

Dear Elaine Hirsch, Charles Wood, and members of the *OLA Quarterly* Editorial Board,

First, I wanted to thank everyone who worked on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion issue of the *OLA Quarterly*. So many of the articles shared were inspirational and showed how libraries of all sizes and librarians at all levels of an organization can find ways to make libraries, collections, and the information environment more equitable, diverse, and inclusive. Most of the articles made me feel proud to be a member of the Oregon library community and a past contributor to this publication.

I also wanted to express my deep concern about the publication of the final article in the issue, “Yes, but ... One Librarian’s Thoughts About Doing It Right” by Heather McNeil. I believe this article should never have been published in a professional journal based on its poor quality, lack of evidence for conclusions, and lack of collegiality. As someone who has had two articles published in *OLA Quarterly*, I believe this article reflects poorly on all of us.

While McNeil seems to be in favor of diverse books and reads many herself, she also doesn’t necessarily believe that *every* library should have a diverse collection that “will possibly sit, unread, on the shelves.” She provides no evidence to suggest that diverse books will not circulate, but people new to the field might simply trust her unsupported suppositions based on her many years of experience. In the very same issue, [there is an example from a smaller library](#) in a more conservative and less diverse area with a much smaller budget (like McNeil’s hypothetical library) that is devoting an increasing chunk of their budget to diverse books based on their belief that we “have a professional and ethical responsibility to be proactively inclusive in collection development.”

McNeil cites an impressive array of works at the end of her article, but does not actually incorporate any of the lessons or messages in works by DiAngelo, Reese, Ishizuka & Stephens, and Gonzalez into her article. They seem solely designed to demonstrate that she is qualified to tell people how to do diversity “right.” Nowhere in this piece does the author consider the harm that a lack of diverse books in a library collection or racist illustrations in Dr. Seuss books might have on our diverse patrons. Instead of thinking about how a black child might feel not seeing themselves reflected in books at their library, she worries about a small library spending money on diverse books that might not circulate. Instead of thinking about how a young Asian child might feel seeing the caricature of a Chinese man in *To Think that I Saw it on Mulberry Street*, McNeil centers her own feelings and those of other white people.

This article is also uncollegial and dismissive of diversity efforts that make the author uncomfortable, like those of Dr. Debbie Reese and the authors of *Reading While White*. To make a well-respected indigenous librarian and expert on Native American children’s literature a target the way she did by making her name a heading and starting the section with “Hoo boy! Opening a can of worms here” was offensive (as was her misidentification of Dr. Reese as Ms. instead of Dr. and her conclusion that Dr. Reese did not understand the award criteria). Instead

of providing any evidence from *Reading While White* to support her negative conclusions, she simply tells her audience that the authors want to make white people feel bad and wrong.

Her views in the article aside, McNeil's article is written more in the style of a personal blog post than a professional article designed to contribute to the profession. It is a stream of consciousness assortment of observations with no discernable conclusion that might benefit the reader. In the end, McNeil is suggesting that people be open-minded and consider others, when she has not spent a moment of time in the article recognizing the needs and feelings of those from historically marginalized groups and has simply centered her own experiences and feelings.

Since this was published in OLA's official publication, it reflects poorly on OLA and on Oregon librarianship and I am troubled that it was published in its current form. Choosing not to publish something or requiring significant edits is not censorship; it is good editorial practice. As someone who has written opinion pieces for *American Libraries* magazine for over a decade, I often have had to make significant edits based on my editor's comments and have even had entire articles rejected. No journal has to publish every opinion piece that comes their way.

I don't know what the OLA Quarterly's editorial standards are, but I can't understand how an article with such glaring problems as this has could have been published in a professional journal designed to represent our state professional organization. Oregon library workers are better than this; OLA is better than this. I have immense respect for the work you all do and the time you give to our state organization, but I would suggest that the *OLA Quarterly* editorial team consider their editorial standards for publication. It is troubling to see such a fantastic issue of *OLA Quarterly* end in such a negative way with such a poorly-considered and inflammatory piece and I hope the editorial board will address their decision to publish it.

Warm Regards,

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