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A Critical Dialogue: Faculty of Color in Library and Information Science

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We are all early career academics of color in Library and Information Science (LIS) working as full-time faculty members in higher education institutions across the US. We work at public land grant universities in the South and Midwest and at a liberal arts college in the East. We each responded to a call by the American Library Association's (ALA) Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship program, which sought to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of the LIS professorate. The first and second waves of Spectrum fellowships, awarded in 2007 and 2008, saw twelve recipients. In 2013, a third wave of fellowships were awarded and helped fund six additional doctoral students. We represent 1/3 of the first and second wave of recipients who chose to move forward with careers in academia. These statistics unsurprisingly resonate with the minority status of faculty of color in higher education.

According to Turner et al. (2008), in 2005, faculty of color made up only 17% of total full-time faculty in American universities as reported by the *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*. The representation among the different populations paints an even more dismal picture of the state of diversity among faculty members with: 7.5% Asian, 5.5% Black, 3.5% Hispanic, and 0.5% American Indian. Among full professors less than 12% are people of color, with 6.5% Asian, 3% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 0.3% American Indian. Compare and contrast these statistics with those specific to the LIS professions. According to statistics compiled by the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), in 2012, of 965 faculty members teaching in ALA-accredited programs across the United States and Canada, 3.6% (32) were Hispanic (of any race), 0.1% (7) were American Indian or Alaska Natives, 10% (97) were Asian, 3.2% (31) were Black or African American, 3.2% (31) were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and fewer than 1% (4) identified as being multiracial (Wallace, 2012).

The statistics for librarians of color are not much better, with Latinos making up to 16.3% of the U.S. population and only 4.7% of credentialed librarians; African Americans make up 12.6% of the population and 4.4% of credentialed librarians; Asian and Pacific Islanders are 5% of the population and 3.8% of credentialed librarians; and, Native Americans are less than 1% of the population and 1.2% of credentialed librarians (American Library Association, 2017). The lack of diversity among LIS faculty may have a role to play with these dismal statistics given the fact that faculty of color make a positive difference in the recruitment and mentorship of students from underrepresented groups. Not having the supports in place to sustain a virtuous circle perpetuates the lack of diversity in LIS and it limits the LIS professional's cultural competence (Jaeger and Franklin, 2007).

In order to break the cycle we need to move forward and promote an environment in which historically oppressed and underrepresented groups are not

only actively recruited in institutions of higher learning, but also in which members of these groups are mentored and encouraged to be full members of the academic community. It is our view that this process needs to start with an honest conversation about the different factors affecting the professional experiences of faculty of color. We present our stories here to breathe life into the aforementioned statistics and open up a larger discussion to engage academic administrators, faculty, and future faculty members across all racial and ethnic groups. We believe our stories can prepare future doctoral students of color entering LIS, or at the very least address some their concerns about academia. As such, this piece sets out to engage in a much-needed critical dialogue about our hardships and positions of privilege as faculty members of color in LIS in the United States.

To do so, we use a reflective and dialogical approach underpinned by a social justice framework to discuss the cultural, gender, and class dimensions of our ways of knowing within the academy. Our conversation is guided by a series of questions centered on social justice issues that aim to address some of the experiences we have faced as faculty of color in the academy. These questions stem from our participation in the 2015 ALISE Annual Conference focused on social justice and the re-imagination of LIS education. This conference brought us together to reflect upon our experiences as members of the Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship and new assistant professors for the panel "Diversifying the Reflection of LIS Education: Spectrum Doctoral Fellows in the Front of the Classroom". After the event we agreed to write about what we had each brought to the panel, expanding upon our experiences and weaving together a stronger social justice perspective by developing prompts that structured and guided our conversation on the various issues addressed below.

Faculty of Color in LIS—Who We Are and Where We're Coming From

Social justice can be understood as an attempt to answer the question: How can we contribute to the creation of a more equitable, respectful society for everyone? (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008). The creation of this society could be heavily influenced or even started with education, especially higher education, which allows for increased opportunities for social mobility and increased income levels (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008). Education overall benefits all members of society, and higher education can be an even richer experience when the recipients expose themselves to a diverse group of individuals, both students and professors. What are some of your formative educational experiences? Why did you decide to get a doctoral degree in LIS?

