

Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast
2011 Call to Action, January 10
American Library Association Midwinter Meeting, San Diego, CA
Jenifer Grady

Theme: Everyone Can Be Great...Because Everyone Can Serve, from The Drum Major Instinct Sermon.

Learning outcomes

1. It's ok to want RECOGNITION, POSITION, IMPORTANCE, and PRAISE
2. The importance of and tools for self-advocacy
3. Introduction to ALA-APA

After Dr. Michael K. Honey, keynote speaker.

Good morning everyone.

My reflections focus on the beginning of the Drum Major Instinct sermon where Dr. King examines our inherent desires to be RECOGNIZED and IMPORTANT, to have POSITION and receive PRAISE.

James and John, disciples, wanted to be on the right and left hand of Christ when he ascended to heaven. What I love about this passage is that the disciples were so human! So like me, so like all of us. They had desires for recognition, for position, for importance, for praise. These are the words I want us to consider: RECOGNITION, POSITION, IMPORTANCE, and PRAISE. **Would you repeat those for me?** My hope is that you will accept these desires as natural and perhaps even essential for you and the profession. These same desires inspired many of you to create the ALA-Allied Professional Association to serve you.

It was these instincts that inspired Dr. King's to champion the dignity of sanitation workers. Dr. King's goals shifted towards economic justice. Sanitation workers felt expendable, mirroring the emotions and realities of librarians who know their pay is unfairly low and library support staff who feel their work is unappreciated. **Please nod if you know that feeling** of being replaceable, which is rife in communities where libraries are cutting and freezing positions, hiring part-time workers to do full-time work, and making adjustments that poke at our assumptions of the value of ourselves and the profession. These instincts birthed the ALA-APA mission of improving the salaries and status of library workers.

For those who heard about the better salaries mission, Library workers can't live by love alone, and asked, "What are you doing to make my salary better?" Then and now I say it's up to you to be an advocate for yourself! ALA-APA can help you gain RECOGNITION, POSITION, and PRAISE by training you to negotiate and advocate for yourself. It is also another safe forum to discuss union issues.

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You should already have learned that it's not always enough to be smart or do a good job. It's not enough to have a noble profession. **How many of you have done just that and been shocked that no one noticed?** Sometimes you have to toot your own horn!

The instincts for RECOGNITION and POSITION inspired certification programs and other ways you show leadership and dedication in your families, communities, libraries, and in ALA.

Candidates in the Certified Public Library Administrator Program seek RECOGNITION for wanting to learn and do more. Some want to be director or on the right hand of the library director. [Not that library directors are like Jesus, I'm just using the metaphor.]

The instincts of RECOGNITION, IMPORTANCE and PRAISE inspired the Library Support Staff Certification Program. LSS said, "we want to be recognized and valued for our service in libraries, our expertise, our dedication and our commitment to grow professionally." They asked ALA for a way to symbolize the importance of your POSITIONS. **Without LSS many libraries would not be open or functional, right?**

The desire for PRAISE was what transformed National Library Workers Day (NLWD) – Tuesday, April 12, this year – to be a feel-good day when celebrate ourselves. Originally, it was to be a day to call attention to the inequities of library pay, but I feel we should do that EVERY time we get a platform or a sympathetic ear, not just once a year. Nominating yourself as an NLWD Star online you can read about yourself online and get what Dr. King called "warm glow from the vitamin A to your ego."

But work towards greatness with character, with content, and with a mind set on WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR OTHERS with the RECOGNITION, POSITION, IMPORTANCE and PRAISE you seek and achieve. What can you do to make your workplace and community better? How can you serve?

Dr. King asserts that the drum major instincts, used and properly harnessed, can lead you to greatness, if you incorporate service. I challenge you to use your POSITION here at this ALA Midwinter Meeting. What can you do for others because you were here? Find ways to honor colleagues, friends, family and, patrons' instincts for RECOGNITION, POSITION, IMPORTANCE, and PRAISE along with your own. Take back ways you can you be your most excellent self by using your drum major instincts to lead, teach, serve others towards their greatness.

Thank you.