

You or Me: Tokenism, Assimilation, & the Perils of Conforming to the White Gaze

Nicollette Davis

Louisiana State University

Crystal Chen

Facing History & Ourselves

Narcissa Haskins

Louisiana State University

ABSTRACT: When working in predominantly white institutions (PWIs), many Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) experience daily microaggressions, particularly the conflation of the identities of two BIPOC coworkers of the same race or ethnicity. Using autoethnography, the authors of this article describe their own experiences in public and academic libraries and how this “doubling” microaggression can slowly unravel the fabric of their identities. To preserve their identities, many BIPOC workers change, compete, and conform, attempting to disentangle their identities from each other. Through these acts, a kind of “double consciousness” (as described by W.E.B. DuBois) is formed, and impacted workers are faced with a larger question of self-identity. The article’s authors posit that “small” microaggressions are catalysts for deeper harm, including a cognitive dissonance that disrupts a stable sense of self and wellbeing. Instead, acts of resistance, such as creating trusted coalitions, can help BIPOC workers reject the white gaze and protect their collective individualized identities.

Keywords: microaggressions, double consciousness, triple consciousness, hypervisibility, invisibility, workplace dynamics, competition, BIPOC library workers



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited

Journal of Radical Librarianship, Vol. 12 (2026) pp.63-83. Published 30 Aug 2026.

1. Introduction

Overview

When working in predominantly white institutions (PWIs), many Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) experience daily microaggressions, suffering a slow death by a thousand cuts. A particularly pernicious microaggression is the conflation of the identities of two BIPOC coworkers of the same race or ethnicity, and in its wake, either the continued denial of reality by the offending party or a traumatic outpouring of guilt that imprisons and overwhelms those that are harmed.

The authors of this article describe their own experiences in public and academic libraries and how this “doubling” microaggression can slowly unravel the fabric of their identities. Because when we are constantly told that we are someone else, then who are we really? When there is only space for one person of any given racial or ethnic identity, then where can the second person exist? We are squeezed and shrunk and suffocated, made to fit into tiny unwelcoming spaces where their existence is a rebellion to be quelled. To preserve their identities, many BIPOC workers change, compete, and conform, attempting to disentangle their identities from each other and hoping to be the *Chosen One* rather than a forgotten afterthought. Through these acts, a kind of “double consciousness”¹ (as described by W.E.B. DuBois) is formed, and impacted workers are faced with a larger question of self-identity.

Using autoethnography as a form of counternarrative,² this article delves into individual experiences of “doubling” and “double consciousness” and contextualizes it within broader research data on workplace diversity and relevant works by Frantz Fanon,³ Gene Luen Yang,⁴ and Roxane Gay.⁵ The article’s authors posit that “small” microaggressions are catalysts for deeper harm, including a cognitive dissonance that disrupts a stable sense of self and wellbeing. Instead, acts of resistance, such as creating trusted coalitions, can help BIPOC workers reject the white gaze and protect their collective individualized identities.

Positionality

This article is informed and shaped by our personal and professional experiences as library workers. These experiences may influence our research processes, interpretations, and understandings; thus, we chose to include the following positionality statements.

Nicollette Davis

I was born and raised in Louisiana and identify as a Black, fat, queer, disabled woman. I

¹ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago, 1903; Project Gutenberg, January 1, 1996), 1, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/408/pg408-images.html>.

² Melissa Villa-Nicholas, *Data Borders: How Silicon Valley Is Building an Industry Around Immigrants* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2023), 12.

³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), eBook.

⁴ Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese* (New York: Square Fish, 2009).

⁵ Roxane Gay, “The Trouble with Prince Charming,” *Bad Feminist*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014), eBook.

am a first-generation college graduate with a Master's degree in Library and Information Science. I have been a library worker for nearly 18 years and a librarian for 7 years. All of my identities inform my daily life as well as my professional experiences. I am guided by intersectionality and Black, queer feminist thought. I recognize that my truth may or may not resonate with others, but I always seek to speak from a place of intentional and radical care.

Narcissa Haskins

I am an African American woman from Philadelphia who is thriving in the South. I have a Bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus in Africana Women's Studies and a Masters in Library and Information Science. With the lens of a womanist, while also identifying as a mature, conscious, Black woman, I am aware of how I am situated in the world of libraries. It is through my multifaceted experiences in libraries, I realized how I show up for myself in these spaces can influence how I empower those around me.

Crystal Chen

I am a Chinese/Asian American immigrant woman living and working in New York. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts, a Master's degree in Printmaking, and a Master's degree in Library and Information Science. I've worked in public libraries (teen services) for over 10 years, and I now work for a global nonprofit. I bring the experiences of my racial/cultural identity and professional development to my work and am cognizant of my privilege in being able to access resources and time in conducting research. I strive to be aware of my biases and how that shapes and informs my work.

There are many things that connect us as women of color in the predominantly white profession of librarianship. Although we have lived different lives and have different career paths, our experiences overlap in unique ways. We hope that our linked personal experiences—that are explored through double consciousness, triple consciousness, invisibility, and hypervisibility—will further illuminate and offer insights on the real-life impact of microaggressions in the workplace.

2. Seeing Double

“I’m me.” — Fontaine, *They Cloned Tyrone*⁶

Being mistaken for someone else is not a new experience for many BIPOC. It's a small, repeatedly-inflicted wound. A scar forms at the site of the wound so we protect ourselves by donning armor to deflect these microaggressions inflicted by “well-meaning” colleagues. This armor becomes thicker and thicker with each jab, immobilizing us, crushing us, and eventually cracking apart under its own weight, leaving us raw and exposed.

Through the white gaze, we are not seen as whole beings with minds and dreams of our own. We are only parts of each other: three-fifths human⁷ and one-half whole. In this environment, our

⁶ *They Cloned Tyrone*, directed by Juel Taylor (Los Gatos, CA: Netflix, 2023), <https://www.netflix.com/title/80996324>.

⁷ U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec. 2., cl. 3.

self-identity fragments like a broken mirror and re-forms. The split realities of how we see ourselves versus how others see us overlap and blur into a double consciousness, a “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others.”⁸ This doubled gaze through which we view ourselves is mirrored in how others view us: physically doubled and indistinct from one another. We are seen as reflections of each other—mirages without substance.

Nicollette

There’s a saying that goes “Everyone has a twin.” *The New York Times* even published an article in 2022 about people who look nearly identical but aren’t related.⁹ I’m sure it’s a happy surprise to see someone who looks like you in the world, but what does it feel like when it seems that you look like every other dark-skinned, larger-bodied, glasses-wearing woman? What does it feel like when your experience is chalked up to be something that everyone experiences, when it’s actually not the same?