Mónica: I was born and raised in Puerto Rico, but rural Puerto Rico, far away from the white sand beaches and the coastline resorts. My mother was the first one in her family to get a college education, even though she was married by the time she was 19 and had me by the time she was 21. I cannot fully explain how, but I always was an ill fit at basically everything. I was an only child in a place where almost everyone had many siblings. Also, both my parents worked outside of the home, which for mothers in the area was still rare, so I had a lot of responsibility from a young age, which included housework after school. I was good at school, but did not excel at anything. I was not typical in any way and I knew somehow that I was not born to be a homemaker like all the women in my family except my mother. At the age of 28 the opportunity came and I left Puerto Rico for east Tennessee to get my library science degree at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I was already an adult and by that time had a bachelor's and a master's degree in management. Through my experience working in academic libraries in Puerto Rico, I knew that was what I wanted to do. Then, in my last semester at Tennessee the opportunity came for a PhD in the form of the Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship. I took it, even though it was a big gamble, and that is how I discovered my passion: teaching.

In my new role as an LIS educator I have been criticized for bringing topics that are too personal to the classroom, but I feel compelled to tell my students what it was like to grow up outside of the continental United States. It is helpful for them to be able to compare it to the relatively comfortable middle class that many of them come from. I am clear about my experience growing up in a place and at a time where libraries were for others, not for us and that education is a dream at odds with what is expected of us in our reality. I tell my students about the library in my school opening when I was in third grade and that there was no public library to go to in my very rural neighborhood. Sharing these experiences helps students see that there are places and worlds different than their own and that libraries matter to those in the lower social classes. It also emphasizes the point of libraries being for everyone and mattering to those who are less advantaged.

Janet: I'm the first person in my immediate family to attend a four-year university. My older siblings both attended community college and as a result, they were my first educational role models. That being said, my mother and father always made education a priority in our home in part because they had very little access to it. Growing up in rural Mexico, they were only allowed to attend school for a few years, just enough for them to learn basic arithmetic and reading and writing literacy skills. My grandparents were a part of a generation of people who benefited from the Mexican Revolution's removal of the hacienda system (akin to a plantation system) so getting a formal education was gaining ground in society, but it was not yet viewed as a priority in their families.

In high school, some of my teachers, mentors, and to some extent peers motivated me to apply to college. From my peers I learned about their aspirations to become medical doctors, nurses, musicians, and artists, which inspired me to continue with my studies. From teachers and mentors, I learned that their commitment to education and mentoring was based on social justice principles or their ties to the Chicano civil rights movement. I learned more about civil rights movements at the California Ethnic Multicultural Archives (CEMA) and through coursework at UC, Santa Barbara where I ended up going to college. At CEMA, I was a student assistant and Salvador Güereña, the director, planted a seed that would later help influence me to go on and earn a doctorate in LIS. My exposure to Chicano politics and later Latin American film history further sparked my interest in attending graduate school.

Nicole: My grandmother worked in a factory, and she told my mother "you have to do better than me." My mother went on to become a registered nurse and earn a master's degree, and her mantra to me was the same, "you will do better than I did." So in that way, graduate work was always an expectation for me, it never occurred to me that I would or could "just" go to college. Now this is not to say that my path to librarianship was clear and immediate. I entered college as a science major and quickly discovered that this was not the area for me. In the process of dropping out of one program and looking for another path, I backed into librarianship by accident. I knew nothing about libraries other than I liked to use them; I had never seen a black librarian, so it never occurred to me that there was any career potential there. I worked in libraries for many years, earned a second master's degree, and honestly had no plans to pursue doctoral work, because I had done better than my mother and was doing well career-wise. However, after several years I started to get restless - I was having trouble advancing in the profession (a combination of lack of opportunities and my own reluctance to relocate), and I was beginning to do some research and write. Just as my restlessness was beginning to peak, the notice for the Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship program came out, and I took it as a sign. I took the GREs again, filled out the application form, and gained early entry into my doctoral program inside of six weeks. Had that notice not come out, I can't say that I would have actively pursued doctoral work at another time. Fast forward some years, and I was coming out of the doctoral program thinking I was going to pursue an administrative job in an academic library. I had no intentions of pursuing a post in the professoriate. It was a matter of chance that I went on the market and pursued that trajectory.

