quality of his poetry from whites. He then proceeded to read poems that were virulently anti-Semitic. One member of the audience was an escapee of Hitler's Germany—a man who had experienced firsthand the effects of anti-Semitism. Because Lewis is a talented poet and a charismatic person, the effect of his reading was tremendous, and the immigrant raised his voice in protest to the hatred he was hearing expressed. He talked of the family he had lost to the concentration camps; he protested that he owned no tenements or stores in a ghetto. The black audience hooted him into fearful silence as we whites sat immobilized. Lee told him that if one Jew owns a slum property, all Jews are guilty.

As we fought in Detroit over the film, I kept wondering what the Black Caucus would have done and said if ALA/IFC had chosen the black culture conference encounter as the situation to be depicted in its film. If the Jewish members of ALA had asked "out of respect" that we reject such a film, would the Black Caucus have defended Lee's right to his perceptions and his right to express those perceptions as forcefully as he knew how? I did then, and I do now.

At Detroit, we replayed the film's script.

We cannot, as an Association devoted to the dissemination of all ideas, be so unsophisticated as to equate defending a racist's right to speak with being a racist. It is the right to be heard that is all important, and not the quality of the ideas. We cannot allow ourselves to lose sight of the fact that suppression of one unpopular opinion opens the door to suppression of all unpopular opinions. Nor can we afford to forget that every major improvement in society—including the civil rights movement—began as an unpopular minority opinion. Most of all, out of total self-interest, we should remember that each voice silenced contributes to the possibility of our own voices being silenced.

Being heard in the marketplace is becoming increasingly important. Recent Supreme Court decisions lead me to believe that freedom of expression will only be protected to the degree that each of us is willing to practice it. The Speaker focuses on the First Amendment, and we had all better read the superb discussion guide that accompanies the film, and read the books on the bibliography, because it is becoming clear that unless we win the battle of the First Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment is going to end up in the trash barrel.

A few months ago, I didn't understand that concept. I'm grateful to "the film" for opening my eyes. I'm grateful that the controversy led me to have my first personal contacts with Judy Krug, who didn't turn out to be such an ogre after all. And, for additional benefits, we can ponder the importance of a film that led Gerhardt and Brad Chambers to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in voting to remove ALA's name from it. It wasn't all deterioration of social and interpersonal relations! Let's talk about the positive things that emerged and work harder so that our next film is technically better, but not less provocative.

Other Voices, Other Views

No Substitutes
Since ALA is a multi-racial and multi-ethnic organization, it is revealing to note that no no-black group offered to substitute for the stereotyped black characters and permit the attachment of the label "genetically inferior" to itself. After all, it's such a harmless little film.

ELAINE J. ADAMS, Texas Southern University Library, Houston

The Determining Factor
The furor over The Speaker must seem like a fresh revelation to all the film librarians in the land. I was surprised not to see a comment about this controversial film from any film librarian in your very comprehensive report of the fray at ALA Detroit as re-played in the July/August AL . . . Mr. Josey and the Black Caucus responded as they should have. Josey has had a sharpened sensitivity to black/white relationships all his professional career. I just believe you over-reacted, E.J.

At the hundreds of film preview meetings I've sat in and/or conducted, I found the immediate reaction to a film valuable, but not all conclusive when deciding whether to purchase the film. That is why we ask the members of the preview committee to write down their comments first, then we discuss the film. It is human nature that some, if not all, will temper their opinions after the discussion. That is why a few days later, the chairperson and a couple of the most experienced film users in the library system look over the preview sheets, tally the vote, and make a final decision to purchase or not. A real determining factor is the length of discussion evoked during the preview session.

Probably no consolation to the Black Caucus members, but I don't see The Speaker being used beyond our own library compounds—library schools, friends groups, and library inservice training—despite the sincere wishes of the IFC. How many middle-aged people are we going to get to watch a 40-minute film on a topic most concerned with a library problem? Lee Bobker broadened the film's scope in order to widen its appeal with good intentions, but he had a difficult assignment.

GEORGE M. HOLLOWAY, The Free Library of Philadelphia

Appalled, Disappointed, and Disturbed
I would like to state at the outset that I am opposed to censorship; and I do support the First Amendment. So I am not in favor of censoring the film.