When I was a library page at a public library, I began to get mistaken by patrons for another colleague who I did not look like. They would see my colleague at the front desk and then see me shelving in the stacks and comment, “Wow, you move fast,” or “Didn’t I just see you when I walked in?” After the first couple times, it was easy to laugh it off and correct them, but then it became a nuisance. Usually, my colleague and I weren’t in the same space when it happened, but when we were in the same space, we’d just look at each other and internally roll our eyes. It wasn’t “offensive” in the sense that I didn’t want to look like my colleague. It was “offensive” because we did not look alike, sound alike, dress alike, nor did we have the same mannerisms. I was shorter, darker-skinned, and darker-haired than my colleague. It might seem small, but the microaggression’s repetitive nature slowly becomes an undercurrent that affects your very existence in a space.

To consider the existence of a person requires intention, and within the field of librarianship, especially as BIPOC, our existence is obviously loud—and hypervisible. We are often the only or the few within various departments, so when we navigate these interactions of mistaken identity, the harm that is caused is instantaneous. We are forced to immediately correct our offenders, which can make us question our personhood and value within the workplace. If our offenders blatantly fail to acknowledge us as whole people—elevating feelings of invisibility—it authenticates an environment already primed for destabilizing experiences. Our efforts to collaborate, produce good work, and achieve new heights for ourselves will always feel in vain.

Destabilization of Self

Who are we if our very existence is questioned, conflated, and disbelieved? To be mistaken for someone else is one thing. But to have your reality denied is another. The initial microaggression, or “subtle act of exclusion,”¹⁰ can grow like a tumbling ball of snow, gathering

⁸ DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chap. 1.

⁹ Kate Golembiewsk, “Your Doppelgänger Is Out There and You Probably Share DNA With Them,” *The New York Times*, August 23, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/23/science/doppelgangers-twins-dna.html>.

¹⁰ Ruchika Tulshyan, “We Need to Retire the Term ‘Microaggressions,’” *Harvard Business Review*, Harvard Business Publishing, March 8, 2022, <https://hbr.org/2022/03/we-need-to-retire-the-term-microaggressions#:~:text=I%20prefer%20the%20term%20%E2%80%9Cexclusionary,neutral%20descriptor%20of>

mass until it's dense enough to flatten those in its path.

Crystal

While checking out books to a library patron, I was asked if I used to work at the central library branch. I said no, but he didn't accept my answer, convinced that I was the same person that had assisted him there. I knew, of course, that he was conflating me with other Asian American colleagues, but what can you do when your emphatic denial is not accepted? I shrugged and just said, okay, and wished him a nice day.

Other Asian American coworkers have been congratulated for my achievements by white coworkers. I've been thanked for my delicious matcha cookie recipe (I don't bake). I've been called by other people's names. I've felt tokenized and underestimated, with no space to breathe. And I've asked myself; how do I uplift and make space for others when it feels like there's not even space for me?

This disbelief in our lived experiences becomes another deep cut. When faced with disbelief, our realities become the subject of doubt. "Is my memory correct?" we ask ourselves. Uncertainty shades our thoughts: "Am I wrong?" or "Maybe I'm blowing this out of proportion" or "I must have misunderstood them." If our realities are disbelieved, then what does that mean for our existence? It is an act of trauma that can destabilize what we thought we knew and our sense of self.

Nicollette

When I started a new job, it was an exciting and stressful time! I anticipated the hustle and bustle of getting to know a new space and the faces that make up that space. I did take note of another Black woman, Narcissa, who actually did have features similar to mine. We're both plus-sized, dark-skinned, wear glasses, and have natural hair. A couple of colleagues even shared that they thought me and Narcissa looked similar. Even though it was a great compliment, I knew that we were not identical and shared very distinctly different physical and personality traits.

Sometimes, I am greeted in a familiar way by people on campus who I have never met. I began to question myself and wondered if maybe I had forgotten that I worked with this person. Perhaps my memory is failing me for this specific person and I don't remember. It felt deeply strange to second guess my own memory because of someone else's recollection. Not only do I have to be aware of my own reality, but I have to determine if that was me or not from other people's accounts. I feel that I have to be hyperconscious of where I am and who I meet; it goes well beyond a simple mistaken identity. It's a different way of moving, thinking, and even anticipating.

Double Consciousness

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon describes the "massive psychoexistential complex" that Black men experience as result of the dual or double narcissism inherent in colonizer and colonized relationships.¹¹ Fanon describes Black men as having two dimensions and interacting

%20the%20phenomenon.

¹¹ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, introduction.

with white men and other Black men differently, causing a “fissiparousness” or self-division that is the “direct consequence of the colonial undertaking.”¹² DuBois writes similarly of double-consciousness: “One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”¹³

This “twoness” is visually represented in the contemporary young adult graphic novel *American Born Chinese*,¹⁴ where the Chinese American protagonist, Jin, experiences a fraught and sometimes surreal journey of alienation and disalienation. He seemingly awakes one day as a character of a different race, blond and blue-eyed Danny—the manifestation of his own internalized colonial subjugation and symbol of assimilation. His cousin, Chin-Kee, an amalgamation of racist stereotypes—and the concept of double-consciousness given form and mass through this physical manifestation of the white gaze—arrives to spread chaos in Jin/Danny’s life. Eventually, through a series of unusual circumstances and reveals, Jin is able to finally attain disalienation by confronting the symbols of his subjugation and rejecting the white gaze to become his true self.

Alice Walker tackles DuBois’ double consciousness theory in a Black feminist-centered framework. In reference to Walker’s *The Color Purple*, Valerie Croiselle writes, “Because of her double victimization as a woman and as a black person, Celie, ‘the mule of the world’—‘de mule uh de world’ (Hurston, 2006, p. 17)—to take up Zora Neale Hurston’s labeling of the black woman in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, has been deprived of her voice by both patriarchy and racist tradition.”¹⁵ The characters in these novels are silenced at large by society due to their race and within their own communities as Black women. The intersecting identities of women and other historically marginalized persons has been explored through triple consciousness theory, which expounds upon the double consciousness theory.

Triple Consciousness

DuBois’ idea of double consciousness takes into consideration the intersection of being an American and existing as a Black person. It posits the idea that Black people have to think of themselves in the context of being American and a part of Black experience. Triple consciousness theory builds upon this by including gender as an additional layer Black women must be cognizant of.¹⁶ Hypermasculinity, patriarchy, and white feminism work together to create this specific experience for Black women as well as other women of color. Black women specifically deal with the Strong Black Woman (SBW) trope, which is seen within the work environment as well as in other areas such as healthcare. The SBW archetype “theorizes and shows unique race- and gender-specific experiences that force a resolute and stoic

¹² Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, chap. 1.

