

Talking From The Margins: How Trauma and Stress Impacts the Well-Being Of BIPOC Library Workers

Alejandro Marquez (he/him)

April 2024



The Content Is Going To Be Heavy

We are going to be discussing:

- Job satisfaction
- Low morale
- Constructive criticism of the profession
- Negative workplace culture

Take a moment of self-care if needed

Introductions



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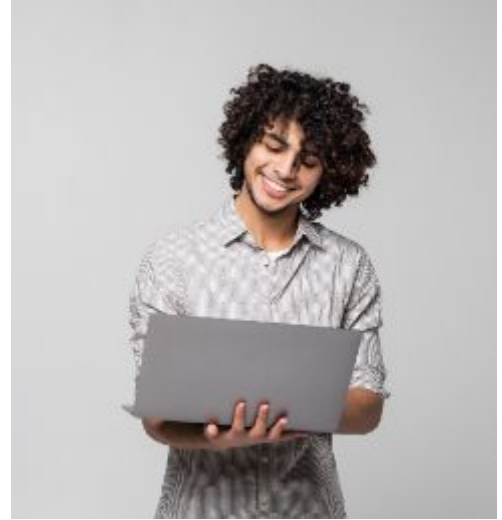
<https://du.digication.com/alejandro-marquez/>



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Objectives

- Interactive activities plus Q&A
- Explore library trends that impact BIPOC and marginalized employees' mental health and well-being
- I'm **not the only one** that feels this way!
There is a **reason!** I have **keywords** to use in my literature search



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We Wear The Mask

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

By Paul Laurence Dunbar

My Privilege

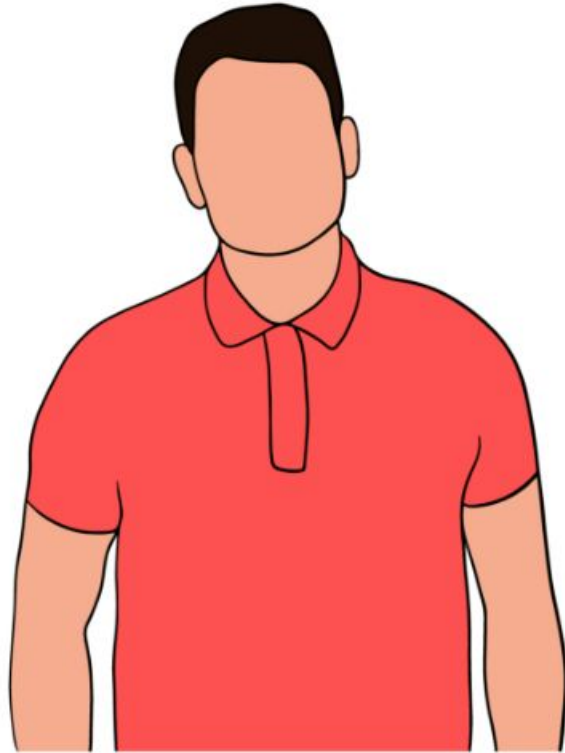


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**Library work is a RACE
CLASS
GENDER
AGE
ABILITY
SEXUALITY issue.**

Chat Box Activity

In a few words, post to the chat box what is one action that libraries can do to improve BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) employee well-being?



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**Ripped From The
Headlines -
Content Warning**

'AN EXTRA LAYER OF SCRUTINY'



For Sputtering Diversity Efforts, Claudine Gay's Resignation Risks Further Setbacks

By *Katherine Mangan* | JANUARY 10, 2024

Administrator's Suicide Leaves Campus Reeling With 'Despair' and 'Disappointment'

The fallout at Lincoln University of Missouri prompted calls for the president's firing and raised questions about the treatment of Black women in academe.

By [Sara Weissman](#)

Franklin, J. (2016). Racial microaggressions, racial battle fatigue, and racism-related stress in higher education. *Journal of Student Affairs at New York University*, 12(44), 44-55.