Brenton: I am of the Carolinas; my mother is from the Appalachian region of North Carolina and my father the South Carolina Lowcountry. Although, my father enrolled in the state's "Negro Agricultural and Technical College" -it being illegal to attend college with white citizens, I was actually the

first in the family to graduate. I was never expressly encouraged to become or do anything; attending college and graduate school were manifestations of my ambitions. Like most people, librarianship was never my initial career goal, yet I've never done anything else. Growing up I was largely indifferent to libraries. The school library, which was actually called the "media center" seemingly, contained little more than old books with illustrations of white-blond children. Once I discovered *Africa* in high school, I found the public library also maintained a paltry section of old books written during the 1960s and 70s, expect for the obligatory works by Basil Davidson. The true horror however, came when trying to check out books, a black male employee demanded to see my identification, suggesting that my library card might actually belong to someone else. My use of public libraries abruptly stopped.

The academic library was actually the space and place that made me love and desire libraries. After completing my undergraduate studies I enrolled in the historic School of Library & Information Science program at Clark Atlanta University. Echoing Nicole's comment above, academic librarianship pressures you to relocate; not only for advancement but also to obtain that initial position. My first job was as Post-MLS Multicultural Resident Librarian at Kansas State University. However, after moving from Atlanta to Kansas, and returning to Atlanta within a three-year-period I was largely uninspired with librarianship and knew I needed to make a change in the near future. While presenting at the inaugural Joint Conference of Librarians of Color, I met Dr. Etheleen Whitmire, a professor at University of Wisconsin–Madison, who told me about the Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship and an upcoming open house at the School of Library & Information Studies. Over a decade later, I am an Assistant Professor.

Experiencing the Classroom and Social Justice Education

Researchers point out that due to the history of racial separation experienced in this country, and which still exists at varying levels, most students have lived all of their lives in communities, which are segregated (Gurin et al., 2002). Both white and minority students enter college without interacting with racially different peers and they are seldom willing to interact with peers who belong to racial or demographic groups different from their own (Ross, 2014). The value of social justice education that teaches processes directed at helping students engage in critical reflection of dehumanizing political conditions (Ross, 2014), depends on a higher education institution's efforts in diversifying their student bodies and instituting policies which foster genuine student interaction (Gurin et al., 2002). As members of a program that sought to impact racial and ethnic demographic changes for LIS education, how have your experiences as students affected how you engage in social justice endeavors in LIS?

Janet: I want to start with teaching because for me one of the most fulfilling aspects of being a professor is that as an educator I have the power to engage with concepts and ideas in the classroom that most of my LIS professors didn't introduce in their courses. One of the most striking differences I encountered in LIS from previous coursework I had completed in other programs of study was how the literature I was being exposed to did not address the populations and political and social issues I encountered growing up. This is a pattern that students now point out to me. I try to break this pattern by engaging with new ideas that speak to diversity issues, although I also attribute my pedagogical approach to growing up in a really different social world than that of the majority of my students. I was blessed to go to a high school in East Los Angeles where my friends and acquaintances were of different heritages— Chinese, Taiwanese, Korean, Japanese, Russian, Armenian, Guatemalan, Salvadoran, African American, Indian, and so on. Ethnic and racial diversity was normal to me, but as as I continued to advance educationally I kept encountering the *other* normal. That being said, I really enjoy the fact that I'm no longer on the receiving end of someone else's course design, and that I have the power to create new intellectual pathways for and with my students. Still while this newly found form of authority is satisfying and intellectually engaging it also proves to be daunting and exhausting.

Nicole: I agree, it's daunting, but I've really enjoyed this part of the process. Unfortunately, I tend to spend too much time trying to crafting the perfect syllabi and lesson plans, but I do love finding the "perfect" article or resource that I can add to my repertoire. It reminds me of being in graduate school and thinking -- "This article stinks or this chapter doesn't make one bit of sense. When I teach a class like this, I will never use this piece." I will admit to using some of the tried and true classic articles, but they are accompanied with new resources that I think are better suited and will help me 1) engage students and 2) present content in my own style. I think customizing courses to our own styles and sensibilities is really important. I also make a point to feature scholarship by women and people of color, something that can be more difficult to do in LIS, and something I didn't encounter consistently in my graduate education. It's important to allow opportunity for our own voices to come through in the classroom, and to give our diverse students an opportunity to see themselves in the content. I don't think about it as authority, but I do think about this as reframing the content and creating more space for counter stories and marginalized voices. It's an awesome opportunity.

