



**Student Trauma Experiences, Library Instruction, and
Existence Under the 45th**

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3 **Working Title:** Student Trauma Experiences, Library Instruction, and Existence Under the 45th
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7 **Structured Abstract**
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9 *Purpose*

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11 By historicizing the broader system of education contextualized under the 45th presidential
12 administration, this paper aims to provide a nuanced discussion regarding the condition of
13 information literacy and librarianship as capitalist institutions in service to the state. In response,
14 tools to oppose systemic racism and minimize harm in the classroom as well as
15 recommendations for change and resistance are addressed.
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22 *Design/methodology/approach*

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24 The paper focuses on historical analysis of libraries as institutions within larger educational
25 systems and draws heavily on critical theories as a method of critique.
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28 *Findings*

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30 This paper demonstrates that the 45th presidential administration is a logical progression of
31 neoliberalism and institutionalized discrimination, which has had adverse effects on the health
32 and safety of (primarily marginalized) students, library workers, and library practice, but that
33 critical reflection and information seeking on part of librarians may provide solutions.
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39 *Practical implications*

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41 This paper can be used as a guide for librarians seeking to contextualize the educational
42 environment and apply a critical praxis to information literacy programs.
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45 *Social implications*

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47 The reflection presented in this paper can aid in expanding awareness in LIS surrounding
48 issues of equity and justice, and impart urgency and need for institutional change.
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51 *Originality/value*

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53 Given the lack of diversity in Library and Information Science, this paper provides critical
54 interventions for information literacy practice. The authors' unique practical and theoretical
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3 backgrounds allow for nuanced discussion and pedagogical creation which directly impacts and
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5 addresses key issues of justice and equity in the classroom.
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9 **Keywords:** Libraries, Social Justice, Pedagogy, Critical Theory, Equity, Neoliberalism,
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11 Information Literacy, diversity, inclusion, trauma-informed pedagogies
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13 **Article Classification:** Conceptual Paper
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Introduction

In November 2016, Donald J. Trump was elected as the 45th president of the United States. While reactions to the election results were polarized and diverse, opponents to his candidacy exhibited widespread shock and interpreted the results as unprecedented and even undemocratic. For many, his election seemed to reaffirm white, heterosexual, Christian, male privilege, while simultaneously shattering the illusion of living in a progressive post-racial society following the presidency of Barack Obama. Suddenly, the election of the 45th president was met with reports of declining mental health coined by clinical psychologists as “Trump anxiety disorder” (Keller, 2019; Kwong, 2018). More concerning, but not surprising, a growing body of research now shows a strong correlation between the event and aftermath of the 2016 election and declining mental health and safety of (especially marginalized) student populations (Hagan et al., 2018; Mette and Bertolini, 2018; Umaña-Taylor, 2016).

A growing body of literature focuses on the detrimental effects of the election and the administration's subsequent policy decisions on mental health, however, it's equally important to critically examine the underlying and systemic causes for the event. Doing so will aid us in understanding why and how we arrived at this culturally situated moment in order to determine the path forward. Examining public response (especially media) to the election offers deep insight into the socio-historical context that led to the 2016 election, but also offers an alternative view of the election results. Rather than understanding the 2016 election as a back-slide or failure of democracy, we might consider instead that the results point toward a logical success under a system of government founded upon racism and colonialism (Feagin and Ducey, 2019), and that the shock as communicated through media represents a continued obliviousness by privileged white liberals to systematic injustice and white supremacy, as obscured by shallow diversity rhetoric, including in higher education.

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3 This alternative perspective is important to our understanding of the effects of the 45th president
4 not as anomalous, but rather a logical progression of a system that has been and continues to
5 be deeply and structurally racist. Furthermore, it illustrates that it's not enough to continue on a
6 path of shallow resistance through domesticated and institutionalized diversity rhetoric. Instead,
7 to address the symptoms of the 2016 election and the impact on the mental health of students,
8 we must directly attack the root cause and call "for the dismantling of the colonial institutions
9 and power relations through which race is (re)produced," especially with LIS information literacy
10 practice (Rosa and Bonilla, 2017, p. 202).
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22 Because this article discusses trauma informed pedagogies and critical interventions within
23 libraries and library instruction, the authors believe that this work cannot be accomplished
24 without first interrogating systemic injustices and the school's role in traumatizing students. To
25 do this, library workers must first and foremost perform the intellectual labor of theorizing on
26 injustice and trauma to understand the deeper meaning, impact, and origin. "Once we expand
27 our understanding of trauma...we can see how unexamined—or even well-intentioned—policies
28 [and practices] can do real harm to students struggling with the trauma of managing systemic
29 injustices." (Gaffney, 2019)
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41 **Global Context- Social, Political, Economic**