BROKE IN PHILLY



After a Temple librarian died, coworkers said the sick-leave policy 'ran her into the ground'

Temple library workers say the university's sick-leave policy causes employees to go to work sick and in pain, including Latanya Jenkins, who died of cancer in April.

NBCBLK

UNC withholds tenure for "1619 Project" journalist after conservative backlash

UNC-Chapel Hill's board of trustees did not approve tenure for Nikole Hannah-Jones, which a report claims was due to conservative pressure against the decision

State senator calls LGBTQ+ people 'filth' when asked about death of nonbinary student

Public Radio Tulsa | By [Max Bryan](#)

Published February 23, 2024 at 4:18 PM CST





MENTAL HEALTH

LGBTQ teens often struggle to find mental health care tailored to them

A recent study found that fewer than 1 in 3 mental health facilities in the U.S. provide specialized LGBTQ services for adolescents.

OUT POLITICS AND POLICY

Over half of 2022's most challenged books have LGBTQ themes

The American Library Association last year reported the highest number of attempted book bans since it began tracking such attempts in 2001.

Just because we carry it well, it does not mean that it is not heavy.

Source Unknown

Chat Box Activity

In a few words, post to the chat box what is your definition of mental health or mental wellness?



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Definition Of Mental Health

The capacity to **think, feel, and act** in ways that enhance our ability to **enjoy life** and **deal with challenges** that we face.

What Is Trauma?

Trauma is when we experience **very stressful, frightening or distressing events** that are difficult to cope with or out of our control. It could be **one incident, or an ongoing event** that happens over a long period of time. Most of us will experience an event in our lives that could be considered traumatic.

What Makes Something Stressful?

- Strong demands
- Immediacy
- Life transitions
- Timing
- Ambiguity
- Desirability
- Controllability
- Broken promises
- Large workloads
- Hectic schedules
- Angry verbal exchanges
- Abusive management
- Things outside your control

Emotions Of Stress & Trauma

- Anger
- Guilt
- Sorrow
- Sadness
- Self Contempt
- Humiliated
- Shame
- Helpless
- Confused
- Rejected
- Insecure
- Powerless
- Futility
- Lost
- Empty
- Horrified
- Revolted
- Nauseated
- Frustrated
- Distant
- Inadequate
- Outrage
- Disbelief
- Disappointed
- Mistrustful
- Vengeful
- Rage
- Sleepy
- Remorseful
- Bored
- Jealous

Why Well-Being Matters

- Well-being is about the quality of our lives
- Positive emotions help us to cope with difficult situations and strengthen relationships
- Organizations benefit from staff & users with high well-being
- Society benefits from citizens with high well-being

Library Trends: Experiences & Realities

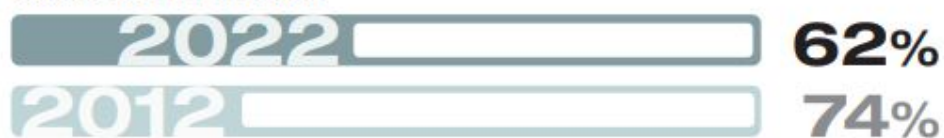
Please identify your number one **dissatisfaction**:

	PUBLIC LIBRARY	ACADEMIC LIBRARY	SCHOOL LIBRARY
#1	Low salary	Low salary	Lack of respect/ recognition
#2	Not enough staff	Not enough staff	Performing nonlibrary related tasks
#3	Conflicts with administrators/ managers	Inadequate budget/funding	Not enough staff

SOURCE: LJ/SLJ JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY 2022

Gerber, A. (2023). Satisfaction (Not Always) Guaranteed: LJ and SLJ's 2022 job satisfaction survey shows that most librarians are glad they chose their career, but significantly fewer than in 2012. *Library Journal*, 148(3), 62-65.

