I'm Lindsey Dunn, and I’m a readers' advisory librarian and content writer for NoveList. At my job, I use NoveList story elements, such as subjects, themes, and appeals to create lists and articles that help librarians and readers find their next favorite books for fun. Before that I worked at a public library for 13 years at Wake County Libraries. After the panel, I am happy to speak to anyone who has questions about how NoveList handles diversity. I've also brought some handouts that you are welcome to take to share how you can search for diverse authors and books in the product. But for now, we are here to talk about diversity committees and how they can help your library or library system.

Let me give you a little background as to how this panel came to be. Growing up white, I have never given much thought to issues about race, equity, or diversity. This began to change in 2016, when three of my worlds began to converge. At church, at a volunteer choir I participate in, and at work, I began to be gently challenged about my beliefs by others who had more experience than I. Being a curious person, I decided to read books and learn more about how others viewed the state of racial equity in this country.

In 2018, I discovered the Joint Librarians of Color Conference happening in Albuquerque and put in a request to attend. It was a wonderful learning experience, and I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to grow in these areas. I was there to learn and see what opportunities might arise to do even better at our services as librarians. I've been to ALA, NCLA, and other conferences in the past, and I noticed a big difference. Although there were great sessions and plenty of learning, there was much more of an emotional element to this conference. People were mainly there to gain support, feel heard, and be around other people who had similar experiences. They were there to find community. I witnessed and heard many librarians of color who felt isolated, alone, and frustrated. At their places of work, they felt forced to carry the burden of educating everyone on staff as a lone wolf. While it wasn't laid out that way, there was this unwritten expectation that they would guide everyone else with no effort from anyone. And it was tiring.

I began to create a hypothesis. Libraries should set up diversity committees to create environments where this burden is shared. To create a mini-JCLC at work, as much as possible. I have never been on a library diversity committee, but my choir formed a group to deal with the issue of why most of our members and audiences remain white when we live in a very diverse city. And while our group is still new, I saw how powerful it can when people sit together and talk about these issues together.

I then turned my attention to finding librarians who did this already. Wonderful news! I found some. I knew that academic libraries often have a diversity groups but didn't know if this existed in public libraries. Well it does, and some of those representatives are here to speak to you.

But before I introduce them, I want to emphasis why I feel this is important. Since putting myself in this position to learn about diversity and equity, my life and work has been enriched by embracing diversity. Even though it might seem that progress is slow or it's often difficult to reach agreement, it's worth it for your libraries and communities to give attention to these issues.