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43 To begin, we must situate the academy as a whole within the appropriate global context under
44 which college administrators function to develop policies and practices which in turn impact
45 student health and success. As a cited source of anxiety, depression, and declining mental
46 health, we will begin with impacts of the most recent presidential election on well-being of
47 university students (Hagan et al., 2018).
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3 The 2016 election exists against the backdrop of worsening economic inequality, intensified
4 political partisanship, rapidly changing ethno-racial demography, global trends towards
5 nationalist populism, and other neoliberal economic and political projects that have been “taking
6 shape since the early 1970s and has accelerated with the end of the Cold War and the
7 development of digital communication technologies” (Gusterson, 2017, p. 210). For the
8 purposes of this paper, neoliberalism is defined as an economic and political philosophy that
9 values privatization of public services, deregulation of industry, and reduced government
10 spending. Within this context, libraries are affected in a variety of ways. As public institutions
11 under neoliberalism, library funding is routinely threatened and libraries are forced to provide
12 “measurable data” and demonstrate worth or risk loss of funding. Libraries are also pushed to
13 innovate or support entrepreneurialism and to do so through competition for limited funding and
14 competitive ranking (suspiciously similar to market capitalism).
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30 The Trump presidency is a symptom of decades of unexamined neoliberal capitalist control, or
31 in other words, a form of global capitalism that emphasizes privatization of wealth over public or
32 common good. “In short, neo-liberalism subordinates all control of our civic spaces, from local
33 governments to universities, to the interests of market-driven models of efficiencies and profit-
34 taking under the false nostrums of the markets’ inherent ability to sort through any problem no
35 matter how thorny and thereby provide a privatized (e.g. profitable) way to
36 a better world or outcome” (McDonald, 2017).
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47 We see evidence of neoliberalism through hyper-financialization (rapid and unchecked increase
48 of market size and influence) of the economy, corporatization of educational systems, dramatic
49 increases in globalization and exploitation of labor in the global south, forced austerity
50 measures, loosening of food and drug regulations, increases in economic/climate migrants and
51 refugees, and ever-deepening social and economic inequality (Harvey, 2011). In turn, these
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3 incursions into the social, political, and economic realm engender a discourse and language
4 preoccupied with commercialism and profit where “individual and social agency are defined
5 largely through market-driven notions of individualism, competition, and consumption” (Giroux,
6 2002, p. 426) and individuals (or in this case students) commodified and reduced to a “brand”.

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14 Based on this reality, there is no single or simple narrative that can adequately explain or offer
15 interventions for the Trump presidency. Rather, the global context in which it occurred is a
16 complex and complicated amalgamation of political, social, and cultural events and ideologies
17 spanning decades. Framing these issues within librarianship, the most important takeaway is
18 that these events, policies, and social shifts that set the stage for the 2016 election
19 predominantly affected, and often intentionally targeted groups of particular race, class, gender,
20 ability, and ethnicity (Hall and Lamont, 2013).

30 31 **Institutional Context - Higher Education**

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33 As a pervasive and institutionalized ideology, global neoliberalism has similarly infected the
34 (particularly Western) educational system in complex and profound ways (Giroux, 2002;
35 McDonald, 2017; Saunders, 2010). To define and justify their existence under discourses of
36 “new public management” during the 1980s and 1990s, educational institutions (and libraries by
37 association) began stressing performance measures and metrics as valuation and proof of
38 teaching effectiveness (Olssen and Peters, 2005). Simultaneously, private interests begin
39 colonizing the public institution of education under what scholars refer to as corporatization,
40 under which information becomes commodified (Lawson et al., 2015). This new corporate
41 culture status quo of academia is an “ensemble of ideological and institutional forces that
42 functions politically and pedagogically both to govern organizational life through senior
43 managerial control and to fashion compliant workers, depoliticized consumers, and passive
44 citizens” (Giroux, 2002, p. 429). Similarly, libraries also often tend towards embracing corporate