Mónica: I have a conflicted relationship of sorts when it comes to the power which comes as a result of being a new faculty member and the fact that I do not feel like I have any power. As a student, I always felt that my role was to listen, follow instruction and, in a way, obey, or at least abide by my professors'

rules. I would participate in class and always complete my readings for the day and any work stipulated on the syllabus. My entire life I saw my professors as authority figures. But as a professor I do not think my students see me as an authority figure and that makes me feel powerless. This manifests itself in many ways, from overly familiar behavior towards me that some students exhibit by overlooking and overstepping the rules I have put in place for my courses, even those I have put into paper. This has led me through a path of becoming progressively more distant and formal each time I teach. I don't necessarily feel comfortable with this and it was not the kind of professor I aspired to be when I was a student. I do not think that this is conducive to good pedagogical practice either. Many times I find myself pondering, why is this happening: Is it because of my "otherness" as a Latina woman? As a (somewhat) younger professor? Or an even more complicated factor like cultural proximity? I am not sure. But to me it has been tangible, and it has been the factor that has made my transition from student to faculty member the hardest.

I thought I was going to be the professor that knew student's names and did fun exercises in class and directed deep conversations and discussions. Those were the professors that I remember the most, and whose classes I enjoyed the most. But that is the hardest balance to strike. I guess the talent of guiding a deep conversation and discussion in class is cultivated in time but I feel like I encounter a wall of silence more often than not when I am trying to get students to discuss a topic at a deeper level.

Brenton: My teaching was greatly affected by the larger geography in which I resided. The cold reality of the academic job market is, newly minted PhDs might have to accept jobs in less than ideal geographies. This situation may be most acute among faculty of color and individuals with non-heteronormative identities. My transition from doctoral student to the professoriate was marked by my heightened awareness of *space*. I was leaving a so-called *liberal and progressive* Mid-Western college town and a public Ivy institution with a student population reflecting global diversity in both its racial composition and ideology, for the staunchly conservative Gulf South to work at an institution founded as a normal school that trained white schoolteachers. The uneasiness that I felt navigating this new environment was in many ways replicated inside the classroom as well.

I also acknowledge my "power" and "authority" in the classroom; in the most utilitarian manner, as instructor of record-I am *judging* student assignments. However, as mentioned above, I also believe I am "reframing" the discussion such that it's inclusive but also constructs a critical praxis of LIS processes and infrastructure. While I am certainly framing the initial discussion, I have adopted the *sage on the side* approach. This vision however, comes three years post doctorate and two institutions later; my first year of teaching in the academy did

not reflect the transformative pedagogy I had imagined. Teaching a handful of courses that were ripe for social justice exploration, I was keenly aware of my visibility: as the only African American in my department, the only male, and likely the only African American professor most of my students had encountered or would likely encounter in their tenure at the institution. I did not feel I occupied a safe space in which to explore pedagogy of social justice, as I was overcome with fear of retaliation by way of negative course evaluations or overreaching administration looking for conformity (Cole, 2014). Modernizing courses with new technologies seemed like a much *safer* strategy, I could be the "cool" technology-oriented black male professor.

Diversity and Faculty of Color Teaching, Research, and Service Agendas

Faculty of color face a multitude of challenges in their professional growth. Examples of these added strains include tokenism that in many instances results in an unfair division of labor that places a heavy service load on faculty members who find themselves struggling to balance with other components of the tenure process. Publishing and teaching are generally perceived as more important in the tenure process and the professional development of academics (Murakami & Núñez, 2014). Additionally, the retention of people of color as faculty members in institutions of higher education is affected by the reduced number of mentoring opportunities reported by many (Murakami & Núñez, 2014). Another area is related to issues of respect, especially as many find themselves teaching courses which are generally held in low regard by the academic community and which, most of the time, involve courses dealing with race relations (Mirakami & Núñez, 2014). How have these types of challenges manifested themselves for you in the academy? And, what, if any obligation, do faculty of color have to address diversity, recruitment, and retention in our work?

Nicole: I think that we, as part of the original Spectrum Doctoral Fellows cohort, we have power, or at least recognition, as it pertains to being role models and examples of inclusive LIS education. And now as faculty of color we are even more visible, to our colleagues and to our students. It astonishes me that I encounter students who have never been taught by a person of color - most of the time that's a wonderful experience, but sometimes that can be problematic if students refuse to relinquish their ideas of what authority should look like. With this said, I think of the adage - with power, comes responsibility. What is our responsibility, if any, when it comes to addressing and/or being active with issues of diversity recruitment and retention in the profession? This can be an issue, particularly if our research and teaching don't focus on these areas, yet we're frequently identified as diversity experts and asked to participate in such discussions and activities.

