

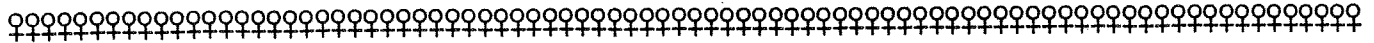
Women In Libraries

NEWSLETTER OF THE
ALA/SRRT FEMINIST
TASK FORCE

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Leaders of the Pack

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ALA Preconference "Librarians as Colleagues: Working Across Racial Lines." June 24-26, UC, Berkeley

The Nature of This Flower Is to Bloom
Alice Walker

Rebellious. Living.
Against the Elemental Crush.
A Song of Color
Blooming
For Deserving Eyes.
Blooming Gloriously
For its Self.

Perhaps what I most appreciate about this education is that "the beat goes on." We participants cannot and will not say that we have "done" racism, understand it and ourselves, and have "fixed" everything. What this preconference inspired is a renewed dedication to work on racism and its effects upon ourselves and our institutions.

The exercises which we used in Berkeley are valuable for self-examination every two months or so. One, a Personal Checklist, offered a long catalog of characteristics, both positive and negative, depending on one's perspectives (examples: adaptive, friendly, invisible, respective, under-

employed, uptight, etc.), and asks that the user select five that describe her...then five that describe her as a member of her racial group (Asian, Black, Latina, Native American, White). Another activity required pairing up with someone not of my race. I found myself with the noted E.J. Josey, a former ALA president. For each of the five above-listed races, we named ten stereotypes we have heard in some way, after which we coded the stereotypes into categories: (1)rejected images (2)notions still believed but making us uncomfortable (3)stereotypes still being sorted out for validity (4)things still thought appropriate. Not too surprisingly, since we are both members of American society, E.J. and I shared similar lists of stereotypes and coding too for all groups except Blacks (he's Black) and whites (I'm white).

Fascinating to me was a small group discussion during which we examined a scenario, problems and solutions to which we later brought to the full membership of participants. So much did the scenario for my group remind me of an experience at my workplace that I mentioned it during our session. The experience to which I refer is my preparation of a Black Studies booklist, which I eagerly volunteered to create when my library's Black Studies Librarian and other Black librarians on the staff explained that they had no time to devise the list. When a librarian from another division discovered a white person creating the bibliography, she was quite displeased, and I fully sympathized, as I believed that a person of any particular group can do the most sensitive job on projects for patrons of that group. The two Black women in my Preconference circle clearly disagreed with this perspective. Although they strongly support greater efforts at Affirmative Action for the sake of justice and role models, they argued that, if I am supposed to serve an African-American public, I had better be capable of compiling a basic list of resources for research into Black Studies. I was impressed with their forceful reasoning and am still pondering the question.

Not every moment was peachy-keen. Many of us came to the preconference expecting to hear from and participate in discussion of anti-Semitism; the planners excluded this dimension--in their view, another issue of tangential value to investigation of racism. Some women felt that class should have been a consideration. (I had too, initially, knowing how one's reaction to, say, E.J. Josey's looks alone may differ markedly from one's reaction to a Black teenager who is obviously streetwise and not middle-class. Hearing experiences of librarians of color, particularly that of a Black woman who, on her first day at a new library, was mistaken for the cleaning lady, caused me to readjust my perspective, however, and remember how patronizing we can be of those who are "not our kind.") Several white women, keenly aware of how painful have been the experiences of people of color, remarked that they were very hesitant to add to that pain by honestly expressing their prejudices. This had been planned as a conference for white people to help other white people to improve each other's understanding. Now work is underway on another preconference before the San Antonio midwinter '88 ALA convention, and this preconference will probably be most particularly for white librarians. (I still refer back to the shared misconceptions of E.J. Josey and me, though.)

Another past president of ALA, Clara Stanton Jones recalled a truism that she once heard: that if libraries, ancient and medieval, had not been destroyed, Columbus would have flown, not sailed, to the Americas. She took that story one step further: that racism has similarly obstructed progress of all people in preventing the contributions necessary from each of us. Early in the conference, Francie Kendall, our facilitator, had

pointed out the difference between prejudice and racism, that prejudice is a judgment before experience but that racism involves powers to oppress others. Clara Stanton Jones saw that the oppressors oppress themselves too.

Lest this sound abstract and idealistic, take a look below at ideas for changing our field, as conceived by small groups at the preconference. If you want more information about these or other projects, you may contact Francie Kendall, whose profession is now to offer these educational experiences, at 415-527-3889 (Albany, CA) or Betty-Carol Sellen, whose idea this preconference was, at 718-780-5618 (Brooklyn College, NY).

