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DEWHITENING LIBRARIANSHIP

A Policy Proposal for Libraries

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LET'S BEGIN WITH A CRT IN LIS STORY¹

What a morning! LaTonya Lan has spent it reading and answering emails, texts, and social media messages congratulating her on becoming Dean of Libraries at So and So University. The messages came from all over, but she noticed that only the librarians from the ethnic affiliate professional library groups had mentioned that she was in fact the first woman of color to lead a major academic research library in her state, not to mention her entire region of the country. LaTonya was not surprised by this because her white colleagues, though very nice people, had always been very uncomfortable talking about race.

That's why one of the emails she received particularly caught her attention. It came from her friend Janice, a white library dean at XYZ University, who wasn't afraid to talk about race: "Congratulations LaTonya! I remember that wonderful chat we had at that last big conference. You're now the first library dean I know who I've ever had a conversation with about Critical Race Theory! Speaking of which, a friend of mine shared a CRT-based proposal she has coauthored with two other librarians. With their permission, I am sharing with you. Would love to hear your thoughts as a new dean. Is this something that you could get behind?"

INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a core value of the largest library professional association, the American Library Association (ALA), and of its higher education library affiliate, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (American Library Association 2010;

Association of College and Research Libraries 2018). But how are libraries and their administrators and trustees showing that this is indeed an important value? How are we putting our stated commitment to racial diversity in library and information science (LIS) into practice? In assessing the success of libraries' diversity work when it comes to race, we should not just look for the presence of the word *diversity* in mission statements; rather, we should look at the numbers of librarians of color in the profession. In assessing just how serious libraries are in their stated mission of diversifying the profession, we should look at how much of library budgets have been allocated to racial diversity and to recruiting, retaining, supporting, and promoting librarians of color.

Thinking from a place of personal and professional experience, solidarity, frustration, and optimism, the authors join together here to share a proposal one author, Isabel, made to her own library, the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass), as a case study and a case in point. While the initial proposal was grounded in the culture and circumstances of UMass, an academic library in the northeastern United States, the proposal itself is really for *all libraries*. It has thus been shared with the greater community of academic libraries through conferences and other presentations in New England and throughout the United States (Espinal, Freedman, and Smith 2018; Albuero et al. 2018).

In this chapter, we not only present this proposal but also ground it in Critical Race Theory (CRT), a form of critical approach to social issues of power disparity and oppression that centers examinations of race, racism, and whiteness (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). We use CRT to examine some of the causes for the persistent lack of racial diversity in the library profession and to thus tie in our proposal as a potential practical and structure-based solution addressing those causes. Our proposal, aimed at redirecting library budgets toward the recruitment and training of librarians of color, consists of the creation of postbaccalaureate library positions that include full funding for MLIS degrees targeted toward People of Color. Adopting a CRT lens allows us to examine the ways in which historical racial stratification and economic oppression are keeping People of Color from choosing professions such as librarianship, further deepening disparities in financial circumstances between People of Color and whites. In order to achieve racial parity and equity, libraries need to allocate large influxes of financial resources to help People of Color become librarians, resources that historically have been diverted to other projects. What we suggest is essentially a racial equity project that consists of "dewhitening" the LIS profession.

DIVERSITY STORY AND COUNTERSTORY IN LIS

The origin story of our proposal to dewhiten librarianship is tied to the story of diversity in LIS. In particular, it is tied to the dominant narratives of diversity in LIS and the growing counternarratives that have arisen in response.

Currently, the racial composition of librarianship at our institutions and in the librarian profession at large is woefully unrepresentative of the United States' population, just as it was years ago (Howland 1998; Adkins and Espinal 2004). Despite numerous analyses of this problem over the past decades, the demographics have remained stagnant, unaffected by previous efforts to improve racial diversity and representation. For example, for many years, UMass Amherst did not have a single Black/African American librarian on staff; it now only has one Black/African American librarian with permanent status, and one temporary Black/African American librarian (a library resident with a term of two to three years). We focus on UMass as a site for infiltrating the status quo and turning its whiteness on its head, using the Critical Race Theory method of counternarrative, "opening a window onto ignored or alternative realities" (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, 46).

