Diversity in Conflict*

Teresa Y. Neely**

Ms. Neely reviews some of the major aspects of modern American society, analyzing how they promote or exhibit racial inequity and diversity-related unrest. She then explores the significance of the state of race relations in these overarching areas of society for the practice of librarianship. She concludes by offering several strategies for change.

From the very beginning, there has been ethnicity and diversity in this nation, whether or not it was labeled as such. Distinctions have always been made from the visible differences of people.1 Over the years, the United States has come to be a country where—although some support the view that diversity and its celebration is a good thing—we still remain torn by issues of race, ethnicity, quotas, affirmative action, gender, and sexual orientation. With this in mind, I plan to address racial inequity and diversity-related unrest by reviewing some of the major influences that currently exist in American society. I will then identify, describe, and discuss trends in academic librarianship. Race relations and diversity on the national level are significant for the practice of librarianship because higher education in general and academic librarianship in particular are influenced on many levels by such things as politics, federal policies, and the practices of the entertainment industry. To better understand the conflicts over diversity that exist in academia and librarianship, one must be familiar with the beliefs and practices that exist in the larger arenas of this nation.

Background

As a nation, the groups of people who make up the United States have routinely self-selected or have been forced to endure separateness in everything (i.e., public organizations and associations, facilities, hospitals, prisons, churches, schools) in order to function as civilized inhabitants of society. This behavior has been justified on the basis of racial and ethnic stereotypes, historical precedence of hate

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and bigotry, and an institutionalized racism that has flourished alongside visions of "purple mountains majesty" and "amber waves of grain."

As a result of the "institutionalization of the concept of White, Western European superiority over" nonwhites, this country has had to resort to federal legislation in order to abolish African-American slavery, desegregate and make an attempt at addressing gender and homosexuality issues in the military, desegregate schools that were separate but rarely equal, and establish or restore basic civil rights to people of color and women, including the right to vote. Thomas Cornell notes that the fallout of this institutionalism "has historically limited opportunities for growth and full societal inclusion by minority groups in the U.S."

And now, at the brink of the twenty-first century, we find ourselves defining and redefining diversity—making it more inclusive or exclusive on every level of society, including politics, entertainment, higher education, and the profession of librarianship.

Conflict and Race in America

In the Atlas of American Diversity, Shingawa and Jang note that "Race continues to be one of the more vexing problems in American life today." The authors also confirm the increased emphasis on segregation efforts, noting work by Massey and Denton who in 1993 reported that segregation was at an all-time high in the United States during the previous decade.

Perhaps in response to a widely varying set of race-related incidents—including but certainly not limited to the obvious racially motivated violence of the Los Angeles riots following the Rodney King/Reginald Denny incidents; the still unaccounted-for death of Pittsburgh native Jonny Gammage; the apparent commonplace use of racial slurs in the national media (particularly in the reporting of Mark Furhman-related testimony in the O. J. Simpson case); and the constant harassment and assault on people of color, especially men of African descent, by police nationwide—the chief executive of the United States has taken

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3. Id.
5. Id. (citing DOUGLAS S. MASSEY & NANCY A. DENTON, AMERICAN APARTHEID: SEGREGATION AND THE MAKING OF THE UNDERCLASS 60-82, 83 (1993)).
a stand on race relations. In June 1997 President William Jefferson Clinton announced his year-long "Initiative on Race" designed "to increase the number of Americans working to improve understanding and cooperation across racial lines." Since President Clinton represents the highest level of leadership of this country, the need for him to issue this call at all seems to clearly indicate the general state of affairs in the United States. However, even this nationwide effort has not quelled the rise in racially motivated violence and ethnic discrimination, nor has it appeased the inhabitants of the nation's cities.

The seven-member advisory board for the initiative was established in order to advise the president on ways of improving the quality of race relations in America and is currently working with the president to: "promote national dialogue on race issues; increase the nation's understanding of the history and future of race relations; identify and create plans to calm racial tension and promote increased opportunity for all Americans; and address crime and the administration of justice." Since the initiative was announced, the advisory board itself has come under fire. Board meetings have been held in a number of different cities across the nation, and during a recent visit to Denver, Colorado, the board was greeted by a group of native Americans who were dissatisfied because there is no native American representation on the board. They did not feel that their views could be adequately represented by the group. The board has since realized a number of accomplishments including the integration of American Indians and Alaska Natives as panelists at advisory board meetings and at a special tribal leaders meeting; the securing of the National Research Council to coordinate studies on a number of topics including race and demographic trends; and a meeting of conservative writers and academics, some of whom are against affirmative action, to discuss race relations in America.