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3 jargon and practice as a function of existing as an appendage of academia. Therefore, as LIS
4 practitioners it's important to reflect upon how uncritical adoption of language, policy, and
5 practice—including assessment and standard information literacy lecture models—not only
6 reproduces systemic injustices that actively harm and discriminate against students, but also
7 validates the underlying ideologies of white supremacy.
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15 Like neoliberal ideology contemporarily, higher education has historically been influenced by
16 enlightenment ideologies of the 1700s. Enlightenment ideology—which champions humanism
17 and virtues of reason, rationality, empiricism, and positivism—emphasized democratic
18 transformation of a society through individual liberty and education. While on the surface
19 enlightenment ideologies seem to provide a positive foundation for libraries as “democratic”
20 institutions for public good, such rational scientific thinking has also created problematic
21 paradigms which LIS. Borrowing from enlightenment interpretations of texts from the Han
22 Dynasty, since the 18th century educational institutions have embraced the practice of
23 meritocracy. In the United States, this system was proposed by Thomas Jefferson and John
24 Adams under what they referred to as a “natural aristocracy,” eventually morphing into a system
25 of “institutional merit” which is “concerned not with questions of character but with the
26 acquisition of specialized knowledge — the knowledge that could be taught in schools, tested in
27 written examinations, and certified by expert-staffed credentialing bodies” (McClay, 2017 para.
28 6). Meritocracy can manifest through standardized testing, gatekeeping entrance into
29 professions by requiring an expensive degree when on the job training would suffice, scandals
30 involving celebrities buying their children's entry into college, legacy admissions, and more.
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51 Combined with the current neoliberal reality as marked by economic inequality and
52 hyperconsumerism (i.e. significant pressure to perpetually consume superfluous goods),
53 rampant meritocracy has transformed higher education into academic capitalism, under which
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3 education is corporatized and knowledge is commodified and treated as venture capital
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5 (Saunders, 2011, 2015). This in turn results in treating and viewing students as customers,
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7 rather than learners. The consequences of meritocracy as applied to librarianship are serious
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9 and far reaching and impact everything from the demographic composition of the library
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11 profession (Chang, 2013), to prescriptive information literacy (Hicks and Lloyd, 2016; Swanson,
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13 2004), to basic policies and front desk services (Berman, 2001; Sung and Tolppanen, 2013).
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15 Meritocracy overwhelmingly favors those possessing power and privilege and naturalizes
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17 rhetoric of exceptionalism and individualism, and therefore, upholds and reaffirms white
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19 supremacy (Smith, 2017).
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24 **Local Context- Libraries**

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26 To understand and examine the historical implications and impact of the 2016 election and 45th
27
28 presidential administration on students, library workers must critically examine the library
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30 institution itself as one that is part of the system of education (the academy). Simultaneously, it's
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32 important to situate the library within the broader ideological, economic, and political issues that
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34 have shaped it. Questioning the unexamined ideologies and role libraries perform in the broad
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36 socio-political landscape discussed above which produced Trump is suggested. Exploring how
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38 that has manifested in LIS practice is also suggested.
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44 In addition to neoliberalism and its varying impacts, another part of the larger landscape that
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46 researchers have pinpointed as key to the 2016 election is the persistent post-racial fantasy of
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48 American politics (Bobo, 2017). In other words, post-racial ideology/fantasy is the idea that a
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50 society has moved beyond the concept of race, and that people no longer experience
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52 discrimination on the basis of race. When this idea is consistently touted within American
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54 politics, predominantly white politicians (and by extension the people and institutions they
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56 "represent") may begin to believe that because racial discrimination is a thing of the past, they
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3 as individuals cannot “see color” and therefore do not discriminate. As a result, institutions may
4 appear anti-racist and progressive through the lens of post-racial fantasy, but in reality are
5 invested only in diversity and inclusion initiatives to maintain appearance and desirability just
6 enough to attract “customers,” leaving the underlying structure itself unexamined and
7 unchanged (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Racialized bodies (or bodies that are ascribed a racial identity
8 by others/institutions for a particular use or purpose) become commodified and quantified within
9 educational and corporate discourse, “disconnected from context, language and social
10 identity...available for use in institutional promotion and branding” (Urciuoli, 2016, p. 30). Thus,
11 the 2016 election shock and reaction illustrates that inclusion-oriented and body-based diversity
12 projects have likely functioned to assuage white guilt and obscure the colonial history of higher
13 education (Rosa and Bonilla, 2017). Placing the 45th president in context, his election in
14 proximity to the first US president of color shows that diversification rhetoric, rather than
15 promoting equality, is in actuality a tool of colonialism. This rhetoric reproduces power by
16 inadvertently legitimizing and simultaneously making invisible the underlying institutional
17 structure through the myth of a post-racial ideology. The library is no exception to this trend and
18 is complicit in engaging in diversity projects for optics.

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39 Given this context and that of neoliberal capitalism, we should consider how libraries reflect and
40 manifest post-racial ideological thinking systematically and institutionally. As situated within
41 higher education, libraries reproduce those same if not similar systems of institutionalized
42 discrimination. In regards to post-racial ideologies, through diversity initiatives and rhetoric LIS
43 has not only perpetuated but leaned into racial capitalism by endorsing diversity and inclusion
44 over decolonization (Edwards, 2015). This is evidenced through persistent whiteness of LIS
45 (Davis and Hall, 2007; Vinopal, 2016), poor retention rates of librarians of color (Neely and
46 Peterson, 2007), ongoing issues of cultural hostility and microaggression (Alabi, 2015a, 2015b),
47 and more. If LIS is unable to “solve the issue” of diversity within its own institution, it is unwise
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3 and even concerning to expect the same predominantly white profession to serve diverse
4 student populations without critical reflection or negative consequences. This is doubly true of
5 working with students at-risk under the Trump administration.
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11 Understanding the history and ideological underpinnings leading up to the election of Donald
12 Trump is crucial to understanding students as situated within context of their local and social
13 environment and realities. Observing and engaging with the lived realities of students and their
14 environments as couched in historicity will aid in developing a well-informed, critically conscious
15 library practice. As discussed later, not completing this theoretical and foundational work can
16 have disproportionately devastating consequences and very likely re-traumatize students.
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26 **Student Context**

