to a difference for the people of color among our colleagues and within our communities.

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