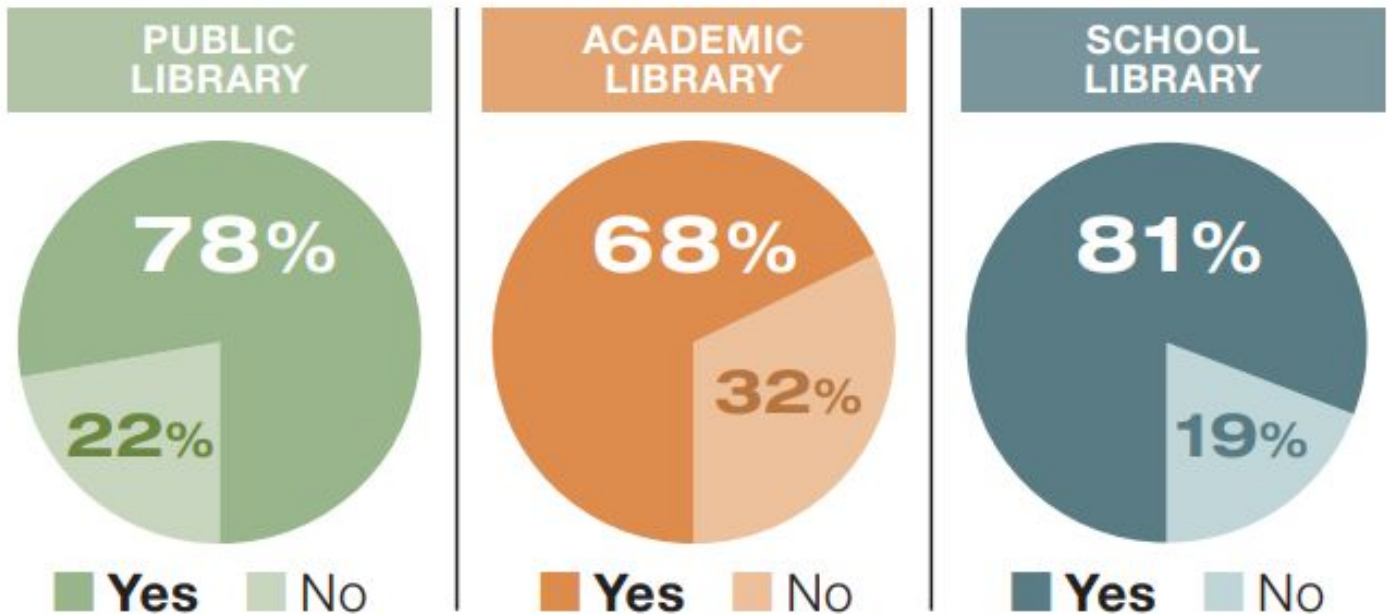
How satisfied are you with your current job?
A 2022 vs. 2012 comparison

NET: VERY SATISFIED/SATISFIED**PUBLIC LIBRARY****ACADEMIC LIBRARY****SCHOOL LIBRARY**

SOURCE: COMPARING *LJ/SLJ* JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY 2022
WITH *LJ/SLJ* STATE OF LIBRARIANSHIP SURVEY 2012

SURVEY STAT

Would you choose this career again?

