Thank you Ms. Barnes for your gracious introduction.

Good morning to the Co-Chairs, Virginia Moore and Andrew P. Jackson (Sekou Molefi Baako), Madame ALA President, Camile Alire, Mr. ALA Executive Director, Keith Michael Fiels, To all of the dignitaries who will be presenting this morning, and, to all of you, our colleagues and friends, who celebrate the life and achievements of Dr. King, and, who have assembled this special year, to celebrate the life of our leader, mentor, friend, colleague, role model, brother in the struggle, and one of the greatest librarians to have ever graced this noble calling, Dr. E. J. Josey.

In my close to 45 years of involvement with ALA there have been no more moving and inspiring events that I have attended than the Annual Sunrise Celebrations—which is why I feel so honored to have been selected to be a speaker this year.

E. J. Josey may have died July 3rd, but I don't have to believe it.

The physical person, Dr. E. J. Josey, may have passed, but his spirit, its never compromising, indefatigable, relentless, and oh, so passionate battle against racism and repression, for human rights, and for the values of the profession he so righteously served—yes, E. J. Josey’s spirit will live on through all of us who honor his name by continuing these struggles and staying on that trail he blazed for us to follow.

It is fitting to speak of E. J.’s greatness and his contributions today, the day we celebrate the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Josey was our profession’s Dr. King. E. J.—like Dr. King—was a gifted and inspirational orator who could move individuals and crowds with his speeches. E. J. was fearless, and fought for every cause in which he believed. He always was there, for you and with you; it was an honor and pleasure to be alongside him in any struggle.

The now-retired Honorable Major R. Owens, the African-American, and only librarian ever, Congressman, wrote as fine a summation as any:
“E. J. Josey can be accurately described as an alloy of productive contradictions. As a past-president of the American Library Association, he is the ultimate insider who retains the outsider’s point of view which launched his exceptional career.

“He is a conciliator and a coalition builder who also retains the fervor of the positive troublemaker. E. J. Josey has a world-class mind and an international outlook; he is at home with people of all races, ethnic groups, and religions. Yet, in this same unique, intellectual, social, and emotional personality package, we will find nowhere in America, a leader more dedicated to Afro-Centric concerns.”

Dr. Josey was one of the greatest librarians of the 20th or any other century. This morning I briefly will review his career and speak of his life as a librarian and his achievements. I will share with you thoughts, anecdotes, and remembrances that are limited by the brief time available.

Born January 20, 1924, in Norfolk, VA, E. J. was the eldest of five children. He was awarded a B.A. from Howard University, an MA in history from Columbia University, and an MLS, from SUNY Albany in 1953.

E. J. became Dr. Josey when he had 5 honorary doctorate degrees conferred upon him: Shaw University, 1973; University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, 1987; North Carolina Central University, 1989; Clark Atlanta University, 1995; and Clarion State University of Pennsylvania, in 2001.

He began his career as a librarian at the Free Library of Philadelphia; and was an instructor in social science, and subsequently librarian and associate professor at Savannah State College. Between his tenure as instructor and director at Savannah State, he was the director of the Delaware State College Library.

He left Savannah for the New York State Library to become the associate and then chief of the bureau of academic and research libraries, and finally, chief of the bureau of specialist library services. His last position was professor at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Library and Information Science, from which he retired as Emeritus Professor.

As a teacher and mentor throughout his career, Dr. Josey passed along the collective memory, tenets, and skills of our profession. He was a mentor to the Pitt students, and most every African-American librarian in the U.S. old enough to have known him.

As a matter of fact, I have yet to meet an African-American librarian who wasn’t inspired, mentored, helped, or simply touched in some way by Dr. Josey—not to mention the numerous Hispanic, Asian, white, young, and old of us he always encouraged and supported.
Mary Anne Vandiot, MLIS, Norfolk Main Library wrote on an *American Libraries* blog,

“He was my very first professor at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Library & Information Science back in 1991. I was just starting grad school & was very unsure of myself. He gave me the confidence that I needed to go on, and I will never forget him. He was dedicated, compassionate, and passionate about his work.”

Dr. E. J. Josey was the founder of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association in 1970, and its President for several years.

As the great librarian, and first African-American ALA President, Clara Stanton Jones, wrote,

“The Black Caucus of the American Library Association was born out of the renewed hope of the Civil Rights Movement applied to the important role of African Americans in librarianship. The caucus has been [and continues to be] an inspiring voice for Black librarians and for the entire Association.”

