

# SRRT Newsletter

A Publication of the Social Responsibilities Roundtable  
of the American Library Association

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This issue is dedicated to the memory and work of Brad Chambers and includes a number of memorials by people who knew him and worked with him.

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## COORDINATOR'S MEMO

To: SRRT members

From: Doris Kirschbaum, Action Council  
Coordinator

As many of you already know, Brad Chambers, Coordinator of the Civil Rights Task Force, died on September 22. Everyone who knew him in ALA, SRRT and the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) will have their own memories and feelings of sadness. Whenever I was in New York, I tried to stop by CIBC to see him, because I always came away with something interesting to think about or an idea for a newsletter article.

Brad was one of the few people for whom I would be willing to sit at my typewriter at 7 a.m. with the phone to my ear to take last minute dictation for a newsletter item about the Civil Rights Task Force--and then do it again the next morning because it needed a last paragraph.

He was not free from controversy. The CIBC was recently attacked in the *American Educator*, the quarterly of the

American Federation of Teachers, and the *SRRT Newsletter* had an article at that time defending the CIBC. If anyone would like to suggest what we might do at Midwinter to remember Brad Chambers and the causes he was concerned with, please let me know.

At Midwinter, SRRT will be sponsoring a presidential debate between Regina Minudri and Donald Sager. It will be held on Saturday, January 5, from 8 to 10 p.m. Bring your questions to the debate, or send them to the moderator of the debate, Joan Goddard, San Jose Public Library, 180 W. San Carlos St., San Jose, CA 95113. I hope that everyone who attends Midwinter will also come to SRRT Action Council meetings and participate in discussions.

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## COUNCIL ON INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

The Council staff, greatly saddened by Brad's death, is committed to continuing the fight for social justice. During this time, we appeal to readers of the *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, to friends of the Council, to all concerned with social justice to help us continue the work to which Brad was so dedicated. Support, both moral and financial, is needed. We ask for you help:

\*\* Financial contributions are sorely needed. Your tax-deductible gift to

the Bradford Chambers Memorial Fund will help the Council through this interim period.

- \*\* Help spread the word. Let others know about the Council's work by giving a gift subscription (\$15/yr.) to the *Bulletin* to a friend or relative, to your local library or school system, or to your child's teacher.
- \*\* Consider giving Council materials during the upcoming holiday gift-giving season.
- \*\* Volunteer. The Council has a very small staff and now, with the loss of our director, we would especially welcome your help.
- \*\* Help us find a new director. We would welcome your suggestions of candidates. Please write to the Search Committee, Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, Room 500, New York, NY 10023.
- \*\* Write letters of support. Tell us how the Council has been of assistance to you. In addition to providing moral support for the Council staff, such letters will be of invaluable assistance in our fund-raising efforts.

The Council's work is too important to stop now. Please help us continue.

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#### EDITOR'S NOTE

You may have noticed a new banner header on this issue of the newsletter. At first glance, this may seem like an entry in the "Snake in the Grass" category for the Worst Title Change of the Year Award. However, the change was prompted by the need felt by some members of SRRT (at least among the catalogers and serials librarians) for a less ambiguous title than the old banner presented. This publication has long been known as the *SRRT Newsletter* and it was felt that the title should make that clear. As might be expected, this attempt to be helpful forces the National Serials Data Program to assign us a new key title and a new ISSN. Our apologies to those who have to revise their

records.

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"A direct descendant of Cotton Mather." That's what I heard Nat Hentoff call Brad Chambers. Which says a lot more about Hentoff than Chambers. Because the Brad Chambers I've known and worked with was a decent, gentle, people-loving warrior, a person intolerant of bigotry and prejudice, but not himself either a despot or censor. Due largely to his inspiration and energy, the Council on Interracial Books for Children has, over the past decade, notably sensitized both teachers and librarians to the racism, sexism, handicapism, and other child-warping biases in their tools and practices. Further, Chambers and the Council pioneered in promoting truly bias-free, multicultural publishing, teaching, and librarianship. Many of us have been affected by Brad's work. And we're all the better for it. So are the kids we serve. And the society we live in. For Brad Chambers

radiated a commitment to human rights, to social justice, and to peace. There are never many like him. And that makes his passing even more sorrowful. But the most appropriate "memorial"--beyond statements like this or contributions to the Council--is surely to redouble our efforts on behalf of the causes he championed.