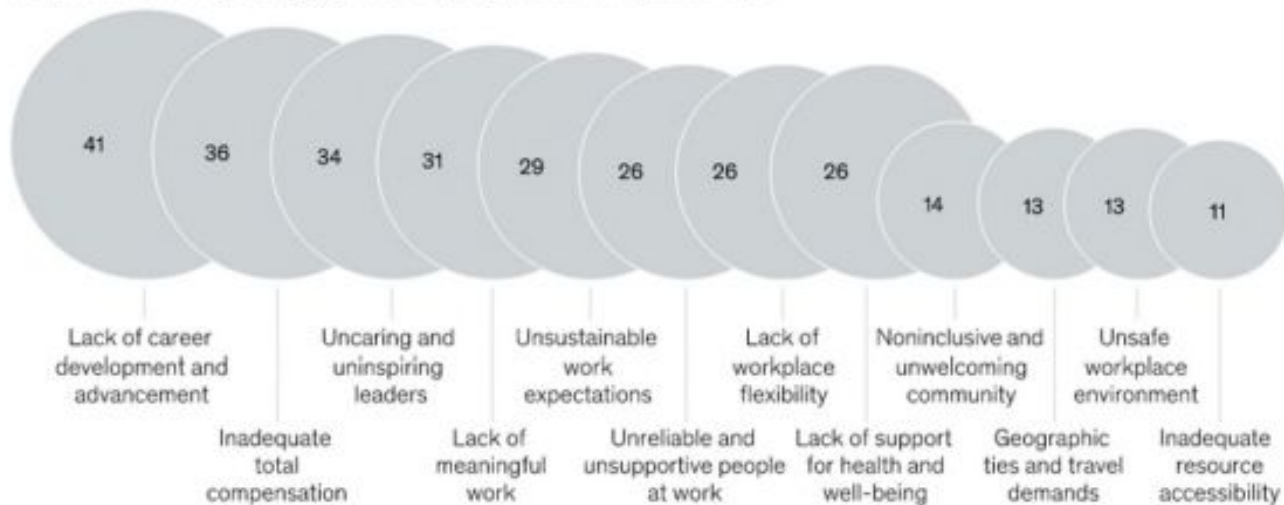


SOURCE: LJ/SLJ JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY 2022

Gerber, A. (2023). Satisfaction (Not Always) Guaranteed: LJ and SLJ's 2022 job satisfaction survey shows that most librarians are glad they chose their career, but significantly fewer than in 2012. *Library Journal*, 148(3), 62-65.

Top Reasons For Resignation

Top reasons for quitting previous job, Apr 2021–Apr 2022, %



Source: Subset of respondents from McKinsey's 2022 Great Attrition, Great Attraction 2.0 global survey (n = 13,382), including those currently employed and planning to leave (n = 4,939), those currently employed and planning to stay (n = 7,439), and those who quit their previous primary jobs between Apr 2021 and Apr 2022 (n = 1,154)

McKinsey
& Company

Kaetrena Davis Kendrick

The Low Morale Study focuses on the negative feelings concerning:

- Lack of respect
- Lack of recognition of contributions
- Poor work/Life balance
- Poor work expectations or roles
- Poor leadership
- Poor communication
- Structural changes and related outcomes (e.g., layoffs)



Feeling Pushed Out

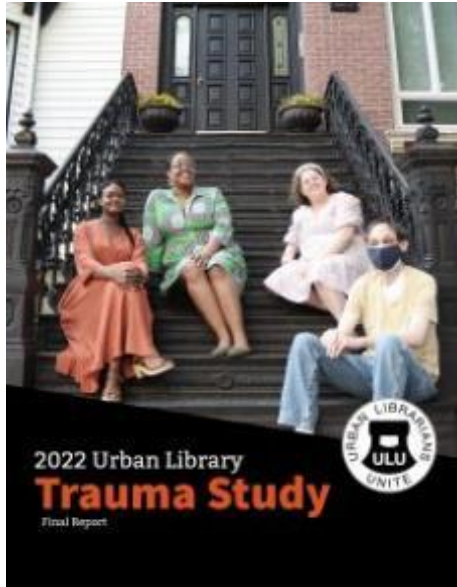
- Pushed out vs. pulled
- Not feeling appreciated or seen
- Lack of career development
- You can be passionate but don't have to remain in toxic environments



Photo by [Keagan Henman](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Urban Library Trauma Study

- 68.5% have experienced violent or aggressive behavior from patrons
- 85% have experienced trauma in the workplace and shared it with others
- 83% have received support from another member of staff