However, I am appalled and disappointed that to articulate its support for the First Amendment freedoms and access to all information and ideas, ALA would choose a vehicle that at the same time negates the Association's putative stand on another basic, but very crucial issue—the elimination of racism and the protection of human dignity. At one point, the narrator describes "a group of intelligent and well-meaning people," yet the entire characterizations and acting of one race failed to show much semblance of intelligence.

I can understand varied individual opinions, but I am disturbed that ALA, an organization in which many blacks are loyal and supportive members, can be willing to give its stamp of approval to a film that shows such lack of sensitivity in one area and yet not resolve the issue which it purports to espouse in another.

Since people and organizations, as well, are more often judged by what they do rather than by what they say, I would hope that in the future ALA will endeavor to let its actions speak louder than (or at least as loud as) its words.

ANNIE M. JACKSON, Southern University Library, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Racism is the issue
Having seen the film and heard the debates, there is no question that it is racist in its stereotyped behaviors and its treatment of the subject. This raises three questions we must deal with: 1) Is ALA not further sanctifying the misrepresentation of racism by distributing the film? 2) Why was the film not more carefully monitored since it concerned such a sensitive subject with so many possible ramifications? 3) Why were both Membership and Council not able to hear and believe those who spoke so eloquently during the debates?

The first two questions will be dealt with rationally with actions and reactions to do what can be done to alleviate the consequences. Even so, they remain major points: The credibility of the Association depends on just how they are resolved.

The third question, however, is even more difficult to resolve. The speakers during the debates were clear and stated as they identified why the film was objectionable and the grounds for the assertion that it was racist. Yet, not enough people understood. The Black Caucus has a credible record of constructive and thoughtful efforts. Yet, sufficient numbers of Membership and Council did not honor their rejection. The "Preliminary Guideline for Reviewing Films for Racism-Sexism Awareness" distributed at
the film showing was a positive effort to alert viewers to this concern. Yet, this did not convince.

Can it honestly be that a majority of ALA Members and Councilors do not see that racism is the issue, do not yet see that racism should be eliminated not perpetuated when it is discovered, do not yet see that we have defined the organization by our vote?

BARBARA CONROY
Tabernash, Colorado

Holocaust Victim Speaks

Your coverage of the Great Debate on the Speaker omits quite a few important details. For example, you failed to mention that the first vote taken was on the SRT resolution [to remove ALA’s name from the film]. It was at first mistakenly declared as carried, whereupon a number of members left the meeting. Since membership meetings on the last day of a conference are poorly attended anyway, I consider the final vote inconclusive at best.

Further, since you found it appropriate to quote, among others, a refugee from Nazi Germany in support of the film, fairness demanded an opposing voice, that genocidal theorists of racial superiority do not deserve the protection of the First Amendment.

As a survivor of the Holocaust, one who went through the hell of 12 concentration camps, and, in addition, lost all members of his family, I expressed my support of the resolutions against retaining the ALA label. True, my defense was very emotional, but if you consider that you only need to substitute the names of Julius Streicher or Alfred Rosenberg for the likes of Shockley (or Boyd), you will know how I feel.

ISAAC ARBUS, Brooklyn, New York

A Historian’s View

Not yet having seen The Speaker and not having been present at the Council III meeting, I was somewhat surprised to see myself quoted on p. 574 in the last issue of AL. Nonetheless, there is no objection to the statement attributed to me since it accurately reflects my views. It’s just that as a sometime historian I want to be sure the record is clear about my not having been present at what must have been a very stormy Council session.

For most of the past fifty years the American Library Association has supported the freest possible exchange of ideas, including those which many members personally find repugnant.

We have sometimes supported court cases which involved books or films which the majority of the membership probably would never read nor promote in their libraries. I assume we have done so on the Jeffersonian principle that it is the right of an individual in a free society to make up his or her own mind. As Jefferson expressed it concerning a weak book published by a French author in 1813, “If M. de Bécourt’s book be false in its facts, disprove them; if false in its reasoning, refute it. But, for God’s sake, let us freely hear both sides, if we choose.”

Southerners used to argue that it is their right to pervert the views of such organizations as the NAACP, the Southern Regional Council, and other groups promoting integration, even though their views were antagonistic to those of people then in control of local and state governments. Academicians affirmed that in a democratic society it was important for ideas to clash with each other in the market place so that youth could learn to analyze and criticize them intelligently.

