Preserving History, Telling Stories: In the Service of Justice and Equity

June 3, 2020

With the recent senseless killings of Black people across this country including George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Nina Pop and Dion Johnson, ASU Library stands with the Black Lives Matter movement in condemning these deaths. President Crow has made it clear that the University expects innovation, creativity, and action to build a climate of justice and equity or, in the words of the university's Charter, expects to assume "fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves."

We call on our leaders, locally and nationally, to take swift action against the systemic racism, white supremacy, and settler colonialism that has dehumanized and targeted marginalized communities in Arizona and across the country. The injustices facing specifically the Black community have for too long been ignored. Statistics show a record high number of police shootings every year in Arizona and that Black people in this state are disproportionately impacted by police shootings. Local organizations like Black Lives Matter Phoenix Metro, Black Phoenix Organizing Committee, and Mass Liberation Arizona are trying to hold police accountable and advocate for justice and community healing and safety.

Libraries are not neutral in the fight against systemic racism and white supremacy. According to the Arizona Archives Matrix Project, the Black community is represented in less than 1% of archival materials in the state. In the face of institutionalized racism, white supremacy, xenophobia, and homophobia, communities in Arizona can learn to preserve and tell their stories with the support of librarians and archivists. We are at a crucial juncture where we are being called upon as individuals and as a profession to do better than we have in the past. Scholars and archivists within the profession, including Dr. Michelle Caswell, Lae'l Hughes-Watkins and DocNow, are currently addressing white supremacy, how to dismantle power structures that exclude minoritized communities from the historical record, and how we can empower communities.

Since 2017, ASU Library's Community-Driven Archives Initiative, has worked with the Latinx, Black, Asian & Pacific Islander, Indigenous, and LGBTQ communities to center the lived experiences and knowledge of community members and to create intergenerational and intersectional spaces and places that support and protect lifelong learning. Our Community-Driven Archives team, along with the Labriola National American Indian Data Center, acknowledge the historical trauma that lives within communities. We support healing projects led by community members and advocate for intellectual co-ownership of archives and shared stewardship responsibilities, to ensure that those whose stories we tell participate actively in the collection and use of these archives.

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We continue to work with faculty, students, and Arizona communities to extend the reach and inclusiveness of those archives. At the same time we make these stories known in many ways, from social media to online exhibits, and we will continue to make these stories known and seen and heard. As we return to our physical facilities, we will mount exhibitions in the new spaces of Hayden Library, which were designed with this project in mind. To learn more about this initiative or to participate in it, please contact us.

We stand with the Black community of ASU and Arizona and we will continue to support individuals as they speak their truth and document their stories of resiliency and acts of racism against marginalized communities across the state. **We see you, we hear you, and you matter.**

Library Guides & Resources

Elon University - Anti-Racism Resources

UMass Amherst - Readings & Media on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Princeton University Library - Black Lives Matter