<https://urbanlibrariansunite.org/ults/>

Strained Library Staff

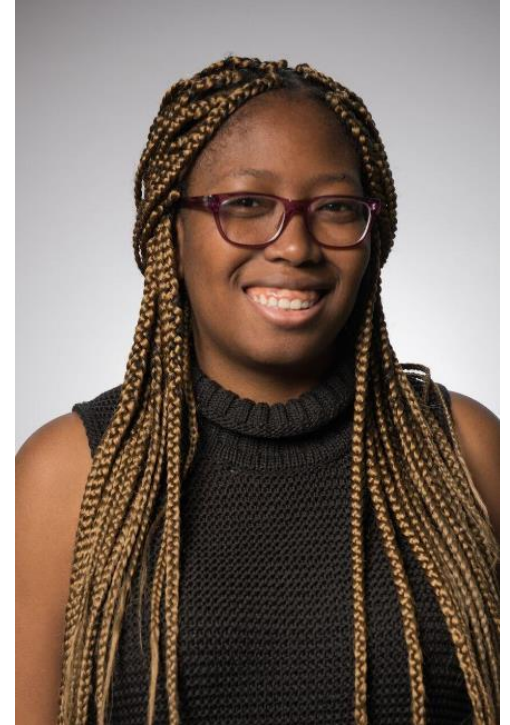
- Not trained or qualified to assist
- To help or not help
- Emotionally draining and time consuming
- Safety concerns
- The reality of calling for emergency assistance
- Do you feel emotionally and technically equipped to meet the modern challenges?



Image by juicy_fish on Freepik

Fobazi Ettarh

- Vocational awe outlines the ways in which the institution of the library has come to be thought of as **“inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique.”**
- Marginalization, dismissal, or retaliation



Demoralization

- Policies and practices hinder workers from upholding their core values
- Flat budgets, understaffing, EDI issues
- Lack of meaningful change
- Disconnected from the passion



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Quiet Quitting

- Employee disengages from their work and responsibilities without overtly expressing dissatisfaction or resigning.
- Also known as: Employee engagement, silent resignation, passive disengagement, and work withdrawal.



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Languishing

"Languishing" describes low mental well-being in the **absence of a diagnosable mental health condition** and was coined by sociologist Corey Keyes, PhD.

- Feeling stuck or life has become stagnant
- Emptiness
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of well-being

Grief

Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar pattern of behavior.

- Friend or mentor leaves an organization
- Reorganization or layoff
- Searching for passion or meaning
- Lack of collaboration or camaraderie
- Dwelling on the past
- Apprehension about the future
- Have you experienced a lot of loss recently?

Anger

- Anger is a basic human emotion
- Experienced by **All People**
- Workers pushing back against resilience narratives, understaffing, and lack of pay
- Catalyst for identifying and addressing underlying issues or systemic problems



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**Our jobs often provide
more than a paycheck:
They often offer a sense
of purpose, growth, and
community.**

Personal Experiences In Library Land

It's an ache, a helplessness, an anger. One feels humiliated. Sometimes I say to myself, "Hey, steady on, you're imagining all this." And then I catch that look again. Catch it on the edge of a remark, feel a cold reluctance in a handshake.

Harold M. Abrahams, Chariots of Fire

Internal Dilemma

- Did I interpret that correctly?
- Did she say what I think she said?
- What did he mean by that?
- Should I say something?



Image by benzoix on Freepik



By —
**Amanda
Seitz,**
Associated
Press

Leave your
feedback

Loneliness poses health risks as deadly as smoking, U.S. surgeon

Ignorance Is Bliss

- Good people who had no idea
- Physical and emotional barriers
- Everyday workplace realities
- Are you staying up to date on the latest trainings?
- Where do you go looking for materials to educate yourself?



Image by benzoix on Freepik

Hidden Curriculum

- Coined by the educator Philip Jackson in 1968
- Unwritten rules and norms
- Office politics
- Work culture
- Communication styles
- Conflict resolution
- Organizational values
- “You’re too emotional...”