In the twenty-two years Isabel has been at UMass, the lack of Black/African American librarians has been salient in her experience. The same can be said for April and Maria and their experiences of racial homogeneity in their library careers. Unfortunately, the official narratives of the library make no mention of this aspect of our experiences. Instead, the dominant narrative results in protecting and preserving whiteness in the profession; this protection of the white status quo extends even to the initiatives and efforts ostensibly used to create more diversity (Hathcock 2015; Espinal 2001). Well-meaning white librarians and administrators create and participate in diversity and inclusion committees and include diversity, inclusion, and equity language in their mission statements and strategic plans, but they almost always stop short of enacting real, transformational change.

This dominant narrative of whiteness is ubiquitous and insidious, hiding behind seemingly innocuous values such as "color blindness" and "meritocracy" (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, 37–42) and even "diversity" (Hudson 2017). "Diversity" was essentially invented as a way for the courts to elide the question of affirmative action for racial redress while still allowing race as a factor in college admissions (Carr 2018, 205–207). But diversity as a substitute for affirmative action has come at the expense of students of color (Martinez-Watts 2013, 52, 62). *Diversity* as a term has been diluted over time within the LIS profession to serve as a buzzword, or more dangerously, a performative placeholder for actual transformative change. To advocate

for an expansion of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, and Pacific Islander librarian-credentialed professional presence in historically white spaces, we need a shared vocabulary to engage with the discourse. Rooting and anchoring the activist tenet of CRT (decentering whiteness) is why we introduce the verb *dewhiten* as a way to name what is often simply called diversifying. We make the case for an effective race-conscious affirmative action proposal with the goal of dewhiting librarianship and changing the skewed demographics of our field.

At times it's been extremely difficult for us as female-identified People of Color in this profession to live with our "counterreality" in the face of the dominant narrative of whiteness. CRT helps us relax and understand that it's not us, it's the racialized system that creates an ontological dissonance. We can attest that CRT does indeed give us what Delgado called "psychic self-preservation" and "healing" (Delgado 1989, 2437). It also provides a theoretical framework to help us see the validity of our stories and the importance of centering our perspectives. Indeed, CRT started in the legal profession as a means of introducing the power of new voices and perspectives into the dominant narrative:

A final element concerns the notion of a unique voice of color....The voice-of-color thesis holds that because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, black, Indian, Asian, and Latino/a writers and thinkers may be able to communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know. (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, 9)

The legal origins of CRT are of particular importance to one of our authors, April, who began her professional life, and her work in diversity activism, as a practicing attorney. Finding power in her unique voice of color and legal, now library, storytelling has helped April to engage with the profession's whiteness and move toward making it better.

Thus, for all of us, CRT empowers our voices as women of color in the profession and proposes that our perspectives be at the center, rather than the margins, of our profession's discourse. Critical race theory also encourages us that, although we come from groups that have been deemed "minority," our minority status is far from what we are and what we have to offer, even if in our day-to-day interactions in this overwhelmingly white profession, we often feel like a lone voice. What's wonderful is when we are able to join forces with fellow librarians of color via projects like the very writing of this chapter, and know that we are not alone.

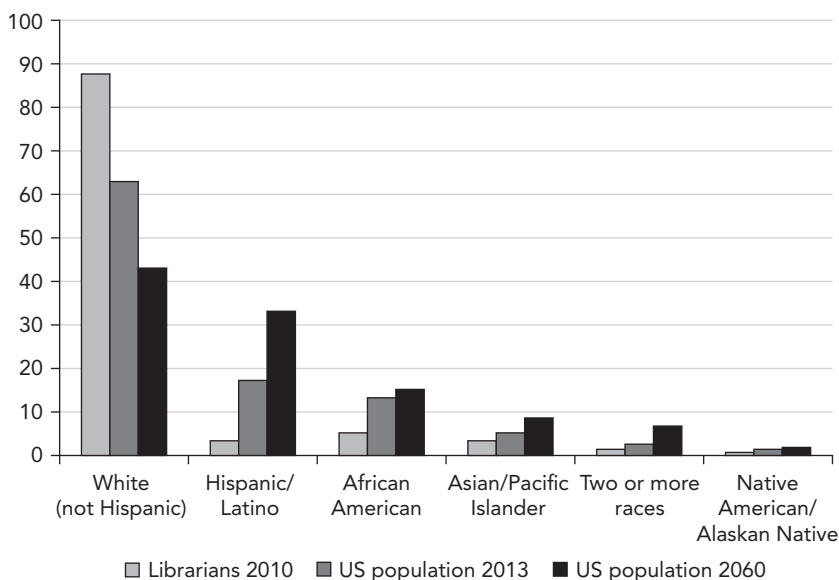
RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS IN LIS