The year 1979 marked significant changes for the Coretta Scott King Award. At the ALA annual conference in Dallas, TX, the Award's tenth anniversary, Mrs. Coretta Scott King appeared and spoke at the breakfast. In addition, the Atlanta-based awards committee and the advisory board merged to form the Coretta Scott King Task Force.

Through the leadership of E.J. Josey, the merger of these two groups placed the Award under the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) of ALA. It was now an official award, recognized by the American Library Association.

I was proud to have been the first ALA President who appeared on the Today Show who managed to get recognition for several of the Coretta Scott King Award winners, in addition to the usual ALA Newbery-Caldecott awardees.

Dr. E. J. Josey was president of the American Library Association, 1983-1984, and was a member of the ALA Council seemingly forever.

Thanks to E.J.’s fight for social justice and the rights of all of us, the ALA Pay Equity Committee—which was an outgrowth of his Special Presidential Committee on Pay Equity—was permanently established in 1986. Of the committee's six charges, I'll mention two: "first, to promote the visibility of the pay equity issue as it affects library workers, both to the profession and to outside groups; and, to provide advisory support for pay equity litigation cases involving library workers."

Clara Jones wrote that the Pay Equity Committee would strengthen the ongoing fight to increase librarians’ salaries, at least to the level of other professions requiring comparable graduate study.”

Maurice J. Freedman, MLS, PhD
My subsequent efforts as ALA President in 2002-2003 to advocate for comparable worth salaries and pay equity for all library workers, were built on the precedent set by E. J.’s Special Presidential Committee.

Some of the things E.J. did as president—his theme was libraries, coalitions and the public good—including a task force on government information, a minority concerns committee, and outreach to many, many organizations. He brought representatives from many of these external organizations to his ALA conference.

His publications were groundbreaking and of great importance. By 1991, 266 books and articles were published by and about him, according to the festschrift edited by Dr. Ismail Abdullahi, E. J. Josey: An Activist Librarian. At the time of his death, Dr. Josey wrote over 400 articles and twelve books.

Here’s an amusing anecdote passed along by Sanford Berman who reviewed What Black Librarians Are Saying, in 1973. His review was a glowing one except for one negative point: Sandy felt that the index was inadequate.

Upon reading the review, E. J. contacted Sandy and challenged him. If you think the index is inadequate, then you index my future books. Which of course Sandy did, including Handbook of Black Librarianship (1977), Opportunities for Minorities in Librarianship (1977), and more.

I shall never forget my first awareness of E. J. It was an especially moving moment in time and illustrative of his lifelong fight against racism.

At a Chicago hotel on a snowy January night around 1970, I attended, along with other early SRRT members, a meeting of a panel of five library school deans who were discussing recruitment into library schools and, by extension, recruitment into the library profession.

Somewhere in the mists of memory, what is clear was the power of Dr. Josey’s righteous anger and his inspirational and moving declamation.

He made an impassioned yet cogent statement critical of the lack of minority recruitment in library schools; and, specifically the insensitivity, ignorance, and total lack of understanding of the racism implicit in the virtually non-existent minority recruitment by the white male deans having the discussion.

Upon concluding, he walked out on the panel. The 15 or so in our group—without hesitation—stood up, and followed him out.

ALA Past President Betty Turock wrote,
“Dr. E. J. Josey’s life’s work was libraries, librarians, and the people of color he recruited to the profession and then mentored to success.

“One of our early conversation stays with me. I can still hear his voice as he said in a dismissive tone, ‘ALA recruits one Minority Fellow a year. Imagine! In 50 years we will have recruited 50 Fellows.’ As President of ALA I had the opportunity to make a difference that he supported with his mellifluous voice, his influence, and his resources.

“Elizabeth Martinez worked with staff and I worked with members to establish ALA’s Spectrum Scholarship Program—it was part of the Spectrum Initiative. In this first year since his death, my tribute to E. J. is that I will chair the 2010 Presidential Spectrum Campaign to raise $1 million for the continuation of Spectrum Scholarships.

“E. J. worked tirelessly with many of us to raise the early funding for Spectrum. His work and words continue to motivate us all. By keeping the Spectrum Scholarship Program alive, E. J.’s work continues to live.”

Dr. E. J. Josey was one of the original founders of the Social Responsibilities Round Table.

