

## IJIDI: Book Review

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Reviewer: Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz, New York University, USA

Book Review Editor: Norda A. Bell, York University, Canada

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**K**nowledge Justice is dedicated to Irlanda Estelí Jacinto, who is named as a colleague who began the journey of the construction of this book, but chose to leave librarianship, “and for all the other Irlandas in LIS” (p. v). Entering this text with a nod to this departure puts at issue the impact of racism on our profession, and livelihoods, as well as highlight the urgent need for this active and liberatory scholarship. Why do librarians of color leave the profession? How does White Supremacy reign in LIS? And what is Critical Race Theory (CRT)? Defining, articulating, and practicing knowledge justice is the act of disruption that this book introduces. CRT is the framework and lens for which this text is built with a purpose to “produce a volume that reenvisions what LIS could be with Critical Race Theory as a central philosophy... [and] is the first to focus solely on applying CRT to LIS” (p. 7). To learn more about CRT, the “Introduction” illustrates core concepts, tenets, historical formations, and instances in LIS of CRT. The “Introduction” must be read by every LIS student, library manager, and all who work as information professionals. As an educator to first-year LIS students, for example, in my class, this will be required reading in that we may all be steered in a common understanding of CRT application.

Editors Sofia Y. Leung and Jorge R. López-McKnight provided space for the contributors--all Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)--to use CRT to challenge the foundational principles, values, and assumptions of library and information science in the U.S. The positionality and identities of the contributors further substantiates the writing. During several book launches attended by hundreds, the editors described the curation process: authors were invited to periodic, virtual meet-ups (this is before the pandemic transition to universal zoom) where questions related to individual research were subject to analysis and care. Authors were also invited to peer review other chapters, creating an interlocking web of structure, community, and support, evident in the contributor editing of introductory chapters. Readers will find the collaborative structure of its curation apparent in the referential and reflective portions of the collection.

There is a synchronicity to the writings, the tone, the urgency, and I would argue, as a result of this level of caretaking, this book’s impact on the profession. Readers will also find that the contributors of this text have formed a community of LIS scholars and practitioners committed to racial justice. This book review encourages U.S.-based readers as well as those from an international audience to engage with this community of thinkers as change agents, innovators, and mostly library and information science professionals who dare to shed light on structures

that perpetuate White Supremacy, holding the profession accountable to right structural wrongs. Additionally, this book review experimentally takes on CRT tenets, with an aim to exemplify the text's teachings, applying what would be for me, an ordinary reading and intersectional perspective, for which my interests converge, through a queer review of its chapters.

From the Introduction alone, I agree that *Knowledge Justice* is “destined to become the foundational seminal primer for those seeking illumination and inspiration regarding the application of CRT” (p. 131-132). Yet, this review focuses on queer contexts within, beginning with my positionality, replicating the form of authors, Jennifer Brown, Nicholae Cline (Coharie), and Marisa Méndez-Brady in their chapter “Leaning on Labor: Whiteness and Hierarchies of Power in LIS Work”, who state, “We write this from myriad perspectives --Blackness, queerness, Latinidad, femme, indigeneity, non-binary...” (p. 104). Vani Natarajan's chapter is also a guide to situate oneself, as they did: “I am a South Asian American with US Citizenship... I am both a non-Black person of color and a settler of color” (p.142). Both chapters recognize our absences and subjective connections at “the level of society” (p. 133). And now mine: I am a Black-garifuna-belizean-second generation-jamaican-first generation american born with U.S. citizenship privilege. I am a Black settler, a lesbian mother to a Black girl, with a legally disabled Puerto-Rican wife, in a predominantly White neighborhood in Lenape and Wappinger territories in northeastern U.S. Thank you Jennifer Brown, Nicholae Cline (Coharie), and Marisa Méndez-Brady for your formulas.

