

ALA Statement on Censorship of Information Addressing Racial Injustice, Black American History, and Diversity Education

On August 18, 2021, the American Library Association (ALA) Executive Board issued a statement opposing initiatives to censor information resources, curricula, and programs addressing racial injustice, Black American history, and diversity education. The full statement follows:

The American Library Association is committed to upholding our core values, which include equitable access to knowledge, social justice, and intellectual freedom. As members of a profession committed to free and equitable access to information and the pursuit of truth, we stand firm in opposing any effort to suppress knowledge, to label “controversial” views, or dictate what is orthodox in history, politics, or belief.

At present, efforts to censor any consideration or discussion of racism, slavery, Black American history, and related issues and concerns in our schools, colleges, and universities pose a real and present threat to libraries’ ability to fulfill their role as trusted community institutions that provide factual and accurate information that reflects the breadth of the American experience about these topics.

A commitment to intellectual freedom and social justice requires that libraries not only protect the truth from suppression, but also prevent its distortion. Consequently, the American Library Association has joined other educational institutions and civil liberties organizations in opposing any legislative proposal or local initiative intended to ban instruction, consideration, or discussion about the role of racism in the history of the United States or how systemic racism manifests itself in our schools, workplaces, and government agencies.

ALA member leaders and staff pledge to join with library workers, libraries, and state and regional library associations to oppose any proposal to censor information resources, curricula, or programs addressing racial injustice, Black American history, and diversity education. We commit to supporting libraries, library workers, schools, and universities facing these challenges and developing tools that will prepare library workers to defend their collections, counter falsehoods, and engage their communities in important conversations about racial injustice and empowering everyone to fully participate in our democratic society.

For information or for any inquiries please write the Office for Intellectual Freedom at oif@ala.org.