

A LIBRARY  FOR EVERYONE



2023

EQUITY & ANTI-RACISM ANNUAL REPORT

Making an Impact





INSIDE BY PAGE

A Message from Joslyn.....	3
Curating Collections.....	4
Hosting Artistic Exhibitions.....	5
Bringing People Together.....	6-7
Highlighting Unique Milestones.....	8-10
Reflecting Our Community.....	11
A Library for Everyone	12



ON THE COVER

In June, we held a fashion show celebrating 50 years of hip hop style, as part of the Collections of Culture: 50 Years of Hip Hop Inside Libraries, Museums and Archives initiative. Learn more at oppl.org/hiphop50.

MISSION & VISION

Our library's mission is to share the information, services, and opportunities that fulfill Oak Park's aspirations. Our vision is to empower every voice in our community.

PRIORITIES

Our library strives to be a library for everyone, one that prioritizes:

- Becoming an equitable and anti-racist organization;
- Connecting people and building community;
- Creating capacity for literacy, learning, and lifelong skill development; and
- Sustaining, sharing, and respecting community resources.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report shares examples of library work in 2023 that has made an impact—measurable and anecdotal—on the individual people it serves and the overall community it supports. Thanks for reading and for using your public library, Oak Park!



A MESSAGE FROM JOSLYN

When reflecting on 2023, I had the opportunity to review the timeline of our library's anti-racism and equity journey (oppl.org/timeline). If you have not seen it, or if it has been a while, I encourage you to take a few minutes to check it out.

For me, as this institution's first African American Executive Director, this virtual walk down memory lane was inspiring and humbling—a reminder of the shoulders I stand on, and how the work we do today, and plan for tomorrow, builds on yesterday.

And though this work will never be completed, it is only by partnering with people both inside and outside of our library—our Board of Library Trustees, our staff members, and our community—that we continue to move forward.

On the following pages we detail public milestones from 2023. Internally, we also celebrate:

- **Providing opportunities.** Within my first six months, six of 14 promotions included BIPOC library staff, providing opportunities for advancement at all levels and not exclusively for degreed librarians.
- **Investing in people.** In 2023, more than 70 staff members at all pay grade levels and representing all library teams attended over 90 paid learning opportunities (training sessions, workshops, seminars, and conferences), including 14 who attended the 4th National Joint Conference of Librarians of Color in

St. Pete Beach, Florida, and more than 30 who attended the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago, many of whom were first time attendees. Knowledge is power, and so we continued offering tuition grants totaling over \$26,000 to 12 staff members. These grants were for staff members to pursue certificates or degrees, such as a grant writing certificate, a bachelor's degree, and a Master's in Library and Information Science degree.

- **Learning, Sharing & Engaging.** In August, I was appointed to serve a three-year term on the Reaching Across Illinois Libraries' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. With this appointment, I am afforded the opportunity to share the work we are doing at our library with academic, public, and school libraries across the state, to connect and learn from other libraries' DEI efforts, and to receive access to the most innovative trainings and initiatives for both my own edification and to potentially include as part of our evolving and expanding anti-racism and equity journey.

On behalf of all Oak Park library staff members, I thank you for celebrating our work in 2023, and I look forward to adding anti-racism and equity milestones to our 2024 timeline and beyond.

Yours in service,

Joslyn Bowling Dixon
Executive Director, Oak Park Public Library
joslynd@oppl.org

CURATING COLLECTIONS



Our dedicated Collection Team is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, striving to build a collection that offers a broad spectrum of perspectives, voices, and experiences. By meticulously selecting items that resonate with different heritages, traditions, and histories, they aim to foster a sense of belonging and appreciation for the rich tapestry of cultures that enrich our library.

One way you might see this is in the engaging lists and monthly displays that honor various cultural backgrounds, ensuring representation across a spectrum of identities. Every list and display of titles this team curates is guided by the principle of inclusivity, as they strive to offer a broad spectrum of perspectives, voices, and experiences. Whether the theme revolves around history, science fiction, or poetry, the goal remains constant: to present a collection that authentically mirrors the diversity of our community.

Our library takes pride in fostering an environment where every individual, regardless of background, can find themselves reflected in the pages of suggested reads, which promotes understanding and empathy among our patrons.

“When curating the library’s collections, our primary aim is to champion inclusivity and celebrate diversity.”

