Selling Social Justice Through School / Library Collaboration

Luke Kirkland
Teen Specialist
Waltham Public Library
things we can do

things we can’t do
Why We Can’t Do Those Things
Because you’ll ruin everything.

People are going to hate it.
People are going to hate you.
The school/library will hear all about it.
Your supervisor is going to punish you.
The Principal/Director is going to fire you.
The City Council isn’t going to approve next year’s library budget.
Underfunded, your library will perish.
Libraries everywhere will die.
CAN

SHOULD
CAN is LIMITING but it’s SIMPLE and EASY

SHOULD is LIBERATING but it’s CONFUSING and HARD
things we should not do

- keep resources from citizens
- censor or limit ideas
- make money a barrier to entry
- block discourse
- discriminate against users
- protect systems over people

gs we should do

- share
- educate
- liberate
- facilitate dialogue
- pursue social justice
- defend human rights
Nothing survives that doesn’t evolve.

Communities have needs that we can’t overlook.

Your community is your boss.
We have a professional responsibility to affect community well-being—not just community comfort.

Our jobs are complicated. But we have to do them.
Job security is a tool of systemic oppression.

Be smart. Don’t get fired. But don’t get too comfy.
“Bureaucracy is the form of government in which everybody is deprived of political freedom, of the power to act; for the rule by Nobody is not no-rule, and where all are equally powerless we have a tyranny without a tyrant.”

Hannah Arendt
from On Violence
THINGS YOU DO

THINGS WE DO
STRATEGIES
DO THE
Professional Researcher
One School
One Story Day
2016 Selection

All American Boys
by Jason Reynolds
& Brendan Kiely
“There’s this dude named Aaron Douglas...A painter in the time of the Harlem Renaissance...Let me describe what his work looks like. Imagine *The Lion King*. But all the lions are people. Black people. So Simba and Mufasa, are, let’s say, a black king and a prince. Now, imagine that you’re looking at them through the thickest fog ever. So thick that you can’t make out any actual features on their bodies, but you can still see their silhouettes. So it could be any king. Or any prince. But you can still tell they’re black. That’s Aaron Douglas’s work. And the first time Mrs. Caperdeen showed us a slide from his series *Aspects of Negro Life*, I knew the kind of art I wanted to be making.” (pp. 141-144)
1899-1979. Born in Topeka, Kansas

Leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance: “Father of Black American Art”

Early work: illustration’s for NAACP magazine “The Crisis”. Best known work: series of murals titled “Aspects of Negro Life”

Inspired by Modernism and Futurism, African art, Art Deco

Professor at Fisk University
1917-2000. Born in Atlantic City, NJ.

Dropped out at 16 to study art in Harlem

Served in Coast Guard during WWII

Won a Guggenheim Fellowship

Best known works: Migration Series, War Series, Harriet Tubman Series

Taught at University of Washington

Produced limited-edition works to aid non-profits like the NAACP

Fought in Army in Europe in WWII

Studied Art History and Philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris

Abstract collage, Cubism, songwriter

*The Odyssey* as black experience

Member of Harlem-based arts group The Spiral: responsibility of artists

1987 winner of National Medal of the Arts: nation’s foremost collagist
First known for SAMO graffiti
Neo-Expressionism. “Suggestive dichotomies”. Social commentary.
DJ. Noise rock band Gray. Dated Madonna before she was famous.
Supported by Andy Warhol
Credited with returning black art to the world of high art
Died at 27 from drug overdose
Born in 1969 in Stockton, CA.

Studied at Atlanta College of Art and Rhode Island School of Design.

At 27, second youngest recipient of MacArthur Genius grant.

Black and white cut-paper silhouette murals explore race, sex, violence.