Among the controversial topics included in the ongoing national discussion on race in this country is whether there should be an apology and reparations for Americans of African descent for African-American slavery. The difference in
public opinion is clear. The majority of whites polled are opposed, and the majority of blacks polled are in favor. In 1997, the president apologized to survivors, descendents, and family and friends of the African-American men used by the federal government for scientific syphilis testing without their knowledge or consent in Tuskegee, Alabama. President Clinton’s March 1998 trip to Africa was rumored to be a step in the direction of an apology to African-Americans, although Naomi Wolf’s recent column in George Magazine points out that his statements there constituted more of an apology “for the slave trade in Africa, to the descendents of Africans who were left behind by it; not in America to the descendents of those who were captured and bred in captivity.” In remarks made in Uganda, Clinton said:

It is as well not to dwell too much on the past, but I think it is worth pointing out that the United States has not always done the right thing by Africa . . . going back to the time before we were even a nation, European Americans received the fruits of the slave trade. And we were wrong in that, as well. . . .

A baby step, but a step nonetheless. Wolf argues eloquently for an apology for slavery, and even apologizes herself. Although President Clinton’s initiative has achieved a national dialogue on race in America, his direct actions have made a greater impact—the appointment of more women and minorities to prominent positions cannot be overlooked. Large questions still remain, however: whether his race initiative will prove to be productive and fruitful, and whether the dialogue will continue when he is no longer in office.

The national conflicts mentioned above have a direct impact on librarianship. The practice of librarianship, in the aggregate, mirrors the lack of diversity that is reflected nationally, everyday, in media representation, news and sound bites, and by major players in the political arena. It reflects the national dominant culture and, therefore, has the tendency to share and echo similar ideologies and biases about diversity, race, and affirmative action. The critical issue that remains after this realization is how do we as librarians work around it? How do we agree to disagree and move forward?


13. See President’s Remarks In Apology To African-Americans on the Tuskegee Experiment (May 16, 1997), 33 WEEKLY COMP. PRES. Doc. 718 (May 19, 1997).


Conflict and the Entertainment Industry

The Movie and Film Industry

On every level in American society there appears to have been a shift from the master/slave dichotomy to a white/nonwhite unspoken era that seems to be even more pervasive. Witness the entertainment industry where people of color, with few exceptions, are noticeably scarce on Oscar, Emmy, and Grammy nights. Yes, it is true that in more than seventy years of Oscar-granting, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has distributed a few of the coveted acting awards to blacks (and even fewer to Latinos/Hispanics, Asian Americans, and native Americans). But a recent People Magazine article highlighting the number of African-Americans nominated in the twenty-five categories between 1985 and 1995 found that only sixteen of the 250 individuals nominated were black. The article focused on blacks "because they are America’s largest minority and because of the widespread belief that they have successfully broken through Hollywood’s barriers." Despite Oscar-worthy performances by people of color in successful crossover movies (i.e., Angela Bassett and Laurence Fishburne in What’s Love Got to Do With It; the entire cast of Eve’s Bayou; and Oprah Winfrey, Danny Glover, and Whoopi Goldberg in The Color Purple), none of these actors were awarded the statue. In the Oscar music race, people of color are still not recognized. Consider the 1996 multiplatinum soundtrack for Waiting to Exhale, for which Kenneth “Babyface” Edmonds was awarded the Grammy for producer of the year, as well as other best-selling movie soundtracks such as Love Jones (1996), The Preacher’s Wife (1996), The Bodyguard (1992), and Soul Food (1997). All were passed over by the Academy. Lambert and Wright report on a notorious incident that apparently took place at the Academy Awards in 1995.