Of course, and unfortunately, our stories are not unique, and neither are the numbers unique to the libraries where we work. The demographics of the profession

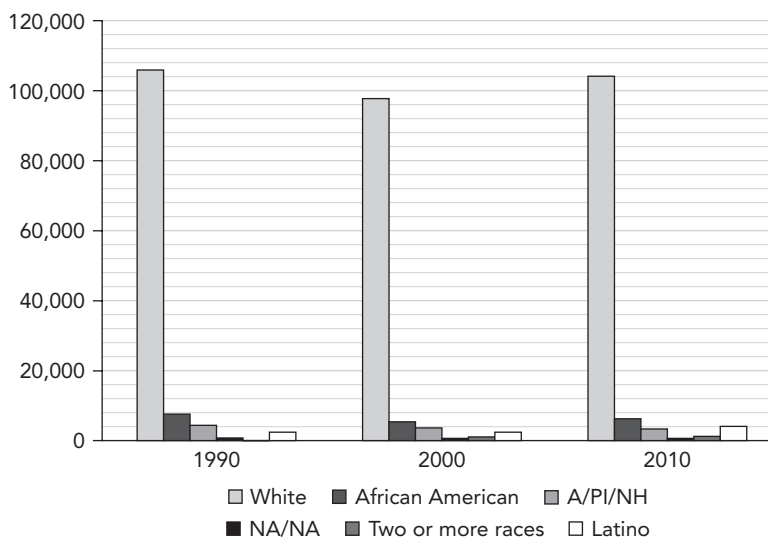
nationally, as outlined in figures 9.1 and 9.2, do not bode much better than at our respective institutions.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in November 2017 tweeted the graph depicted in figure 9.2.

The AFL-CIO's Department for Professional Employees reports that in 2018, only 6.8 percent of librarians identified as Black or African American, 8.6 percent as Hispanic or Latino, and 4.6 percent as Asian American or Pacific Islander, and that the "librarian profession suffers from a persistent lack of racial and ethnic diversity that shows few signs of abating" (AFL-CIO 2019, 3). The ALA's "Diversity Counts" notes a persistent lack of racial and ethnic diversity in library workers at all levels, and it ties this lack to an increased rate of attrition for library workers of color, connected in significant part to lack of leadership and professional advancement opportunities (Davis and Hall 2007, 11; Moore and Estrellado 2018, 351). In 2014, Chris Bourg, director of libraries at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), used racial demographic comparisons to show the difference between reality and representativeness of LIS (figure 9.3) and asked the profession to consider a ten-year plan to diversify. Even pretending that the US population would wait for us to catch up (i.e., if the racial composition of the US stayed steady), we would need to replace nearly 3,000 white



9.1 Racial composition of librarians 2010 versus US population (2013 and projected 2060) (Bourg 2014).



9.2 Credentialed librarians by race/ethnicity (IMLS 2017).

	Actual number of librarians	Target number based on racial representation (2013)	Difference between reality and representativeness
White	104,392	74,760	-29,632
African American	6,160	17,800	11,640
Latino/a	3,661	20,173	16,512
Asian/Pacific Islander	3,260	6,289	3,029
Two or more races	1,008	2,848	1,840
Native American (including Alaskan Native)	185	1,424	1,239

9.3 Target racial demographics for LIS (Bourg 2014).

librarians every year with over 1,000 African American librarians, 1,650 Latino/a librarians, 300 Asian/Pacific Islander librarians, 180 multiracial, and 120 Native American/Alaskan Native librarians. A five-year plan would require double those numbers (Bourg 2014). Yet to date, we have not seen any plan on a large scale to address these racial imbalances that have now been well documented. Even as some library leaders acknowledge the need to diversify librarianship, the demographics persist to weigh in favor of whiteness across institutions, including at the authors' libraries, UMass Amherst and NYU, and at MIT, Bourg's institution. We hope that our proposal below would be a cornerstone of such a plan.