Anastasia Chiu, Fobazi M. Ettarh, Jennifer A. Ferretti's chapter, “Not the Shark, but the Water: How Neutrality and Vocational Awe Intertwine to Uphold White Supremacy” highlights CRT tenets including “racism as ordinary, critique of liberalism, and whiteness as property” to further explore two often quoted and what have become foundational concepts in library science - “neutrality” and “vocational awe” (pp. 29, 49-71). Authors quote lesbian poet and activist, Tatiana de la Tierra's 2008 essay, “Latina Lesbian Subject Headings: The Power of Naming” in their acknowledgement that attests Library of Congress Subject Headings uphold White Supremacy (p. 65). These authors demand a paradigm shift, which acknowledges racism as the water that surrounds us, in four sections: collection development, facilities access, public services, and in metadata and discovery. They conclude that “no part of the library work cycle benefits from intertwining neutrality and vocational awe. Although well intentioned, these values work together to normalize and uphold racism and White Supremacy in libraries, even when they are espoused with the intent of working toward equity” (p. 66).

Myrna E. Morales and Stacie Williams in, “Moving toward Transformative Librarianship: Naming and Identifying Epistemic Supremacy” introduce readers to “transformative librarianship” - an understanding of “how information fosters our self-awareness while at the same time holding an awareness of the community to which we belong” (p. 89). Authors identify connections of epistemic supremacy in relation to CRT including “...the disproportionate killings of Black and Indigenous people, especially women; and the assault on gender-oppressed bodies” (p. 76). Authors cite epistemic supremacy targeted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Counterintelligence Program's (COINTELPRO) thirty years of surveillance, “including clergy who were civil rights organizers as well as members of the LGBTQIA community” (p. 80). Authors also reference Audre Lorde as a critical race theorist who coined vulnerability theory, “which identifies all people as ‘embodied creatures’ who are susceptible to harm and notes that people with marginal identities are especially vulnerable to institutional harms” (p. 81). Queer content is heavily present in this chapter of transformative librarianship which concludes with examples for how GLAM institutions and professionals may recall Black lesbian feminists' practices, such

as that with the Combahee River Collective, to consider transformative librarianship as praxis to “create conditions for radical change” (p. 87).

adrienne maree brown’s Emergent Strategy, is referenced in Jennifer Brown, Nicholae Cline (Coharie), and Marisa Méndez-Brady’s chapter, “Leaning on Our Labor: Whiteness and Hierarchies of Power in LIS Work”. Authors embody the practice of Emergent Strategy, and the radical, awe-inspiring work of visionary writers such as Octavia Butler (p. 106). This is foregrounded as authors identify heteronormativity (p. 100) and “misogynoir (a particular type of misogyny directed at Black women and Black femmes)” (p. 105), as two examples of interest convergence, a CRT tenet, as playing a role in the refusal of our libraries to name whiteness in diversity programs, initiatives, and documents. In their concluding section, the authors cite queer speculative fiction writers as CRT theorists to provide readers with tools to “explore what systemic change might look like” using a ten-part outline of radical practices.

Miranda H. Belarde-Lewis and Sarah R. Kostelecky’s chapter, “Tribal Critical Race Theory in Zuni Pueblo: Information Access in a Cautious Community” do not have explicitly queer themes, yet this chapter’s community and ancestral focus foregrounds desire as a central component of the TribalCrit theoretical framework. To counteract TribalCrit’s tenet 2, that “US policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White Supremacy, and a desire for material gain,” tenet 4 denotes, “Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification” (p. 114). Desire is connected to an imperative need for Native communities to “know” and that knowing is grounded in the ancestors, the communities, and the plants (p. 116).

Nicholae Cline and April M. Hathcock are editors for “Part II: Illuminate Erasure”, which centers queer subjectivities. This section begins with Anthony W. Dunbar’s essay, “The Courage of Character and Commitment versus the Cowardliness of Comfortable Contentment”, which attests that the move to bring CRT outside of marginal conversations and into the mouths of every librarian is “certainly a highly spiritual journey” (p. 131).