Strategies for Institutional Change: Library Schools & Inservice Education

Library education:

1. Alumni can raise funds for the establishment of minority programs; students and alumni should pressure schools for those programs. Watch UC-Berkeley for developments laid by preconference members.
2. Inservice training: a handbook and other materials
3. Staff recruitment for library schools: needs
 - a. Internships
 - b. Creation of teaching slots based on experience in the field rather than on degrees
 - c. Support for staff with degrees too
- A suggestion was made that a Council on Library Resources Grant be sought.
4. Student recruitment
 - a. Library schools should participate in high school "career days" and/or hold one-day workshops to explain librarianship, upgrade the image
 - b. Librarians must do self-promotion in order to attract others to the profession.
5. We must add to the ALA agenda
 - a. Recruitment of minorities as part of the accreditation process
 - b. The creation of a complete package to sell librarianship
 - c. Recruitment and funding of staff to be sent to library schools
 - d. Curriculum changes in library schools

Preparation is needed for interviewing in "the real world," contacts are needed for "the real scoop" regarding job openings

6. Service to "staff back home"
 - a. Give organizational talk
 - b. Report on prejudice and racism
 - c. Short facts and statistics, more to come
 - d. Excite them, be nonthreatening
 - e. Describe conference groups, stress "women of color"
 - f. Handouts: stereotype exercise and personal checklist

Arrange for access to "higher-ups" and staff

- Sensitivity training for all staff
- Bring in outreach educator
- Identify allies

National Agenda

1. Organize a day during an ALA convention to focus on racism (Theme suggestions: 1) Librarians as colleagues: racism as a barrier to progress 2) Librarians as colleagues: working across racial lines). For information about plans for the New Orleans convention (1988), contact Susana Hinojosa, 415-944-3423; Edy Fisher, Univ. of California, La Jolla Library; or Patty Wong, Oakland (CA) Public Library.
2. Involve division of ALA in a commitment to eliminating racism; include SRRT groups, committees.
3. Fall-back plan: "Racism" as the program for all women's groups
4. People of color to serve on committees of ALA divisions
5. Division boards committed to include minorities: send letters to them.
6. ALA staff recruitment of people of color (Low numbers are a disgrace.)
7. Contact minority and women's task forces and groups to involve them in plans; get commitments; get contracts

Publications

1. Encourage a major publication to devote a full issue to racism (e.g., LJ).
2. An alternative to #1 is a regular column on all sorts of facets of racism in libraries.
3. The concept of "outreach" is "out" nowadays, so we need to promote the concept of multiculturalism in the board room--a managerial viewpoint.
4. So many issues: not only who's hired, but materials too
5. Since librarians are practical types, articles should be oriented toward problems and solutions/tips. Possibility of sending "cases" and scenarios to LJ's "How Do You Manage?"
6. White people must petition American Libraries (the ALA publication received by all members and read by many other librarians too) to cover conferences like this one (the preconference on racism) and in other ways publish about racism. People of color have tried and met with opposition to agitation by "special interests." ALA must respond to its members. Information is needed by the profession; racism is indeed a majority issue.
7. We could also demand reprints of OLPR's report on the state of race and gender in U.S. public and academic libraries (pitifully few were printed).
8. Work for better dissemination of various SRRT publications, perhaps simultaneous publication in standard library journals.
9. Study federal government publications.
10. Consider too youth, e.g., Top of the News.
11. Create a checklist of most sensitive publishers, a finding tool for librarians serving people of color and for those wanting their public to be aware of the diverse U.S. population.
12. Investigate the Office of Intellectual Freedom's newsletter for censorship at the source.
13. Small presses that publish minority authors need support from journals and book selectors.
14. Give special attention to ALA publications, since ALA is our organization.

15. Enjoin ALA Office of Library Outreach (OLOS) to fund adequately for publications.
16. Pressure ALA to encourage more children's books with "minority" characters and subjects.
17. Create a brochure about this preconference and its developments.
- * 18. Rate--by teams of representatives from various ethnic groups-- annually (the way congressional representatives receive ratings from public interest groups) library journals. Standards based on illustrations, ads, language, subjects of articles, etc.; see Council for Interracial Books for Children guidelines for ideas. Competition among the journals may foster advancement.
- * 19. Rate the state organization journals too.

*favorite idea of this committee; see also page 8.

Group Ideas for breaking down barriers, breaking the chains

1. ALA shall
 - a. Choose a central focus to examine racism such as one day during "prime time" of the annual convention.
 - b. Leadership shall use appointment power
 - c. Continuing series of articles about racism in libraries to appear in American Libraries and Library Journal.
 - d. Reinvestigate Council resolution on racism and sexism.
2. Feminist Task Force shall
 - a. Reach out during planning and strategies and articulation of ideas for input from women of color on programs, projects, resolutions.
 - b. Listen and be flexible on issues.
 - c. Find common issues with other groups for joint action, coalitions.
 - d. Recognize and work to lower "psychological barriers" that make approaching parties feel unwelcome at FTF meetings.