INTERSECTIONS OF RACE AND CLASS AND ECONOMIC DISPARITIES IN LIS

No true narrative about race in LIS, nor any attempt to dewhiten the profession, would be complete without an examination of how race intersects and interacts with class. Indeed, one of the areas that CRT concerns itself with is this intersection of race with issues of class and socioeconomic status. It's important to note, however, that CRT focuses on the *intersections* and *interplay* of race and class and does not substitute class as a proxy for racialized oppression (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, 107–111). The issues that arise from this interplay between race and class are crucial to any efforts to dewhiten librarianship. While it is clear from the statistics presented above that librarianship has a whiteness problem, those data do not present the whole picture. Evidently, librarianship also has a class problem as well, which operates to complicate the racialized oppression at work in our professional demographics. In his 2000 survey of US labor statistics, Keith Curry Lance found that while the number of librarians from racial and ethnic minority groups fell far below those groups' respective representations in the overall population, the number of paraprofessional library assistants ran much closer to population demographics for most groups (Lance 2005, 42).

These data highlight the fallacy of many arguments for the status quo that claim that People of Color have no interest in engaging in library work. It is clear that many of us do, and in numbers more representative of our group demographics in larger society. However, we are often found almost exclusively in paraprofessional positions and, for those of us wishing to advance, we encounter a seemingly insurmountable *white ceiling* preventing our advancement.

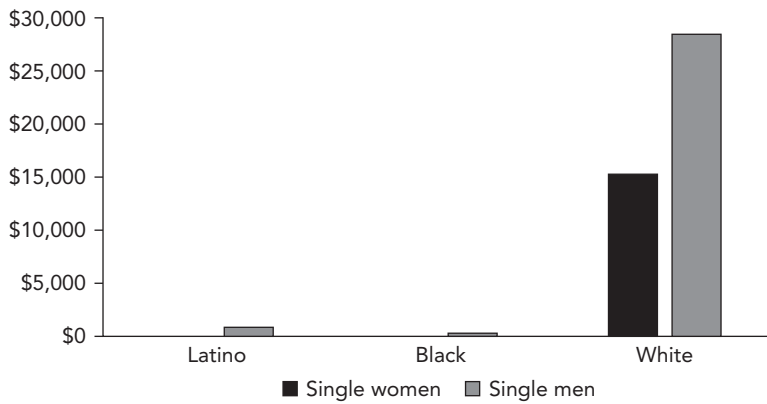
This class dimension affecting the advancement of library workers of color is nothing new to the authors of this chapter; we observe the microcosmic representations of the macrocosmic interplay of race and class in our workplaces and throughout our institutions. Moreover, library literature suggests that these issues can be easily observed in virtually any academic library setting. In their article critiquing the use of binary demarcations between *professional* and *paraprofessional* library work, Jones and Stivers use racialized language, without referencing race directly, to describe the class distinctions at work in library workplaces: they refer to paraprofessionals as “the help” and describe their work as following a trajectory rooted in “separate but equal” philosophy (Jones and Stivers 2004, 92). This racialized intervention of class politics was highlighted during a 2018 ACRL/NY Symposium panel discussion on the experiences of professional academic librarians who began their careers as non-MLIS library staff (Binnie et. al. 2018). Speaking from their identities as cisgender

women of color, Alyssa Brissett, Kenya Flash, and Diana Moronta surfaced the ways in which racism, sexism, and classism intersected in their workplaces to present barriers to their advancement, more so than was the case for their white counterparts on the panel and in their professional spheres. They described the lack of support, and sometimes explicit discouragement, they received when looking to advance their library careers, particularly through obtaining the master's of library information science (MLIS).²

When People of Color *do* express an interest in pursuing the MLIS, and a long-term career in the field, lack of financial support and resources often is a significant barrier to professional entry (Kim and Sin 2006, 168–169). A CRT lens shows that these financial barriers are not random, but a result of the historical economic conditions that produced racial stratification in the first place, often concealed behind color-blind policies. There are a number of historically rooted material and economic conditions experienced by librarians of color and potential librarians of color that prevent them from staying in, advancing in, or even joining the profession in the first place. One of those conditions that LIS must acknowledge is the racial wealth disparity between whites and nonwhites. In 2020, amid the heightened Black Lives Matter protests and antiracism statements by many organizations, including libraries, the *New York Times* published an article which stated that “economic inequity... serves as the backdrop” of “the power imbalance involved in the deaths of George Floyd and too many others like him,” and showed that “at nearly every stage of their lives, black Americans have less than whites” (Lieber and Siegel Bernard 2020).

