

A LIBRARY  FOR EVERYONE



# 2022

## ANTI-RACISM IMPACT REPORT

# From Paper to Practice: Becoming a Library for Everyone





## IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY WORLD,

our patrons reflect and include a wide cross section of the population of any given village, city or town: seniors, children, teens, the well-to-do, and the have-nots, across the cultural and racial spectrum.

On the contrary, the library profession has historically not been an inclusive space; 83 percent of librarians identify as white females. When the profession is monolithic in this way, it can and often does create a disconnect in providing library services which engage culturally diverse patrons. We can and often do miss opportunities to cultivate a welcoming environment where Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) patrons and/or staff feel seen, heard, and valued.

With Stephen Jackson, our Director of Equity and Anti-Racism, leading the charge, our library is working actively and with intention to normalize providing culturally inclusive collections and programs as well as an ecosystem in which BIPOC library staff can develop and thrive within the library service profession.

I am proud of the progress this library has made with our active anti-racism efforts, and I look forward to what is to come in 2023 and beyond.

**Joslyn Bowling Dixon**  
Executive Director

**The library profession has historically not been an inclusive space; 83 percent of librarians identify as white females."**



## Focusing on Historically, Intentionally & Traditionally Marginalized People Groups (HITMPGs)

Throughout 2022, we prioritized staff members who have identified as Black, Indigenous, or African American by continuing to hold space for a staff Black affinity group.

“These groups create welcoming environments for staff and offer a higher probability that identity isn’t a barrier in the work environment,” said Jackson.

“Providing opportunities for those who have not historically, intentionally, and traditionally had their voices centered is a way to shift our internal culture,” he added.

In the fall of 2022, two new groups—one for Latinx staff members and another for LGBTQ+ staff members—were established.



Juneteenth Storytime, June 2022

## RE-SHAPING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2022, the library’s Community Engagement Team moved from supporting Public Services & Programs to reporting to the Director of Equity and Anti-Racism. The eight team members, each with specialized roles, built authentic, collaborative relationships with and among community members, area partners, and their fellow library staff members.



Dia de Muertos ofrenda at Dole Branch

“Our community guides everything we do,” Jackson said, adding that “when we speak of community we want to be clear we are acknowledging not only the public whom we serve but also the internal community who are essential to the quality of our service.”

One noteworthy example in 2022 was the shift of Librarian Nora Sanchez from an early childhood focus to serving as the library’s first Latinx Language and Culture Librarian. Successful collaborations followed, including the first-ever Hispanic Heritage Month community festival Convivencia, the library Dia de Muertos ofrenda displays and Day of the Dead Performance by The Omeyocan Dance Company, and new community programs such as Noche de Loteria and Latinx Author Book Cafe.

## MEET THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM



### **Chibuiké Enyia, Manager of Community Engagement**

Hired in late December 2022 and starting in early 2023, Chibuiké is a lifelong Oak Park resident who brings more than five years of management experience and extensive community engagement experience to the library. He is familiar with the library as a Village of Oak Park Trustee, an Oak Park patron, and as the team's book bike assistant this past summer.



### **Ian Gosse, Community Engagement Librarian**

Ian has worked for the library since 2012, having spent seven years in Patron Services, then moving into Community Engagement. Ian is responsible for coordinating the library's Home Delivery program, as well as assisting with Book Bike visits and other outreach events around the community. When not at the library, Ian enjoys listening to audiobooks and playing video games.



### **Juanta Griffin, Multicultural Learning Coordinator**

Juanta is passionate about multicultural education for all ages. A longtime Oak Park resident, arts educator, and community organizer, Juanta joined the library in March 2020 as Multicultural Learning Coordinator. She explores and shares learning from the library's Multicultural Collection, curated to help community explore cultures and build empathy. She collaborates with community members and groups to offer cultural programming and exhibits facilitated by and delivered through their own unique voices and identities.



### **Jenny Jackson, Community Engagement Coordinator**

Jenny specializes in social and emotional learning development. She can usually be found hanging out with puppets—especially Ruthie the camel—at library storytimes and in the Early Bird Learning video series. She loves listening to and learning from children—it's the best thing ever!

## MEET THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM



### **Claire Ong, Library Specialist**

Claire has a passion for libraries and began her library career in 2014. She started working at the Oak Park Public Library in 2021, as a Library Clerk in Adult Services. After joining the Community Engagement Team in 2022, her role has expanded to include outreach, such as riding the Book Bike and attending community events. Claire is especially enthusiastic about the Multicultural Collection, and how it is used to educate and appreciate diverse cultures.