16. Oscars have been awarded to the following African-Americans: Best Actor—Sidney Poitier (Lilies of the Field, 1963); Best Supporting Actor—Louis Gossett Jr. (An Officer and A Gentleman, 1982); Denzel Washington (Glory, 1989); Cuba Gooding Jr. (Jerry Maguire, 1996); Best Supporting Actress—Hattie McDaniel (Gone With the Wind, 1939); Whoopi Goldberg (Ghost, 1990). See Richard Shale, The Academy Awards Index: The Complete Categorical and Chronological Record (1993).

17. Pam Lambert & Lynda Wright, What’s Wrong with This Picture? People Wkly., Mar. 18, 1996, at 42, 44.

18. In 1986, Herbie Hancock was awarded an Oscar for Original Score for ‘Round Midnight; Lionel Richie was awarded an Oscar in 1985 for Original Song for “Say You, Say Me” from White Nights; in 1984, Prince was awarded the Original Song Score Oscar for Purple Rain; in 1984 Stevie Wonder was awarded an Oscar for Original Song for “I Just Called to Say I Love You” from The Woman In Red;
“Canción del Mariachi,” Los Lobos’s guitar-driven ballad in last year’s Desperado was nearly declared ineligible for consideration as Best Original Song because its Spanish lyrics were deemed “not intelligible” by the Academy’s music branch. (The Academy later blamed a “clerical mistake” for the ruling.)

Lambert and Wright quote African-American director Reginald Hudlin, his brother, partner, and producer Warrington Hudlin, and sound mixer Russell Williams, who note that limited membership in the Academy from African-Americans and Hispanics is a major factor behind the Academy’s slighting of minorities, and probably a contributing factor to this incident.

Special notice must also be taken in viewing the products of the movie and film industry. It appears that U.S.-related racial and ethnic atrocities are not appropriate fodder for America’s cinema-plexes. Neither movies with such content or their producers and directors are recognized despite their commitment to preserving and presenting these critical aspects of American history and culture. Steven Spielberg’s The Color Purple (1987) and Amistad (1997); Spike Lee’s 4 Little Girls (1997), Malcolm X (1992), and Get On The Bus (1996); and Eve’s Bayou (1997), directed by Kasi Lemmon, an African-American female—all were virtually shut out of Oscar contention. A few garnered nominations, but no Oscars were awarded to directors or actors in these films. Spielberg’s treatment of the Holocaust in Schindler’s List, however, was deemed Oscar-worthy material in 1993, as was the life of Indian Mahatma Gandhi in 1982 when Gandhi was awarded eight Oscars.

There appears to be a collective guilt-ridden conscience or some other sort of mental block when atrocities and hatred are visited upon people on American soil. However, when it occurs elsewhere, committed by “other” white people (i.e., Nazis), it is somehow more acceptable. Wolf notes this tendency as well when she writes:

We build memorials to what we want to remember, but a glance at our public monuments also shows just what we want to forget. . . . America has willful amnesia about its slave past. . . . White America wants to forget.

**Popular Literature and Books**

In July 1998 the Board of the Modern Library, a group that convenes twice a year to discuss titles on the library’s publishing agenda, released its list of the
one hundred best novels published in the English language since 1900. The board is predominantly white and male and is comprised of twelve well-known authors, historians, and critics, including Maya Angelou (who did not vote).\textsuperscript{24} The list included only two titles by African-Americans (Ralph Ellison’s \textit{Invisible Man} and Richard Wright’s \textit{Native Son}), and only eight by women. Board chairman Christopher Cerf, in discussing the list noted that he “wished other authors had been included, such as Doris Lessing and Toni Morrison.”\textsuperscript{25} Interestingly enough, when Random House provided an opportunity for readers themselves to vote for their own list on its Web site, the following books made the “reader’s top 100” by the end of July: #25, Toni Morrison’s \textit{Beloved}; #55, Ralph Ellison’s \textit{The Invisible Man}; #70, Zora Neale Hurston’s \textit{Their Eyes Were Watching God}; #73, Toni Morrison’s \textit{Song of Solomon}; and #83, Alice Walker’s \textit{The Color Purple}.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{Films and Movies}