Image by freepik

Navigating Institutional Power

- Racial & gender dynamics
- Performative actions
- Punitive responses
- Exploitive
- Precarious
- High cost of the master's degree

Culture Fit

- Compatible with a library's culture, goals, and values
- “He or she is someone they'd like to have a beer with.”
- Authenticity- Only bring the parts that make us as comfortable as possible
- Employees from marginalized communities bring a lot of different identities to the workplace

Neutrality As A Library Value

- Libraries are not now—and have never been—neutral
- Library workers can never be “above the fray”—nor have librarians ever existed as “impartial referees”
- Users have multiple interests, traditions, lifestyles, and personalities. Not providing a platform for hateful, intimidating, dangerous, or dehumanizing speech
- The library profession’s commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is not only warranted, it is imperative

Workload

- What is too much?
- What is too little?
- Role blurring
- You need to remember TME:
Time, Money, and Energy.
- Where do I want to invest it?



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Arrival Fallacy

- I'll be happy when....



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Hope Labor

- Belief or hope for future opportunities
- Examples: Unpaid internships, volunteering, freelance work
- Creates limited access to opportunities based on financial means
- Moving to find work, taking lower pay

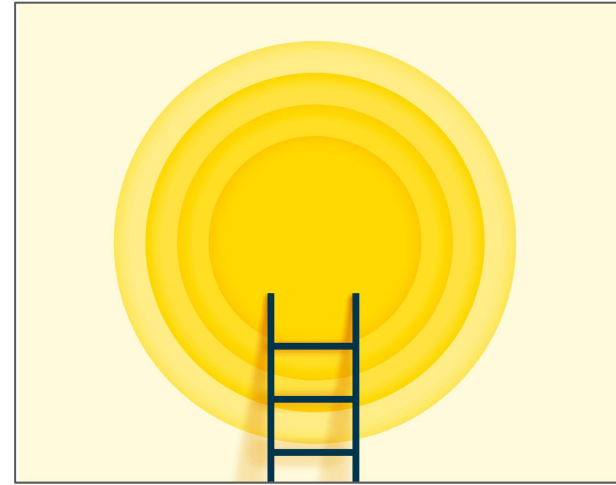


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Salary and Pay

- Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median annual wage for librarians was \$62,280 in May 2020
- Paraprofessionals earn on average \$46,000 according to Library Journal's 2022 Library Job Satisfaction Survey
- Salaries vary depending on the type of library and the location



Photo by [Alexander Grey](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Colorado Academic Librarians

- \$45-53k Naropa University, Manager, Library Technical Services, Archives & Special Collections
- \$47-49k Pikes Peak State College, Reference/Instruction Librarian
- \$48-55k Colorado State University Pueblo, Scholarly Communications Librarian
- \$50k Colorado Mesa University, Instruction and Research Librarian
- \$51k Front Range Community College, Librarian
- \$52-58k Denver Botanical Gardens, Technical Services Librarian
- \$55-59k University of Northern Colorado, Textbook Affordability Librarian
- \$60-65k Auraria Library, Collection Development Librarian
- \$66k Colorado State University, Student Success Librarian
- \$67-71k University of Colorado Boulder, E-resources Librarian
- \$70-72k University of Denver, Access Services Librarian (manager)

Vicious Cycle Of Silence

- Discourage talk about negative experiences
- Illusion that it is rare
- Comfort of others
- It's a relic, confined to the past
- Full time staff: Your pay may be low but you have health care and tuition assistance



Photo by [Ocean Biggshott](#) on [Unsplash](#)

That Was A Lot!
Let's Take A Breath.
Take A Moment To
Scan Your Body.

Thoughts & Feelings...

- Feelings of sadness, anger, mistrust, frustration
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion issues
- What is the manager's roles and responsibilities in solving the problem?
- Not being heard or seen
- Too many thoughts/ too little feelings
- Where do we go from here?

Chat Box Activity

- What future do you want to create?
- What emotion do you want to feel?



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There is Hope!