— Barbara Fitzgerald,
Manager of Collections

HOSTING ARTISTIC EXHIBITIONS


Guided by the library's commitment to equity and anti-racism, these local artists were selected to share their stories and creativity through these 2023 Main Library gallery exhibitions and related programs.

DAVID ALVARADO

ODD FELLOWS
1.09.2023 - 2.05.2023

01.26.23
Artist Reception
6:30-8:00PM

OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
OPPL.ORG/ART



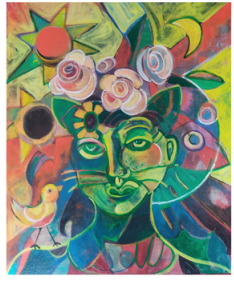
"Mr. Spide", Acrylic, paint pen on insulation board

RACHEL WEAVER RIVERA

E.A.C.H. EXPRESSION, ART, COMMUNITY, & HEALTH: ARTWORKS ABOUT REAL LIFE!
8.01.2023 - 8.31.2023

Artist Reception and Drop-in Workshop
8.19.23, 10AM-12PM

OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
OPPL.ORG/ART




"Cat Lady", Acrylic on Canvas, 20in. x 16in., 2023

JASON DORSEY

ALKEBULAN SHADOWS
2.07.2023 - 3.11.2023

2.11.2023
Artist Reception
2:00PM-4:00PM

OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
OPPL.ORG/ART




"Alkebulan Shadows", Digital Photograph 12.5in x 18in

TONY ARMENDARIZ

EXPRESSIONS OF LIFE
9.03.2023 - 10.07.2023

Artist Reception
9.16.23
1:00PM-2:30PM

OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
OPPL.ORG/ART



"She Has and She Will", Watercolor on paper, 22in. x 30in.

Robert Marshall Presents:

ECHOES
03.14.23 - 04.15.23

OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
OPPL.ORG/ART




"ECHOES THE ART EXHIBITION", MARCH 14TH - APRIL 15TH, 2023 - CHICAGO, IL - HEARTHECHOES.COM

LINDSAY OLSON

Our Once & Future Wetlands: Art, Ecology & Engineering
10.10.2023 - 11.11.2023

Artist Reception and Discussion
11.09.23
6:00PM-8:00PM

OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
OPPL.ORG/ART



"Calumet Region III", Cotton thread on cotton ground with collage and stitching, 22.5in x 24.5in

HASANI CANNON

ART EXHIBITION
04.18.23 - 05.20.23

OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
OPPL.ORG/ART




"Durag King", Mixed Media on Paper

EVA SMITH

Super Natural
11.14.23 - 12.14.23

Artist Reception
11.19.23
2:30-4:00PM

OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
OPPL.ORG/ART



"Pop", Mixed media on paper, 24" h x 18" w, 2023

JANIS MARTIN

A CONTAINED LIFE
5.23.2023 - 6.29.2023

06.08.23
Artist Reception
6:00-7:30PM

OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
OPPL.ORG/ART




"My Secret Garden", Oil on Canvas, 9in. x 12in.

PHYLLIS FRICK

Green Line to Harlem
12.16.23 - 1.14.24

Artist Reception
12.19.23
6:00-7:30PM

OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY
OPPL.ORG/ART



"Payday", Mixed media collage on panel, 24" h x 18" w

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

In 2023, more than 70 library-led events offered opportunities for equity and anti-racism learning, free and open to all. By month, here's a list of event titles and topics.

JANUARY

- Idea Box: Martin Luther King Jr. Lorraine Motel Memorial Window Exhibit
- Dream Hands & Peace Quilt Squares
- "Odd Fellows" Reception with David Alvarado

FEBRUARY

- Idea Box: "The Work": Black History Museum & Exhibit Reception
- "Alkebulan Shadows" Reception with Jason Dorsey
- BrondiHouse
- Uniquely You Tea Party
- Film Screening & Discussion: "Who We Are"

MARCH

- Robert Marshall & The Survivors Circle: "Echoes: The Stories of Male Survivors Overcoming Sexual Trauma"
- Idea Box: Ramadan Around the World
- Celebrating Ramadan Read Aloud & Craft Hour
- Express Yourself! A Drag Storytime & Costume Celebration Featuring Bun Stout



APRIL

- Disability Awareness Field Trips
- Artist Reception with Hasani Cannon
- National Arab American Heritage Appreciation Workshop
- Eid Mubarak! Read Aloud & Craft
- Building a Village: 50 Years of Fair Housing in Oak Park

