



BCALA Statement to ALA Council Against Racism

In May 2020, the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) released a “Statement Condemning Increased Violence and Racism Towards Black Americans and People of Color.” It is now necessary for BCALA to stand up in support of ALA Council Leaders of Color, BIPOC ALA Council members and attendees.

BCALA Presidents, BIPOC ALA Council members and attendees, have encountered incidents of racist microaggression when convening with the ALA Council at more than one ALA Council meeting, including current Executive Director, Tracie D. Hall; President Julius Jefferson; Immediate Past President, Wanda Brown and Past President Loida Garcia-Febo. After disrespectful affronts have occurred, apologies have been made and the insult described as “unintentional.” However, intent never alters the impact of injury, especially when complaints of the injured are seemingly nullified or dismissed and slights continue to take place year after year. BCALA deplores and condemns this negative pattern of behavior.

We challenge all members of the ALA Council to deeply evaluate the context of their interactions, words and behavior. We implore ALA Council to begin to put themselves in the position of marginalized members in ALA Council spaces. In the library world and in the nation as a whole, People of Color are not afforded the same access to positions of authority as their white counterparts; therefore, it becomes all the more important not to address BIPOC leaders in a casual or ridiculing manner that diminishes them and the status of their leadership roles. If we are truly against racist oppression, we should do all we can to ensure that BIPOC leaders and participants are given the respect, dignity and professional courtesy to which all ALA Council members are entitled when they finally have a seat at the table.

Acknowledgment of negative behavior is necessary, but it is only an initial step in the process. Business cannot continue to be conducted as usual. BCALA is requesting that ALA Council meeting policies, communication norms and rules of conduct be re-examined and re-created with a diversity /equity lens. BCALA is requesting that a formal commitment from ALA Council to uphold these improved standards be made so that racially offensive statements and behaviors, regardless of intent, whether overt or subtle, cease to occur.

Finally, BCALA recommends that ALA mandates continuous diversity training for ALA Council to assist them in becoming aware of unconscious bias and other barriers to diversity and inclusion and to raise awareness of the issue of microaggression against BIPOC members of ALA for a more respectful and inclusive ALA Council.

BCALA is willing to continue this dialogue and to serve supportively as a consultant in this effort.

Sincerely,

The Officers and Members of **The Black Caucus of the American Library Association.**

About BCALA

In 1970, BCALA began its mission to serve as an advocate for the development, promotion and improvement of library services and resources to the nation's African American community; and provides leadership for the recruitment and professional development of African Americans. BCALA is comprised of individual members and affiliates throughout the United States.