Taught at Columbia. Currently a Professor at Rutgers University.
SEXISM  HATE  RACISM
The Tree of Life
Grows for All
Watered by the Tears of the Oppressed
DO THE
Fandom
Trojan Horse
You’re a nerd.
Identify some fandom that you care about

intellectual interest

Identify some issue that you care about

emotional interest
Then you ‘ship them
WRL 2018: Hamilton

Hip-Hop Themed Teen Programs

Breakdancing Workshop
DJ Workshop
Graffiti Workshop
Finish-the-Rhyme Game Show
Hip-Hop History Escape Room
Hip-Hop Documentary Film Series
Freestyle Fridays
We serve lots of racialized youth. We don’t serve a lot of white kids.
White people love *Hamilton*

Do racialized people love *Hamilton*?
Do all people who listen to rap music... also care about racism?
We talk a lot about diversity. We don’t talk as much about integration.
FDR & The New Deal
Public Housing Concept by Le Corbusier
The American Dream
The Great Migration
WE WANT WHITE TENANTS IN OUR WHITE COMMUNITY
Government Enforced Segregation

14. **RACIAL RESTRICTIONS**...No property in said addition shall at any time be sold, conveyed, rented or leased in whole or in part to any person or persons not of the White or Caucasian race. No person other than one of the White or Caucasian race shall be permitted to occupy any property in said addition or portion thereof or building thereon except a domestic servant actually employed by a person of the White or Caucasian race where the latter is an occupant of such property.

15. **ANIMALS.** No hogs, cattle, horses, sheep, goats, or similar livestock shall be permitted or maintained on said property at any time. Chicken hens, pigeons, rabbits and other...
Redlining Map
Fair Housing Protest
South Bronx Housing Projects
South Bronx
Seven Immortals
Hoe Ave Peace Treaty
The Birth of Hip-Hop

Luke Kirkland
Teen Specialist @ Waltham Public Library

DJ Kool Herc
A DJ Kool Herc Party

**Back to School Jam**

**Place:** 1520 Sedwick Ave. "REC Room"

**Date:** August 11, 1973

**Time:** 9:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m.

**Admission:** $0.25 Ladies, $0.50 Fellas

**Given by:** Kool Herc

**Special Guests:** Coco, Cindy C., Klar K., Timmy T.
DO THE
Inequity
Moonwalk
The Tenacity Challenge Art Mural
DO THE
Skills Pay the Bills
Waltham High School Protest Against Racism

Never Again!

Lives Over Guns
DO THE
Kids Say the Darndest Things
Real Talk
(formerly known as Activism in Youth through Creativity)

Twice-monthly youth-led forum for honest dialogue

presenting curriculum at MLA & ALA
For Freedoms

50 State Initiative

uses art to encourage and deepen public explorations of freedom in the 21st century
For Freedoms Lawn Sign Creation

REspect
Treat all women with
Domestic Violence

FREedom FROM
For Freedoms Lawn Sign Creation

Freedom From

Growing up and having to pay your own rent
Why These Strategies Work

It’s because you’re a librarian!

The mechanics of these programs are simply what librarians are here to do.

Collaboration keeps organizations in competition and on their toes.

Schools can use PL without having to be fully responsible or meet curriculum standards.

Librarians don’t operate within traditional youth-adult power dynamics.

Schools answer to parents. PLs to youth.

You build inspiration, tools, habits, connections to sustain your own professional activity and the activity of your colleagues.
Things I Tell Myself
Get out an make friends.

Don’t get silo-ed. Make the most of partner leverage.
Everything is information. Don’t limit yourself.

Don’t be ingenuous.

This is politics. We are political animals. We work in a political industry.
Keep it simple.

Human rights are not partisan.
Don’t simplify.

Communities are not monolithic.
Youth are not pawns.

Educate. Amplify youth voice. But don’t weaponize youth for your or others’ causes.
You don’t have to share everything you do.

It’s okay to keep it on the DL. But be ready to explain/defend it.
Accessible design benefits everyone.

Just because our attention may be paid to marginalized populations, our efforts are actually about protecting the rights of everyone.
Don’t prioritize intentions. Prioritize effects.

It doesn’t matter if we’re “not a racist/sexist/etc” if our actions result in marginalization.
“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

Lilla Watson
Thanks & Good Luck!

MAIL: lkirkland@minlib.net

GRAM: @WatchCityTeens

WEB: waltham.ma.lib.us/teens

TWITTER: @lkrklnlnd