"A Festivus for the Rest of Us": Perspectives on Diversity in the Midwest

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"A Festivus for the Rest of Us": Perspectives on Diversity in the Midwest

Abstract
Diversity within a profession dedicated to preserving American society is vital to ensure that the breadth of America's stories is captured in the archival record. While the Midwest Archives Conference, the Society of American Archivists, and other archival organizations sponsor scholarships, groups, and other initiatives intended to nurture and support diversity within the archival profession (such as MAC's Archie Motley Memorial Scholarship and SAA's Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable), the profession remains overwhelmingly homogenous.

This session will include narratives from a panel of archivists of color who will share their experiences, challenges, and lessons learned while working in the Midwest region. The session moderator will then open the conversation and invite you to pose questions and to share your own perspectives and experiences with diversity, both professionally and personally. By the end of the session, we hope to create a group of self-identified archivists and information professionals who may be interested in starting a community of MAC members dedicated to discussing diversity issues within our profession and fostering inclusivity in our geographical region.

Disciplines
Archival Science | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies
A Festivus for the rest of us:
Perspectives on diversity in the Midwest

Harrison W. Inefuku, Sasha Griffin, Aaisha Haykal, Harvey Long
Midwest Archives Conference
April 28, 2016

#s103
Who we are

Archivists of color sharing our experiences working or studying as archivists of color in the MAC region

• Harrison W. Inefuku, Iowa State University
• Sasha Griffin, Denison University
• Aaisha Haykal, Chicago State University
• Harvey Long, University of Wisconsin–Madison
“This is the Midwest. It’s not a very diverse region.”
Race and ethnicity in U.S. Census regions

[Graph showing distribution of race and ethnicity in different Census regions.]
Race and ethnicity on my journey
Race and ethnicity in the MAC region
Another perspective

- The Midwest is the most homogenous region in the United States.
  - 77.2% identify as White, non-Hispanic
  - Put another way, 22.8%, or over 1 in 5, identify as non-White and/or Hispanic
- Iowa is the most homogenous state in the Midwest
  - 87.9% identify as White, non-Hispanic (Iowa)
  - 12.1%, or over 1 in 10 people in Iowa are not White and/or Hispanic
Archival and societal demographics

A*CENSUS 2012 Member Needs and Satisfaction Survey

United States

Midwest

Legend:
- White
- Black/African American
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
Diversity, inclusion and MAC

From the Strategic Plan:

• Membership—Increase the number, diversity, and retention of members.
  • Explore ways to increase diversity on MAC standing committees, task forces, and working groups. In addition to broadening member perspectives on committees, this will bring more diverse and experienced leaders to the attention of the Nominating Committee for future slates of candidates.
  • Conduct a “Who are we?” census at regular intervals to better understand the makeup and needs of our membership.
  • Conduct a campaign with the goal of increasing, and diversifying, and retaining membership.
“Networking and collaborating at conferences and through committee work can go a long way to redress the isolation that many librarians of color experience at their home institutions.”

Our goal

To identify a community of MAC members dedicated to discussing diversity issues within our profession and fostering inclusivity in our geographic region.
Sasha Griffin
Being an Archivist of Color

Aaisha Haykal
“I don’t care if you’re white, black, brown, or purple. I treat everyone the same.”

Chris Bourg, Director of Libraries, MIT.
https://twitter.com/mchris4duke/status/720698392607899649
What are Microaggressions?

• Often they are not meant to hurt the other person’s feelings

• However, the accumulation of them over the years build up

• “Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.” - “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life”

• Now can be extended to other identities, sexuality, class, religion, education level
From who do AOC face microaggressions from?

- Co-workers
  - (example of “unprofessional hair” “too loud” “should not collect that music”)
- Supervisors
  - (being seen as a “prop” see we are diverse)
- Donors
  - (example with donor “sweetie” and “off color jokes”)
- Board of Directors/Advisory Board Members
- Professional Organizations
  - (example of “allowed to be on diversity related things” “no depiction on marketing materials” or tokenism)
- Conference Sites
  - (historical location, LGBT Bill in NC, police brutality in FL, IL, SC)
- Fellow students
  - (example of classroom setting “urban population” “troublemakers” “why do we have to learn about diversity”)
- Patrons/Researchers

LIS Microagressions Poster SAA 2015

https://twitter.com/lismicroaggress/status/635512401379459072

@LISmicroaggress on Twitter

Started working at an archive.
Got handed a 1980's bio form that asked me to select a skin color.

What shade of brown am I? Sad but true.
Hiring and Job Offers

• Pressures of being first-generation college graduate
• Family responsibilities
  • Limits job prospectus
  • Children
  • Parents
• African, Black, and Eastern cultural traditions and relationship with family

Do we accept the position?

- Things to consider
  - Hair salons/barber shops
  - Grocery/food choices
  - School options for children
  - History of the community/state that the job is at
    - i.e. sundown towns, police brutality
  - History of the university
    - i.e. relationship with the ethnic communities, student demographics, international political stance
  - Distance from family
  - Demographics of the staff

http://donnadrewsawyer.com/?p=78714
Library/Archives School Programs

• Curriculum is European based
• Voices of minority students are sometimes silenced
• Being forced to “represent” your [insert description]
• Don’t address issues of intersectionality
• Incorporation of other field theories
• Demographic
  • Role of online programs, possibilities
  • Collaborating with HBCUs and HSIs
  • Dual Degree programs
• Cultural Competency
• ALA Accreditation and SAA Guidelines
How can you be an ally?

• Engage in dialogue with people underrepresented communities
• Know that it is not about your feelings and
• Engage with materials and programming throughout the year not just during the “months”
• Review your collections, what stories are missing, who is not there
• Address microaggressions when you see them happening
• Investigate complaints quickly and sensitively
• Cannot be objective or neutral as a profession
Resources


• LISMicroaggressions Tumblr
  • LISmicroaggressions.tumblr.com
  • @LISmicroaggess on Twitter

• In the Library with the Lead Pipe
  • http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/

• #ArchivesSoWhite Intro & Bibliography
  • https://issuesandadvocacy.wordpress.com/2016/04/18/archivessowhite-intro-bibliography/
Harvey Long
Q & A
ArchivesFest
Session Evaluation Form Available @
bit.ly/MAC16-Session-Eval-Form

or

complete paper copy
and turn in at back of room

Clockwise from upper left: Festival goers dance at Summerfest, 1984, Milwaukee Public Library Historic Photos; PrideFest Milwaukee parade heads to Veterans Memorial Park, 1995, Archives Dept., University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Libraries; Papa Lou leads woodwind band at Festa Italiana, 1983, Milwaukee Public Library Historic Photos; & Indian Summer Festival at Henry Maier Festival Park, late 1980s (?) Archives Dept., University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Libraries