In similar fashion, the American Film Institute recently released its list of America’s 100 Greatest Movies\textsuperscript{27} and of those one hundred, none were about, by, or included blacks or other people of color in leading roles.\textsuperscript{28} The list was released commemorating the first one hundred years of moviemaking and the movies were selected by “a blue-ribbon panel of more than 1,500 leaders from across the American film community.”\textsuperscript{29} The movies were selected from a list of four hundred chosen by the American Film Institute and judged using the following criteria: feature-length fiction film, American film, critical recognition, major award winner, popularity over time, historical significance, and cultural impact. As with the Modern Library’s list of novels, the public has been given a chance to vote for their top ten favorite movies from among the list of four hundred. It is clear from the differences in the voting that the Web-surfing public, at least, recognizes the contributions of people of color in movies and popular literature.\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ula Iluty, \textit{Panel Votes ‘Ulysses’ as Century’s Best Novel}, Denver Post, July 21, 1998, at 4A, 4A.
\item \textsuperscript{27} American Film Institute, \textit{100 Movies} (visited Aug. 30, 1998) <http://afi.100movies.com>.
\item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{Gone with the Wind} (1939) ranked #4 and Hattie McDaniel received the best supporting actress award for her portrayal of a stereotypical asexual mammy character. \textit{The Birth of a Nation} (1915) ranked #44, presumably as a landmark in motion picture development, but its portrayal of African Americans as savages was not positive. \textit{Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner} (1967) ranked #99 and starred Sidney Poitier, however the focus was on the family of his white fiancée. \textit{See id.}
\item \textsuperscript{29} American Film Institute, \textit{100 Movies} (visited Sept. 2, 1998) <http://www.afi.100movies.com>.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Of the four hundred movies from which the one hundred were selected, the following were included in the public’s vote as of July 31, 1998: \textit{Beverly Hills Cop} (1984) with Eddie Murphy (#203); \textit{Birth of a Nation} (#35); \textit{The Black Board Jungle} (1995) with Sidney Poitier (#307); \textit{Cabin in the Sky} (1943) with Lena Horne and Louis Armstrong (#385); \textit{Carmen Jones} (1954) with Dorothy Dandridge and
When people of color are portrayed in movies, frequently they are typecast in stereotypical roles which, more often than not, do not provide an accurate portrayal of African-American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian American, or native American life. In broadcast television the inaccurate portrayals are seen more widely and consequently more easily accepted as truth. For example, African-American women are routinely portrayed as Sapphiras or Jezebels,\(^{31}\) welfare queens, or asexual nannies or mammys; and African-American male characters are often underdeveloped or placed in unrealistic situations. These stereotypes persist so often that college-aged individuals often believe that someone named “Aunt Jemima” or “Uncle Ben” actually existed.\(^{32}\) Latino/Hispanic woman are rarely portrayed, Latino/Hispanic men are little more than Latin Lover types, and it is truly a rarity to see an Asian American or native American woman on the major networks or most cable stations unless there is a national heritage week or month.\(^{33}\)

**Separate But Equal**

In response to the overwhelming nonrecognition of people of color for their performances—sometimes critically acclaimed and sometimes not—ethnically diverse groups have risen to the occasion. For instance, each year the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), Soul Train, Essence, and other black-related organizations present awards to black actors, artists, thespians, and other famous or respected black people. There are also, in theory, black comedy or variety shows on television, such as Russell Simmons’ Def Comedy Jam (HBO) or BET’s Comic View (Black Entertainment Television), but these no longer exclusively showcase black talent.

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31. Both are women from the Bible. Sapphira was married to a man named Ananias and together they lied to God about money gained from the sale of property (Acts 5:01); Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, King of Israel, and introduced the worship of Balaam (committing fornication and eating meat sacrificed to idols) into Israel; it is also the name given to a wicked woman who exerts a corrupting influence (The Revelation 2:20).


33. Korean American Margaret Cho was the first and only Asian American to star in her own television show *The All-American Girl* in 1994. The show has since been cancelled. See Baron & Gall, *supra* note 16, at 53.
The Native American Indian Film Festival, sponsored by the American Indian Film Institute, was founded in 1975 and is the oldest festival of its kind worldwide. It was founded and is produced by American Indians, ensuring a wider distribution of films by and about American Indians. It also provides a network and marketplace for the cultivation of financial resources for technical support, distribution, and resource sharing among Indian producers, directors, writers, performers, and craftspeople. On the music front, the first annual Native American Music Awards were recently held in Connecticut with Wayne Newton as host.