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28 Although stress among college students has been well-documented in popular and academic
29 literature, recent (and historic) neoliberal trends paint a much grimmer portrait of the causes and
30 future trajectory of the mental health crisis (Sweet, 2018). Rapidly rising suicide rates among
31 millennials (Ducharme, 2019; Network, 2019), link to significant associations between minority
32 stress and severe negative mental health (Gonzalez et al., 2018), and steadily declining self-
33 reported emotional health of incoming college students are not a spontaneous contemporary
34 phenomenon which exists in a vacuum. Instead, these issues present as symptoms of lived
35 reality under late-stage capitalism (Prins et al., 2015) combined with unique stressors under the
36 45th presidency (Burnett-Zeigler, 2016; Drabble et al., 2018; Vega, 2018; Wray-Lake et al.,
37 2018). Understanding the implications of neoliberalism, corporatization, and post-racial ideology
38 on students contextually (and as influenced by historical factors which contributed to the Trump
39 presidency) is key work towards the development of minimizing harm in the classroom and
40 developing critically-informed pedagogy.
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3 While research has suggested that suicide and poor mental health rates are affected by
4 socioeconomic status, economic opportunity, race and ethnicity, sexual and gender identity,
5 citizenship status, and more (Compton et al., 2015), these issues are only exacerbated by the
6 current social, economic, and political environment and deterioration of public programs in lieu
7 of privatization, both locally under US government administrations and globally amidst rising
8 nationalism (De Vogli, 2011; McGregor, 2001). Millennials and Generation Z were born and
9 raised during a unique period of neoliberal capitalism, which has had deep consequences on
10 their mental and physical health and development as exacerbated through intersections of
11 identity as well as their positionalities as learners in the classroom (Kirmer, 2013; Saunders,
12 2010). Both came of age during a shift/crisis in the medical profession towards privatization and
13 resultant opioid epidemic, global economic recession, collapse of the housing industry,
14 persistent wage stagnation and meager-post recession earnings, unprecedented educational
15 debt, actual and conceptual wars (the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, post-9/11 war on terrorism,
16 war on drugs, etc.), schoolyard violence, the environmental crisis and impacts of global
17 warming, explosive rise of the internet and digital communication technologies, Google, social
18 media, and more. While many of these were set in motion as a result of neoliberal reforms of
19 the 70s and 80s, these culminating factors contribute to the classroom experiences and
20 information gathering skills of students.
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43 Students of color, students with disabilities, queer students, economically precarious students,
44 undocumented students, indigenous students, and all students from historically oppressed and
45 marginalized identities (Merrick et al., 2018) often face disproportionate discrimination (Hope et
46 al., 2015; Museus et al., 2016) and potential hardship both in their daily lives and within the
47 classroom. This discrimination may manifest through discriminatory policymaking (Acosta, 2013;
48 Giroux and Schmidt, 2004; Tamura, 2008), microaggressions (Boysen, 2012; Franklin, 2016;
49 Sue et al., 2018), dehumanizing rhetoric (Dolmage, 2017; Reyna, 2000), and more. Lived
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3 realities under constant threat cause fatigue and heightened sensitivity and awareness of their
4 environment (Gaffney, 2019), which includes the library classroom. Therefore, without fully
5 considering the lived realities of students and the holistic impacts of experience, especially
6 under a hostile presidential administration, library workers may very well trigger or deepen
7 trauma experienced by students.
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13 14 15 **Professional Context**

