

## Grace Doherty Library of Centre College (Danville, KY)

**Library type:** Academic library

**Topic:** Racial equity and anti-racism

**Funds used for:** Books for discussion

**What the reviewers liked about this proposal:** Overall thorough proposal that addresses all application questions

### Community and Library Information

**Describe your library and the community it serves, including demographics, dynamics and key issues or challenges it faces. What should reviewers know about your library and community in order to understand your proposed community engagement project?**

The Grace Doherty Library serves the campus community of Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. Online, it serves scholars interested in our collections and archives. Centre is a small liberal arts institution of 1350 undergraduates and close to 400 faculty and staff. The College was founded in 1819 as a Presbyterian institution that served white, male students. In the early 1960s, Centre merged with the Kentucky College for Women, a local women's institution. In 1964, the College accepted its first Black students. The student population remains 73% white. The new president of Centre College has named recruitment and retention of a diverse student body and employee population as one of seven strategic pillars. Sixteen faculty members who self-identify as members of under-represented groups have formed the Underrepresented Faculty Council (UFC) this year. Faculty led by the UFC shared a statement with the campus that they fully support and commit to the Black Lives Matter movement. The UFC also championed and enabled the institution's new General Education Curriculum to ensure it contains a requirement that all students engage with a diversity and equity learning goal. Centre College is also an inaugural member of the Liberal Arts Colleges Racial Equity Leadership Alliance. Students have also started several new clubs and organizations just this year: the Centre Black STEM Coalition, the Intercultural Council (comprised of all affinity groups on campus,) the Diversity Student Union, and the New Horizon Scholars. Given this devoted focus to diversity and inclusion efforts in the classroom and as a campus priority, the library seeks via programming and reading groups to support and expand upon the united learning and active practice initiatives of Centre College. The library staff consists of six librarians and four support staff. They support faculty and students in their research and scholarship efforts and develop programs and outreach that aligns closely with campus goals and the academic program. The Grace Doherty Library mission is to support the academic program and to extend learning outside of the classroom. Lifelong learning is a penultimate goal of the college and the library spotlights this goal via support for faculty and staff through library programming such as the Human Library and by fostering learning circles and reading groups open to the entire campus community that celebrate diverse voices in literature and nonfiction. This academic year, the library is prioritizing racial equity and Anti-Racism as a leading goal for education, outreach, and conversation.

### Conversation Topic or Issue\*

**Describe the topic or issue that your community engagement project will focus on. Why is it important for your library or community to discuss this particular issue/topic? How did you arrive at this**

**particular topic/subject (e.g. did you talk with library patrons, reach out to other area organizations? Dig into data about your community)? How will your library and/or community benefit from having this/these discussion(s)?**

The Grace Doherty Library is co-leading with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion a learning community of two faculty and eleven staff members through curated readings and active practices devoted to Anti-Racism via the 21 Day Racial Equity website. Enabled by funding from the ALA Libraries Transform grant and in collaboration with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the learning community will move the Anti-Racism conversation and related action-based practice out to the campus community. The administration and faculty of Centre College have already made diversity and inclusion a fulcrum for campus activity. In November, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion developed and implemented a campus-wide event of twelve distinct antiracism programs, titled Building Bridges. Classes were cancelled for this half-day program and the entire campus community attended. The racial equity learning community, co-led by Director of the Library Carrie Frey with Andrea Abrams, Associate Vice President for Diversity Affairs & Special Assistant to the President / Associate Professor of Anthropology, provided a virtual program that was attended by over one hundred participants. Eighty-seven of these attendees consisted of student participants. The high attendance for this event displays a hunger among the students to commit to conversation and action aimed at Anti-Racism. The violent acts directed at Black individuals such as George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor are a strong impetus for the call on campus to take on Anti-Racism as a goal and an active mission. Breonna Taylor lived in Louisville, Kentucky, home to many Centre College students. Her death and subsequent events have rocked our campus. By moving the conversation and everyday practices surrounding Anti-Racism from the learning community to the broader campus, we hope to affect real change and give individuals a place to share and discuss their own experiences, as well as their individual perspectives, on this important topic. Reading and discussion are important first steps to taking action. Centre College will benefit from deep and meaningful conversation about real world problems via the community-wide book reading of *White Fragility* and *So You Want to Talk about Race* and requisite follow-up book discussions.