Even when white and nonwhite individuals have the *same level of education and income*, they continue to have *vastly different levels of wealth* (Asante-Muhammad 2018; Thompson 2018; Zaw et al. 2017). Katherine Richard (2014) explains that wealth is not the same as income; it's “what we own minus what we owe.” Wealth includes inherited assets, bank accounts, home or vehicle ownership, stocks, and bonds. The racial disparities are astounding, as Richard reports: “In 2007, White women had a median wealth of \$45,400, while African American women and Latinas had a median wealth of \$100 and \$120, respectively.” The starkest contrast in wealth is between white persons and Black and Latinx persons, as Asante-Muhammad's (2018) report shows (see figure 9.4), with patterns very similar to the racial demographic charts of librarianship.

Although the financial statistics above focus on Blacks and Latinx vis-à-vis whites, disparities show up for other racialized groups as well, as other studies have demonstrated. For example, Martinez, Jiménez-Castellanos, and Begay use Critical Race



9.4 Median wealth of single persons by race, Latinx identity, and gender (Asante-Muhammad 2018).

Theory and Tribal Critical Theory to link poverty levels, school funding levels, and Navajo school achievement and participation (2019).

These facts and consequences have a huge impact on librarians of color and on our recruitment and retention, as Minter and Chamblee-Smith (2018) observe:

Income disparities in the LIS field are not unique to WOC. However, because many communities of color have been prevented from accumulating wealth, hardships that arise from obtaining advanced degrees and pressure to work in under- or un-compensated jobs as new professionals have a unique impact on those from lower to low-middle income backgrounds. (238)

Compounding this problem is the fact that student loan debt is stunningly higher for college graduates of color. The Brookings Institution reports, “The moment they earn their bachelor’s degrees, black college graduates owe \$7,400 more on average than their white peers (\$23,400 versus \$16,000).” But over time, “differences in interest accrual and graduate school borrowing lead to black graduates holding nearly \$53,000 in student loan debt four years after graduation—almost twice as much as their white counterparts” (Li and Scott-Clayton 2016). Other studies have found that students with higher debts are less likely to choose occupations in fields in which salaries are low, notably such as education or librarianship, thereby affecting the career choices of graduates and color and creating a lack of diversity in these fields (Rothstein and Rouse 2007; Fiddiman, Campbell, and Partelow 2019).

Any library dewhitening initiative worth its salt would have to address these huge divides in wealth and acknowledge that People of Color who are qualified to get the MLIS degree (i.e., who have a college degree) may already be in huge debt and do not

have a fraction of the assets that our white counterparts have. Libraries committed to equity and diversity have to act on these disparities in a meaningful and effective way. CRT scholar Charles R. P. Pouncy notes:

If we believe that the roots of the ideologies of subordination lie in the structures used to maintain particular distributions of assets, resources, and opportunities, ... then we recognize that the processes by which these distributions are maintained will become the battle lines and boundaries that circumscribe and limit our ability to achieve praxis—for those boundaries protect the financial claims that flow to people with white skin as a consequence of the ideologies and white privilege and white superiority. (2002, 842)

For LIS, the message is clear: providing substantial funding for obtaining the library credential, the MLIS, is imperative in any true dewhitening agenda. To neglect to do so would mean continuing to maintain the unequal distribution of assets by racial subordination embedded in our society, thus maintaining white privilege in LIS and keeping the demographics of our profession white as well. Providing the needed funding was the impetus for Elizabeth Martínez to introduce the Spectrum Scholarship Program in the late 1990s (Martínez 2018). But Spectrum and the American Library Association alone cannot accomplish the huge task that is dewhitening librarianship. As Teresa Neely and Lorna Peterson (2007) assert, we need a “comprehensive, collaborative (among all stakeholders) recruitment and public awareness campaign for recruitment purposes” (6), and we need to identify and implement the most effective recruitment, retention, and promotion strategies (12).