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17 Within the new landscape of higher education and libraries both in the 21st century and as
18 situated under the 45th presidential administration, library workers face a myriad of issues that
19 profoundly affect our philosophical and physical labor. Under the neoliberal regime of higher
20 education, library work has grown increasingly precarious; continuing appointment or full-time
21 work is becoming rare or difficult to come by, replaced by part-time, contract, and adjunct work
22 (Brons et al., 2018; Gregory and Higgins, 2018). Furthermore, to even get to the point of
23 employability on a “professional” level (read: librarian), individuals are asked to accrue
24 significant debt through attainment of the Masters of Library and Information Science (versus on
25 job the training) and perform extensive underpaid or unpaid labor through staff positions,
26 compulsory internships, volunteer work, and other invisible labor (Hathcock, 2015; Nicholson,
27 2016). Once in a library position (professional or otherwise), profession demographics,
28 unexamined privilege and bias, and more form a political and ideological gauntlet at both local
29 and national levels (Honma, 2005). Navigating this while also coping with overburdened
30 workloads and disproportionate emotional labor very often lead to disenchantment, burnout, and
31 psychological distress (Ettarh, 2018; Sloniowski, 2016). Taken together, these issues reflect
32 how the landscape and practice of librarianship has been transformed by capitalist
33 neoliberalism, meritocracy, corporatization, and post-racial ideology. It is under this internal
34 context that we are creating and disseminating information literacy sessions to students, which
35 undoubtedly affects students in a deep and unseen way.
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5 The role of librarians and educators is not solely limited to the tangible ways that we address
6 impacts of misinformation/disinformation in instruction sessions and provide outreach and
7 support for student groups. In fact, without deep reflection into the institutional reality of
8 librarianship paired with culturally-situated lives of students and knowledge of social justice,
9 well-meaning information literacy sessions seeking to help students assess online information
10 and develop critically reflective practice may in actuality inadvertently trigger or deepen trauma
11 experienced by students with marginalized and intersecting identities, especially as
12 compounded by a lack of diverse representation in the field (Stewart et al., 2014).
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24 It is crucial for librarians teaching under the 45th presidential administration (and continuing
25 indefinitely into the future) to be affective, critically self-reflective, and rooted in critical
26 pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is a philosophical approach to teaching based primarily in critical
27 theories such as critical race theory, feminism, critical disability theory, and more. The goal of
28 critical pedagogy is to emancipate learners from oppression through the development of critical
29 consciousness, but also to encourage individuals towards creating meaningful and progressive
30 social and political change (Freire, 2000).
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41 Key to the role of librarians under the current administration is to also remain cognizant of
42 neoliberal exploitation of (gendered) emotional labor and trying to not perform tasks in service of
43 these ideologies. This paper isn't arguing that libraries should be a safe space where difficult
44 discussions don't occur. On the contrary, we ask that libraries dig deeper into the work of
45 developing personal critical information literacy and self-reflection and move beyond diversity
46 rhetoric and surface-level intervention. The paper is instead asking librarians and educators to
47 deeply consider and acknowledge positionality when leading or facilitating discussions that may
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3 be sensitive and complex. This is especially important if the librarian is part of any privileged or
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5 dominant group.
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9 Critical self-reflection and honest assessment should be embedded into librarians' everyday
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11 practice. Because no identity is monolithic, and all people have a variety of intersecting
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13 identities, constantly challenging ourselves to intentionally consider and educate ourselves first
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15 on identities we don't possess is key. Furthermore, we must then commit to centering identities
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17 that suffer disproportionate discrimination in our practice and development will invariably affect
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19 our practice. Librarians should branch out from the library literature and familiarize ourselves
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21 with social justice literature, theory, and critical practice/praxis, both personally, but also
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23 professionally and within the MLIS programs. Furthermore, we should start to critically evaluate
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25 our complicity in academic capitalism and strongly consider active resistance to neoliberal and
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27 corporate tendencies within the workplace (i.e. assessment, learning outcomes, strategic
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29 planning, etc.) as they represent a system that actively harms both our philosophical practice as
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31 well as student well-being (Gaffney, 2019).
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37 **Why should we change?**