MAY

- Zines & Chapbooks: A Self-Publishing Workshop for All Ages
- Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Celebration

JUNE

- Pride Month Resources
- Juneteenth parade
- Hip-Hop Xpress Double Dutch Boom Bus
- Fashion Show: 50 Years of Hip Hop Style

JULY (continues next page)

- Idea Box: Disability Pride
- Normalizing Neurodivergence
- Disability Pride March Sign Making
- Disability Pride March
- Disability Pride Shake, Rattle, & Read
- Film Screening: "El Deafo"
- Film Screening & Discussion: "Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution"
- Hidden Disability Circle

PROGRAMS RUNNING ALL YEAR LONG

All year, we offered Supported Storytimes & Developmental Playgroups, Language Conversation Hours (Spanish, English), Latine Author Book Cafe, Noche de Loteria, and three teen mentoring programs: You, Me, We: Co-Ed Mentoring Program; Access Granted Male Mentor Program; and Tea Talk.

JULY (continued)

- Inclusive Dance Workshop
- Film Screening & Discussion: "This Is Not About Me"
- Supported Gardening

AUGUST

- Latine Hip Hop as New Poetry
- Free Professional Headshots
- One Year In: Community Conversations on Climate Ready Oak Park
- Black & Brown Education in America
- "E.A.C.H. (Expression, Art, Community, & Health) Artworks About Real Life!" Drop-in Family Art Activity & Art Exhibit Reception with Rachel Weaver Rivera
- Idea Box: Overdose Awareness

SEPTEMBER

- The Sweetest New Year: Rosh Hashanah Celebration
- How to Take a Great Photo: A Workshop with Jason Dorsey
- Cuentos from the Americas with Jasmin Cardenas
- Author Visit: "For Brown Girls With Sharp Edges & Tender Hearts" with Prisca Dorcas Mojica Rodríguez
- Latinx Roundtable

OCTOBER

- Poesía con acento boricua con Elisaura Vázquez Ayala
- Author Visit: Cynthia Pelayo
- Author Visit: "The Bodies Keep Coming" with Dr. Brian H. Williams
- Hispanic Heritage Month Festival: ¡Viva! Oak Park at Village Hall
- Latin American Music With Pop-Up Music School
- Rangoli Art
- Oak Park Renters Survey
- American Sign Language Storybook of "Red: A Crayon's Story"
- Idea Box Community Exhibit: Navaratri

NOVEMBER

- Día De Muertos/Day of the Dead Community Ofrenda
- Trans & Non-Binary 101 & Allyship Workshop
- Understanding ADHD & Autism
- Native American Women in Illinois History

DECEMBER

- Healing Through the Holidays
- Latine Author Book Cafe: "Vampires of El Norte"
- Holidays Around the World
- Family Drag Bingo Brunch
- Community Kwanzaa Celebration



HIGHLIGHTING UNIQUE MILESTONES

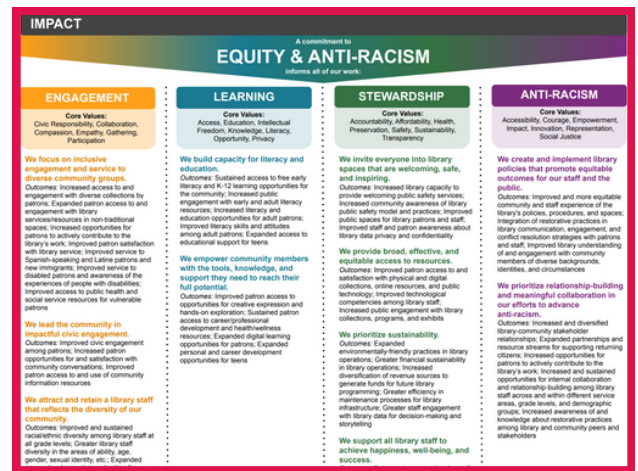
Logic model expansion. Developed with our Board of Library Trustees, a 2024 logic model formally infuses equity and anti-racism throughout the library's three longstanding strategic priorities of engagement, learning, and stewardship.

Local recognition. As a recipient of the Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association Founders Award, we were celebrated for our "fearless and committed efforts to promote free expression and push back against growing challenges to our freedom to read." And we were recognized as "a strong ally in [our] consistent stand for the fundamental rights of LGBTQ+ people to be represented and celebrated, as well as to participate fully and equally in civic life."