Penpals

Amy Pett, Port Washington Public Library, 245 Main Street, Port Wash., New York 11050, would like to hear from librarians who have conducted community surveys of women nonlibrary users, with emphasis on poor, immigrant, and minority women.

For a chapter in a book tentatively entitled Libraries, Erotica, and Pornography, Martha Cornog, 717 Pemberton St., Philadelphia, PA 19147 is interested in hearing about the experiences of libraries that subscribe to recreational sex magazines such as Playgirl, Penthouse, etc. Responses will be anonymous in the book. If you are willing to fill out a questionnaire, please contact her.

All This + Heaven Too: ALA meetings

- ★ Report on the EMIERT Publishing and Minority Materials Task Force meeting on Monday, June 29, 2-4 p.m.

The ALA conference catalog describes this meeting as, "Panel discussion on ethnic publications; their decline in recent years and prospects for the future."

I went solely because a friend, a Black reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle and a published author (Chain Chain Change, Seal Press), was one of the panelists. What dismay when it was apparent that there were twelve panelists and only one of them, my friend, could be representative of a minority group. The other eleven were all white and mostly male and spoke in phrases such as, "We had a good Black woman who worked for us once...." This representation (or lack thereof) was an embarrassment and showed very lazy planning on the part of the coordinator. Perhaps, instead, the panel should have addressed the decline in the number of people of color working in the publishing industry? --Marilyn Souders, Newsweek Library

- ★ Information for, by and About Women of Color in the U.S. was a program presented by the ACRL Women's Studies Section.

As if we needed another reminder, we heard of the deplorable indexing of information about women, especially women of color. Lillian Castillo-Speed pointed to the legitimacy given the stereotype of Chicana women as little other than childbearers in the number of articles on fertility among Chicanas. More research needs to be done about higher education, psychological effects of intermarriage, labor history, literature, business, health, the elderly, lesbians, feminists, and biography. Edith Fisher urges that we subscribe to Memphis State University's Women of Color and Southern Women's Studies Center newsletter. She also welcomes online searching by keyword, since periodical indexes use such artificial terms. Wei Chi Poon's admonition that librarians respond to the information needs of people of color has its basis in the projection that minorities will be the majority by the year 2000. She is particularly concerned about increasing research about the Asian woman's experience in the U.S., since for so long men outnumbered women here. No indexes currently published specialize in Asian-American materials; a visit to the Asian American Studies Library at the University of California at Berkeley is especially interesting for the subject headings which she has devised over the years she has headed that institution.

Binnie T. Wilkin teaches a course in service to ethnic minorities at the School of Library Science at UC-Berkeley, but she also believes that all reference courses should include a great deal of material for research about ethnic groups.

- ★ Judy Grahn

In addition to co-sponsoring the preconference, the Feminist Task Force enjoyed a wonderful evening of poetry by Judy Grahn. In recent years, Judy Grahn has been exploring myths and legends, developing her spirituality. Her new poems incorporate a woman-centered mythology into psychological discovery. After having experienced much soul-searching at the preconference, we responded with a sense of immediacy to the

reading. To order Judy Grahn's latest chapbooks, contact the Inanna Institute, P.O. Box 11164, Oakland, CA 94611.

★ Let the Sunshine In!--FTF members Dee Conkling and Sarah Watstein have proposed that FTF provide a Hospitality Suite as a pleasant place for women in the various ALA women's groups to meet one another on an informal basis. The room could be a gathering point before going to dinner, a place for continued discussions on topics brought up at the meetings, or just a place to relax and talk. For more information or to involve yourself in this possibility, contact Dee or Sarah; their addresses and phone numbers appear on page one.

★ Feminist Presses: Diversity in Print was the subject of RASD's Women's Materials / Library Users Discussion Group.

Who says the women's movement is dormant? Contact Seal, Cleis, Spinsters/Aunt Lute, Shameless Hussy, Booklegger, and other women's presses to hear about the exciting books they are publishing.

Activism

Joan Marshall composed a resolution that ALA compile a profile of its jobs by race.

Eyes on the Prize-- Yes, FTF will begin to survey library journals for racial attitudes. Miriam Crawford and Polly Thistlethwaite will scrutinize American Libraries; Joan Marshall, Susan Vaughn, and Betty-Carol Sellen, LJ; Christine Jenkins and Marga, School Library Journal.

Oh, Mama! - Could this really be the end? ... more in No

WOMEN IN LIBRARIES, the Newsletter of the American Library Association Feminist Task Force, is published five times a year, from September to June. Send articles, comments, or books for review to:

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