¹³ DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chap. 1.

¹⁴ Yang, *American Born Chinese*.

¹⁵ Valérie Croisille, “Overcoming Double Victimisation in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* or the Self-Healing Power of Writing Herstory,” in *Trauma Narratives and Herstory*, ed. Sonya Andermahr and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín, London: Palgrave Macmillan, (2013), 98-99.

¹⁶ Nahum Welang, “Triple Consciousness: The Reimagination of Black Female Identities in Contemporary American Culture.” *Open Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2018): 296-306.

disposition and the exhibition of an unbreakable strength in Black women. The SBW construct is culturally specific with five traits: (1) maintaining unwavering strength, (2) suppressing emotions, (3) demonstrating self-reliance, (4) succeeding despite obstacles, and (5) placing the need of others before themselves.”¹⁷

When it comes to addressing mistaken identities or calling in folks who do not see us, there’s an internal dialogue of our perception. Despite being given “permission” to speak up, we still face difficult choices as women of color, knowing that we are often not understood or even purposefully misunderstood. We carry the weight of having to be aware of how we are perceived, even when we are being harmed—leaving us wondering if we should address microaggressions or not. Echoing the SBW trope, we often push our feelings aside to maintain our safety while neglecting our own need to be seen and heard. In a society that’s built on oppression but advertises freedom, the consequences and repercussions are often greater for women of color.

The landmark study by Sue et al. shares similar SBW archetypal themes amongst Asian Americans such as exhibiting mental/intellectual strength, invisibility, and exoticism, subject to a form of “color-blindness” projected by white people.¹⁸ Advancement for Asian Americans, particularly Asian American women, can be hard-fought due to their perceived “interchangeability.” They are the least likely to be promoted (with white workers “154 percent more likely to be an executive than their Asian counterparts”), often confused with each other due to “casual Asian-face blindness” and considered “an army of nameless automatons not worth remembering for promotions.”¹⁹ Author Lisa Ko describes her experience being persistently mistaken for other female Asian students and coworkers: “At the heart of my anger at being seen as interchangeable with other Asian-American students . . . was that we were seen as lacking individuality, and by extension, humanity.”²⁰ Asian American women, like Black women, must be conscious of their gender as an additional layer of their identity as they navigate through oppressively racist and patriarchal spaces.

3. Spectator or Spectacle

“This dream you’re chasing, the one where you end up at the top of the mountain, all eyes on you, it’s the dream you never wake up from.” — Antlers Holst, *Nope*²¹

As BIPOC, we often find ourselves in the unique position of reconciling two disparate experiences simultaneously—being both invisible and hypervisible. We are made invisible when we are overlooked for opportunities or find ourselves excluded from the primary social narrative.

¹⁷ Lakeshia Cousin, Versie Johnson-Mallard, and Staja Q. Booker. “‘Be Strong My Sista’: Sentiments of Strength From Black Women with Chronic Pain Living in the Deep South.” *Advances in Nursing Science* 45, no. 2 (2022): 127–42, <https://doi.org/10.1097/ANS.0000000000000416>.

¹⁸ Derald Wing Sue, et al., “Racial Microaggressions and the Asian American Experience,” *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, no. 1 (2009): 94. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1948-1985.S.1.88>.

¹⁹ Brian X. Chen, “The Cost of Being an ‘Interchangeable Asian,’” *The New York Times*, June 22, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/06/business/the-cost-of-being-an-interchangeable-asian.html>.

²⁰ Lisa Ko, “Harvard and the Myth of the Interchangeable Asian,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/13/opinion/sunday/harvard-and-the-myth-of-the-interchangeable-asian.html>.

²¹ *Nope*, directed by Jordan Peele, Jordan (Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 2022).

We are made hypervisible when we are put on display to represent diversity initiatives with no real substance. How do we reconcile the two?

Invisibility

Within higher education, the feeling of isolation turns into social invisibility as a form of microaggression that mirrors hypervisibility and tokenism.²² Ferretti exposes how the role of white librarians who identify as critical librarians can steamroll and render their BIPOC colleagues invisible within the workplace.²³ Ferretti wondered how critical librarians, who are fervent in their pursuit to evolve the teaching of informational literacy, are obsolete when interacting with their colleagues. Existing within a profession with predominantly white women, BIPOC must navigate daily those who wish to use their performed wokeness to gain notoriety.²⁴ This reality often compounds when BIPOC are faced with having to capitulate to harmful interactions or suffer retaliation.²⁵

Through the lens of Critical Race Feminism (CRF), Newton's 2023 case study²⁶ uses the matrix of domination to explore how white people on campus use microaggressions toward Black women as a tool of discrimination, exposing how the invalidation of Black women's experiences in historically PWI simultaneously renders them invisible. Newton reminds us of Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* and how Lorde eloquently reminds us that we have the right to feel rage about our circumstances. Lorde writes, "Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision, it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change."²⁷ When BIPOC are made invisible, we must navigate how to fight for our right to exist within these spaces. We must contend with the choice to fight, but also sometimes to retreat without the opportunity to expose and confront the perpetrators of our harm. Yet, we are reminded by our peers and allies that we must push through these microaggressions to change the dynamics for those who follow us into these spaces.

Narcissa

The politics of being in a non-tenured library faculty position exposed complex working dynamics. I helped other tenured and tenure-track librarians, yet when work was sparse, I faced challenges getting support on projects that would give meaning to my career. I reflected on this isolation and invisibility, realizing some other Black women in the library were experiencing this. Our movement was quiet, head down, and doing nothing

²² Kristen J. Mills, "It's Systemic': Environmental Racial Microaggressions Experienced by Black Undergraduates at a Predominantly White Institution," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 13, no. 1 (2020): 52, <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000121>.

²³ Jennifer A. Ferretti, "Building a Critical Culture: How Critical Librarianship Falls Short in the Workplace," *Communications in Information Literacy* 14, no. 1 (2020): 141-142, <https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2020.14.1.10>.

²⁴ Ferretti, "Building a Critical Culture," 139.

²⁵ "The 'Problem' Woman of Colour in Nonprofit Organizations," The Centre for Community Organizations, March 8, 2018, https://coco-net.org/problem-woman-colour-nonprofit-organizations/#The_The_Problem_Woman_of_Colour_in_the_Workplace.

²⁶ Veronica A. Newton, "Hypervisibility and Invisibility: Black Women's Experiences with Gendered Racial Microaggressions on a White Campus," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 9, no.4 (2023): 164-78.

²⁷ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Crossing Press, 1984), 122.

that would jeopardize our positionality. However, there were moments when the weight of our invisibility felt like a crushing boulder.