--Sanford Berman, Head Cataloger, Hennepin County Library, Minnetonka, MN

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The body that was Brad Chambers has gone from here, leaving many of us greatly saddened by the knowledge that we will not be able to talk to him again, but the spirit with which he inspired so many friends and onlookers within and beyond SRRT will be with us for a long time, moving us, I hope, into further efforts like his to make our society more responsive to the needs of the great majority of our population.

One of the aspects of Brad's work in ALA that impressed me was the choice he made to become an ALA member, making the financial commitment and giving considerable amounts of his time even though he was not a librarian. He recognized the importance of librarians and of librarianship in influencing how people developed, how their attitudes were shaped through books and other media and library events. And he therefore chose to invest himself in working within ALA to open up new channels of communication to librarians.

I do not know precisely how much of the outstanding quality of the *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin* can be attributed to Brad, but certainly his role as editor for almost all of its fifteen years and his leading position in the Council on Interracial Books for Children indicate his major responsibility for its production and content. What has struck me in almost every issue of the

magazine is not only its consistently high standard of writing and its direct, frank approach to each topic tackled, but also the willingness to broaden the areas covered by the magazine in fighting prejudice and distortion in the books and other media on the market today. The *Bulletin's* support of minority authors and illustrators has been one of the great boons to children's literature. Its reviews of current children's books are unique in the thorough analysis they give of relationships, the sharp eyes they focus on the issues that young people are interested in and will respond to.

Probably the most substantial way in which we can show our great affection and respect for Brad Chambers is to see that his goals are brought closer to achievement through the continuance and much broader distribution of the *Bulletin*.

--Miriam Crawford

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All of us in all educational institutions will miss the bright light of our kind colleague Brad Chambers. His determination and vision helped us to make significant gains in educational policy for goals SRRT and the Council on Interracial Books for Children share.

As noted in the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (1982 ed.), Brad's work with SRRT in 1976 for the ALA resolution for an action program for racism and sexism awareness created substantial policy that affected most of the members of ALA and the people they serve.

Brad's work with CIBC and National Education Association also has improved the quality of the service we offer in educational institutions. The NEA-CIBC-CEA publication of *Violence, the Ku Klux Klan and the Struggle for Equality* is a valuable reference for all

libraries and supplements the excellent work of CIBC in its *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*.

Remembering how ALA's celebration of its centennial in 1976 was made substantial by Brad's tireless work, we must celebrate his life now with resolve for our energy to be directed for further policy of substance in ALA.

--Jackie Eubanks, Brooklyn College Library

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Years before meeting Brad, I "discovered" the *Bulletin* early in my first job as a young adults librarian. I still remember the sense of exultation with which I picked up the first issue. Here was a tool which made the connections between the work I was trying to do with books and young people and the real world with its problems, its racial injustice, its sex discrimination, its sometimes hidden but nonetheless real and rigid class lines, its threat of nuclear annihilation. Here, at last, was a guide through that rough and thorny terrain that was not afraid to look at the obstacles in the path of healthy and humane development of young people, that was brave enough to make judgments on the really important values in children's literature, and could help me use books in working with young people which reflected the world they actually inhabited and which could help them develop the personal and social means to live in that world satisfactorily and, we would hope, to help change it.

But even getting to know the *Bulletin* didn't really prepare me for meeting Brad. I'll never forget the first time I saw him rise on the floor of a membership meeting at ALA. I have now forgotten the controversy of that moment. I only remember the remarkable good sense, the extraordinary courage, the modest mien but unshakable conviction with which he took on the majority of

the membership and Council. These initial impressions, of course, were confirmed over and over again as I worked with Brad over the next few years in SRRT and, especially, the Anti-Ku Klux Klan Task Force.

We should not have lost him so soon. But few people have left so dynamic a legacy, both in terms of personal inspiration--we *must* be braver because of Brad--and also in the concrete existence of the Council and the *Bulletin*. Let us remember him by continuing, to the best of our abilities, his innovative, creative, and courageous work.

--Nancy Gruber

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Losing Brad Chambers is pretty severe medicine for people concerned about social justice--he was pretty unusual.