Many ideas of which I was even for discussion in the South, had become the prevailing mood of the country and a majority in the region by the late sixties and early seventies. Now that these ideas are freely discussed on campus, we can scarcely refuse our students, our libraries, or our newspapers to dissenting views on the other side. For if we do, we surely lay ourselves open to the charge of inconsistency by our cynical friends in the legislature who fought for the removal of such censorship laws as the “Speaker Ban Law” even when it was highly unpopular for them to do so.

Thus when our students shout down such speakers as the president of the North Carolina KKK or a representative of “Jews For Jesus,” the legislator is apt to say, “Whatever happened to that concept of the university as a marketplace for ideas?” If the legislator then points out that freedom of speech often seems to depend upon whose ox is being gored, then it should come as no surprise to us. Nothing around, when our values are in danger and we trot out Thomas Jefferson, and reverently appeal to the politicians in the name of our sacred ancestors, we may find the legislators turn deaf ears.

Under these circumstances, I hope the students at UNC at Chapel Hill and I can see the unexpurgated edition of The Speaker. However, when the film may be, we all need to know that ideas have consequences and some of those consequences are not pleasant, or easy, or devoid of passion. Pringles can be discussed in the abstract with useful results but their concrete expression often generates controversy. The important point to keep in mind is how we deal with controversy, how we maintain our principles and our community relationships at the same time.

Apparently The Speaker has the ability to provoke discussion of intellectual freedom at its basic level. If that is true, then one could scarcely hope for a better vehicle for teaching. If our students can view this film, or any other film or book, critically, with the tools of professional scholarship, and within the framework of the humanity of our faculty, we shall have provided them an opportunity in graduate education which should serve them well as librarians. And that is what education and intellectual freedom and libraries are all about.

Edward C. Holley, Dean, School of Library Science, University of North Carolina/Chapel Hill and Past President, ALA

Amateurish Production

The film, I think, has the same weakness that many bad films have—a poorly written script. The people are caricatures, the confrontations are simply not believable, and the dialog sounds contrived. It is an amateurish production.

If the Association chooses to use drama as a vehicle for exploring First Amendment rights it is better not choose, at the very least, a competently written piece. Better yet, go all the way, seek out something really fine. Why produce a grade B film? Better nothing at all.

The importance of the message and the good intentions of those involved in producing the film are not great enough to overlook poor quality. First Amendment rights are neither well expressed nor well served. Instead, they are distorted and obscured, with the result that the film itself adds to the confusion surrounding the issue rather than helping to dispel it.

In spite of the opportunity it offers to see Mildred Dunock perform, the film surely does not deserve the endorsement of the Intellectual Freedom Committee or ALA.

CAROL BARRY, Central State University Library, Edmond, Oklahoma

On the Cutting Edge

In The Speaker, blacks are shown exercising their right to free speech in attempting to stop a racist speaker from appearing at a community school. This right of free speech is one which the activities of black organizations and individuals have strengthened through the last two decades by their struggle. Blacks have been on the cutting edge of the struggle for human rights, and they have helped to make their communities better places for all to live in.

The issue of free speech is very much alive, and the black community has helped to keep free speech alive because this community perceives that it is a trap and a snare to save. If all ideas are sacred because ideas are sacred, People are more sacred. Librarians know that words are more than mere words—they are also passions, emotions, and actions. Blacks, too, like any other minority, know that certain words are not without harm, that words can hurt, especially if the words are disguised as a mere inquiry, as a seeking after truth.

The debates at the ALA convention should be summarized and printed to be distributed with all copies of the film. This would make the entire community focus on just what the film is saying about the United States, about what the U.S. is, what it has been, and what it might become.

Framing of speeches by those few that those who disagree with the film say so, and say why they disagree.

But the film itself is not the “speaker,” and is not saying that blacks are inferior. Rather, the film shows blacks exercising their rights and exerting their power to change a potentially dangerous situation.

The film may be an inferior production, but only if people are allowed to see it can they judge its merit.

RICHARD V. ANGLIN, Ramapo-Catskill Library System, Middletown, New York

*An AL reporter erroneously identified as Holley the member who said his university intended to show the film because it likes to provoke debate.

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