Hope = Will + Way

Acknowledging An Uneven Path

- It is alright to be upset with an unjust world
- Prioritize physical, emotional, and financial health
- Systems advantage some identities and disadvantage others
- Problems are systemic
- Challenges and opportunities

- Duncan-Andrade, J. (2009). Note to educators: Hope required when growing roses in concrete. *Harvard educational review*, 79(2), 181-194.
- Grain, Kari. (2022). *Critical hope: How to grapple with complexity, lead with purpose, and cultivate transformative social change*. North Atlantic Books.

Transmutation: the act or process of changing something completely, especially into something different.

Leadership / Change At Every Level

- Individual
- Departmental
- Organizational
- Institutional
- Societal



Photo by [Clark Van Der Beken](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Solutions

- Focus on the core essentials
- Performative vs meaningful change
- Change is going to take 5-7 years
- Focus on **care** as both a short term and long term solution along with capacity building
- How long are individuals willing to wait?



Photo by [Olav Ahrens Røtne](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Managers

- Stuck in a middle ground
- Personal power and push back
- Progress when people burned out
- Treat the whole person but focus on tasks
- What does it mean to bring your whole self to work?

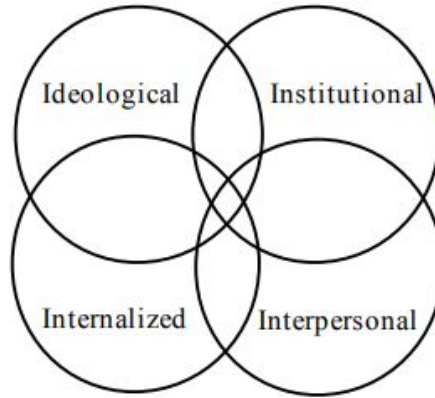


Image by storyset on Freepik

Find Allies

- Like minded **individual** who shares a common interest
- Like minded **organizations** who shares a common interest
- Like minded **institutions** who shares a common interest
- Building awareness and taking action
- Emily Drabinski and Kelly McElroy, [Building Our Power: Management and Labor in Libraries](#)

The Four "I's" Of Oppression



Each of these levels are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Any effort to dismantle oppression must address all four of these levels.

Power Mapping

Simply a way to identify who has power in the community, and to figure out what will move those individuals or institutions to do whatever it is you want them to do. Creating a power map will help you answer these important questions:

- Who are some key potential allies in your community—individuals and organizations who are likely to be on your side and who have the ability to influence others?
- Who might oppose your plan, and who is in the middle who could be brought over to your side
- What are effective ways to communicate with your community?

Create Mentorship Or Buddy Programs

- Facilitate relationships that extend beyond immediate work tasks
- Form of professional development
- Helps to identify career goals, correct gaps in skills and knowledge
- Develops mentoring/coaching skills



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Call In Culture

- No one is perfect and there are going to be disagreements
- Calling in is an approach to addressing harmful words or behavior
- Ask yourself: Will my action make things better or worse?
- It involves initiating a one-on-one or small group conversation
- Focused on fostering understanding and growth rather than punitive measures
- Aims to educate and raise awareness about the impact of harmful behavior
- Discern the difference between blame and responsibility

Be Intentional About Inclusion

- Establish clear inclusion goals
- Leadership commitment
- Training and education
- Diverse recruitment and hiring practices
- Inclusive language and communication
- Accessibility and accommodations

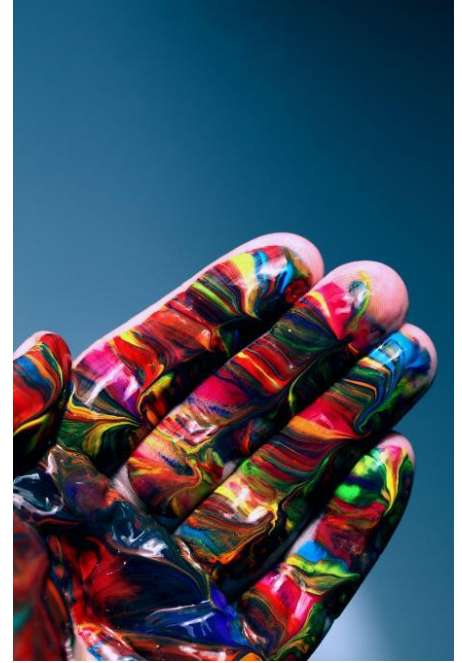


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Preferred Names And Pronoun Use