Latin Americans have also answered this clarion call, sponsoring their own awards like the American Latino Media Arts Awards (formerly the Bravo Awards), hosted by the National Council of La Raza, "to recognize and celebrate positive and accurate images [in films and on television] of the Hispanic community." Film festivals, such as the Chicago Latino Film Festival, and comedy or variety shows, such as Showtime’s Annual Latino Laugh In Festival, also give exclusive recognition to the talent and contributions of Latino comedians. And in 1986 the National Hispanic Media Coalition was formed in response to the media’s representation of the Hispanic American community. This is evidence of what appears to be a new era of “separate but equal.”

Along the same lines, there seems to be a double standard. There is a general belief that some well-known individuals of color, such as Tiger Woods, Oprah Winfrey, Bill Cosby, Michael Jordan, and, more recently, Will Smith, are above the sort of typecasting generally bestowed upon the not-so-rich-and-famous people of color. However, at least a few of them, with one notable exception, have made public statements to the effect that “regardless of your net worth, you’re still going to be and see black every time you look in the mirror.” And this, in and of itself, speaks volumes about America.

The professional sports arena is one area where people of color can succeed—depending upon your definition of success. Only a few will reach the level of affluence and national recognition of Michael “Air” Jordan, Earvin “Magic” Johnson, or golf phenomenon Tiger Woods. Many, many more sports hopefuls will flicker beautifully and brightly like a Fourth of July fireworks display, and

then pop and fade just as quickly under the cloak of alleged scandal, debt, or other accusations of wrongdoing and criminal misconduct.\textsuperscript{37}

It would be refreshing to return to the days where managers, agents, and other concerned groomers of success (think Berry Gordy and the early Motown years) taught manners and elocution. Perhaps the addition of money management and how to behave in the glare of the public spotlight would also help add to the longevity and enduring popularity of performers of today.

Diversity in the broadest sense, at least in the entertainment industry, has not been successful. There has been some integration into the ranks of the dominant culture, but increasingly, there is more separateness than equality. The stereotypes perpetuated in the print and television media, as well as the negative images that are produced for mass consumption, are probably most noticed by people of color. As a reasonably informed, fairly well-educated woman of African descent who happens to be a librarian, I am constantly aware of the negative images being broadcast into millions of homes worldwide each day. These images are, in theory, supposed to represent people like me; however, many of them are stereotypical and inaccurate. Most individuals who are not black don’t have enough information to enable them to reject these images as both negative and false; consequently they are stored away as bits of information that will one day be shared with others, thereby perpetuating ignorance and further widening the chasm between races and cultures.

I, like many of my sisters and brothers in the struggle, am extremely concerned when a black character is introduced into a new or existing television show, or when a movie with a predominantly black cast and black themes arrives on the screen. Will the characters be authentic? Will the colored-people jokes abound? What will the characters be willing to do for a laugh, or ratings, or both?

I am completely aware that broadcast television, by and large, does not see me or people like me as its target audience. Multimillion-dollar advertising campaigns are not aimed at my discretionary dollars, although I too purchase shampoo, Pepsi\textsuperscript{r}, and Tylenol\textsuperscript{r}. If black people relied on televised advertisements, we would be eating three meals a day from McDonald’s\textsuperscript{r} and Burger King\textsuperscript{r}, and drinking Sprite\textsuperscript{r} and malt liquor. Broadcast media advertising for other groups is almost nonexistent, with the exception of the Taco Bell\textsuperscript{r} advertising blitz loosely depicting an Eva Perón-like character with her adoring masses as a small, aggressive.

Diversity in Conflict

Is this the way the public views the population that by the turn of the century will be the dominant culture?

Conflict in Higher Education

Diversity and race in higher education and librarianship are handled surprisingly similarly to the entertainment and sports industries. They exist on the fringes, often as added agenda or strategic planning items (and then only because they are added at the insistence of one or two staff members or a concerned administrator). Issues relating to diversity are seldom thought out well in advance, nor is the larger picture often considered. Diversity and race are not insular and should not be addressed as such. Being a black woman is who I am. It is indigenous and intrinsic and cannot be separated or divided. I am not an advocate of the color-blind society, and so, to deal with a librarian who is a person of color, is to deal with an individual who happens to bring some color to the overall experience. Figuratively speaking.