Brenton: I believe that we have some level of responsibility, however it's up to the individual, to articulate what that role should be and most importantly, the manner in which they accomplish those activities. Echoing Nicole's comment, faculty of color in LIS are very conspicuous. I've had several prospective students of color contact me to discuss the program, although they were interested in pursuing areas outside of my specialization. The most challenging obstacle I've faced with respect to diversity issues, as a junior faculty member is time. Diversity recruitment and retention efforts are incredibly important; at times however, these activities can manifest as extra labor. Do white faculty members feel the same weight of diversity recruitment as faculty of color or is this *our* distinctive debt I often wonder?

I've managed to negotiate this area with a mix of my own initiative and imposed *opportunities*. Working on departmental collaborative grant applications, I was very proactive in ensuring the inclusion of diversity components but also that recruitment efforts target people of color and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU); the departments burgeoning social media presence now includes connections with HBCUs and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Some efforts may be small, such as following minority serving institutions or LGBTQ organizations on Department Twitter accounts however, it's important that individuals know they are in fact visible and have allies, which has not always been the reality in LIS.

My imposed *opportunity* began when selected as my department's representative to the College's Diversity Committee. Initially I was displeased with the appointment, because I was not asked if I wanted to serve, the university, in this capacity (my selection appeared based on nothing more than my racial classification as *Black*) and combined with aggressive publication goals for that academic year, I was hesitant to take on *yet another* service commitment. I also know that faculty of color are overwhelmingly the default members of such committees (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2008). Surprisingly several non-Black colleagues mentioned that anyone could serve on the Diversity Committee, asking why were African American faculty always-obligatory members? Although I decided to carry out my obligations, I had conflicting emotions about the experience; while I was relieved by the nearly non-existent workload, leaving more time to focus on research, I grew concerned over the committee's sparse activity for the year.

Mónica: The comments Brenton makes about students approaching him and serving on committees makes me think of Latina students who have reached out to me because they want to discuss certain topics with a fellow Latina. I feel flattered and want to help as much as possible, but in some cases I feel like I had not been able to help the student enough basically because of lack of time. I have

a specific incident in mind where a student wanted to talk to me because they had been made very uncomfortable by somebody else's racial comments towards them, yet the moment the student came to see me could not have been worse. I was running to a very important committee meeting and although I tried to make time to talk to the student about the incident, I could not help to feel like I rushed the student who might have had something else to tell me. This to me seemed like a clash between two important roles in my career: the service component of my job and my role as an advisor. How to reconcile so many aspects of the job, when there are only so many hours to the day?

I have to admit that one of the issues that I have encountered at all levels of my professional career is the expectation that I, as a member of a specific ethnic group, inherently must specialize in race related research. In reality this is the first time that I have delved into a topic dealing with race, diversity, or even social justice. This impression is not only carried by other members of the academic community, but also by students who come to me seeking advice in their own race related studies. I find myself many times clarifying that my main area of research is actually centered on academic librarianship, administration of academic libraries and management issues as manifested in academic libraries. I do engage in qualitative research, and so far the topic of race or diversity or even social justice hasn't emerged as a topic. This sometimes seems like a hard thing for others to realize, and then I have to engage in a conversation in which I must explain that, in my opinion, part of my non-exposure to these areas of research is because I was born and raised in a place where I am the cultural majority and it wasn't until I was an adult with two college degrees to my name that I was exposed to a place where I was no longer part of the majority. And then many times I find myself thinking, "Should the question really be asked? Is it inescapable for me to engage in race and diversity research only because I'm a member of a specific racial/ethnic group?"

Janet: My scholarship does fall under the broad category of diversity, but if I were in another discipline my research area would be classified as a specialization. In that sense, I can understand what you mean about being pigeonholed Mónica, because like you I have research interests that should not make me an automatic authority on all-things diversity. What this points out is that our field suffers from an inability to meaningfully engage with and untangle difference in ways that matter for the pluralistic communities it seeks to serve and represent. Now more than ever, though, I am seeing a lot more professionals working on critical research and participatory practices that addresses this problem.