### Conversation Goals\*

**Describe the library's goal or purpose of your project plan. What are you aiming to accomplish? (e.g. enhance library resources based on community input; explore a topic and/or build understanding of others' experiences; generate ideas, explore options, and make a decision; discuss an issue and collaboratively determine next steps, etc.)**

One of the goals of this project is to collectively define Anti-Racism and to explore the topic with the campus community. In so doing, we will build understanding of racist policies and actions present in our own community via individual shared experiences. Through the lens of the assigned reading of *White Fragility* and *So You Want to Talk about Race*, campus participants will also reflect on racist policies and initiatives enacted or in place at the higher levels of local, state, and federal government via their policies and initiatives. Another goal is to allow participants to express individual experiences and knowledge surrounding the topic of racial equity while also deepening understanding as they listen to and learn from the experiences of others. Finally, we will strive to generate ideas for combatting racist policy and practice in our own community through critical examination of the embedded issues of racism and unequal practices on our campus.

## Conversation Planning\*

**How do you envision your conversation taking place? (e.g. virtual book club discussion, socially-distanced conversation outdoors at the library using the National Issues Forum Model, etc.) Do you feel you are able to describe how you envision your conversation(s) will take place? Or are you new to this and planning to learn these skills through the online course? What kind of marketing/outreach do you plan to do for the conversation? How are you planning to share the content/outcomes of the conversation? (e.g. writing an article for the local newspaper, creating a video about what was discussed for the library's social media, etc.)**

Given the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, it does not seem likely that an in-person event will happen during the spring of 2021. For this reason, Carrie Frey, Director of Library Services, envisions that the conversation(s) about racial equity and Anti-Racism will take place via virtual resource discussions. We are using Zoom for courses and other programming at Centre College, so this will likely be the venue we utilize for these discussions. We used Zoom for the Building Bridges program developed in November and found it very easy to separate our large group of over 100 attendees into smaller breakout "rooms" for discussions. We will market this experience via our social media platforms, campus-wide email, and through the campus Centre Next publication that circulates to all Centre constituents via the college website. We will share virtual discussion outcomes via social media as well as through an article circulated to campus constituents as a follow-up to the reading and discussion program. This article will also be submitted to the local newspaper, the Advocate Messenger. The Centre Communications Office will circulate marketing information ahead of the discussions and/or a follow-up article. Often, Communications will choose to write an article in advance of programming or a follow-up, not both, so we will work with them to determine the focused outreach. Given that we will be asking participants for open and honest conversation, we will likely not video the actual discussions. While the library has been involved in many book club discussions, this particular conversation is likely to involve some emotional responses. Carrie Frey will take the online course focused on facilitating conversations. This will build on Carrie's considerable skills, honed from years mentoring a cohort of ten Posse scholars, managing a staff of five librarians and four support staff members, and being a member of the President's senior staff. Anti-Racism is a topic that deserves the utmost preparation on the side of the facilitator to achieve an open and honest exchange among participants.

## Budget\*

**Describe your plans for the grant funds. What will you use the funding to purchase or support? Please be specific (e.g. \$1,000 will be spent on staff time to support the development and implementation of the project, \$200 will be used to purchase a Zoom Business license in order for us to virtually host our conversation). The total amount of your proposed budget plan should add up to \$3,000. Note: If you are unable to spend the entire grant down by July 31, 2021, you may accrue funds to spend through February 28, 2022. If you anticipate needing to accrue funds, please note this in your response and include your plans for spending it down.**

We plan to engage the campus in reading two texts devoted to racial equity. The entire \$3,000 of funding will purchase the texts campus constituents will read and then discuss in small learning circles. The texts we plan to use for our campus conversation(s) are: *So You Want to Talk About Race*, by Ijeoma Oluo and *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin DiAngelo. The \$3000 we are requesting will be budgeted as follows: 151 copies of *So You Want to Talk About Race* 10.20 x 151 = \$1540.20 + 151 copies of *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About*

Racism  $9.60 \times 151 = \$1449.60$  Total:  $\$2989.80$  We have other funding we will use to help bolster the purchases of these two titles and plan to commit another  $\$3400$ . This will allow us to purchase another 170 copies of each of these titles. We plan to hold the book discussions in March, 2021, so the funds will be used ahead of the deadline to purchase the books.