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39 Hopefully the discussion above illustrates that regardless of best intentions, libraries are
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41 institutions within a much greater system and history of oppression and discrimination. If we as
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43 librarians truly and honestly want to position libraries as spaces of healing and challenge
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45 oppressive structures, there is much work and self-reflection to be done. To answer the
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47 question posed above, we should change because current information literacy practice is very
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49 likely actively traumatizing and hurting our students, and because it is not only just, but also
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51 certainly attainable. If libraries claim to be benevolent, emancipatory institutions, but not
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53 providing critically reflective or trauma-informed services, then we aren't doing what we say
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55 we're doing.
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5 When our general education classes come to our library workshops, in order to remain
6 engaging to students many librarians try to keep searches and assignments topical and
7 relatable. Furthermore, because of a broader acknowledgement embedded within the ACRL
8 Framework to integrate social justice topics and critical literacy, instruction librarians may be
9 tempted to utilize topics such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), police and government surveillance,
10 or assignments that require research into a topical opposing viewpoint. Many of these sources,
11 both provided by the library instructor and discovered by students, often discuss gender, race,
12 the exploitation of black and brown bodies, police violence, objectification, and other heavy
13 topics. Additionally, if working with a PowerPoint or conducting live searches, it's critical to
14 consider that the images that we present to our students are not alienating them, tokenizing
15 their experiences, or otherwise doing harm for the sake of topical relevance.
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30 Through this model, students are introduced to new, complex concepts and given minimal time
31 to deeply engage with sources and share with their partner or group and share out. Given time
32 constraints of the one-shot, we often jump from one group to the next to cover everything
33 required for the workshop, leaving little time to process or critically reflect not only on the
34 information, but the information seeking process and how the process in itself relates to power
35 and privilege. Although we are sometimes able to check-in with students while roaming and
36 observing their work, the last portion of a typical one-shot information literacy workshop is a
37 flurry of activities; students are sharing out, filling out a workshop survey, and listening to
38 professors' announcements regarding (related or unrelated) upcoming assignments. This sends
39 the message that performance metrics and assignment completion (i.e. production of goods) is
40 more valuable than the process of education, and illustrates that the consequences of
41 corporatization and neoliberalism is greatly affecting library instruction practice by framing the
42 student as passive and compliant.
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5 Throughout one of the authors' career, several colleagues have approached them following
6 workshop sessions to share that they felt uncomfortable or unprepared to present difficult
7 content in class, disagreed with professors, or felt the students of color were uncomfortable with
8 the content. Being one of very few librarians of color in the library workplace, the
9 disproportionate emotional labor of navigating well-meaning conversations ultimately driven by
10 white guilt and fragility can be exhausting at best. This emotional labor by librarians of color
11 outside of the classroom creates an environment where it becomes difficult to safely balance
12 affective work within the classroom without risk of burnout.
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24 Though rates vary depending on the definition of trauma used, findings consistently show that
25 more than half of incoming freshmen have been exposed to potentially traumatic events (Boyras
26 and Granda, 2019; Carello and Butler, 2015; Read et al., 2011). While the literature is clear that
27 a minority of these students develop PTSD, it is equally true that post-traumatic stress can still
28 occur without it becoming PTSD, and this is a significant contributor to difficulty adjusting to
29 college (Boyras et al., 2016; Boyras and Granda, 2019). These issues become amplified when
30 considering the decreasing number of school library services or complete lack of school libraries
31 and librarians (particularly in low-income neighborhoods) coupled with freshmen library anxiety.
32 If the objective of information literacy is to impart critical literacy skills and confidence, why
33 would we bring the painful realities of police brutality and racial inequities into the classroom
34 without providing the space and time for nuanced discussion and processing?
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50 In analyzing approaches to trauma narratives across nonclinical disciplines, Carello and Butler
51 discuss the level of emotional safety vital to learning and propose a trauma-informed
52 educational pedagogy (2014). This is especially applicable to library workshops where we don't
53 have the necessary time to build rapport and process potentially traumatic or retraumatizing
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3 content. If we want to maintain emotional and psychological safety for our students in the
4
5 interest of learning, at the very least we can be trauma-aware.
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8 9 **What we can change**

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11 First and foremost, we have the power to change ourselves through education, and through that
12
13 our approach, pedagogy, and expectations. The information landscape has undergone radical
14
15 transformations. This is a world in which information behavior is ruled by emotional responses
16
17 rather than logic, fact, or truth (Cooke, 2017). In acknowledging the affective domain of
18
19 information behavior and the climate in which our students exist, we open the opportunity for
20
21 addressing the impact and effect of information literacy. As critical as these skills are, many of
22
23 us only interface with students during one-shots or two sessions with our freshmen researchers,
24
25 where we don't have the benefit of established rapport with students, classroom management,
26
27 or repeat exposure.
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32 What we do have is authority and agency. At the helm of the classroom, we are in a relative
33
34 position of authority and in control of the structure of the class. Even if we choose to reject the
35
36 *sage on the stage* role, we still are in the position of imposing queries on students, and this
37
38 gives us great freedom, but also significant responsibility. If done thoughtfully, we can use this
39
40 to increase our focus on being intentional and critical. We need to address information behavior
41
42 as it's being presented and we need to be just as intentional and critical with our decisions in
43
44 source evaluation. Addressing metacognition can help us set the scene for learning and bring
45
46 everyone's attention to the purpose of information literacy and thinking about learning (Booth,
47
48 2011, pp. 17–24; Ilett, 2019). It also centers the experience on learners, not just the outcomes
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50 we set for a session.
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3 We should also manage our expectations of what we can convey effectively in 50 minutes. The
4 pressure to deliver a great amount of information in that time can lead us to focus on content
5 over learner outcomes. Pivoting from content-focus to results-focus and designing backwards
6 are much better means to convey understanding (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005, pp. 13–17).

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11 Additionally, pairing in-class instruction with pre-work or online modules has the potential to
12 increase reach and self-efficacy (if they remove performative aspects of classroom participation
13 and encourage engagement).

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20 Presented with an assignment prompt or syllabus that focuses on difficult history, BLM, or racial
21 inequities, we can and should find sources relevant to the topic. However, we can have the
22 authority in the classroom and the agency to select sources for evaluation that present nuanced
23 viewpoints. It is also critical that we examine the reasons for choosing to present certain
24 sources. Are we selecting that which is relevant to both students and assignments in the interest
25 of grabbing/keeping attention? Are we presenting topical and current information that the
26 students can relate to personally? Is this information being presented in a way that diminishes
27 or erases experiences of students? Consider the environment of the campus setting and our
28 student populations when selecting sources, especially the visual elements of sources.