I've also been given the "opportunity" to serve on diversity committees. This happened during my first year as an assistant professor. First, I was appointed to a diversity committee at the College level and a semester later

locally within our School. Unlike you Brenton, when I was informed about these possibilities, I was curious because I wanted to understand the institution's culture, and I thought I could offer up some perspective given what I was hearing from students. At the time, the campus climate was tense with undergraduate students of color demanding that the administration build a more inclusive environment as many of them were being treated as second-class citizens. At the graduate level there were no organized demands; however, within our School some students created an anonymous micro aggressions blog as a response to faculty and students' lack of cultural competence in the classroom. I learned a great deal about the institution's culture by being a part of these diversity committees. Most importantly, I learned that I am now able to firmly say "Thank you, but no, thank you" should such an opportunity arise again at this point in my career. Saying "no" is a form of self-care.

Nicole: The irony in my personal journey is that I did not teach or do significant research about matters of diversity and social justice until I began teaching in a LIS program. I too reference Brenton's "a distinctive debt", in the sense that I feel the debt was imposed upon me in some ways, as opposed to feeling as though I had a debt to pay. My primary area of research is human information behavior and I remember being explicitly told in my doctoral program that I could not specialize in anything related to diversity because it would "pigeonhole" me. So once I entered the academy, I was presented with an opportunity (or rather a hole in the curriculum) to create and teach a class on diversity. My service work during my 12+ years as a practicing librarian revolved around service, so the content was not unfamiliar. Now, I teach an entire suite of courses in this area and sometimes wonder if I have backed myself into the pigeonhole I initially worked to avoid.

However, I enjoy this dimension of my work and have had enormous opportunity to teach, write, and conduct research, particularly as diversity and social justice are applied to LIS pedagogy. With this in mind, I am acutely aware of and concerned about tenure and how this area of research will be perceived; diversity and social justice are currently trendy in the field and my work has been well received. Will the pendulum have swung back, away from diversity, by the time I come up for tenure? It's a real concern. With this in mind, I am very conscious about keeping up both halves of my research agenda - I work in human information behavior *and* diversity and social justice equally. And if I can, I fuse the areas in my research; sometimes this is easy to do, and sometime it is not. In this way I can indulge the area of my research that has become a personal passion project for me, and maintain my original line of inquiry. Perhaps I can fulfill the "debt", and still maintain other interests and important areas of study.

Conclusion

After reflecting on our career paths and about our place in academe as early career professionals of color, our conversation has illustrated various points that need to be considered in broader discussions regarding the recruitment and professional advancement of people of color in LIS. First, it is clear that we all come from very different backgrounds. What brought us together was that we all saw value in education. Education gave us a path, a purpose in life. This purpose did not manifest itself in LIS at the beginning of our educational careers as we all encountered the LIS field as a potential professional path after we were already in college. For those conducting research on the recruitment and retention of people of color in LIS, this take away is significant in developing strategies and programming that can address this early engagement gap.

Our careers as faculty members have provided us with many opportunities, but also many challenges. One of the most visible challenges is that we have a conflicted relationship with balancing our power as faculty members, and our roles as educators and researchers. On the one hand, some of us find ourselves developing inclusive pedagogy as we find ourselves at odds with replicating our own professors and traditional disciplinary canons. We have also discovered that there are environmental factors that affect our perceptions of power and presence in our workplaces, such as the organizational cultures inherent to our geographic locations. While other assistant professors may face similar challenges early in their careers, what makes us our cases different is that our identities as people of color give us a lot of visibility on campus, and it sometimes makes us *de facto* diversity experts. These positions of high visibility, yet invisible and inferred expertise, put us in an uncomfortable position, since we might be limiting our primary areas of interest by complementing our primary research agendas with works on diversity that were not originally part of our teaching and scholarship agendas. Moreover, the service components attached to this perceived expertise are not necessarily valued but, in some cases, become mere administrative exercises that further tokenize us. Having allies and mentors to support faculty of color is thus crucial.

Finally, another significant factor that merits more attention, especially in our current political climate under the new administration, is that if it had not been for the ALA Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship opportunity, funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, it is unlikely that we would have pursued doctoral degrees. Funding for LIS education and the recruitment of a new crop of students of color will greatly affect the future of the profession as a whole. Having this type of financial support is imperative to firmly supporting and affirming the importance of recruitment efforts into the LIS profession. It also affects our ability to develop equitable and sustainable programming in cultural heritage organizations that speak to our communities. This is an issue we

will have to address as a profession and as individuals as we move ahead in our careers and mentor a new generation of students who are inspired to join the profession.

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