It was a great disappointment for him to be attacked for censorship by librarians. The attacks particularly came to a head in 1974-75 when the Council on Interracial Books for Children published an annual review of children's books, monitored for some ten "isms"--from racism, sexism, and ageism to elitism. I found the survey extremely interesting and readable and was interested to note that the two books which passed all those ten tests were reviewed as being not very interesting.

Some restoration of recognition for the CIBC came in the past several years, but its work is needed now more than ever. The most significant memorial to Brad would be renewed support of CIBC now.

--Elizabeth Morrissett, Peace Information Exchange Task Force

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I had grown close to Brad since I interviewed him at length for *Sipapu*. Chambers was a lengthy and exacting interviewee, the lengthiest, and the most exacting, I had ever encountered. His demands on me were not trivial; every word had to be right, and he insisted that even my introduction had to describe his position correctly. Bacon's phrase, "writing maketh an exact man," described him, and the reason for this had nothing to do with pedantry. He knew what he was dealing with: children's books touching on questions of racism, sexism, handicapism, ageism, and other subtle forms of oppression in our volatile environment. He knew that freedom and dignity were not far apart, but that they were frequently seen in conflict. He knew that words are not simply words, but also bombs. He knew that words, spoken or written, however innocently, could change and even devastate young lives. On this account he changed, and even outraged, much of the library community, still locked in dogmatic slumbers.

Brad was a serious man, though not without humor, and a worried man. Even after he had approved the interview in *Sipapu*, even after it was sent off to the printer, he would call me up about some attack he had read on his position, and ask me (of all people) for advice and support. Out of one such conversation arose a statement of support for him and his work, which was published in the *SRRT Newsletter*, but not, in spite of promises, anywhere else. Having viewed it, Brad phoned me and in a soft voice told me it was all right. He could sleep now, and he thanked us.

I won't get one of those late-night calls any more; I hope that CIBC will still keep me on the exchange list he set up with me. I often wished, as I talked to Brad, that I could send him a drink across the long-distance wires. A bigger stein, across a longer line, I send to him tonight.

--Noel Peattie, Editor and publisher, *Sipapu*.

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## PEACE INFORMATION TASK FORCE

The annual survey of state library associations for any resolutions or work on peace issues is going forward. The efforts and money spent in going to IFLA, which was in Nairobi this summer, did not result in any approval of a group, roundtable, etc., under the IFLA umbrella at this time--the Professional Board suggested in turning down the request that it belongs under the Social Sciences Libraries Section, and a request for a program on conflict resolution and peace information was made to the chair of that group in early September. Elizabeth Morrissett attended the second national conference on conflict resolution and peace in St. Louis in mid-September, and gave a report on librarians' various efforts, sabbaticals, surveys, etc. A whole new profession of dispute resolution is growing up around the legal and social work professional agencies, owing to the new laws passed for helping people solve problems outside the courts, and they were very present at this meeting.

The questionnaire to state library associations has gone out. Would anyone whose library organization does something (anything) with peace and conflict management issues by resolutions, educational programs, or other activities please let Mary Rosenthal (St. Lawrence University Library, Canton, NY 13617; tel. 315-379-5451) know about it?

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## SRRT BUDGET

The following summary of the SRRT budget for 1984-1985 is presented for the information of the membership.

Action Council expenses	\$ 825.00
Newsletter	2500.00

ALA HQ service	1060.00
	<u>\$4385.00</u>

Task Forces	
Alternatives in Print	\$250.00
Civil Rights	400.00
Feminist	450.00
Gay	350.00
Intl. Human Rights	100.00
C.S. King Award	150.00
Library Union	500.00
Men's Issues	350.00
Peace Info. Exchange	200.00
	<u>2800.00</u>
TOTAL	\$7185.00

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#### LIBRARY UNION TASK FORCE

The Library Union Task Force had a profitable session in Dallas with two good programs and membership meetings. Although these meetings were small, they brought forth some new faces and good ideas.

On Saturday evening, June 23, "Libraries, Unions, and Political Action" were discussed by Harriet Newton of the Los Angeles Librarians Guild, Patsy Hays of the Dallas-Fort Worth Chapter of the Coalition of Labor Women, and Jim McCasland of the Dallas County AFL-CIO, with Mary Rosenthal of St. Lawrence University as moderator. Political action included lobbying for expanded library service or against cuts, maintaining friendly relations with legislators, and assisting campaigns of friendly legislators (or against unfriendly ones). Action techniques included cash donations, providing volunteers for phone banks, and issuing press releases.