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE: DEWHITENING LIBRARIANSHIP

It is clear that we need new approaches. It is not enough to continuously demonstrate and bemoan the state of affairs; we need to take action, another tenet of CRT. Delgado and Stefancic point out that the CRT movement comprises both activists *and* scholars committed to both studying *and* “transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power,” and that CRT “not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better” (2001, 2–3). This action-oriented dimension of CRT informs our approach and budget-driven proposal.

With this in mind, one of our authors, Isabel, while writing an update to a conceptual essay about whiteness in librarianship (Espinal, Sutherland, and Roh 2018), decided to come up with a strategy and policy proposal to change the demographics, which she would actually bring to her library. She suggested to her library administration that her

institution could take the lead with an innovative approach that could be replicated across the country, and if replicated, it could significantly increase the numbers of librarians of color. Imagine if every large academic and public library in the country did this! Let's just look at academic libraries. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2012 there were 1,770 academic libraries in the US with expenditures above \$500,000 (Phan et al. 2014). Following Bourg's logic, if each of these libraries were to support two new People of Color each year to attain their MLIS, we could increase the number of librarians of color by 3,478 per year (Bourg 2014). If we added large public library systems to this equation, we would achieve even better results.

The time is ripe: librarianship is at a turning point, when many librarians hired in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s are retiring, although many are working longer than previous generations (Long and Sheehan 2015, 746). Retirements are likely to continue as the age of librarians is much higher than the general population: 31.5 percent of librarians are over the age of fifty-five, as compared to only 19 percent of the general workforce (AFL-CIO 2019, 3). Diverting a portion of the cost savings from retirements to a diversity recruitment and retention program will have a large return on investment, bringing highly qualified candidates into the field who otherwise might never consider librarianship because of its historic whiteness. Over the course of the past fifteen years or so, libraries have used salary savings from retirements as a way to further strategic priorities related to technology and innovation or to budget for organizational change. As one library administrator notes, "Related to organizational change is the reallocation of resources to hire in key areas, which are either of emerging importance to research libraries or are gaps that we just didn't have" (Meier 2016, 273–274). It is time to use this managerial strategy to achieve the strategic goals of increasing and enhancing diversity, inclusion, and equity, addressing this key area of LIS to dewhiten the profession. If racial equity is to have any meaning, it must be backed by substantial funding, and when no additional funds are coming to libraries, libraries must take it upon themselves to reorganize their existing budgets to be able to allocate funds for dewhening projects. If not, LIS will likely continue to be just as white as ever.

ONE PROPOSAL: POSTBACCALAUREATE FELLOWSHIP POSITIONS

The essence of this concrete proposal is this: to create postbaccalaureate fellowship positions in libraries that financially support, and thus attract new library science

students of color. In their 2018 article on decentering whiteness in librarianship, Espinal, Sutherland, and Roh suggested that libraries can pay employees of color to obtain the MLS on the job, and can create jobs specific to this purpose (157). This proposal fleshes that idea out with more detailed terms. In particular, our proposal puts accountability on the library from the onset, bringing it home, as opposed to relying solely on the professional associations such as the ALA, ACRL, or ARL.

The participants of the proposed LIS postbacs would have their tuition and educational expenses fully covered by this program; libraries themselves would bear the costs by allocating funds for the program in their budgets, cutting from other areas of the budget as needed or using savings from retirements as available. The aim is to recruit People of Color into the field of librarianship, thus increasing the pool of librarians of color both at specific libraries and in the profession at large, by removing the financial barrier of the cost of attaining a graduate degree in library and information studies.

A sample breakdown of the budget for the program's components would look as follows, based on information from a proposal to UMass Amherst in 2017. The goal is to each year fund two part-time positions that include part-time tuition at an accredited library school program. The salaries for the two fellow positions are at 50 percent of an entry-level, non-MLIS salary grade, plus benefits. Reimbursement for part-time tuition cost would vary, but two representative examples include \$6,606 for one year of part-time tuition at one library school and \$22,140 at another.³ To fund a fellow in each institution would cost a total of \$28,746. In addition, we envision covering other key outreach and development costs to provide a complete professional and educational experience for the fellows (see table 9.1). We estimate those total costs at \$4,400 for the first year. Altogether, the estimated cost for the first year of the program would be \$70,014 (see table 9.2). In subsequent years this would increase, as two new fellows would be added each year, as two fellows would graduate.

