

The Montana Library Association stands with library workers, patrons, and the community partners we work with and serve who are susceptible to acts of prejudice or threats of violence or discrimination. The pervasive racism present in our nation denies its residents equal rights and equal access and as such is a barrier to the goals of this association and to everything that libraries stand for.

Libraries hold the common belief that we ought to remain neutral as we serve patrons who comprise the entirety of the human spectrum. But to remain neutral at this moment in history is unacceptable. There is no neutral here. Oppression in any form is a power structure that is antithetical to the mission of any library. Hatred, violence, prejudice, or exclusion of people because of their appearance is not a political argument; there are no sides to this debate. All have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. All have the right to not fear harm to their person. All have a right to have their voice heard. All have a right to be represented. Silence is not an option. Inaction is not an option. Now is the time to educate each other. Now is the time to have difficult conversations and explore how reconciliation and justice may become reality.

I know that Montana libraries will be diligent in ensuring representation is maximized within our services, programs, collections, and partnerships. I encourage all Montana libraries to continue to provide resources, booklists, safe spaces, and support to those voices and peoples who have not been recognized and represented. Let us stand together and support those who need it most—solidarity is needed now for all.

Gavin J. Woltjer

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