

PLOTTING THE REVOLUTION

**(for information
professionals)**

By Lena Gluck

I REALLY DIDN'T REALIZE THE LIBRARIANS WERE, YOU KNOW, SUCH A DANGEROUS GROUP. THEY ARE SUBVERSIVE. YOU THINK THEY'RE JUST SITTING THERE AT THE DESK, ALL QUIET AND EVERYTHING. THEY'RE LIKE PLOTTING THE REVOLUTION, MAN"

Michael Moore. March 13, 2002

People are often shocked when librarians do anything even moderately badass. Especially when it involves taking an active role in helping marginalized members of our communities or protesting laws.

**The FBI
has not
been here**

[watch very closely for the removal of this sign]

**A lot of us
got into this
profession
after**

**hearing about or seeing
libraries stand up when no one else
would.**

**It seems, at first,
like the only
profession in
the world that
actually values
community
above profit**

**STAY
STRONG
FERGUSON
WE ARE
FAMILY**



Unfortunately,
the illusion
of the heroic
profession
only lasts so long

what that D[ata] do @meadowlion · Feb 11
Next time somebody wants to say librarians are inherently "superheroes" or "the best people!" remind me to tell them about the Nazi/neutrality thing at #alarmw?

Show this thread

what that D[ata] do
@meadowlion

Every time somebody says something like that, inside I'm like "let me tell you about the anti-Asian joke my white colleague made the other day"

5:30 PM - 11 Feb 2018

And it's not just individual librarians either.
Librarianship, like most every profession in the United States, was founded on and has a long history of the whole list of evils we wanted them to defend our communities against

- Slavery
- White Supremacy
- Xenophobia
- Working Class Suppression
- Capitalism
- Segregation
- Colonization
- Pro-Government Propaganda

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But there is so much opportunity for activism and community solidarity in the profession as it exists today.

There are so many examples of librarians and information professionals using their privileges as a member of this profession to connect homeless people with resources they want and need, to create safe spaces in the community where none exist outside those doors, to enable marginalized folks of all backgrounds and intersecting oppressions to have voice and find solidarity.

This does not erase the systemic oppression built into the fabric of librarianship. It does not erase our history either.

But it does mean that activists have succeeded in mitigating the damage of the wider profession within their circles of influence.

And it means that activists have succeeded in creating pockets of radical librarian theory and have enacted strategy to change the profession from within for the better.

Antifa violence 'vitaly worth doing,' says NYU librarian

Toni Alraksinen
New York Campus Correspondent
@Toni_Alraksinen
on Sep 28, 2017 at 9:51 AM EDT

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- A New York University librarian praised Antifa violence as "vitaly worth doing" in an essay about the recent rise of violence on the far-left.
- April Hathecock argues that since "an explicitly peaceful movement" like Black Lives Matter faces "similar scrutiny" to Antifa, leftist protesters might as well employ violence in pursuit of their goals.

they say this like it's a bad thing!

I ♥ antifa librarians

This zine exists to give a brief introduction to some of the strategies that have worked in the past to either improve the profession as a whole, or to take direct action when slow institutional change will not protect people who need protecting.

Some things have been done by librarians & info professionals

Others by activists whose fights brought them to libraries as a site of oppression

STRATEGY #1:

ORGANIZE

Historical Example(s):

- Progressive Librarians' Council (1939)
- Black Caucus (1969)
- Social Responsibilities Round Table (1969)
- Congress for Change (1969)
- Progressive Librarians Guild (1990)
- DERAILED Forum (2016)

You're not alone!

Find your comrades

There's power in numbers.

Find the folks working toward your goals & vision and collaborate

STRATEGY #2:

BEND THE RULES

AKA: BE UNCOOPERATIVE

Historical Example(s):

- Publishing articles on how to enact socially responsible and radical library praxis, when those efforts aren't supported by broader ALA (1970s-Present)
- Opposing the Patriot Act while still technically following the law (2000s)
- Refusing to cooperate with ICE or to give patrons means to report community members to ICE (2016)
- Probably thousands of small examples of independent librarians privately bending policy in order to help folks. Doesn't need to be in a history book to have happened.

STRATEGY #3:

DONATE MATERIALS

Historical Example(s):

- Arthur and Lewis Tappan (1882)
 - Two wealthy abolitionists donate 2000+ anti-slavery writings

*Note: White supremacists have been horrifically successful with this tactic, particularly the "United Daughters of the Confederacy" who donated pro-slavery propaganda for children to libraries across the country.

Fight back with donating anti-racist texts.

Also check out TRANS INTO LIBRARIES project!
started by trans advocate Bobbi Linko

Seriously though, it's worth a try.
If you want your library to have something and they aren't going to get it on their own, try getting it for them.

STRATEGY #4:

When the laws/policies are unjust, break them

DIRECT ACTION

Historical Example(s):

- Civil Rights activists stage sit ins at segregated libraries leading to integrated libraries by 1964 (1950s-1960s)

if you don't improve library policy from within,

- Anti-Racist Action (ARA) organizers, the Boston local of North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (NEFAC) in an alliance with local kids of color helped run out of town fascists who were recruiting in York town's library meeting room, which later led to the library changing its meeting room policy (2002).

your community will rise up to meet the challenge

STRATEGY #5:

MAKE YOUR OWN

Historical Example(s)

- Reading Room Society in Philadelphia - the first social library for African American community (1828)
- Female Literary Society - first social library for African American women (1831)
- Philadelphia Library Company of Colored Persons (1883)

Unlike white librarianship, Black US librarianship has pretty rad beginnings with solid values right from the start.

↑ The Library Company of Philadelphia didn't allow PoC so they built their own. The PLCCP promoted literature, science, readings, lectures debates & public speakers in their community