

STEPHANIE BIRCH

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Statement of Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In my personal and professional life, I am committed to social justice and furthering equity, diversity, and inclusion in higher education and the library profession. Solidarity is a core value and principal by which I live and work, as I consciously choose to utilize my privilege in the service and support of those denied such privileges. I strive to build sustainable partnerships built upon the principals of mutual aid, while also listening, reflecting, and strategically using my voice to amplify underrepresented and frequently silenced voices.

As the African American Studies Librarian at the University of Florida’s George A. Smathers Libraries, I am frequently involved in institutional EDI initiatives and difficult conversations pertaining to racial representation and systems of oppression. In all aspects of my work -- librarianship practices, scholarship, and service activities – I strive to continuously learn, grow, and apply anti-oppressive ideas in my day-to-day operations. Below are a few actionable ways that I integrate my EDI values and philosophies into my work:

Accessible Design

Balancing form and function to ensure accessibility for all users; Creating materials (presentations, documents, websites, etc.) that are friendly to effected by color blindness; Applying alt-text to images and heading formats to ensure access for users assisted by screen readers; Using photographs, illustrations, and graphics responsibly and mindfully with regards to cultural, racial, and gender representation.

Labor and Working Conditions

Paying laborers for the work they perform, including student workers; Participating in union activities and using collective action to bargain for better working conditions, including issues such as livable wages and paid parental leave; Fostering a safe and supportive working environment that values compassion and transparency.

Learner-Centered Instruction

Applying the educational pedagogies of bell hooks and Paulo Friere to library instruction, in order to cultivate a feminist and democratic classroom community; Carefully considering my positional as an instructor and the inherent power dynamics of the instructor-student relationship; Mindfully engaging students as experts in their own learning and holistic beings, with concerns and needs beyond the library/university environment.