As my twin colleague, Nicollette, was adjusting to a new academic environment, there were several situations when we were mistaken for one another. It was a surprise because of her positionality as the only Black, tenure-track librarian in the research and instruction services department. Typically, when a librarian is in a position like hers, they are made hypervisible by default, which Nicollette was on track for because of her various national accomplishments at the time. After a particularly harmful mis-identity interaction with a coworker, I garnered the support of my twin and our accomplices in power to send an email to the library's listserv. With my twins and my photos on display, I exposed and alerted how much harm some of our colleagues have been causing for months.

I found temporary solace at the moment because of the public support for our message from the dean of the library. However, after the announcement, numerous emails of apology flowed in, which were challenging to accept. The attempt to reconcile with the years spent at the library clearly did not deposit any visibility into my existence as a colleague. Making apologetic emails compound my disappointment. Nicollette and I were trying to navigate the genuine support along with responses of aloofness. The email I sent caused hypervisibility, and I wondered when we would feel a sense of normalcy. Our only option was to move forward and to prepare ourselves for when we would be mistaken again.

As time moved on, we could tell that people were attempting to be intentional about not getting our names wrong. However, the effort at times turned into the loss of my name altogether. There were several times, instead of speaking my name, I received a wave and a smile. It made me think of the times when you are getting to know someone for the first time, and you can't quite put a name on their face when you see them again. This form of invisibility takes away your value in a space you frequent, and it makes it harder to embrace the person you are being mistaken for, which is the perfect recipe for toxic competition. Thankfully, my twin and I formed a coalition to uplift ourselves and always speak each other's names when we know someone is getting it wrong.

Hypervisibility

J.R.R. Tolkien famously wrote, “not all those who wander are lost” and similarly, not all those who are visible are actually seen.²⁸ Being recognized at work is a great thing that can lead to positive experiences and high morale. However, when brought into a PWI (librarianship as a whole), BIPOC workers are sometimes the sole representation of diversity. As Ramón García points out, “Academia and, by proxy, libraries were never originally intended to meet the needs of all people. So, it makes sense for BIPOC librarians to feel a sense of alienation in a profession that claims to celebrate and value diversity, but which in fact is sorely lacking in terms of real representation.”²⁹ Over the past several years as diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts seemingly

²⁸ J.R.R. Tolkien, “The Riddle of Strider,” All Poetry. <https://allpoetry.com/poem/15995581-The-Riddle-of-Strider-by-J-R-R-Tolkien>.

²⁹ Ramón García. “The Power of Community Building: Reflections from a First-Time JCLC Attendee,” [up//root](#),

increased in the era of “anti-racism,” there was an influx of increased visibility of historically marginalized folks. This type of tokenization is complex, often making diversity feel superficial rather than meaningful. Additionally, there’s pressure to perform, especially if there’s only one or a few BIPOC within the institution.

Megan Browndorf and Maura Seale share the idea of the “New Hire Messiah.”³⁰ This is usually a person brought into a library with a wide range of applicable skills and promising talent. They are often brought in and expected to save the library while also being simultaneously under-trained and under-supported. While this notion applies to any given librarian coming into a new institution, it’s arguably more complex for BIPOC library workers. They can be considered the New Hire Messiah in more ways than one. In addition to providing their talent and skills, there might be expectations placed on them to be the representation, or even worse, the sole authority figure of the identities they occupy. This also continues well beyond the “new hire” stage as even seasoned librarians of color are tasked with being the sole representation.

At PWIs, there’s an inside joke amongst some BIPOC students and faculty which essentially encompasses the hypervisibility effect: “How did those cameras get here?” Students and faculty of color are often asked to pose for PR and marketing photos that are placed on websites, social media, billboards, and other forms of advertisement to suggest that the campus is racially diverse.^{31, 32} This also happens within the library. BIPOC workers are often photographed to highlight diversity aesthetics, but in reality, the workplace does not reflect it and might actually contribute to the harm of those workers.³³ Espinal et al. note in their article on inclusive librarianship, “There is a tension between erasure and tokenism.”³⁴ The labor of BIPOC library workers is often erased, downplayed, or the credit is given to white colleagues. However, library workers of color are often placed in positions to be the veneer of representation without any meaningful action towards fostering an environment that is genuinely inclusive and honors a variety of experiences. They provide a false sense of community and belonging that may leave BIPOC feeling even more isolated. Like the BIPOC folks being used in marketing photos, Espinal et al. shares the example of being a BIPOC librarian on a search committee and tasked with appealing to other BIPOC applicants.³⁵ The task might be assigned explicitly or covertly implied. This can be a difficult position to be in to act as the veneer of representation, while simultaneously seeking kinship, particularly if the workplace lacks other BIPOC librarians. It might feel like a duty to want to recruit others, but this unfair and exhausting responsibility of inclusion should not fall on the individual. Instead, it should be embedded in the institution as a

September 27, 2023, <https://www.uproot.space/garcia>.

³⁰ Megan Browndorf & Maura Seale, “Service, Gender, and Liaison Librarianship,” in *Deconstructing Service in Libraries*, eds. Veronica Arellano-Douglas & Joanna Gadsby (Sacramento: Library Juice Press, 2020) 11-33.

³¹ Mills, “It’s Systemic’: Environmental Racial Microaggressions Experienced by Black Undergraduates at a Predominantly White Institution,” 51.

³² Leigh S. Wilton, Ariana N. Bell, Mariam Vahradyan, & Cheryl R. Kaiser, “Show Don’t Tell: Diversity Dishonesty Harms Racial/Ethnic Minorities at Work,” *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* 46, no. 8 (2020): 1171–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167219897149>.

³³ Ferretti, “Building a Critical Culture,” 135

³⁴ Isabel Espinal, et al., “A Holistic Approach for Inclusive Librarianship: Decentering Whiteness in Our Profession,” *Library Trends* 67, no. 1 (2018): 153, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/706993>.

³⁵ Espinal, et al., “A Holistic Approach,” 153.

whole.

Invisible and hypervisible, BIPOC workers vacillate between spectator and spectacle—ignored when they voice their needs and tokenized when it benefits the needs of others. The “rules” of belonging are constantly shifting, leaving BIPOC perpetually marginalized. Finding community becomes a necessary act of self-preservation, but BIPOC workers may find themselves chasing after a mirage in that search for genuine connection.

4. Looking for Belonging

“It’s easy to become anything you wish . . . so long as you’re willing to forfeit your soul.”
— Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese*³⁶

To preserve their identities and sense of self, BIPOC library workers may try to compete, conform, or change. They may act in otherwise atypical ways in their search for belonging within majority communities. But belonging in this context is not an act of community or homecoming. Rather, it is an act of survival. And when BIPOC workers seek to survive by belonging, they are faced with difficult choices that can paradoxically chip away at their established sense of self.

