
Black Subject Headings in LCSH

Successes and Challenges of the African American Subject Funnel Project

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Overview

- Why LCSH for racial and ethnic groups needs to be improved
- How collaborating in a funnel is an effective way to make changes to LCSH
- What successes and challenges the funnel has experienced

What's Wrong with LCSH (Library of Congress Subject Headings)?

- Centers whiteness
- Includes outdated terminology
- Omits concepts related to the African American experience
- Hides material about racism

Centering Whiteness

“Marked” vs. “unmarked” headings

- African American art museum curators / Art museum curators
- Asian American actors / Actors

People of color = “Minorities”

Outdated Terminology

- “Illegal aliens” (instead of “Undocumented immigrants”)
- “Blacks” (instead of “Black people”)
- “Slaves” (instead of “Enslaved people”)

Lacking Concepts Related to the Black Experience

- Great Migration
- Blackface
- Black wall streets
- Slave auctions
- Slave markets

Hiding Materials about Racism

- “Racism” used only for general works about racism, not directed against a particular group
 - New headings for Racism against Asians, etc.
- “Racism” vs. “Race discrimination” distinction

Other Challenges

- LCSH is not designed to be updated frequently
- Lack of transparency in the subject approval process
- Few institutions and few catalogers involved in the proposal process

SACO: Making LCSH More Transparent

1994: PCC established to facilitate increased availability of acceptable-quality records

1995: SACO and funnels established for institutions and individuals could directly contribute to LCSH

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The Subject Authority Cooperative Program (SACO) enables member institutions to submit proposals for additions to Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), LC Genre/Form Terms (LCGFT), LC Demographic Group Terms (LCDGT), LC Medium of Performance Thesaurus for Music (LCMPT), and LC Classification (LCC) schedules.

[Read more about SACO »](#)

SACO Funnel: Subject and Regional Expertise

- Groups of libraries or librarians who contribute to LCSH
- Efficient means of contributing for all levels of expertise
- Subject- or location-specific

African American Subject Funnel Project

- AFAS/AASLIG established in 2000
- Focus on terminology reflecting the African American experience
- About 20 active members with diverse expertise
- Members from public and academic libraries of all sizes

AFAS



AEAS: African American Studies Librarians Section
Association of College and Research Libraries - ALA

African-American Studies Librarians Interest Group

Charge

Provides the resources—ideas, programs, discussion forums and networking opportunities—to support the development of African American Studies librarianship and resources in academic and research libraries.

Barriers to SACO Participation

- SACO participation is mysterious
- Few catalogers contribute
- Not widely known who can submit proposals
- Documentation can be inaccessible and outdated
- Lengthy subject approval/rejection process

Funnel Priorities: Democratizing SACO Participation

- Rely on all members' expertise
- Strive for transparency and equal access to opportunities
 - Funnel-specific training and documentation
 - Free, widely available tools
 - Collaborative process for generating ideas and tracking proposals
- Assert antiracism

New Terms in LCSH

New terminology on Black and African American experiences:

- Afrofuturist fiction
- Ax Handle Saturday, Jacksonville, Fla., 1960
- Black wall streets
- Sundown towns



1960 youth protest turned violent

Jacksonville mob incident known as Ax Handle Saturday

By Ben Brotman

More than 200 white people wielding baseball bats and ax handles chased black citizens through the streets of downtown Jacksonville, trying to beat them into submission.

It was Aug. 27, 1960, a day that became known as Ax Handle Saturday.

The violent attack was in response to peaceful lunch counter demonstrations organized by the Jacksonville Youth Council of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

The attack began with white people spitting on the protesters and yelling racial slurs at them. When the young demonstrators held their resolve, they were beaten with wooden handles that had not had metal ax heads attached.

While the violence was first aimed at the lunch counter demonstrators, it quickly escalated to include any black person in sight of the white mob. Police stood by idly, watching the beatings until members of a black street gang called The Bonerangs attempted to protect those being attacked. At that point, police night sticks joined the baseball bats and ax handles.

Bloodied and battered victims of the vicious beatings fled to a nearby church, where they



Charlie Griffin, a victim of the violence in Jacksonville on Aug. 27, 1960, is detained by police.



Rodney L. Hurst, center, participates in the peaceful lunch counter demonstration that ended in the violence of Ax Handle Saturday.

Hurst has written about his experiences in the award-winning book, "It Was Never

Forrest High School opened in Jacksonville, celebrating the memory of the first grand dragon of the Ku Klux Klan.

As of July 1, 2014, the name has been changed to Westside High School.

Racial segregation and overt racism had been building tension in Jacksonville for decades. In his book, Hurst places his personal story as a young activist into the larger historical context of the civil rights movement.

"Jacksonville was a mess, not unlike a lot of other Southern cities," Hurst says. "It is believed that the Ku Klux Klan organized the violence of Ax Handle Saturday."

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2014
Pages: 17A | Weather, 18A



"Powerful and important... deserves to become an instant classic."
—The Washington Post Book World

SUNDOWN TOWNS

A HIDDEN DIMENSION OF AMERICAN RACISM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Ben Brotman is vice director of the Historical Society.