It is no secret that higher education has long been divided on issues of race, ethnicity, and affirmative action, and now proponents appear to be losing the legal battle as well. Conversely, a recent national survey by the Center for Living Democracy reported that “schools and universities ranked third behind religious groups and community-based non-profits in fostering healthy racial dialogues."

If the recent successful attacks on minority scholarships in favor of white students, dismantling of affirmative action and race-based scholarships, and nationwide campus hate—speech codes are any indication, the results of the center’s survey may not be representative of the true racial climate.

A recent article in *The New Yorker* notes that former proponents of California’s Proposition 209, as a result of rapidly decreasing admissions numbers, are having second thoughts about opposing affirmative action. Author Jeffrey Rosen quotes a brief filed in the Supreme Court case of *Piscataway Township Bd. of Educ. v. Taxman*, 91 F.3d 1547 (3d Cir. 1996), *cert. dismissed*, 118 S.Ct. 595 (1997), where three University of Texas professors argued that:

If affirmative action is ended, inevitable political, economic, and legal forces will pressure the great public universities to lower admissions standards as far as necessary to avoid resegregation. . . . Barring a miraculous improvement in elementary and secondary education for minority students, color-blind admissions will soon produce either public

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universities without competitive admissions, public universities without adequate funds, or both. Either way, the end of affirmative action is a formula for the destruction of the great public universities.41

Rosen notes that the impact of Proposition 209 on the University of California seems to confirm the fears of these professors. He concludes by quoting a former 209 proponent:

Whether you're a liberal or a conservative on this issue, in some ways I'm sorry that affirmative action ended. ... Once you start telling people that merit doesn't matter when they're at the formative stages of their careers, I think you do long and lasting damage to America. ... I don't think people outside California realize it, but that's the next big fight, and it's going on right now.42

With fewer outwardly positive instances of diversity or integration either nationwide or in the media and entertainment industries, the onus of bringing the concepts of inclusiveness and equality into higher education has fallen on a smaller percentage of the population who are rightly concerned that they may be writing for and preaching to the converted. There appears to be no unity in combating the trend toward deregulation of affirmative action programs and race-based quotas. Where is the evidence to support claims that playing fields are now level and affirmative action and race-based quotas are no longer necessary? And what of white women? Have they made such gains in the workplace that they no longer need to empathize with the plight of those deemed less fortunate simply by virtue of birth (race)? Can they now be taken off the "Endangered List" that is the list of the federally protected classes? Where is the loyalty in the struggle? Who has whose back? Who cares about the cause of oppression in the aggregate? This generally bleak outlook is also apparent in the profession of librarianship. The most recent statistics available seem to support this line of questioning.43 And what of the gays and lesbians and their uphill fight since and before Stonewall in 1969, institutional racism, sexism, ableism, and ageism against the young and the old? Who, if any of us, are committed to them all? Are we all in it for ourselves? Is there any way to go but separately?

The idea of diversity in conflict is not new and will continue to be a problem nationally and in higher education. In the academy, efforts aimed at providing a more diverse work force and the recruitment and retention of more students, faculty, and staff of color are faltering. It is no longer a goal to act affirmatively. Proposition 209 and other civil rights initiatives, the need for campus hate-speech codes (no matter how ineffective they prove to be), Amendment 2, recent attacks on multiculturalism and bilingual education, and a general atmosphere of hate mongering—these are creating havoc in higher education nationwide.

41.  Id. at 68.
42.  Id.
43.  See Deborah Hollis, Affirmative Action or Increased Competition: A Look at Women and Minority Library Deans, J. LIBR. ADMIN. (forthcoming 1998).
Diversity in Librarianship

In academic librarianship, the need for the struggle is starkly apparent. Inclusive diversity initiatives are few and limited, most not even in existence for more than a few years, with fewer in control of long-term funding. A recent review of national diversity initiatives concluded that there is still much to be done.  

The American Library Association was founded more than 125 years ago, ostensibly as a national library association. However, at that time, race was much more volatile and there was not much of a concerted effort to combat the mostly negative fallout. The subsequent organization of ethnic caucuses and associations was necessary to address such issues as recruitment and retention, collection development, and basic library services. Later, there was a need to develop similar associations for the disabled, gays, and women. The concept of diversity appears to be evolving to encompass all things not mainstream. But is this beneficial? And if so, for whom?