As ALA Past President Patricia Glass Schuman relates,

“[In 1968] E. J....was there as one of the original signers of a petition...calling for the founding of the Social Responsibilities Round Table.... E. J. was convinced that SRRT was necessary to ‘Provide a Forum on the Major Issues’” and was needed to resolve critical problems.

“When New York City librarians were organizing a New York-SRRT chapter, E. J. traveled from Albany, 3 hours each way by bus, to attend each of the NYSRRT meetings.”

Schuman continued,

“The idea of SRRT was a courageous one: not everyone in ALA was sure such a forum was appropriate.

“Schuman says: E.J. encouraged me—and many other SRRT types, throughout our careers—including many ALA Past-presidents and Treasurers—Eric Moon, Clara Stanton Jones, Betty Turock, Arthur Curley, Nancy Kranich, Mitch Freedman, Carla Hayden, Carla Stoffle, and, myself.

“Never say ‘If I’m elected,’ counseled E.J.; say, ‘When I am President’”.

Maurice J. Freedman, MLS, PhD
E. J. initiated or supported every progressive effort to achieve human rights, peace, and justice, in the U.S. and around the world.

During the Vietnam War, when America was split between support and opposition, Dr. Josey excoriated the ALA for not taking a position.

Quoting from his book, *The Black Librarian in America*:

“I am probably the only past president of the ALA who ever led a delegation of members out of the annual conference of the Association... It was in 1970 at the ALA Conference in Detroit where for the second or third time our resolution to condemn the Vietnam War had been roundly defeated.

“I took the floor and made an impassioned speech and asked all of those who agreed with me not to stay—that we should leave; about 300 persons followed me out of the conference hall.”

Al Kagan wrote that E. J., as with so many battles for justice, led the fight against apartheid.

“I met E. J. for the first time in 1985 after he stood up from the middle of the audience at the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Meeting in Chicago Opening General Session, and demanded that apartheid institutions be banned from membership in IFLA. We later passed a resolution through the IFLA Council to do that. Of course, it was never carried out. Every year E. J. led an international delegation at every IFLA meeting to meet with the IFLA President and/or Vice-President to demand implementation of the policy.

“[And] of course, E. J. worked tirelessly in ALA around apartheid issues.”

We fought alongside of him in opposition to the misguided, ill-executed, ALA-IFC sponsored, and Association-damaging film, *The Speaker*, and numerous other causes. Dr. E. J. Josey was our compass; he always pointed in the true direction.

Before I retired I was director of the Westchester (NY) Library System. A vacancy occurred for the position of director of the Mount Vernon Public Library, Westchester’s central library. I wanted to do my best to ensure that a qualified African-American librarian was a successful candidate.

I called E. J. for recommendations, and he immediately gave me the names of three African-Americans who would make fine directors.
One of the three, Rodney Lee, was appointed to head this predominantly minority community’s library, its first African-American, and the best director in the 23 years of my tenure in Westchester.

I sought E. J.’s support for my run for president of ALA. E. J.’s endorsement meant a great deal to me because of the weight his name carried throughout the Association, but also because of my reverence for the man.

His positive response flabbergasted me. He ticked off a list of minority, progressive, and other causes for which I had taken stands or advocated throughout my career.

E. J. remembered everything. His support and his love were most well-informed. It was especially moving that his memory of my good deeds far exceeded mine.

I have no doubt that he kept similar sets of books for all of his colleagues who fought—or didn’t fight—the good fight.

I’ll close by recalling how E. J. made his mark on the national stage. He caused several state associations, and, yes, ALA, to become better than they were.

I am talking about his fight in 1964 against the segregated state library associations of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi; and the related issue of the American Library Association countenancing the participation of these racist associations as ALA chapter members.

The force that emanated from him, and through him, made the battle a little unfair. The Council had to pass the resolution—it could not have done otherwise given the immensity and strength of E. J.’s power.

The four state associations subsequently desegregated and E. J. became the first African-American member of the Georgia Library Association.

There are many, many, more stories to tell of E. J.’s greatness, his courage, his kindness, his humanity, and his love, but we will have to stop here.

By example, leadership, teaching, writing, and speaking, Dr. E. J. Josey made us better than we are, and inspired us to want to fight the good fight—and to continue that struggle—for all that he taught us to value as librarians and as human beings.

We are honored to have known you,

and to have been your comrade.
Rest in peace our beloved friend, teacher, and leader,

Dr. E. J. Josey.