

**From:** [Stephen Abram](#)  
**To:** [Stephen Abram](#); [Susie Benes](#)  
**Subject:** FOPL Statement of Solidarity with Black Community Against Systemic Racism  
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## FOPL Statement of Solidarity with Black Community Against Systemic Racism



### For Immediate Release

<http://fopl.ca/news/fopl-statement-of-solidarity-with-black-community-against-systemic-racism/>

**June 8, 2020:** At Friday's Board Meeting, the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries Board of Directors, the following official statement was endorsed:

The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries / La Fédération des Bibliothèques Publiques de l'Ontario joins with our community of library associations in condemning racism of all kinds. We must fight against systemic or structural racism towards Black Lives in our society. While this is fundamentally a moral and human rights issue, there are mindset, social, political, institutional, and process solutions that can and must be addressed. Public Libraries stand ready to be part of the solution.

We must recognize and acknowledge the inequities in our own communities that cause so much anger, injustice, poverty and suffering and limit human potential. Public libraries stand as beacons of freedom, choice, and openness. We have more to do, and we will commit to action.

Condemnation is not enough. The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries is committed to supporting our community to:

- Be good allies.
- Educate ourselves about the issues.
- Identify systemic policies and procedures that exacerbate the issue.
- Publicly declare our intent and belief that racism is a scourge on society.
- Set measurable goals to educate our leadership, staff, partners, and communities to build solutions.
- In all respects, the current 'norm' is against our professional and personal guiding principles and values.

Individual library systems in Ontario should:

- Prioritize anti-racism work in their Strategic Planning.
- Ensure a formal, inclusive, and equitable hiring policy for
- Review staff policies to protect staff from racist (and, indeed, all other forms of oppressive personal violence and interaction).
- [Seek to increase participation](#) from members who are underrepresented in the library community for our Boards. Be visibly welcoming.
- Examine how to promote racial equity in our current activities, while also seeking to develop new programs that explicitly focus on amplifying voices that have been ignored for far too long.
- Review collection development policies and procedures to ensure inclusivity and diversity and actively address gaps in library collections and displays.
- Ensure community-led research, surveys, polls, conversations, and focus groups (etc.) are inclusive of our full communities.
- Eliminate racial and social equity barriers in library programs, services, policies, and practices.
- Create and maintain an environment of diversity, inclusion, and respect, both in our library systems and in all aspects of our wider community roles.
- Ensure we are reaching and engaging disenfranchised people in the community and providing a platform where they may share their voices.
- Serve as a convener and facilitator of conversations and partnerships to address community challenges.
- Be visibly forthright on tough issues that are important to our communities.

FOPL will also be reviewing all of our policies, procedures, bylaws and public statements to ensure we align with these values. Furthermore, the Federation will, in consultative collaboration, develop tools and provide resources to help our libraries.

We stand with our fellow library collectives and associations such as the [Urban Libraries Council](#) and endorsed by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council, to show our strong commitment to ending structural racism by supporting ULC's [Statement on Race and Social Equity](#). Libraries use this statement as a baseline for building progressive policies, activities, and collaborative relationships to advance equity. (A list of 'Statements From Libraries and Library Organizations Re: Racism and Increased Violence' is maintained [here](#)).

We owe it to our Black staff, members, volunteers, authors, and library patrons to demand change and accountability. We must and do acknowledge that we have work to do within our sector and we must work to accomplish positive change.

Libraries inform, educate, and engage. Libraries serve our communities. At the same time, we recognize that libraries in our society are rooted in a history of colonialism, anti-Black racism, and white supremacy. In addition, in Canada, we are challenged as a profession lacking in cultural diversity.

**There are many good resources that librarians and others have created or recommended to assist us in learning more about allyship and awareness of these issues. A modest list is shared with this release in the hopes of providing starting point for action-oriented progress.**

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The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries / La Fédération des Bibliothèques Publiques de l'Ontario offers the following resource links, as a small start, to continue our path forward.

- GUIDE TO ALLYSHIP: An evolving open-source guide to help you become a more thoughtful and effective ally <http://foppl.ca/news/current-events-guide-to-allyship-an-evolving-open-source-guide-to-help-you-become-a-more-thoughtful-and-effective-ally/>
- Anti-Racist Resource Guide <http://foppl.ca/news/anti-racist-resource-guide/>
- Webliography: Anti-Racism Resources <http://foppl.ca/news/webliography-anti-racism-resources/>
- Read “[Theory in practice: Moving from systemic racism to anti-racism in Ontario public libraries](#)” on OLA’s online magazine Open Shelf, as well as their column [Cultural diversity and inclusion in the workplace](#).
- OLA’s Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Task Force has put together a bibliography, including research resources and blogs: [OLA Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Resources](#) (last updated November 2018).
- Toronto Public Library staff have compiled a [Black Lives Matter reading list](#).
- [Goodreads](#) have curated [#BlackLivesMatter](#)
- CBC has gathered resources on [Hear More Black Voices](#), such as podcasts, interviews, TEDx Talks, books, educational documentaries and films.
- The Festival of Literary Diversity (FOLD) shared [Four Critical Titles that Tackle Anti-Black Racism in Canada](#) on Twitter.
- Read [Anti-Racism Resources for White People and Parents](#), compiled by Sarah Sophie Flicker and Alyssa Klein in May 2020.
- Liao, C. (2020, May 16). COVID-19 has put a harsh spotlight on the anti-Asian racism that has always existed in Canada <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/covid-19-has-put-a-harsh-spotlight-on-the-anti-asian-racism-that-has-always-existed-in-canada-1.5572674>
- Pringle, J. (2020, May 12). Ottawa police encourage residents to report racist incidents. <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/ottawa-police-encourage-residents-to-report-racist-incidents-1.4936444>
- [How to Talk about Race and other recorded webinars and resources](#) from ALA’s Office for Diversity and Literary Outreach Services
- Association of College and Research Libraries’ Keeping up with... [Microaggressions](#) and [Implicit Bias](#)
- Public Library Association’s recorded webinar [Understanding Power, Identity, and Oppression in the Public Library](#)
- [Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation](#) from ALA’s Public Programming Office’s Great Stories Club
- The work of [Documenting the Now](#)
- CELUPL: Statement on Serving Marginalized Individuals <http://foppl.ca/news/celupl-statement-on-serving-marginalized-individuals/>
- CULC Statement on Race & Social Equity 2017: [http://www.culc.ca/cms\\_lib/CULC%20-%20CBUC%20Statement%20on%20Race%20&%20Social%20Equity.pdf](http://www.culc.ca/cms_lib/CULC%20-%20CBUC%20Statement%20on%20Race%20&%20Social%20Equity.pdf)

Cheers,

Stephen

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