National collaboration. With the Urban Libraries Council's [Creating Youth Opportunities](#) initiative, Latonia Jackson, Manager of Middle and High School Services, explored the role of libraries in supporting young people at risk of incarceration, and the authentic youth engagement required in doing this work effectively.

National nomination. Our library's Collection Team, led by Director of Collections Leigh Tarullo, was nominated for the Institute of Museum and Library Services' 2024 National Medal for Museum and Library Service, in the area of diverse collections and artifacts.

Listening sessions. A three-month series of community listening sessions gave library leadership the opportunity to connect in person and gather feedback on specific topics—older adult services, library spaces, and library-led programming—as we plan for future library-wide next steps.



HIGHLIGHTING UNIQUE MILESTONES

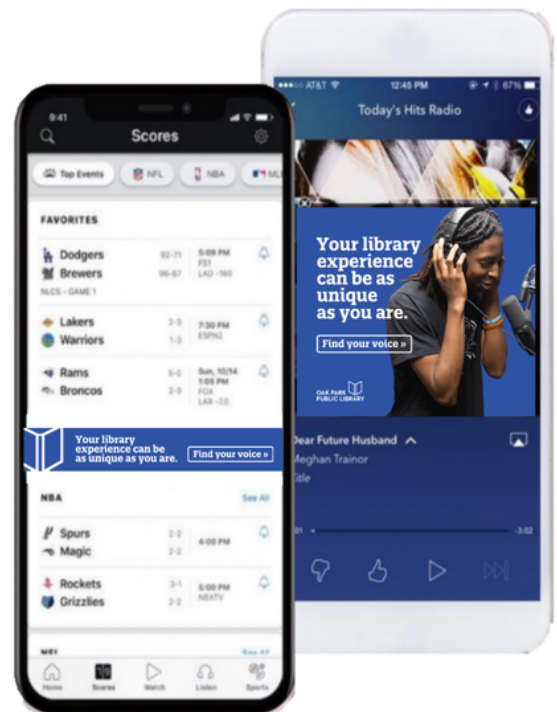
In 2023, Director of Social Services and Public Safety **Rob Simmons** (pictured at right, center, with Village Manager Kevin Jackson and Village President Vicki Scaman) was recognized for his commitment and contributions as a member of Oak Park's Alternative Call Response Task Force. This group brought together a range of experts, community members, and specialists focused on helping individuals suffering from a mental health crisis. In June, the task force presented its findings to Oak Park's Village Board. As one step among many, they recommended embedding crisis and social workers within the village police department, so these trained staff would be first responders, rather than police officers, when someone calls 911 for a mental health crisis. [Read more »](#)



Using data to engage with people in underserved pockets of Oak Park. For the third year in a row, the library's Communications Team completed a strategic marketing campaign for people living in pockets of Oak Park historically underserved by the library.

Each campaign began by looking at U.S. Census tracts. This enabled the team to identify which tracks to market to—landing on those with fewer active library households and a higher number of Black/ African American households living at or below the poverty level.

In 2023, three direct mail print pieces, two push emails, and two variations of geofenced mobile ads were distributed throughout June and July. Campaign results showed that from June through September, more than 1,100 people signed up for new library cards, and more than 3,400 lapsed users returned. The total number of active library households grew to 58 percent, meaning that roughly three of every five Oak Park households used an Oak Park library card over the summer and early fall.



HIGHLIGHTING UNIQUE MILESTONES

Also in 2023, our Middle and High School Services teams had the privilege of offering two exceptional mentorship initiatives.

- **The Access Granted Male Mentoring Program** led by Chris Thomas and Your Passion 1st (pictured at right, top and center photos) focused on discovering passions and pathways to pursue them.
- **The You, Me, We: Coed Mentoring Program**, led by A Greater Good Foundation (pictured at right, bottom), focused on understanding self, others, and the world through restorative practices.

Both programs collectively engaged more than 100 middle and high schoolers. They addressed essential topics such as coping skills, anger management, career exploration, financial literacy, self-regulation, workforce readiness, self-awareness, self-advocacy, confidence building, conflict resolution, mindfulness, goal setting, habit formation, and more.

Using diverse activities such as peace circles, meditation, interactive money games, resume workshops, field trips, open discussions, and role-playing, participants experienced significant personal growth. Results included enhanced confidence, improved academic performance, positive behavioral changes, clarity of plans after high school, job placements, and sustained enthusiasm for program attendance.