Table 9.1 Outreach and professional development expenses

Receptions and social gatherings	\$500
Application materials and fees	\$200
Outreach	\$500
Professional travel: \$1,500 per fellow	\$3,000 in year, \$6,000 in subsequent years
Miscellaneous (unexpected expenses)	\$200
Total	\$4,400 in year, \$7,400 in subsequent years

Table 9.2 Full costs of implementation

Year one costs		Year two & subsequent years costs	
Salaries for fellows (2 part-time staff)	\$36,868	Salaries for fellows (4 part-time staff)	\$73,736
Tuition reimbursement	\$28,746	Tuition reimbursement	\$57,492
Outreach and professional development	\$4,400	Outreach and professional development	\$7,400
TOTAL year one	\$70,014	TOTAL subsequent years	\$138,628

It is important to note what is different about this particular proposal as compared to other residency programs already in existence in some libraries: a postbaccalaureate fellowship is NOT a residency. Many academic libraries have instituted diversity residencies as an answer (and sometimes, problematically, the only answer) to the question of how to bring diversity to the librarian ranks. Diversity residencies are usually construed as entry-level positions for librarians of color who have just received their MLIS degrees. While they may help bring diversity to the libraries that have these positions, they do not increase the numbers of People of Color who obtain the MLS. Therefore, they do not increase the overall number of librarians of color. A postbaccalaureate fellowship, constructed in such a way as to recruit college graduates of color who might not have entered a library studies master's program, most likely will increase the numbers of People of Color who become librarians because it may bring people into the profession who would not have done so otherwise.

CONCLUSION

We are trying to be realistic and optimistic. Realistically, we doubt that any library will actually use the term *dewhitening*. This term is introduced in the service of articulating a speculative vocabulary for antiracist efforts within LIS that is both unambiguous and palpable for flipping whiteness on its head. Yet, our collective lived experience in the profession has cautioned us to not expect real change in the racial diversity (i.e., dewhitening) of library staff and management unless each library as an organization acknowledges that systemic change does not happen in isolation. We need policies, not platitudes—broad budget allocations in addition to inclusive mission statements. Critical Race Theory can lead us to concrete solutions for tackling the profession's demographics problem, which is persistently skewed toward

whiteness. Critical Race Theorists Delgado and Stefancic argue that “traditional civil rights” has reached its limits due to “incrementalism and step-by-step progress”—the same can be said of traditional LIS diversity initiatives. By applying CRT, we can see that traditional diversity efforts are marginal to the fundamental problems of systemic racism that are embedded in our institutions.

CRT helps us understand why this approach has not been used in libraries and helps us move forward in removing the racial, historical, and structural biases and barriers that have held us back from taking effective measures to truly “diversify” librarianship. Just as there is an “education debt,” as explained by CRT scholar Ladson-Billings, there is a “library professional debt” owed to POC; this dewhitening proposal conceptualizes that debt and aims to pay it back. The postbac proposal is part and parcel to dewhitening librarianship but is not meant to replace current initiatives, such as diversity residences for entry-level librarians. The postbac crafts the capacity for marginalized groups to enter librarianship as credentialed professionals without ancillary financial burden. The ultimate goal is that, through such a direct challenge to the systems of oppression designed and maintained by white values, we can expand the hegemonic library landscape to exemplify and empower underrepresented groups. Knowledge production for collective liberatory practices has been percolating on the fringes; our proposal serves as a vehicle for cultural accountability that is sustainable in the service of disrupting and dismantling oppression.

MOVING THE NARRATIVE FORWARD

LaTonya was energized. “Janice!” she wrote back. “This is the best congratulations message I’ve gotten all day. I know you probably don’t like the word *dewhitened*, but I got to tell you I really vibed on it. What say you and I be the first deans to get on board with this proposal? Let’s get this done!”

NOTES

1. Storytelling is a CRT technique used extensively in fields such as law and education (Delgado 1989, 2418–2434; Solórzano and Yosso 2000, 43–59, 156–164). We use this technique, presenting Dean LaTonya Lan, a fictional character made up of very real experiences, to set a context where we imagine how a library dean or director of color might read a proposal such as ours.
2. The librarian master’s degree can be an MLIS, MLS, or MS. For consistency we will use MLIS.
3. At University of Alabama and Simmons College, respectively (2017 costs).

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