### **Nora Sanchez, Latinx Language & Culture Librarian**

Nora joined the library in 2017 and has worked as a Library Assistant and an Early Childhood Community Engagement Coordinator. In 2022 she began her role as Latinx Language & Culture Librarian, engaging with and meeting the evolving needs of the Latinx and Spanish-speaking community. She provides bilingual and Spanish-language resources, translations, outreach, and programs such as Noche de Lotería (Lotería Night) and Latinx Author Book Cafe. Nora collaborates with the community on celebrations such as Día de Muertos and Convivencia, Oak Park's Hispanic Heritage Month Festival.



### **Tatiana Swancy, Restorative Practices Coordinator**

Tatiana, since joining the library in 2015, has held varying roles. She proposed her current (and a new) role as Restorative Practices Coordinator because she recognized a need for more intentional anti-racist, anti-oppression, and pro-joy programs. She partners with artists, nonprofits, and schools, supporting them with library resources and co-creating learning opportunities. She also facilitates peace circles for staff members and the community.



### **Sarah Yale, Community Engagement Librarian**

Sarah, prior to joining the library in 2013, worked and volunteered in schools and nonprofits focusing on youth development and restorative justice. She has worked in Oak Park as a Storytime Outreach Intern, Library Assistant, Neighborhood Services Librarian, and Manager of Community Engagement. She is passionate about making library resources accessible throughout the community and engaging people and partners where they are—particularly via Oak Park's Book Bike, the Paperback Rider.



## Growing Staff Skills in Restorative Justice

Peacekeeping requires active listening and skilled facilitation to create safe spaces for anyone to show up as their authentic selves. This allows our staff to pull from our community what their specific needs are and to add value to how we deal not only with the public but fellow staff members.

In 2022, the library offered ongoing peace circle trainings and circle opportunities for library staff and community members. At year's end, 25 percent of all library staff members had voluntarily participated. Having staff members equipped with this tool enables staff to equitably serve the community through creating spaces where people can show up authentically as themselves.



Community Kwanzaa Celebration, December 2022

## LEARNING & CELEBRATING WITH OUR NEIGHBORS

In 2022, monthly reports to the Board of Library Trustees included equity and anti-racism work with a significant community impact. In addition to those reports, you can [click on the links listed below to read more about these library programs in 2022:](#)

- [Participated in Oak Park's first Juneteenth parade »](#)
- [Purchased new Juneteenth-themed artwork for the library's permanent art collection »](#)
- [Presented new displays for the community to learn about the unknown historical context of people who identify as Black »](#)
- [Created and posted on all floors a Code of Conduct that clearly states the library's commitment to anti-racist practices »](#)
- [Hosted a multigenerational learning series with staff-led public circle discussions centered around "1619" »](#)
- Implemented a new art exhibition process that prioritized BIPOC artists—[see several displays in these photos »](#)

### More BIPOC staff in program planning positions

To successfully deliver programs like the ones above, the library has built teams with more BIPOC staff members in program planning roles. These include staff positions in Community Engagement (pages 4-5), Adult Services, and Middle and High School Services. BIPOC staff members have created and delivered authentic experiences that prioritized people of color. Staff members also used new ways to promote programs identified as equity and anti-racism learning and engagement opportunities to the community.



1619 Series Anti-Racist Discussion Circle, November 2022



Sankofa Arts Festival, June 2022



Omeyocan Dance Company Performance, October 2022



Hispanic Heritage Month Festival, September 2022



D-Composed Concert, November 2022



**Read stories, see a timeline, meet who is a part of the library's Anti-Racism Advisory Team, and more at [oppl.org/anti-racism](https://oppl.org/anti-racism) »**



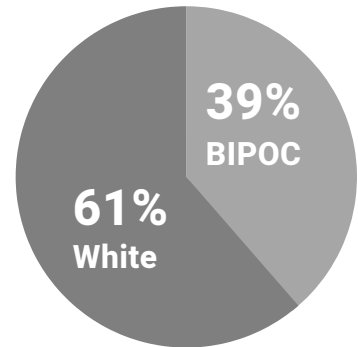
# A STAFF REFLECTING COMMUNITY DIVERSITY

For the last several years, the library has been working toward the goal of creating a staff—with Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) at all levels of the organization—who reflect the racial diversity of Oak Park.