Compete

When resources are (seemingly) scarce or spaces are closed to BIPOC library workers, they can find themselves competing with each other for that limited item, whether it’s a promotion, an award, or a place on a committee. There may be an urgent desire to stand out in some way or to say, “Pick me!” when rendered invisible or hypervisible and knowing that there is only room for one. That competition, whether conscious or subconscious, can affect interpersonal relationships, creating division rather than solidarity.

That competition also manifests within larger BIPOC communities. Asian Americans, particularly East Asian Americans, are often seen as aligned with whiteness or not considered people of color (a sentiment that is sometimes internalized).³⁷ They may find themselves granted different privileges and allowed access to spaces closed to their Black coworkers or other coworkers of color. Some may recognize that this privilege isn’t due to personal merit but rather larger structural inequities—but not all. Friction inevitably arises in these competitive environments, and BIPOC staff find themselves pitted against each other.

Intergenerational competition may also occur. Older BIPOC workers may resent younger workers who have benefited from their hard-won battles and seemingly breezed their way up the social or career ladder behind them. And it can be hard to care for the new, small battles of the present made possible by the bigger, tougher battles of the past. Because of a lingering scarcity mindset, there’s fear that there isn’t room for everyone. So, the ladder may get pulled up or the gate closed behind them.

Younger BIPOC workers may lack context or understanding of the pathways carved for them by

³⁶ Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 29.

³⁷ Sue, et al., “Racial Microaggressions and the Asian American Experience,” 94.

those older workers that came before them. They may consider the older generation stodgy or traditional, a member of the old guard that's too afraid to change or too dismissive of their concerns as younger members of the workforce. Resentment may build against direct supervisors due to the scarcity of positions or promotions available for BIPOC overall, and tensions may occur due to expectations of the "New Hire Messiah." Older BIPOC may find themselves pushed out and toppled off the ladder and the keys to the gate taken away from them.

Narcissa

Navigating an environment curated for competition was challenging. Some of my white colleagues and professors would make it difficult for me and my classmate, another Black woman, to feel free to bask in our achievements because their compliments, at times, were backhanded. Instead of congratulations, we were met with doubt about our ability to execute tasks, even though our record of consistency spoke to our diligence and integrity. I did not wrap my head around how tilted the room was until we were job hunting. As we know, there are several ways institutions can provide an opportunity for BIPOCs to diversify the faculty. For librarians, that is the ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) Diversity Residency. As I watched my white peers apply for standard tenure-track employment with similar work experience to myself, I stood in awe of the number of times a residency was encouraged to people in my network.

No one seemed to find it problematic that during the years I would rotate departments as a resident, my white peers would be rounding out their third year in positions as tenure-track faculty. That is two to three years of no stability, earning potential decreased, and then no guarantee of a job within the organization afterward. I sounded the alarm to my peers and faculty about the hypocrisy of these initiatives. They continue to undermine the upward mobility of BIPOC professionals. Though my professors and peers understood my outcry, we all knew these opportunities were the options that got us in the door. Most institutions could never see past the implicit bias of BIPOC with little experience. These experiences informed how I showed up at my current institution with the need to control my narrative, and how I chose to navigate my career.

Crystal

Over the past few years, I've worked with BIPOC coworkers to push our institution (at the time, a large urban public library system) to increase hiring of and support for BIPOC staff, particularly Black and Asian American staff during the BLM protests and Covid epidemic. But in a conversation with an older Black staff member, we were made to feel as if our concerns were diminished because they didn't compare to the battles they had gone through with the institution in many years past. We were told that things were so much better now than before, and it felt as if we were being asked to be grateful for what we had. Which for a group of young impassioned Black and Asian American workers, we felt completely demeaned by.

I've also witnessed changeovers with our union board during that time. We felt that the union board members, primarily BIPOC from an older generation, weren't hearing our concerns or fighting hard enough for us. They seemed cozy with institutional leadership and HR, and historical union knowledge was gate-kept, with convening processes and procedures used to effectively minimize members' concerns. Eventually, they were voted out and replaced with a younger board, but there was something discomfiting in seeing a

primarily older BIPOC board being pushed out by a younger generation, many of them white.

For the Chosen Ones that do get picked or break through, they still find themselves isolated and tokenized, forced to be the single representative of a diverse community that continues to be shut out. And chosen or not, if they don't perform to expectations, they may find themselves turned out into the cold with the gate shut in their face.

Conform

In Greg Pak's comic books series *Totally Awesome Hulk*, the titular character Amadeus Cho—with the help of basketball star Jeremy Lin—fights off robotic villains who seek to destroy them. The robots squawk “Assimilate! Assimilate!” as they converge upon Cho.³⁸ By mimicking the dominant or majority culture and assuming their values through cultural assimilation, BIPOC—particularly immigrant BIPOC—are promised a pathway to success and belonging. But assimilation requires self-erasure and is not truly achievable for many BIPOC communities.

In particular, Asian Americans are considered perpetual foreigners (“Where are you *really* from?”), no matter how many generations their families have lived in America. Ellen D. Wu writes in *The Color of Success* of the transformation of Japanese and Chinese from “definitively non-white,” “racially and culturally too different,” and excluded because they were “incapable of assimilation” in the early 20th century to the “model minority” and so-called success story of the late 20th century.³⁹ But the “model minority” is a harmful myth that falsely projects Asian Americans as more successful than their BIPOC counterparts. As Ko notes, it's a myth that is “leveraged by both whites and Asians to justify racism against blacks and Latinos... [erasing] larger truths about systematic racism and unjust policies.” BIPOC are also cautioned against the “myth of exceptionalism,” or the belief that “if we try hard enough, we'll be accepted by whiteness and gain its privileges, at the expense of other people of color.”⁴⁰ Instead, it is racial, ethnic, and class solidarity that will put us on the path toward tearing down white supremacy and finding true belonging.

Crystal

I remember being called for jury duty and a coworker telling me that lawyers loved selecting librarians for juries. In this particular case, it was true. I was the first juror selected, and I believe I was perceived as neutral, organized, and interested in gathering facts/information due to my occupation. The other jurors perceived me similarly and voted me as foreman.

But it was my identity as an Asian American woman that I noticed coming into play more often than not. When the two Black jurors were not in the deliberation room (having yet to return from lunch), the white jurors felt comfortable discussing what they considered the racial biases of affirmative action (and its negative impacts on their careers) in front

³⁸ Greg Pak & Frank Cho, *The Totally Awesome Hulk*, vol. 3: *Big Apple Showdown* (New York: Marvel, 2020), 32-34.

