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

Alejandro Marquez (he/him)
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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
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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
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
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?
Ripped From The Headlines - Content Warning
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

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

The Mental Health Foundation- https://mentalhealthfoundation.org/
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.

https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/trauma/about-trauma/
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
### Survey Stat

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Type</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Library</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Library</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Comparing LJ/SLJ Job Satisfaction Survey 2022 with LJ/SLJ State of Librarianship Survey 2012
Top Reasons For Resignation

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

- Lack of career development and advancement: 41%
- Uncaring and uninspiring leaders: 36%
- Unsustainable work expectations: 34%
- Lack of workplace flexibility: 31%
- Noninclusive and unwelcoming community: 29%
- Unequal and unsupportive work culture: 26%
- Lack of support for health and well-being: 26%
- Geographic ties and travel demands: 14%
- Unsafe workplace environment: 13%
- Inadequate resource accessibility: 13%
- Inadequate total compensation: 11%

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)

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?
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

Photo by Clark Tibbs on Unsplash
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 withdrawl.
"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

Photo by Simran Sood on Unsplash
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?
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?
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…”
Navigating Institutional Power

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

Maharani, M., & Ng, P. We Should Talk: Obvious Truths About Working in the Arts.
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?

Photo by Resume Genius on Unsplash
Arrival Fallacy

- I’ll be happy when....

Photo by Jacob Bentzinger on Unsplash
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

Image by starline on Freepik
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?
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

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](https://unsplash.com) on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com)
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?
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
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.

Chinook Fund
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?

https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/power-mapping-101
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

Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash
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

Photo by Alexander Grey on Unsplash
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
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

Photo by Aaron Hare on Unsplash
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.
Question & Answer

Photo by Artem Maltsev on Unsplash
Resources

- Ettarh, F. (2018). Vocational awe and librarianship: The lies we tell ourselves. *the Library with the Lead Pipe, 10*.
Resources

Thank You!

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