Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunrise Celebration: Call to Action

By Loriene Roy (Anishinabe

Chi megwitch, thank you very much, Dr. Theoharis, ALA staff and committee members, and all of you here, today. You know what some other ALA attendees might not know: the Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunrise Celebration is one of the best events at the ALA Midwinter Meeting. It is a great privilege to be asked to deliver the call to action.

I have read the past calls to action, those strong voices and stunning stories. Past speakers have asked each one of us to create change, stand up, speak up, make the world a bit better and return in one year to this event to be recharged.

Today we are reminded that we are creating our personal, community, and professional histories. We have our acknowledged and accidental heroes and heroines. We have our fables and our realities. Today we reflect as we consider what has happened over the 20 years that this event started. We pause to consider the work we have done and the work that is yet to be completed.

Each one of you create change and improve the world through your daily work. I am fortunate to be an educator. And I am fortunate to play a small part in the professional lives of graduate students who want to, and do, make a difference in the world. These are our nascent, upcoming librarian superheroes. They lift us up. Let us join with them in this call for action. I want to be like our everyday superheroes. So, part of my charge to myself and to you is to support them, follow them, join them, celebrate them. Let's hear more of their stories.

- Elisabeth Long started her graduate studies last fall in our School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin. During this winter break she is at the US-Mexico border with the Sanctuary Caravan.
- Mindy Reed runs Recycled Reads in Austin, Texas, a place where you can buy used books but also attend Fix-It Clinics and learn how to repair household appliances.
- Graduate student Leslie Flynn paid for an individual studies and, single handedly, revamped a workplace wellness website for ALA President, Loida Garcia-Febo.
- Janice Kowemy hosted a Noon Year's Eve Party at the Laguna Public Library on December 31 with a noon countdown and balloon drop.
- Sam Werberg is a Press Attache at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Egypt and founded a cultural association for young people in Morocco, involving them in music, street art, skateboarding, and BMX biking.

Each of you does make a difference in the lives of others: you are librarians. What will you change between now and the next call at the 2020 ALA Midwinter meeting? That is the second part of my charge to you.

You serve people. We are often supportive but secondary to the changes that others make. Can we change that?

I am reminded of the Maori saying, kanohi I kitea, or "your face will be seen." Even in the midst of a crowd, your presence is noted and needed. Creating change might start with remembering, learning, and understanding. What should we acknowledge, remember, and stand up to and for today?

As an indigenous person, the reality of Native peoples is part of my everyday life, my past, and future.

As long as people do not know or remember the stories of history including the death march in 1850 from Big Sandy Lake in Minnesota when the government failed to deliver food promised through treaties and 400 died, our faces must be seen.

As long as people do not know or remember the 38 Dakota warriors who were hung in Mankato, Minnesota in the largest mass execution in the U.S., our faces must be seen.

As long as people do not know, or do not remember, the stories of the boarding schools, our faces must be seen.

As long as there are missing and murdered indigenous women, our faces must be seen.

As long as metal tubes—oil pipelines- carry poisons across indigenous lands, our faces must be seen.

As long as Native people are disenfranchised and prevented from voting through actions such as voter ID laws, our faces must be seen.

As long as non-Native youth disrespect Native elders, our faces must be seen.

As long as Native children and youth are without hope for the future and contemplate, and sometimes, end their lives from suicide, our faces must be seen.

These stories, some of the past, are alive today because Native people live.

As long as these actives take place, as long as the rivers flow, and the grass grows green, our place and our action is needed, our faces must be seen.

I was fortunate to be a part of another call to action in September 2012 in Assisi, Italy at the Pilgrimage to Love and Forgiveness, hosted and sponsored by the Fetzer Institute. Let me close with that call written by the Fetzer Council on the Information and Communication Professions, a small group of which I was a member.

We call on professionals in media, library and information science, and telecommunications to join us

in fostering awareness of the power of love and forgiveness through our work.

As professionals, we're in a privileged position to influence the global conversation — to set the tone and spotlight the subjects.

We invite you to consider these questions with us:

 Can we put aside cynicism and turn up the volume on the positive?

Can we ask, Where is the love?

Our work should connect people rather than divide them, heal fractures rather than widen them,

inspire rather than pander, kindle hope rather than despair.

Can we be kind without losing the edge of truth?

While technology increasingly democratizes media,

we, as professionals, have a special responsibility to be compassionate witnesses,

to document and share knowledge,

to create an information commons accessible to all.

We call on our colleagues to work with us to change the lens through which people see the

world, a world where communications build a global community held together and healed by love and forgiveness.

Chi megwitch, thank you very much and let us meet again in one year, but meanwhile let us invite, experience, witness, and act so that our faces are seen.