³⁹ Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), introduction, eBook.

⁴⁰ Ko, “Harvard and the Myth of the Interchangeable Asian.”

of me. It was a strange experience to be in the room during that conversation. They would glance at me occasionally as if trying to include me in the conversation or to signal a kind of solidarity, so certain that I would agree with them—when the reality is that I *know* I have benefited from affirmative action as an Asian American woman (and rather suspected that the white female juror had too). I stayed silent. As an Asian American, I was allowed the “privilege” of being in this white space and granted conditional access due to my identity—in a way that the Black jurors were not. But my entry was precarious and I understood that my inclusion was contingent upon the exclusion of others. It strengthened my resolve to act in solidarity with my Black library colleagues and to not be lured by the false promise of inclusion.

Ultimately, that kind of conformity may seem to grant access but required a silencing of who I was and what I believed in. It’s used to divide communities in order to uphold and strengthen oppressive systems. Assimilation is not possible because we will never gain the privileges of whiteness, no matter how much we conform.

Change

The white gaze doesn’t pass by lightly. Instead, it sweeps across like a blazing light from within the central tower of a panopticon, resting heavily upon BIPOC, who may find themselves acting atypically to escape its crushing weight. Ko writes, “In high school, I internalized anti-Asian stereotypes by rejecting them. I was bad at math and science. I liked art and film. We didn’t all look the same, and I was Not Like Them—not like the Asians who would go to Ivy League schools and be pre-med.” She continues, “But as Mark Tseng-Putterman has written, this fervent insistence at being the “right” kind of Asian is still invested in a preoccupation with how others see us.”⁴¹ But in seeking an identity diametrically opposed to societal stereotypes, BIPOC are still affected and molded by the white gaze. It’s a cage that’s chosen, but a cage nonetheless.

Crystal

If I showed up at work wearing similar attire or colors as my female Asian American coworkers, I would internally cringe, knowing that we would be inevitably confused. Only this time, I felt the added burden of guilt, because it was my choice to choose that particular attire. I often subconsciously made small choices to distinguish myself from my Asian coworkers, fearful of being mistaken yet again—this time not by library patrons, but by coworkers I interacted with on a daily basis. Every act I took to change my appearance or otherwise distance myself from my Asian coworkers was a self-reassurance that it was not my fault and an internal reminder that we were indeed not the same person.

Nicollette

I have felt the guilt of feeling like it’s my fault that the mistaken identities keep happening. One tactic that I use, almost subconsciously, is that I often repeat my name multiple times. Recently, I was speaking to a class and I noticed how often I shared my name. The underbelly of that is “please see me, please don’t mistake me for someone that I’m not.” It’s something very small, but it’s a change that I have made in response to being mistaken. I also anticipate it in ways that I hadn’t before, so I try to prepare for it

⁴¹ Ko, “Harvard and the Myth of the Interchangeable Asian.”

before it even happens. I have to think multiple steps ahead. I feel that there are very few ways that I can change myself physically to see a change, because even with a change of hairstyle, makeup, or wearing something different, the problem lies in not being seen at all. And, the most significant problem is that these should not be my burdens to bear.

In their search for belonging, BIPOC workers may find themselves competing, conforming, or changing in ways that erode their sense of self. That erosion of identity can feel both destabilizing and debilitating, and in order to protect themselves, BIPOC workers must find ways to rest and resist.

5. A Watchful Eye Never Sleeps

“The form you have taken is not truly your own. Return to your true form and you shall be freed.” — Gene Luen Yang, *American Born Chinese*⁴²

It is well documented that racism (including microaggressions) is detrimental to the physical and mental health of Black and Indigenous people and people of color.⁴³ Death by a thousand cuts isn’t just a Taylor Swift song—it’s a real-life experience that happens to us on a daily basis. These microaggressions may initially feel small, but processing all the resulting small and large implications can leave us destabilized and feeling ill—a sudden, staggering blow. It surfaces deep feelings of isolation, questioning, and insecurity, especially in the workplace.

As BIPOC, we are encouraged to speak up and address issues related to racism, as if we aren’t already exhausted and wary. And history has shown us that it’s not always safe to share our concerns. We face disbelief, dismissiveness, and sometimes outright retaliation. But can there be rest without resistance?

Narcissa

The mass employee exodus started after the 2020 pandemic, and I wondered how things would change. After the first three years on the job, I understood that I occupied a role outside the pre-conditioned comfort zone for Black employees as a general librarian. The community of Black women in our library became a collective because of our rebellious and un-conforming nature. We discussed how our work could aid each other and ways we could collaborate across library ranks. The diversity resident at the time was ready to relinquish their role as the African and African American Studies liaison, and they knew I was eager to take it over.

As an aficionado navigating these white spaces, the diversity resident communicated to leadership how we BIPOC should be taking up more space in such a unique way. They strategized their positioning as an employee funded by the library's governing body to speak truth to power. Making it their business to be my advocate, we strategized on how I could take on the liaison duties and ensure these new responsibilities came with a pay increase. The process took other accomplices in power to push for the changes, but we made it happen. In the new role, with the title change, doors flew open for me.

⁴² Yang, *American Born Chinese*, 145.

⁴³ Cousin, “Be Strong My Sista,” 3.

Following the motto "Lifting as We Climb," and with new hires coming down the pipeline, our collective and accomplices were vocal to leadership about the need for more diversity within our task force. We have been able to not only fight for ourselves, but for what we know would push the library forward as a whole.

Protect Our Souls

"Home is community that props you up when your legs are shaky; a glass of water when your mouth is too dry to speak." — Marlyn Terrell Thomas, "Baltimore"⁴⁴

When it comes to dealing with microaggressions and other oppressive acts, there is no single solution to protect ourselves and to keep ourselves whole. Every person's experience and circumstance differ, and there is no one size fits all. However, we offer these suggestions as a foundation to build upon and begin broader discussions.

Divest from Capitalistic "Self-Care"

In a 2023 podcast interview, author Tressie McMillan Cottom and psychiatrist Pooja Lakshmin spoke about the difficulties of the current ideas around self-care. Self-care is popularly viewed as having a spa day, retail therapy, or doing things such as bullet journaling, yoga, or Netflix marathons. Lakshmin called this 'faux self-care,' a temporary patch that may feel good for a moment but is often not sustainable.

Lakshmin shared, "I think that, especially for women of color, for marginalized groups, for Black women, anybody who is because of their identities on the outside, self-care, this version of self-care, can feel actually even—I almost want to use the word violent, because it's self-preservation, like Audre Lorde said. And there is a survival aspect to it."⁴⁵ Self-care has been productized and sold to us as the solution to our ills and as a promise of happiness, just like the newest iPhone. But with any consumerist good, the happiness is fleeting and insubstantial.