- Respecting an individual's gender identity and expression
- Use preferred pronouns consistently and respectfully
- When in doubt, it's okay to politely ask
- Avoid assuming someone's gender identity based on appearance
- Preferred pronouns should be used in all forms of communication, including written, spoken, and online interactions
- It's normal to make mistakes, but the key is to apologize, correct, and move forward

Setting Boundaries

- Be vocal - as individuals and departments
- Take time off; encourage others to use their leave
- Limit notifications outside of work hours
- Prioritize your mental, financial, and physical health
- Encourage employees to voice concerns and refuse to participate in activities they believe are unethical



[Image by pikisuperstar on Freepik](#)

Reflecting on Identities & Privilege

- Self-reflection
- Acknowledge advantages
- Safe spaces
- Using power or position for good



Photo by [Steve Harvey](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Clarity of Rules and Policies

- Avoids misunderstandings
- Promotes consistency
- Enhances accountability
- Fosters a safe and inclusive environment
- Encourages ethical conduct
- Improves decision-making



Image by jcomp on Freepik

Breaking Down Silos

- Create a unified vision and goals
- Foster cross-functional teams through education, work, and training
- Clear and consistent communication channels
- Encourage knowledge sharing
- Foster a culture of trust
- Empower decision-making at all levels
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities
- Get leaders on board and have them role model



Implement A Non-Retaliation Policy

- Workers will not face negative consequences for raising ethical concerns
- Establish a clear and unequivocal policy
- Clearly define and enforce consequences for ethical violations, regardless of position within the organization

**You have to decide who you are
and force the world to deal with
you, not with its idea of you.**

James Baldwin

Coffee Chat

I invite you to take the slides and what you learned today and share what you learned with a friend.



Image by juicy_fish on Freepik

Question & Answer

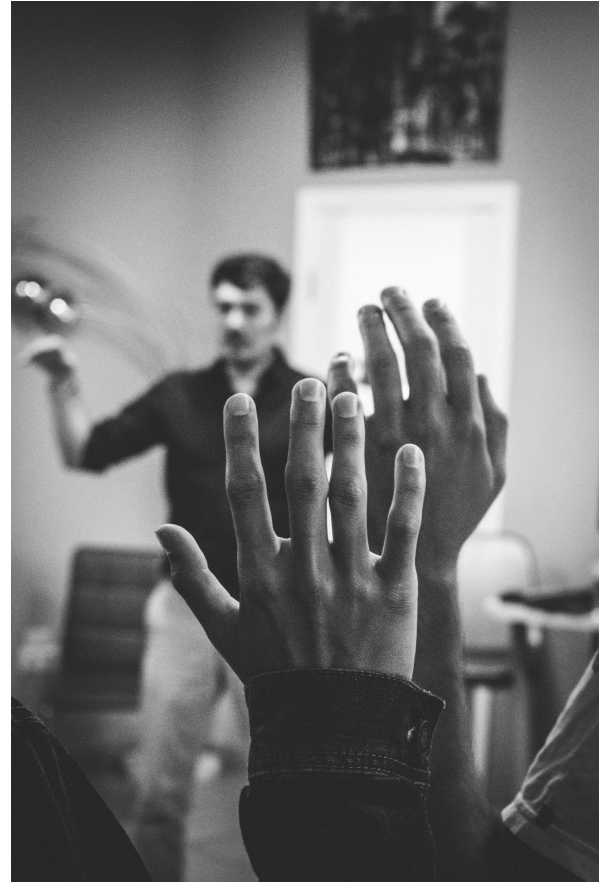


Photo by [Artem Maltsev](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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Resources

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Resources

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Thank You!



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END OF SLIDES