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43 In other words, while it's important to engage students with information relevant to their lived
44 experiences and issues within their community, the greater question is how is information being
45 engaged, in what context, for what end, and by whom. Simply providing a topic related to social
46 justice does not benefit students. Instead, librarians should consider what relationship is being
47 built with students, is it transactional or relational? How is the classroom structured and why?
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54 Why are assignments and activities chosen and as a result what experiences are being erased
55 or diminished? Is there adequate time for reflection? Is student learning being viewed from a
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3 deficit perspective? The reasons why librarianship should change are too numerous for this
4 paper to tackle, but we can start by asking ourselves honest questions about our choices.
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9 It is important to remember that change can and often does start small. Although it's unlikely
10 that an individual can address systemic injustice at the university scale, a few committed, well-
11 informed, and thoughtful librarians can start implementing immediate and meaningful changes
12 in the classroom.
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18 19 20 **Suggestions**

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22 The following suggestions are by no means exhaustive, but they are a starting point in pivoting
23 our practices to focus on students, their lived experiences, and the US climate under the 45th
24 president and moving away from content-focus, centering one's own experiences, and
25 reinforcing the white supremacist roots of academia.
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32 We can acknowledge and adjust to differences in our classroom. We can articulate that past
33 experiences and our identities play a role in information behavior and that there is an emotional
34 and cognitive response to information, textual or visual which we may use to solicit emotional
35 reactions to sources and allow discussion to arise. We can make sure that all students have a
36 chance to review all the sources in evaluation so they can engage rather than passively receive
37 their peers' assessments. Discuss privilege and pedigree when addressing that authority is
38 constructed. Challenge texts: read against the grain when presenting primary documents as
39 sources.
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51 If the instructor assignment and prompts focus on difficult history such as Black Lives Matter
52 (BLM) or fake news, consider whether materials with stereotypical depictions and extreme bias
53 are useful. Educate yourself on teaching difficult topics and history. Though intended for K-12
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3 settings, the Southern Poverty Law Center's *Teaching Tolerance* has a wealth of professional
4 development resources and techniques for classroom use, including media literacy standards,
5 digital literacy standards, and advice for white educators (Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation,
6 2012). The *Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or Controversial Topics* and *Guidelines for*
7 *Discussing Incidents of Hate, Bias, and Discrimination* from the University of Michigan's Center
8 for Research on Learning and Teaching's contains a wealth of methods and resources
9 ("Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or Controversial Topics", n.d.). Set yourself up to succeed
10 by taking the time to strategize so that you've prepared before you begin your step foot in the
11 classroom and build in time to reflect on what happened after the instruction session so that you
12 can continue to grow as an instructor and facilitator.

13
14 Educate yourself and do not place the burden on colleagues of color to explain what you do not
15 understand. Ask if they're okay with discussing ideas with you before you disclose. Recognize
16 the limitations in your knowledge and skill set and know that you have access to networks,
17 toolkits, and reading lists to learn from (see the resources section for some starting points).

18
19 Finally, Carello and Butler propose a trauma-informed educational pedagogy and suggest
20 principles and practices to enhance classroom safety relating to student characteristics, content
21 presentation and processing, assignment requirements and policies, instructor and student
22 behavior, classroom characteristics, and self-care (2015). Their article, *Practicing what we*
23 *teach: Trauma-informed educational practice* is essential reading on the topic. In discussing
24 student characteristics to be aware of when considering classroom safety, Carello and Butler
25 note that,

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Students bring to their educational pursuits a range of individual strengths that
they employ to meet the trials of training along with a life's history of challenging,

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3 and in some cases traumatic, experiences and present stressors. Consequently,
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5 instructors should assume that in virtually every classroom some unknown
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7 subset of students will be at heightened risk for retraumatization or vicarious
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9 traumatization as a result of personal trauma histories, mental illness
10
11 experiences, and current challenges or difficult life transitions (2015).
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16 **Conclusion**

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18 Trauma-aware and trauma-informed practices are more commonly discussed in clinical
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20 disciplines and public libraries than academic libraries, but as discussed, students entering
21
22 college with exposure to potentially traumatic events are not the exception, and it is our
23
24 professional responsibility to educate ourselves on ensuring classroom safety.
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29 Many of the suggested resources also include information on inclusive pedagogy and teaching
30
31 methods to foster inclusive classroom discussions, communication best practices, and how to
32
33 respond to incidents of bias in the classroom. Modeling inclusive behavior benefits learning
34
35 outcomes of all students, as it fosters an open environment and can prioritize equitable
36
37 representation of student voices by empowering students from historically oppressed and
38
39 marginalized identities to share their perspectives.
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44 It behooves us to contribute to an inclusive learning environment that challenges learners to
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46 think critically about the realities of the world they live in without causing harm. In
47
48 acknowledging these realities and their impact on the educational attainment and mental health
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50 of students, we can honor their experiences, validate their needs, and find active, effective
51
52 approaches to delivering library instruction.
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Resources

