

Dear RMRT members: I wanted to share with you my statement to ALA President Julie Todaro about ALA's defense of our values and policies. Best wishes for a happy holiday. Joseph

Silence is never an Option

Statement from Joseph M. Eagan

ALA personal member

November 21, 2016

For many months the American Library Association has been SILENT as Donald J. Trump has assaulted, demeaned and opposed our values as librarians and ALA policies relating to our values:

When Mr. Trump demeaned, stereotyped and harassed women, ALA was SILENT.

When Mr. Trump belittled and stereotyped the disabled, ALA was SILENT.

When Mr. Trump advocated for discrimination against immigrants, refugees and other persons, ALA was SILENT.

When Mr. Trump demeaned the Mexican people, persons of Mexican ancestry and other Latinos/Hispanics and proposed discriminatory actions against these people, ALA was SILENT.

When Mr. Trump promoted Islamophobia, racism, ethnic hatred and white supremacy, ALA was SILENT.

When Mr. Trump condoned intolerance and demeaned diversity and inclusiveness, ALA was SILENT.

When Mr. Trump condoned vigilante violence and dismissed the rule of law, ALA was SILENT.

When Mr. Trump questioned the right of our President to hold his office because of his supposed birthplace and questioned the legitimacy of our Presidential electoral process, ALA was SILENT.

As an openly gay American for over 40 years and a member of GLBTRT since 1989, I know that *SILENCE is never an option* for LGBTQ people in any nation or at any time.

As an American male who has repeatedly heard offensive ethnic, racist, white supremacist and sexist remarks since childhood, I know that *SILENCE is never an option* for any person who believes in America's most cherished value: equality.

As a librarian since 1977 who is deeply committed to our profession's values, I know that *SILENCE is never an option* for librarians, library workers and library advocates.

As an ALA member since 1989, a former ALA Councilor and former ALA Executive Board member, I know that *SILENCE is never an option* for ALA and for ALA members.

Now, after Donald J. Trump is the President-Elect of the United States, the ALA President has spoken.

On November 15 the ALA President issued a statement about the new Trump administration that offered platitudes but failed to condemn the hatred, divisiveness and intolerance – and the assaults on our ALA values and policies - promoted by Donald J. Trump as a candidate for President and as President-Elect. On November 19 the ALA President issued an apology about a draft press release regarding library priorities and the new administration that was unintentionally posted on the ALA website. Neither statement spoke of the ALA President's collaboration with the ALA Executive Board, the ALA Council, the ALA divisions, the ALA round tables or the ALA membership to develop a stance towards assaults on our ALA values and policies by the incoming Trump administration.

SILENCE is never an option when confronted with hatred towards any people and assaults on our ALA core values and policies. ALA's values are America's values. *Silence is not an option* for ALA and our members. Let our voices be finally heard!

As an ALA personal member, I call upon the ALA President, the ALA Executive Board, ALA Council, the ALA divisions and the ALA round tables to work with our ALA membership and ALA staff to defend ALA's values and policies and to collaborate with our chapters and affiliates, the library community, and other associations and organizations to promote and defend our ALA values and policies during the transition to a new federal government administration and during the Trump Presidency.

Joseph M. Eagan
ALA personal member
Member, PLA, ERT, GLBTRT, IFRT, RMRT, SRRT, STORT
Towson, Maryland, USA

Responses on Nov. 22, 2016

Thank you, Joseph, for sharing this. You are correct. ALA was silent and off the radar. Not acceptable.
Ann Marie Pipkin

Well done!
Irene Conable

Well said, Joseph. We have been silent for far too long!
Rosina Alaimo
ALA Councilor

Thank-you Joseph!! I know it's TOO late but I wish we had started this fight a long time ago.
So sorry for letting my anger stew instead of saying so earlier,
Diana Shonrock

Thank you for putting into words what so many of us have been feeling. Very much appreciated --
Fanny Keaton
Public Library Director, Ret.

Deja vu all over again!!
Patricia Glass Schuman

You and Joseph are correct Thank you both.
I am in rehab once again and will not be able to attend Midwinter. Will miss all our meetings and the dinner party.
Valerie Feinman

Some of ALA's silence during the pre-election time may be due to its 501.c.3 status, which does benefit us tax-wise. That may explain the post-election statement.

Pam Spencer Holley

Good thought Pam.
Ma'lis WENDT

I'm probably an outlier here and don't condemn me but I think there are three issues and we are only discussing one of them.

Yes, ALA has been slow to take a public position. I absolutely agree with Joe on that.

However, local libraries have been strong in providing equitable service to all, including refugees and those not legally in the US and people of all colors and people with disabilities. They have not flinched or backed down when criticized. They have defended people and our values and not been quiet about it. That we can celebrate and support.

And finally, and this is the unpopular part, I don't think it's fair or wise to say that because Trump is an evil man we will never, ever work with him. And that would be a particularly dangerous position to take with Congress. We have to look at where we have supporters, where we have common values, where we can move forward

supporting libraries and where we have to take a strong stand. If we oppose everything, just because it comes from one man, we are no better than the Republicans and Obama.