Statistics show that white women have increased their status within librarianship, but what about women of color? And where do white lesbians fit in? Have they made similar gains? Are blacks, Latinos/Hispanics, Asian Americans, and native Americans on the same level in diversity talks? Are gays and lesbians at the table or are they at the card table in the corner?

Can the concept of diversity equally represent all of these constituencies when they are not all equal? Who can offer logical national arguments when discussions of black American slavery and the Holocaust occur? Who suffered more, and who is measuring from what perspective? The questions are endless with no easy non-partisan answers in sight.

Unfortunately, the state of diversity in librarianship is very similar to that of the nation as a whole and to the higher education arena in particular. Diversity appears to be exclusive and inclusive, and this view is rarely a successful one on any level. If librarianship is to realize the gains and successes attained through affirmative action and civil rights legislation as well as the pro-active stance of ethnic caucuses and dedicated supporters, the time is now. Not much new can be written and read. Someone has to be responsible and take the first step to begin the healing and growth.

Strategies for Change

Much has been written in the general, education, and library science literature about diversity and how it can be achieved. Below are a few suggestions that stem from everyday common courtesies and "Golden Rule"-like living.

45. See Hollis, supra note 43.
46. See generally Neely, supra note 39 (discussing in detail the issue of diversity as divergent as it relates to black librarianship and librarianship in general).
1. What's \textit{wrong} with diversity?—There are many who balk at the sound of the word. They want no part of it or anything like it. I ask, what's \textit{wrong} with it? The answer may lie in the fact that diversity discussions require more than surface attention. If there were no special journal issues or special diversity conferences, diversity probably would not make it to the discussion table. As it stands in librarianship, diversity is little more than a fringe activity, something to be engaged in because it is the right thing to do. If it was not on the fringe, it would be neglected altogether.

As a woman of color I live inside my comfort zone and am comfortable discussing all issues that fall within that realm; however, in the case of diversity, most individuals have to step outside of their comfort zones and discuss or listen to issues that make them uncomfortable. They must deal with their own personal demons—racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, and homophobia—items that are, by nature, intimate and personal. Therein lies the source of the discomfort. People are, by nature, civil and polite. It is virtually impossible to have a meaningful and substantive discussion about issues of diversity by being polite. If the subject did not carry personal connotations for so many of us, it would be included more easily—and frequently—in general discussions and would be a less volatile issue. Until the general discussion of diversity becomes more palatable, there will continue to be a need for special conferences and special journal issues.

2. Diversity is as American as \textit{apple pie}.—It is difficult to address diversity if it is constantly viewed \textit{in addition} to your everyday life. Recognize the diversity in all parts of your life, professional and personal. Differences usually don't begin when you step outside of your safe world.

3. Be \textit{professional}.—Many of us forget to behave as the professionals we profess to be. It is not appropriate to repeat assumptions or hearsay as fact, especially in mixed company. If you don't have anything good—or accurate—to say, then it is probably best if you don't say or do anything. When in doubt, ask.

4. Don't believe the hype.—Movies, broadcast and print news, and the pictures from the almighty television box will come and go. Use common sense and your best judgment and gather credible, factual information to answer questions or concerns.

Librarians are by nature an opinionated bunch and are almost never at a loss for words to describe their views, however controversial or dissenting. It is time to take a stand and stop dancing around the issues. Wolf asks:

Why does an apology [for slavery] matter? ... These [things] matter because without them, both sides remain stuck.... Apologies between groups matter for the same reason they matter between individuals in intimate relationships: They keep the relationship healthy. The recent wave of international apologies speaks to the power of this fact .... apologies reflect the value assigned to a given relationship.

In a bad marriage, every little friction symbolizes the larger sense of being held in contempt or feeling betrayed.... In a good marriage, a fight, no matter how bad it gets, is just a fight.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{47} Wolf, \textit{supra} note 14, at 47.
Wolf’s words, although in reference to apologies for slavery, should not be taken lightly. This cannot and never will be a color-blind society, not nationally, not in higher education, and not in librarianship. If we as librarians approach the diversity discussion and the profession of librarianship with common sense and real life practicality, we might just begin to see some real progress. Let’s put our best efforts forward and make this marriage within the profession work.