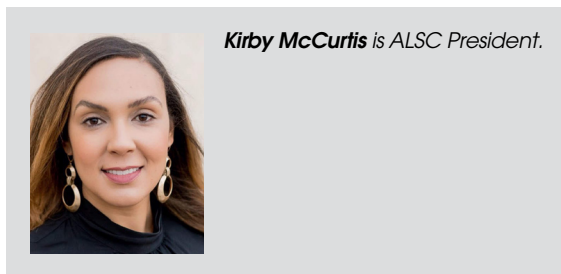


On the Anniversary of the March on Washington

Kirby McCurtis



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I am writing this on a significant anniversary in American history, and I would be remiss in not acknowledging it. Fifty-seven years ago, hundreds of thousands of people came together to march on Washington for jobs and freedom. Attendees heard from a number of civil rights activists including Myrlie Evers, Mahalia Jackson, John Lewis, A. Phillip Randolph, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; this is when the latter gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

The purpose of the march was to advocate for the civil and economic rights of African Americans, and I can’t help but see the parallels between that historic march and the uprisings this summer in the wake of the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. The people in the streets now are invoking this legacy and still demanding an end to systemic racism and injustice.

It is exciting to see this energy and the renewed cries for freedom, but I also find myself overwhelmed with sadness. For how long must we march before Black Americans are treated equally? Will yet another generation of children have to take up the mantle again and again? And, less than a week after another shooting of an unarmed Black man by police, this time in Wisconsin, I struggle to remain hopeful. Jacob Blake was shot in front of his children. I cannot even imagine the conversation his family had to have with those kids.

But one thing I do know is that we, as professionals committed to serving children, need to be talking about what is happening in the world and how racism impacts Black and indigenous people and People of Color. Helping children identify, express, and trust their feelings keeps them safe.

So, when we as adults struggle with just what to say, or knowing how to begin, books can be a useful way to start. ALSC’s new resource, *Look to Libraries in Times of Crisis*, covers a variety of topics and has helpful tools for all library staff.

Don’t forget about the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) and ALSC Social Justice Reading List that was published in July. Titles on the list were compiled by members of BCALA and ALSC’s Quicklists Consulting Committee. What I love about this list is how affirming and uplifting it is; this is especially important when discussing difficult subjects with children.

ALSC’s board of directors endorses BCALA’s statement condemning increased violence and racism toward Black Americans and People of Color, and, as an organization, we stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter, BCALA, and those working to dismantle racial capitalism and white supremacy in all of its forms.

Remember, your silence is violence, and this is work we all need to do. I look forward to continuing the conversation, and know that as a Black woman, I will continue to demand more for all the children we serve. &