Nancy Bolt

Nancy: YES, we need to celebrate that libraries across America have been proactive about providing services, materials and a safe space for so many people in desperate need in our diverse society...e.g., refugees, new Americans, the disabled . And, YES, I agree that we must proactively work with the Trump administration and the Congress to advance our mission and our values and cooperate with our elected and appointed officials where our views and interests coincide. The notion that only one party or one political persuasion supports libraries and our ALA values is ridiculous. Joseph

Dear Friends and Good People -

Please let me share this **Open Letter to Joseph Eagan**

Being minutes away from my big 7 - 5 (anticipating at least a photo in the AARP magazine), which includes 50+ years of service to the public through libraries, I read your letter with keenly empathetic agreement for its underlying spirit. However, having worked diligently during those years to keep my political ideals very separate from my public service responsibilities, I feel there should be a very clear distinction between my personal political ideas and service obligations to the varied publics in the community.

In their seminal *For the People: Fighting for Public Libraries* (1979), Whitney North Seymour and Elizabeth Layne wrote,

“The mission of the public library is to serve the public.
Not *some* of the public.
All of the public.”

Agree with him or not, almost as many people voted for Trump as voted for Clinton —> let us not forget that those folks are also the tax-paying public whom we are committed to serve. The question for us to ask is, are our libraries truly serving the needs and interests of all these publics? Or have we become the “elites” so many of these folks seem to resent.

If librarians want to take the kind political action you don't want ALA to be silent about, go join a political organization to register and act on your ideals: in light of its 501c3

status, ALA is not the forum for that kind of political action, ALA “is organized to promote libraries and librarianship.”

On Monday, ALA President Julie B. Todaro posted “A Message to Members, A statement from the Executive Board to American Library Association members”

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/a-message-to-members/>

reiterating “our core values as an association are clear - **free access, intellectual freedom, privacy and confidentiality.**”

To which Mary Manning responded (and I encourage you to read all the comments), “The issue with the Patriot Act and establishing the Freedom to Read clearly fall within the realm of ALA policies and action, however, demanding a call to arms to fight about social issues should not be any library/librarians initiative. I'm not saying that these social issues aren't worth fighting for because they are, but on a personal level or in a more suitable organization - there are plenty to choose from.”

Here are several recent articles which are instructive to this question:

Study finds churches with conservative theology still growing

<http://religionnews.com/2016/11/21/study-finds-churches-with-conservative-theology-still-growing/>

to help us understand the mind set of a large segment of our public.

You Can Catch More Flies With Honey

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charlie-maffei/you-can-catch-more-flies-b_1676353.html

to help us understand how to deal with our publics.

Your letter is reminiscent of Pastor **Martin Niemöller's** famous poem written about the cowardice of the intellectuals of his time in normalizing the Nazi Party's rise in Germany in the 1930s, a copy of which can be found in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

There have been numerous variations of this poem, and last week Raphael Bob-Waksberg wrote this version on his Twitter account.

First he came for the Muslims, and I said “Guys, let's take a wait-and-see approach here.”

Then he came for the Mexican Americans, and I said, “Let's not be sore losers just because the other guy won.”

Then he came for the Mexican Americans, and I said, "Let's not be sore losers just because the other guy won."

Then he came for the press, and I said, "What makes this country great is our peaceful transitions of power."

Then he came for the women, and I said, "Try to have some compassion for the frustrations of the other side."

Then he came for the black community, and I said, "I know it sucks, but wait four years."

Then he came for me, and I said, "How could this have happened? I did everything I could."

Niemöller's cautionary alert points to personal political actions which we each must decide how to handle, not how to run our libraries good.

In these present times, we must also not lose sight of maintaining our personal equilibrium.

November 23, 2016

I fear that all our efforts will be fruitless in dealing with such ignorance and hate. I think that the new administration is so devoted to ignorance that libraries will seem to be threats. I think LSTA will be under attack.

Did you see just this morning that books on Islam in the Evanston Public Library have been defaced with swastikas and racial slurs? This is the reality of our new national leadership. It is hard not to despair.

Mimi

I had not heard of the Evanston Library defacing. This is the perfect opportunity for ALA to take a public stand against it – and do it publicly in the media.

Nancy M. Bolt

**"In times of great stress or adversity,
it's always best to keep busy,
to plow your anger and your energy
into something positive."**

- Lee Lacocca

www.TheLawOfAttraction.com





As Presidential Medal of Freedom honoree Eduardo Padrón (President of Florida's Miami Dade College) once said, "We're only as great as the doors we open" - "ideas last longer than people."

Thanks for sharing your feelings, much appreciate your thoughtfulness. But I do hope you will reconsider your conclusions about ALA inactivity (a problem it may have in other areas) and redirect your own.

Best wishes - Don Reynolds

ALA Continuing Member, including ALSC, ASCLA, LLAMA, PLA, YALSA, UNITED, LEARNRT, RMRT

At a time when many of our service populations - GLBT, Hispanic, Muslim, Black, Jewish, female - are under public attack, it would be well to make explicit that libraries are safe and inclusive places for all types of people, as well as for all types of materials and ideas.

Irene Conable

Irene: YES, and let's remember to keep our library workers safe and ALA members safe as we promote our values in Trump's dark vision of America and the world. Happy holidays to all. Joseph