On Tuesday morning, June 26, a well-attended program dealt with "Managing VDTs for Employee Well-being." The speakers were Bruce Miller from Indiana University, Louis Tijerina from OCLC, and Jodie Fine of the AFSCME

International Office. Helen Lewis of the University of Connecticut was moderator. Miller discussed VDT hazards in general, including a possible radiation hazard, productivity loss due to ergonomic factors, and the effects of ion imbalance. He made recommendations for the best working conditions with VDTs. Tijerina discussed visual problems, which might be due to workstation design or organizational factors as well as the quality of the screen image. He also talked about remedial measures. Fine addressed what unions could do about potential problems, including negotiating better conditions and forming joint labor-management committees. She stressed that a committee is not a substitute for strong contract language and doesn't replace or supersede collective bargaining.

At the membership meetings, possible activities were discussed, progress of the directory project was reviewed, and plans were made for next year. Although Kathleen Prendergast could not attend, a report from her indicated that questionnaires for the directory of library unions were about to be mailed. "Sexual Harassment, What It Is and What You Can Do About It" was selected as the program topic for the Chicago conference. A poster session on organizing is also planned. Mary Rosenthal has agreed to be co-coordinator with Peter Kidder until Midwinter, after which she and Helen Lewis will be co-coordinators.

Two task force members, Kathleen Prendergast and Joan Goddard, have been appointed to the newly formed ALA Commission on Pay Equity. They participated in a Library Union Task Force-sponsored program on that subject at the 1983 conference in Los Angeles.

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#### MIDWINTER SCHEDULE

The following SRRT meetings had been scheduled at press time. No task force meetings were scheduled to conflict with

Action Council meetings.

Friday, 4 January

4:30-5:30 pm Peace Information TF  
8-10 pm C.S. King TF

Saturday, 5 January

8-9 am Peace Information TF  
9:30-11:00 am Action Council  
2-4 pm Library Union TF  
4:30-5:30 pm Feminist TF  
Int'l Human Rights  
8-10 pm SRRT Pres. Forum  
C.S. King TF

Sunday, 6 January

8-9 am Peace Information TF  
9:30-11:00 am Int'l Human Rights  
11:30-12:30 Alt. in Print TF  
2-4 pm Action Council  
8-10 pm C.S. King TF

Monday, 7 January

8-9 am Peace Information TF  
Civil Rights TF  
Library Union TF  
9-11 am Feminist TF  
9:30-11:00 am Civil Rights TF  
11:30-12:30 Alt. in Print TF  
4:30-5:30 pm Gay TF  
8-9 pm Library Union TF

Tuesday, 8 January

9-11 am Feminist TF  
9:30-11:00 am Alt. in Print TF  
11:30-12:30 Action Council

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THE PACIFIST CHRISTMAS CAROL

It is widely felt that the ideals and spirit of Christmas are in harmony with the concept and goals of pacifism. The angelic proclamation in the biblical story of Christmas, "On earth peace, good will toward men," is a creed which fully supports the pacifist philosophy. It is much less known, however, that there is a well-known Christmas carol which is as much a plea for world peace as it is a celebration of the holiday season.

On Christmas day 1863, the famous American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) wrote a seven-stanza peace poem, *Christmas Bells*. Longfellow's lyrics were inspired by the horrors of the American Civil War in general and by the serious wounding of his son in particular. Not too long afterward, Longfellow's peace poetry was combined with a wistful and beautiful tune by the English composer John Babtiste Calkin (1827-1905) and the enduring Christmas song "I heard the bells on Christmas day" was created.

The reason that this popular carol is not usually regarded as a peace song is that the first three verses, which deal only with Christmas, are sung far more frequently than the last four, which focus on the issue of war and peace. This emphasis on the Christmas verses is partly due to their being the first section of the song and partly due to the understandable inclination by most people to prefer the joys of the holiday season to the serious realities of war.

The final two verses eloquently express Longfellow's strong concern with peace:

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:

"God is not dead; nor doth he sleep:  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

In this holiday season clouded by war, world tensions, and proliferation of nuclear weapons, let us hope that the poet's sentiments become universal.

--William E. Studwell, Northern Illinois University, author of *Christmas Carols: A Reference Guide* (1984).

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