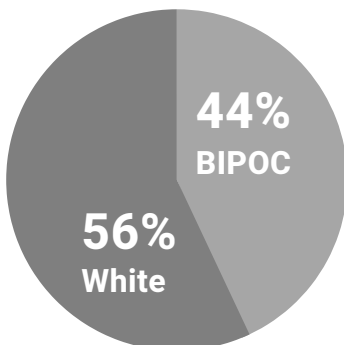
The intentional approach includes listening to ongoing community needs around equity and anti-racism, and creating new opportunities as a result of attrition. The numbers on this page help tell that story. For example, on the library's leadership team:

- In 2017, there was one BIPOC director
- In 2022, there were three BIPOC directors and Oak Park's first Black library executive director.

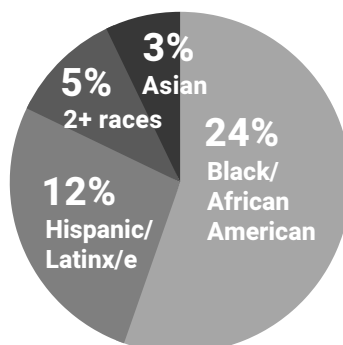
2022 Village of Oak Park



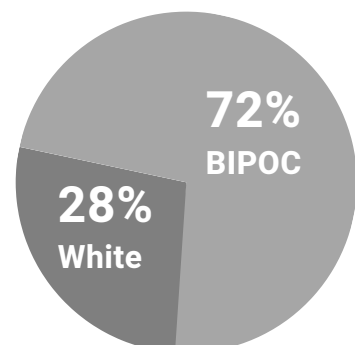
2022 All Library Staff Members



2022 BIPOC Staff Members

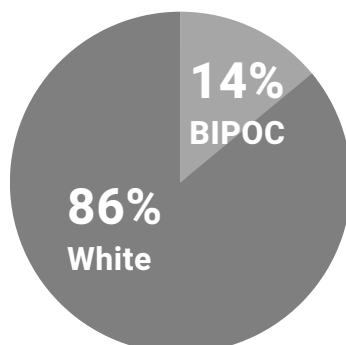


2022 Newly Hired Staff Members

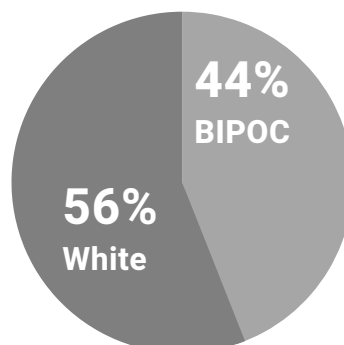


Sources: Internal library data and U.S. Census data

Library Leadership 2017



Library Leadership 2022





# REFLECTION FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF EQUITY & ANTI-RACISM

The library's vision is to empower every voice in our community. Its mission is to share the information, services, and opportunities that fulfill Oak Park's aspirations. And in 2021, in its strategic plan, anti-racism became one of its four strategic priorities.

In 2022, we started inside. Our library began the internal process to present and share how we will continue this journey to mitigate the implications of internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural racism at the library. Throughout the year and throughout the organization, that work included:

- **Involving new community members** in the library's nine-member Anti-Racism Advisory Team (five of which were non-library staff).
- **Individually onboarding new staff members** personally, encouraging them to show up unapologetically in the fullness of their identities.
- **Supporting all library staff members to help identify moments for mindfulness** through multiple staff and public wellness opportunities.
- **Growing inclusive library leaders through management team training**, focusing on topics such as one-on-one coaching and feedback sharing.

Looking ahead, we plan to internally model what we expect it means to be an equitable and anti-racist organization. Granted, that is an aspirational goal. It is with the support of both library staff and community that this journey will continue.

**Stephen Jackson**  
**Director of Equity and Anti-Racism**

**We plan to internally model what we expect it means to be an equitable and anti-racist organization."**



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## **The library's Anti-Racism Strategic Plan attempts to address four types of racism:**

### **Internalized racism lies within individuals.**

This type of racism comprises our private beliefs and biases about race and racism, influenced by our culture. This can take many different forms including prejudice toward others of a different race; internalized oppression—the negative beliefs about oneself by people of color; or internalized privilege—beliefs about superiority or entitlement by white people.

### **Interpersonal racism (personally mediated) occurs between individuals.**

This is the bias that occurs when individuals interact with others and their personal racial beliefs affect their public interactions.

### **Institutional racism occurs within institutions and systems of power.**

This refers to the unfair policies and discriminatory practices of particular institutions (schools, workplaces, etc.) that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people. Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they reinforce racial inequities.

### **Structural racism is racial bias among institutions and across society.**

This involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors, including the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

**Read the full plan at [oppl.org/anti-racism](https://oppl.org/anti-racism).**

Sources: Adapted from Race Forward and RGW Consulting, 2020