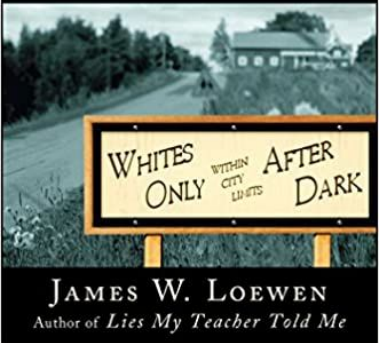


Thursdays and 4 p.m. and on 89.5 WFTL Sundays.

Ax Handle Saturday were in LITF magazine. Hurst has written about his experiences in the award-winning book, "It Was Never

Some people in Jacksonville were now more willing to fight back. In 2014, the University of North Florida opened its doors. The photographs in his book, Hurst places his personal story as a young activist into the larger historical context of the civil rights movement.

"Jacksonville was a mess, not unlike a lot of other Southern cities," Hurst says. "It is believed that the Ku Klux Klan organized the violence of Ax Handle Saturday."



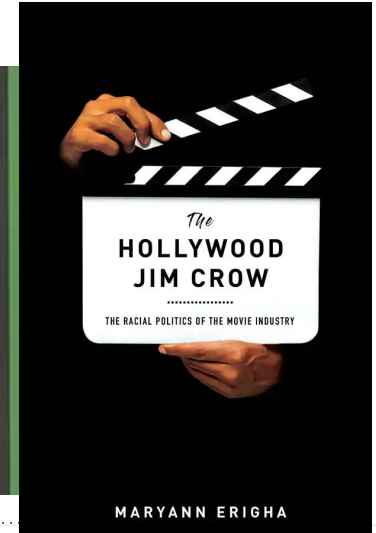
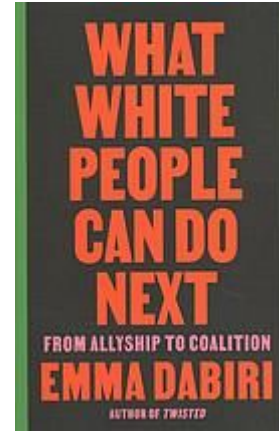
JAMES W. LOEWEN
Author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me*

Historic photos of Jacksonville are displayed in the exhibit for me is that it's on a

Proposed Changes to LCSH

Updated terms empower contemporary users to confidently employ LCSH:

- Blacks/Whites change proposals
- LC Classification change proposal: PN1995.9.N4 to PN1995.9.B585
- Updated references for Colorism



Colorism (May Subd Geog)

Here are entered works on prejudice based on relative skin hue within a racial group.

UF Bias, Skin-tone

Colourism

Shadeism

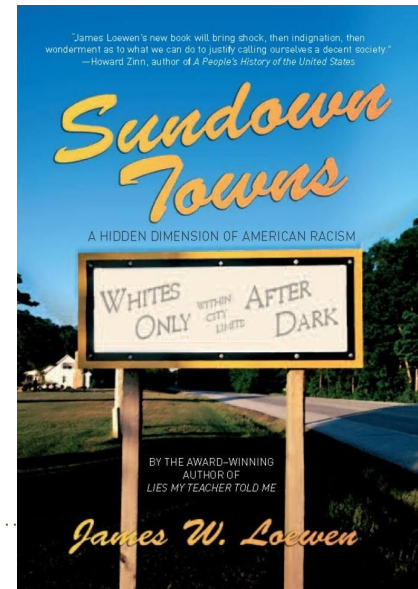
Shadism

Skin-tone bias

BT [Prejudices](#)

Questions for New and Change Proposals

- Should catalogers add new headings to existing records?
- What impact can headings updates have on local catalogs?
- What counts as “literary warrant” these days?



Blacks

USE Black people

Blacks—Songs and music

USE Black people—Music

Blacks—South Africa—Segregation

USE Apartheid—South Africa

Blacks—Surinam

USE Black people—Suriname

Challenges

- LC sometimes neutralizes our proposals in the name of objectivity
- LC policies can get in the way of establishing commonly used terminology

Neutralizing: “Blackface” Proposal

Original scope note: “Here are entered works on the use of stereotyped portrayals of black people (linguistic, physical, conceptual or otherwise), usually in a parody, caricature, etc. meant to **insult, degrade or denigrate** people of African descent”

Final scope note: “Here are entered works on the **caricature** of black people, generally by non-blacks, through the use of makeup, mannerisms, speech patterns, etc.”

Broader term changed from “Racism in popular culture” to “Impersonation”

Library of Congress Policies: “Afro-Latin Americans” Proposal

Existing heading: Blacks--Latin America

Proposed heading: Afro-Latin Americans

LC response: “LCSH does not include composite headings for nationalities in countries other than the United States (see Subject Headings Manual H 1919.5).”

Why this Work is Important

- LCSH is widely used in library catalogs
- Greater impact than implementing local policies

Bottom Line

Improving LCSH is possible! We need to commit ourselves to this work

Don't assume that because there is no heading, there can't be one

Thank you!

More information on the funnel:

<https://www.loc.gov/aba/pcc/saco/aframerfun.html>

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