“A Queer South Asian Librarian in Academia: Counterstory, Theory, Strategies” by Vani Natarajan reads as a self-reflective manifesto. Natarajan ponders, “I wonder how I measure ‘success’ at centering QTPOC voices and lives in my work” (p. 146). The author provides a narrative of counterstory through their own experience in academia, as a student aiming to learn more about their South Asian roots and as a sole librarian of color at their prestigious campus library. To answer this question of attributing success, Natarajan points readers to engagement practices centered on building connections and cross-collaborations outside of the library. The nuance in Natarajan piece is in the method of counterstory, which interjects the practice of situating oneself within the structure of race and privilege, or power and value. In response to a university general statement on collections, Natarajan writes, “The statement lists many verbs (serve, managed, built, arranged) without subjects. Who is building and maintaining the collection?”, acknowledging that staff of color “get no recognition in the above statement for their work” (p. 147). Natarajan interprets their counterstory with three CRT frameworks: community cultural wealth, intersectionality, and Queer of Color Critique, and applies these to the limitations and imagined possibilities of library and archival structures.

“Ann Allen Shockley: An Activist-Librarian for Black Special Collections” by Shaundra Walker uses the counternarrative tool to identify the building of Black special collections in HBCUs, namely through the work of Ann Allen Shockley, coined as an activist-librarian. Walker’s biographical

narrative of Shockley pays homage to Shockley's genealogy, connects her studies in journalism to her work as a creative writer, and finally introduces readers to Shockley's published novels, including *Loving Her*, the first ever published Black lesbian novel. Walker acknowledges Shockley's work as an author of "literary works centering the lives of Black Lesbians" and that this is an overlooked demographic (p.166). This chapter raises queer questions: How could Shockley have been so brave, and so knowing? Walker concludes that, "while [Shockley] was not viewed as an activist-librarian during her library career, viewing Shockley's accomplishments through the lens of CRT allows one to reveal, expand, and acknowledge her activism in new ways" (p. 172). I would recommend readers follow Walker's directive and include Shockley's contributions to the Black lesbian literary political landscape as a significant component of the reimagining of her radicalisms.

As a book editor myself, I often recognize a publication's index. Though indexing is a separate field of study and practice, Lori Salmon curated the index, a librarian in her own right, who added labor and value to this text. As librarians with interest in taxonomies and knowledge organization as a whole, I'd also like to acknowledge some of the choices made. The *Knowledge Justice* editors continually introduce the Indexer as an equal contributor to the text, adding Salmon's name in the table of contents for the electronic version. I view this attribution as an intentional and critical response to our labor as librarians and scholars. The index has a single-subheading structure with cross-references that compile and organize a variation of unique terms, contributors, organizations, and phrases such as: Non-binary: lived labor experiences, 104; Racial Justice: gender-inclusive bathrooms, 151" (index). In seeking queer concepts from this text, there are only two main headings, each of which reference Vani Natarajan's chapter, though from this review, it is evident that multiple queer contexts exist throughout the collection. Despite this criticism, Salmon does provide multiple locators for each instance. For those seeking queer content, the index will only provide a starting point. Do not stop there; continue to explore the language of the chapters and draw new conclusions, using this review as a guide.

As outlined in the "Conclusion:Afterwor(l)ding toward Imaginative Dimensions", this text is a call for transformation of the LIS profession with an "abundance agenda" that "position(s) CRT more centrally in LIS" by centering BIPOC voices (p. 319). Together, "we can push for BIPOC knowledge without invalidating or rejecting other knowledge(s)" (p. 320). This book is recommended for QBIPOC and BIPOC LIS professionals who have waited to find themselves inside a scholarly text. It is also recommended for a global audience of scholars and readers, especially given the Arcadia Fund's contribution to a DRM-free, downloadable open access copy. Finally, it is recommended for LIS programs beginner and advanced courses and LIS professionals seeking scholarship to formulate conversations on racial justice using CRT. The works in this text I anticipate will be oft cited in our recurring scholarship, as the expectation is we will all join this movement on racial justice. *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Studies through Critical Race Theory* is our ticket.

**Shawn(ta) Smith-Cruz** ([Shawntasmithcruz@gmail.com](mailto:Shawntasmithcruz@gmail.com)) is an assistant curator and Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning, and Engagement at New York University Division of Libraries. She is also a visiting assistant professor at the Pratt School of Information. Shawn is co-editor of *Grabbing Tea: Queer Conversations in Librarianship*, Litwin Books and a co-coordinating volunteer archivist at the [Lesbian Herstory Archives](#).