



**Victoria Capatosto &
Ian Reinl**
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A Social Justice Guide Collaboration

Howard University School of Law's (HUSL's) [mission](#), history, and current legal work are a testament to its commitment to social justice, and the [law library](#) fundamentally supports the work of the law school. The act of providing access to legal scholarship for students and faculty is never a neutral enterprise as knowledge and information increasingly become power. The violent killing of George Floyd in late May and the protests that followed reignited national and global interest concerning the systemic racism and injustice found in the United States. It was clear that promoting resources and scholarship addressing these issues was needed, and we had a responsibility to respond.

People often look to libraries to provide access to relevant, meaningful, and authoritative information. The beauty of law librarianship, especially at a social justice-focused law school, is the emphasis on sharing information with people that will one day work to make our society more just, and fair. Additionally, the HUSL Library is a Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) institution that shares information with the general public who often look to us for resources to meet their own legal needs. We felt that the creation of our [Social Justice Guide](#) could be one way to further the conversation around the everyday injustices experienced by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) in the United States.

This project was initially conceived as a collaboration between the Southeastern Chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries (SEAALL) and the HUSL Library. It focused on five topics: (1) racial disparity; (2) racial diversity; (3) implicit bias and microaggression; (4) cultural sensitivity; and (5) protests. Two of HUSL Library's remote public services library and information science (LIS) graduate student interns worked to compile resources for this collection under the guidance of the law librarians from SEAALL and HUSL. This pooling of team members across institutions allowed for interaction between different communities and the sharing of individual strengths and perspectives, plus it resulted in a more meaningful learning experience for the LIS graduate student interns. Whereas librarians brought expertise and savvy in the evaluation and organization of information, graduate students offered their time, energy, and enthusiasm, honing important skills along the way.

HUSL Library's experience collaborating on the SEAALL project was fruitful. We learned a great deal from Richelle Reid and Shamika Dalton, helped fill an information need for our regional association, and created an impeccable work product that laid the foundation for our own guide. SEAALL supported our request to build upon this collaboration to bring these resources to the public as a HUSL Library guide.

Legal scholarship around these topics may inspire law students, faculty, and laypeople alike to learn more and engage deeper with the work of antiracism and protest. Boosting the work of BIPOC communities was an important aspect of this project from inception that we were determined to develop further on HUSL Library's version of the guide. To that end, we focused on showcasing the expertise and output of HUSL's faculty concerning these crucial issues. By including publications produced by HUSL faculty across the years that touched on any of the five topic areas, we highlighted HUSL's unique contributions and promoted the work of diverse scholars.

We see this project as worthwhile for the HUSL community as well as the public. At HUSL Library, internally, its ongoing development is hugely valuable, allowing librarians and interns time for investigating these issues and researching our faculty's deep knowledge base. One unforeseen outgrowth of this project was that it sparked discussion in library staff meetings that led to the creation of a monthly meeting series on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

We plan to continue to develop this guide and add subject areas over time. We hope that the AALL membership finds this resource valuable. We welcome feedback and ideas for enhancement at reference@law.howard.edu.

Victoria Capatosto, Research and Instruction Librarian, Howard University School of Law Library; and Ian Reinl, Summer 2020 Remote Public Services LIS Graduate Student Intern.

About AALL New Voices: AALL welcomes members to share their reflections on any component of law librarianship!

If you would like to participate, please send your submission of about 100-600 words to Megan Mall, AALL's director of content strategy, with "AALL New Voices" in the subject line.