Self-care is also activated by institutions as a balm to smooth away all their rough edges—the perfect buffer and excuse. It's a performance of empathy and benevolence that places the burden of responsibility upon the individual employee rather than the institution. When they say, "Take care of yourself," what they are really saying is, "Take care of yourself, because we won't. Fix yourself, because we won't fix our institution."

Instead, reclaim "self-care" as an act of liberation-based healing. Everyone has different backgrounds, income, abilities, and desires, and healing will look different for different people. Meet yourself where you are. Think about ways to make space for yourself and others, and find ways to "pay" with your time rather than your pocketbook. Center personal joy through building new emotional habits, reclaiming heartening foods and body movements, and maintaining

⁴⁴ Marlyn Thomas, "Baltimore." *up//root*. September 27, 2023. <https://www.uproot.space/thomas?mibextid=Zxz2cZ>.

⁴⁵ Pooja Lakshmin, "Boundaries, Burnout and the 'Goopification' of Self-Care," interview by Tressie McMillan Cottom, *The Ezra Klein Show*, The New York Times, September 19, 2023, audio, 55:08, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/19/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-pooja-lakshmin.html>.

support systems, rather than engaging with consumer trends, luxury or not. Healing does not need to be reactionary but should be brave, proactive, and ongoing to meet the challenges of microaggressions.

Reject the White Gaze

The pervasiveness of white supremacy within the library profession is something that conflicts with the message that the library is for everyone. As Hathcock notes, whiteness is not only a racial category, but also a systemic way of exclusion.⁴⁶ Whiteness in the LIS field is normalized and reinforced as the standard. Hathcock also shares, “The normativity of whiteness works insidiously, invisibly, to create binary categorizations of people as either acceptable to whiteness and therefore normal or different and therefore other. The invisible nature of whiteness is key to its power; when it is not named or interrogated, it can persist in creating a culture of exclusion behind the scenes of LIS practice.”⁴⁷ This creates the foundation and boosts the power of the white gaze.

As Espinal et al. notes white library workers often resort to making excuses, deflection, or gaslighting (also called ‘whitesplaining’) when confronted by their BIPOC peers about harm caused, further perpetuating ideological whiteness.⁴⁸ If it continues to go unnoticed and unchallenged, it creates a deeply harmful cycle which has yet to be interrupted. For those in power, and those who benefit from its violence, there’s little value in divesting from its grasp. The price of often unchecked and unseen whiteness is paid for with the discomfort, devaluing, and minimizing of negative BIPOC experiences. Being conscious of the white gaze also means acknowledging our own privileges within our multiple identities and critically assessing how we, as BIPOC library workers, can also be complicit in white hegemony. The performance of whiteness is rewarded with success for librarians of color.⁴⁹ Whiteness isn’t just about race, it also encompasses patriarchal, heteronormative, socioeconomic privilege, and able-bodied norms which exclude and push many folks out of the field. By raising our consciousness about how this system harms us all, we can better understand the world around us to propel meaningful change.

In her book chapter, “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators,” bell hooks discusses reclaiming power with the oppositional gaze.⁵¹ The oppositional gaze bears witness, documents, remembers, is aware, critical and does not turn away.

⁴⁶ April Hathcock, “White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS,” *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, October 7, 2015, <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/lis-diversity>.

⁴⁷ Hathcock, “White Librarianship.”

⁴⁸ Espinal, et al., “A Holistic Approach,” 148.

⁴⁹ Hathcock, “White Librarianship.”

⁵⁰ Angela Galvan, “Soliciting Performance, Hiding Bias: Whiteness and Librarianship,” *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, June 3, 2015, <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/soliciting-performance-hiding-bias-whiteness-and-librarianship>.

⁵¹ bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators,” in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/postgraduates/pgmodules/femlit/bell_hooks.pdf.

Seek Community

There's nothing like feeling seen and understood. It's a feeling beyond just being visible and encompasses a deep reality of being known. Having someone relate to your experience or hearing others share their stories can feel empowering and serve as validation or an act of restabilization. This can be enhanced by building trusted coalitions rather than feeding into competitive or divisive work cultures. Knowing that we're not alone may help tend to wounds that have been collected over time.

Be Gentle with Ourselves

It's easier said than done, but it's something to be put in practice. We are often our harshest critics. Instead, let's give ourselves the same grace we would give to others. Rather than ruminating upon hurtful things until they grow so large that they take up all the space in our minds and hearts, we'll fill that space with joy.

Prioritize Peace and Safety

Facing constant microaggressions can feel like a war of attrition, where we're slowly worn down by small acts over time. While what constitutes peace and safety may look different to different people, we strive to preserve it in any form, choosing our battles and recognizing that not every battle is worth our time, mental space, or energy. We won't always have the freedom to choose peace, but when the opportunity is there and our reserves of strength are exhausted, it's okay to grab it with both hands!

Release Our Burden

If there's only one major takeaway from this article, it's to know that microaggressions are not our fault as BIPOC workers. It might sound overly simplistic, but dealing with racism can have us second-guessing ourselves and wondering how to remedy a situation that is systemic and deeply oppressive.

We may internalize what's happening and blame ourselves for the actions of others, feeling a sense of sadness or worthlessness for "causing" the issue or disrupting the "peace." We may feel that our existence is at fault rather than the institution. But by critically evaluating what's happening, we realize that these microaggressive actions are a burden that we don't need to carry. So, we say, let go.

6. Looking Back and Forward

In *Bad Feminist*,⁵² Roxane Gay shares thought-provoking essays centered on issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Through observations of feminism—and what makes a "good" or "bad" feminist—Gay highlights the impact of systemic and institutional racism and sexism and pinpoints how it also shows up in smaller ways, such as in pop music, TV shows, casual conversation, and small talk. These small actions might seem minimal compared to larger, more blatant forms of racism, but they still contribute to systems of oppression. Whether it's mistaking one BIPOC colleague for the other, misspelling a person's name on a consistent basis, or placing

⁵² Gay, "Bad Feminist."

impossible standards upon them due to stereotypes—these harmful acts have lasting impact.

We proposed this article to share our experiences, but we wrote it particularly for our fellow BIPOC librarians. In our research, we read a variety of works that deeply resonated with us. We found ourselves nodding our heads along to passages that described our real-world experiences, and we were grateful they gave us the necessary language to express, reflect, and build connections with each other. We hope this article makes you feel seen, included, and connected.

We also acknowledge the difficulty of creating this article. It required us to unearth and communicate things that we had never given voice to, revealing the tender spots we often hide away. And, while we offer some starting points for healing, we recognize the complexities of various institutions and circumstances that keep us oppressed. We move forward by seeing, sharing, and profoundly caring for each other. The answer to the question “you or me?” is “us, together.”