Further Reading

- ACRL's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion LibGuide:
<http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/directoryofleadership/committees/raciaethnic>
- American Council on Education's Campus Climate and Inclusion Reports:
<https://www.acenet.edu/Research-Insights/Pages/Diversity-Inclusion/Campus-Climate-and-Inclusion.aspx>
- Avoiding Racial Equity Detours
<http://www.edchange.org/publications/Avoiding-Racial-Equity-Detours-Gorski.pdf>
- Condition Critical—Key Principles for Equitable and Inclusive Education
<https://www.tpress.com/condition-critical-key-principles-for-equitable-and-inclusive-education-9780807754764>
- Disrupting Whiteness in Libraries and Librarianship: A Reading List
<https://www.library.wisc.edu/gwslibrarian/bibliographies/disrupting-whiteness-in-libraries/>
- The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice's reports on the #RealCollege movement (see <https://realcollege.org/> for more on the survey of college student's basic needs)
<https://hope4college.com/reports/>
- JSTOR Daily's Reading Lists
<https://daily.jstor.org/series/reading-lists/>
- Southern Poverty Law Center's report *Teaching Tolerance in Higher Education*
<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/teaching-tolerance-in-higher-education>

Toolkits & Praxis

- 1
- 2
- 3 ● ACES Philadelphia's Toolkit: Incorporating Trauma Informed Practice & ACEs into
- 4 Professional Curricula: [http://www.philadelphiaaces.org/resources/toolkit-incorporating-](http://www.philadelphiaaces.org/resources/toolkit-incorporating-trauma-informed-practice-aces-professional-curricula)
- 5 [trauma-informed-practice-aces-professional-curricula](http://www.philadelphiaaces.org/resources/toolkit-incorporating-trauma-informed-practice-aces-professional-curricula)
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- 9 ● ALA's Association of Specialized, Government, and Cooperative Library Agencies'
- 10 Accessibility Resources:
- 11
- 12 <https://www.asgcladirect.org/resources/>
- 13
- 14
- 15 ● ALA's GLBT Round Table's Profession Tools Roundup:
- 16 <http://www.ala.org/rt/glbtrt/tools>
- 17
- 18
- 19 ● ALA's Office of Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services' Equity, Diversity, and
- 20 Inclusion Resources:
- 21
- 22 <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity>
- 23
- 24
- 25 ● The Center for Applied Special Technology's Universal Design for Learning Guidelines:
- 26 <http://udlguidelines.cast.org/>
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- 29 ● Education Northwest's Trauma-Informed Strategies for Postsecondary Educators and
- 30 guidebook: [https://educationnorthwest.org/northwest-matters/trauma-informed-](https://educationnorthwest.org/northwest-matters/trauma-informed-strategies-postsecondary-educators)
- 31 [strategies-postsecondary-educators](https://educationnorthwest.org/northwest-matters/trauma-informed-strategies-postsecondary-educators)
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- 34 ● IMLS' Accessibility Resources for Museums and Libraries:
- 35 [https://www.ims.gov/issues/national-issues-priorities/accessibility-resources-museums-](https://www.ims.gov/issues/national-issues-priorities/accessibility-resources-museums-and-libraries)
- 36 [and-libraries](https://www.ims.gov/issues/national-issues-priorities/accessibility-resources-museums-and-libraries)
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- 39 ● Teachers College Inclusive Classrooms Project
- 40 <https://inclusiveclassrooms.org/>
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- 43 ● United We Dream's Toolkit for Educators and Institutions:
- 44 <https://unitedwedream.org/tools/toolkits/>
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- 46
- 47 ● University of Maryland's Difficult History Project: [https://education.umd.edu/difficult-](https://education.umd.edu/difficult-history-project-teaching-primary-sources)
- 48 [history-project-teaching-primary-sources](https://education.umd.edu/difficult-history-project-teaching-primary-sources)
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3 ● University of Michigan's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching's *Guidelines for*
4 *Discussing Difficult or Controversial Topics:*
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6 <http://crlt.umich.edu/publinks/generalguidelines>
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9 ● University of Michigan's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching's *Guidelines for*
10 *Discussing Incidents of Hate, Bias, and Discrimination:*
11
12 <http://crlt.umich.edu/publinks/respondingtobias>
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16 17 18 *Training & Professional Development*

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20 ● Anti-Oppressive Resource and Training Alliance (AORTA)
21
22 https://aorta.coop/portfolio_page/anti-oppressive-facilitation/
23
24 ● The Center for Universal Design in Education's Online Tutorial on Universal Design in
25 Education:
26
27 [https://www.washington.edu/doit/programs/center-universal-design-](https://www.washington.edu/doit/programs/center-universal-design-education/resources/universal-design-education-online-tutorial)
28 [education/resources/universal-design-education-online-tutorial](https://www.washington.edu/doit/programs/center-universal-design-education/resources/universal-design-education-online-tutorial)
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31 ● EdChange & Equity Literacy Institute
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33 <http://www.edchange.org/index.html>
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35
36 ● Project ENABLE
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38 <https://projectenable.syr.edu/>
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