These mentorship initiatives proved instrumental in fostering the holistic health and development of all participants, contributing to their well-being and future prospects. [Read more »](#)



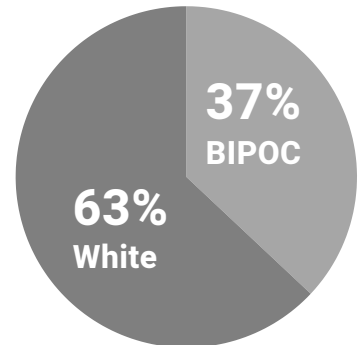
REFLECTING OUR COMMUNITY

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

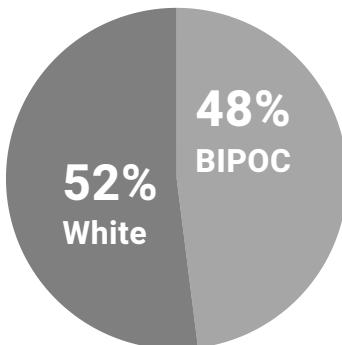
By focusing on work, and hiring and retention practices, that attract a diverse applicant pool, the library is able to make more diverse hiring decisions.

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

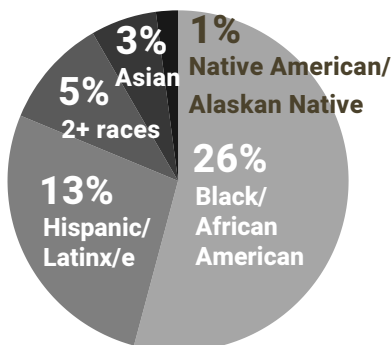
2023 Village of Oak Park



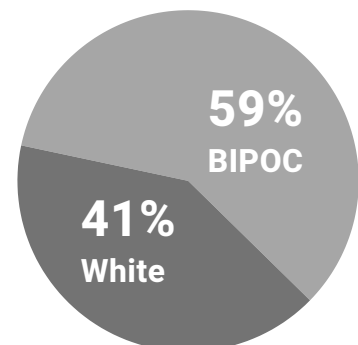
2023 All Library Staff Members



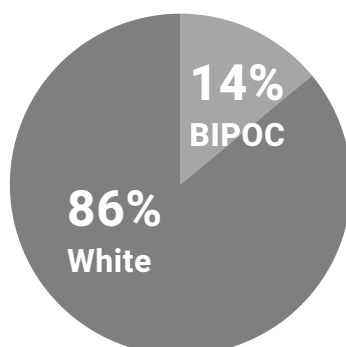
2023 BIPOC Staff Members



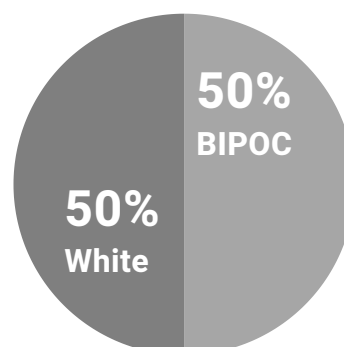
2023 Newly Hired Staff Members



Library Leadership 2017



Library Leadership 2023



A LIBRARY FOR EVERYONE

Our Mission, Vision & Values

As a public library in a Book Sanctuary Community, our mission is to share the information, services, and opportunities that fulfill Oak Park's aspirations. Our vision to empower every voice in our community. These statements were developed through a yearslong process of turning outward, listening to what kind of community our neighbors want to live in. Oak Parkers told us they aspire to live in a community that is diverse, equitable, inclusive, and empathetic as well as a place that supports education, health, literacy, safety, and affordability.

Our Strategic Priorities & Plans

Our library strategically prioritizes anti-racism (and values of accessibility, empowerment, courage, impact-oriented work, innovation, representation, and social justice); engagement (and values of diversity, equity, inclusion, civic responsibility, collaboration, compassion, gathering, and participation); learning (and values of access, education, knowledge, intellectual freedom, literacy, opportunity, and privacy); and stewardship (and values of accountability, preservation, sustainability, and transparency).

Our Logic Model

[Our 2024 logic model \(pdf\)](#) provides a snapshot of strategic thinking and planning around key elements including: inputs (what we have); activities (what we do); outputs (what we produce or deliver); and outcomes (what impact we strive to make in our community).