Bibliography

- Browndorf, Megan & Maura Seale. “Service, Gender, and Liaison Librarianship.” In *Deconstructing Service in Libraries* edited by Veronica Arellano-Douglas & Joanna Gadsby, 11-33. Sacramento: Library Juice Press, 2020.
- Chen, Brian X. “The Cost of Being an ‘Interchangeable Asian.’” *The New York Times*, June 22, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/06/business/the-cost-of-being-an-interchangeable-asian.html>.
- Cousin, Lakeshia, Versie Johnson-Mallard, and Staja Q. Booker. “‘Be Strong My Sista’: Sentiments of Strength From Black Women With Chronic Pain Living in the Deep South.” *Advances in Nursing Science* 45, no. 2 (2022): 127–42. <https://doi.org/10.1097/ANS.0000000000000416>.
- Croisille, Valérie. “Overcoming Double Victimisation in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* or the Self-Healing Power of Writing Herstory.” In *Trauma Narratives and Herstory*, edited by Sonya Andermahr and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín, 98-112. London: Palgrave Macmillan (2013).
- DuBois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Chicago, 1903; Project Gutenberg, January 1, 1996. <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/408/pg408-images.html>.
- Espinal, Isabel, Tonia Sutherland, and Charlotte Roh. “A Holistic Approach for Inclusive Librarianship: Decentering Whiteness in Our Profession,” *Library Trends* 67, no. 1 (2018), 147-162, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/706993>.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2008. eBook.

- Ferretti, Jennifer A. "Building a Critical Culture: How Critical Librarianship Falls Short in the Workplace." *Communications in Information Literacy* 14, no. 1 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2020.14.1.10>.
- Galvan, Angela. "Soliciting Performance, Hiding Bias: Whiteness and Librarianship," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, June 3, 2015, <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/soliciting-performance-hiding-bias-whiteness-and-librarianship>.
- García, Ramón. "The Power of Community Building: Reflections from a First-Time JCLC Attendee." *up//root*. September 27, 2023. <https://www.uproot.space/garcia>.
- Gay, Roxane. *Bad Feminist*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2014. eBook.
- Golembiewsk, Kate. "Your Doppelgänger Is Out There and You Probably Share DNA With Them." *The New York Times*, August 23, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/23/science/doppelgangers-twins-dna.html>.
- Hathcock, April. "White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, October 7, 2015, <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/lis-diversity>.
- hooks, bell. "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston: South End Press, 1992, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/postgraduates/pgmodules/femlit/bell_hooks.pdf.
- Ko, Lisa. "Harvard and the Myth of the Interchangeable Asian." *The New York Times*, October 13, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/13/opinion/sunday/harvard-and-the-myth-of-the-interchangeable-asian.html>.
- Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. The Crossing Press Feminist Series: Crossing Press, 1984.
- Lakshimin, Pooja. "Boundaries, Burnout and the 'Goopification' of Self-Care." Interview by Tressie McMillan Cottom, *The Ezra Klein Show*, *The New York Times*, September 19, 2023. Audio, 55:08. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/19/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-pooja-lakshmin.html>.
- Mena, Jasmine A. & Annemarie Vaccaro. "'I've Struggled, I've Battled': Invisibility Microaggressions Experienced by Women of Color at a Predominantly White Institution," *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education* 10, no. 3 (2017): 301-318, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2017.1347047>.
- Mills, Kristen J. "'It's Systemic': Environmental Racial Microaggressions Experienced by Black Undergraduates at a Predominantly White Institution." *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 13, no. 1 (2020): 52. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000121>.
- Journal of Radical Librarianship*, Vol. 12, Issue 2 (2026) pp. 63-83

- Nahum, Welang. "Triple Consciousness: The Reimagination of Black Female Identities in Contemporary American Culture." *Open Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (October 1, 2018): 296–306. doi:10.1515/culture-2018-0027.
- Newton, Veronica A. "Hypervisibility and Invisibility: Black Women's Experiences with Gendered Racial Microaggressions on a White Campus." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 9, no. 1 (2023): 164–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23326492221138222>.
- Pak, Greg & Frank Cho. *The Totally Awesome Hulk, vol. 3: Big Apple Showdown*. New York: Marvel, 2020.
- Peele, Jordan, dir. *Nope*. Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 2022.
- "The 'Problem' Woman of Colour in Nonprofit Organizations." The Centre for Community Organizations. March 8, 2018. https://coco-net.org/problem-woman-colour-nonprofit-organizations/#The_“Problem”_Woman_of_Colour_in_the_Workplace.
- Sue, Derald W. & Cristina M. Capodilupo. "Racial, Gender, and Sexual Orientation Microaggressions: Implications for Counseling and Psychotherapy." In *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice*, edited by Derald Wing Sue and David Sue. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016.
- Sue, Derald Wing, Jennifer Bucci, Annie I. Lin, Kevin L. Nadal, & Gina C. Torino. "Racial Microaggressions and the Asian American Experience." *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, no. 1 (2009): 88–101. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1948-1985.S.1.88>.
- Taylor, Juel, dir. *They Cloned Tyrone*. Los Gatos, CA: Netflix, 2023. <https://www.netflix.com/title/80996324>.
- Thomas, Marlyn. "Baltimore." *up//root*. September 27, 2023. <https://www.uproot.space/thomas?mibextid=Zxz2cZ>.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. "The Riddle of Strider." All Poetry. <https://allpoetry.com/poem/15995581-The-Riddle-of-Strider-by-J-R-R-Tolkien>.
- Tulshyan, Ruchika. "We Need to Retire the Term 'Microaggressions.'" Harvard Business Review. Harvard Business Publishing, March 8, 2022. <https://hbr.org/2022/03/we-need-to-retire-the-term-microaggressions#:~:text=I%20prefer%20the%20term%20%E2%80%9Cexclusionary,neutral%20descriptor%20of%20the%20phenomenon>.
- U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec. 2., cl. 3.
- Villa-Nicholas, Melissa. *Data Borders: How Silicon Valley Is Building an Industry Around Immigrants*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2023.
- Journal of Radical Librarianship*, Vol. 12, Issue 2 (2026) pp. 63-83

Wilton, Leigh S., Ariana N. Bell, Mariam Vahradyan, & Cheryl R. Kaiser. "Show Don't Tell: Diversity Dishonesty Harms Racial/Ethnic Minorities at Work." *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* 46, no. 8 (2020): 1171–85.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167219897149>.

Wu, Ellen D. *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015. eBook.

Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese*. New York: Square Fish, 2009.