Thank you, Dr. Baldwin, for your eloquent and inspirational words and your excellent scholarship. For many of us this annual Sunrise Service serves as a calming balm for the journey as we muddle through in our attempt to figure out how we are to carry out Dr. King’s legacy in both our personal and professional lives. How are we to fulfill our mission as librarians: to insure that EVERYONE- I repeat EVERYONE- TODOS- Young and old/ rich and yes the POOR- are connected to books and libraries and engaging in learning that will help them to achieve their most highest potential? This morning I want to agitate you into action. “Creative Tension” Dr. King called it. Because unfortunately in America today children are still being judged by the color of their skin and not by the content of their character. They are being judged by what neighborhood they live in—which school they go to—and what language they speak.

As we continue to advance in this rapidly changing complex, technological world of ours, we must continue to challenge ourselves: Are we creating such complex bureaucracies and inundating them with such rigidity and strict, inflexible operating rules and regulations that they are the very obstacles and barriers to access of information? Have we become the very bureaucrats we once abhorred and swore we would never be like? Are we like trees without roots? Have we become somnolent, sleep-walking our way through our careers in a consumer driven culture that overlooks and takes for granted, or simply ignores the reading, literacy and information needs of vast members of our society, particularly the poor, the disenfranchised and the disconnected? “Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness” Dr. King reminds us.

Today my call to action is simple: What will you do from this day forward to act on those values that matter most? It can be something small: Like the language that we use: customers and
clients? How about citizens, in the broadest sense of the word. Or the consumer model of service that we utilize: a consumption approach to information. Need a book? Find it yourself. Self-service. Just like the supermarket. Models with built-in assumptions that people can read, that they know how to maneuver their way through a library, a book shelf, a database, or the information highway. What can we do to make our libraries better serve our communities for their benefit and not ours? Whose libraries are they, anyway? Ours? Because we are the manager or the information expert? Or do they belong to the people? If we believe they belong to the community, then they certainly need more voice –beyond the disingenuous focus group approach that we call voice –where there is no follow-up and certainly no accountability for what the community wants and needs.

Are we so preoccupied with our job responsibilities and what’s on our own plate today- that we can really only focus on one thing: advancing our own careers. At whose expense, I ask ?

How can we occupy our libraries by offering relevant programs and services that benefit our communities?

How can we, for example, help young teens and their parents better understand that it’s not that Jonathan or Juanita are ‘bad' kids- but rather that ordinary young people- are getting caught up in complex legal systems designed by adults for private, financial gain- incarcerated youth whose ‘crime’ is acting and being a kid-only we have now criminalized their behavior and created new pathways, pipelines that lead directly from the school yard to the prison yard. Who will tell the young people? Who will tell their parents about what’s really going on? “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” Dr. King preached.

Everywhere” Dr. King preached.

Forty-four years after his death, Dr. King continues to inspire new generations of brave young people who are holding fast to their dream. They call themselves the Dreamers. They are the undocumented children of immigrant parents who were brought to this country as children by their parents. Many of them have seen a loved one shackled and paraded like animals- men
forced to wear pink underwear while Sheriff Arpaio entertains his crony, racist friends with his latest exploits. Today these young dreamers like Martin Luther King, Jr. so many years before, are taking bold courage steps. They are taking up their cause for a right to an education and for an identity-American citizenship- and they are taking their cause to the American people because they have faith and hope that we the people will not turn a blind eye to their struggle. They are the ‘beloved community’ present and among us.

Who are the dreamers in your community? What we doing to connect with them and help them to succeed?

What stories can we share with them about those great unsung heroes of the Civil Rights Movement: Dorothy Cotton, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hammer, Bob Moses, Emma Tenayuca, Jessica de la Cruz, Carmen Anaya, Eliseo Medina, Gilbert Padilla, Baldemar Vasquez or Ernesto Cortes? People who organized freedom rides and freedom schools, who organized farm workers alongside Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, who taught the poor to fight for basic services: sewer and water and libraries, and teaching the disenfranchised to understand power and to develop take action and develop the relational power necessary transform their communities through the power of the vote.

What are we doing to create new rituals and traditions for public library services for new immigrants? Are story times a thing of the past? Really? Because where I live at they are used as instruments to enable the children of the wealthy and the middle class for children’s language development, but somehow not important enough to offer to poor and immigrant children in other pockets of town. How can that be in twenty-first century America? Of course we don’t discriminate.

Or do we? Equal access is not just about information, but also about programs and services, too.

Let us then, act together to right the wrongs and develop the relational power necessary to transform our libraries. Dr. King really did say it best: I quote” Power at its best is love
implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love."

Join me please in the spirit of love and power and justice and community as we clap/chant the farm worker gesture of symbol of hope in the struggle. (group clap begins slow, then accelerates) Si se puede!

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