

ALA ATLANTA
MIDWINTER MEETING & EXHIBITS
SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 2017
ALA TOWN HALL:
LIBRARY ADVOCACY AND CORE VALUES IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

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>> KEITH MICHAEL FIELDS: Good morning. It is my great pleasure as Executive Director to recognize at microphone 6 ALA President Julie Todaro.

>> JULIE TODARO: Thank you.
(Applause)

We have a large group of people, and I can't thank you enough for coming to talk about ALA and the environment in which we live and exist. We have lots of new opportunities, lots of exciting things happening in a variety of ways, but we really need the leadership of the membership to share with us what they feel our direction should be. So welcome.

I am now going to introduce Keith Fiels. This was my exciting new role. I didn't need a book for it. And Keith will announce our facilitator. Thank you so much for coming. Thanks, Keith.

>> KEITH MICHAEL FIELDS: Great. Once again, welcome to all of the members who have come this morning to participate in this town hall.

I will be very brief. It is my great pleasure to introduce Cheryl Gorman. I'll just say a couple of sentences about her. And first of all, we've had the pleasure of working at ALA now with Cheryl for, what, four

or five years. Cheryl came to us as a member of the Harwood Institute team. As you know, we have been working with them for a number of years on providing opportunities and practices to help libraries better understand their communities and their aspirations as a pathway to innovation at the local level.

ALA as an organization has also benefited from Cheryl's vast experience in organizational development and helping to forge solutions to difficult and sometimes contentious situations. Certainly working as a member of the Harwood team, you have been in interesting places and done some fine work.

Cheryl is Canadian and has worked also in the United States and Australia.

And last of all, in addition to working with ALA, she's also worked very closely with the United Way International.

So without any further ado, I am going to turn this entire town hall conversation over to Cheryl Gorman. Cheryl, thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thanks so much for that warm welcome, Keith, and welcome to all of to you this town hall.

As Keith mentioned, I have worked across Canada and the United States with libraries for many years. I love working with you. I mean that from the heart, and it's because you care deeply about people and the communities that you live and work in.

As Dr. Hayden said this morning, librarians do, indeed, rule, and so it's great that you are here to talk about something that's serious for the profession and important to move forward on in terms of the discussion.

So following the results of the November election, a number of members expressed, particularly online, a number of concerns around the advocacy efforts and the positions with the Trump administration, newly elected President Trump, and that intensity of the discussion really kind of raised up a number of questions that will be important for the membership along with the leadership to work through in order for you to effectively advocate for your values with the Trump administration.

My job as your facilitator here today is to help you move the conversation forward on this really challenging topic.

I had the opportunity on Friday to participate in the town hall that was sponsored by the Office of Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services, as well as the Committee on Legislation. And it really struck me, you could almost consider those two group bookends, that the commonality

that I heard in both of those meetings was people saying things like we need more honest conversations with one another around this issue. We need to stop, pause, and listen and really understand what are the underlying assumptions behind people's positions before we can move forward?

So today's session has been designed to start to deepen that understanding of where you are coming from, what are your assumptions, what's driving your positions, and that deeper understanding is a good start. It's not going to be the end point, though. Let's be really clear. We will not resolve or get to a shared understanding that's deep enough today that will allow decisions to be made. But it's the beginning.

We are going to need some of those honest conversations that people talked about on Friday, being able to really sit around the table, have a deep conversation, and really wrestle with those trade-offs between, on one hand, the positions around idealism, around your values, and on the other hand, pragmatic decisions that need to be made. And those trade-offs need to be discussed.

So today we are inviting your best thinking, that you share your best thinking with the room. With that in mind, you will see on the screen some questions behind me. Some of you saw these in advance of the session, others not, so I will spend just a moment to go over them. These questions are really around helping us move from where we are today forward to what are some of the big choices and trade-offs that need to be made.

So these are questions. Don't feel restricted by them. They are not the only thing you can talk about. But they are meant as thought starters.

So as we think about the member dialogue sparked by the recent election, what's our intention? What's the deeper, bigger purpose that's really worthy of our collective effort?

What do we know so far, and what do we still need to learn about?

Are there specific areas where our core values are being challenged that need more attention than others?

As you reflect on the member discussion since the election, what's taking shape? What are you hearing underneath this whole variety of opinions being expressed? What's really kind of at the center of the table?

And if there was one thing that hasn't yet been expressed that would help us reach a deeper level of understanding and clarity, what would that be?

So as I've mentioned, those are just thought starters. I will give you a couple of housekeeping points, and then we'll move into the discussion itself.

Today's town hall is being streamed via Facebook live by American Libraries for those of you who can't join us here today, and video of that session will be made available through the AL blog and AL Facebook page following the session. Thank you, Phil -- over here -- Phil, for being our videographer.

Because we have -- sorry. One more thing around captioning. Heather is going to continue doing captioning today, so thank you, Heather, for that support.

And because we have a limited amount of time and want to hear from as many people as possible, we need to limit each speaker to three minutes. We are going to use microphone 4 and 6 would be ideal, if you could make your way to one of those two microphones. As with the full Council meeting, our timekeeper and parliamentarian, Eli Mina, will be giving us -- serving as timekeeper. You will see a green light for the start of your comments, a yellow light when you have one minute left, and two minutes when you have run out of time.

In order to -- this format is being used not to limit the discussion but to make sure we hear from as many people as possible.

We would invite you and encourage you to identify yourself and your affiliation at the start of your comments, but that's not a requirement. And the purpose of this meeting, just to be clear, is to hear from members and leadership, both elected and staff, are here in a listening mode this morning. They want you to know they will respond to questions not here in the moment but post this session. I will be giving you more details about what that will look like when the session is concluded.

Let me just pause here to explain that decision. Having done this work, as Keith has mentioned, working through very contentious situations, this is really a moment in time where it's important not to rush into a decision for action but to be thoughtful about the trade-offs that you are reconciling. And so this morning is really a starting point to do that. I would really encourage you to lift up the key questions that, as an association, as members, you need to work through.

So I'll pause to see if there are any questions about format.

If not, I'll recognize microphones in order. Please, as I say, feel free to use these questions that are on the

screen as thought starters, and if those don't work for you, please continue with the thoughts you'd like to bring into the room.

Please at microphone 6.

>> Thank you. My name is Sarah Dallas. I am a councilor-at-large, and I am also the Chair of the Committee on Professional Ethics. And at our meeting yesterday, I was asked to remind everyone about the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association and was also asked to read to get it into the record -- I am so nervous -- number 7: We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provisions of access to their information resources.

Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Sarah. I appreciate you, always hard to be first at the mic.

I have been around a long time. Surprised not to see anybody standing at the mic.

Please, come forward.

So up here, microphone 4, your colleague has deferred.

>> Thank you. Bill Sudduth, GODORT Councilor. I am really going to speak more just on my view of where things have transpired in the last few months, and yes, this is a period of change, but we've had periods of change in the past, and as long as we've stuck to our core values but also thought about how we best get to the ends, we work with who we need to work with.

Yes, at the top there's been a lot of change, but if you go down to Congress, where we really work, there's only been some change. And so we still have the connections, we still have the professional staff. There's not that much turnover in Congress, and that's where we do most of our work. That's where ALA Washington Office does most of its work. That's where the legislation gets passed.

I don't think we know what the top-down change is going to be, but we still have the opportunity to still do the bottom-up change that we've always worked for in the past.

Thank you

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Bill. That's helpful, question 3, around where should we put emphasis.

Microphone 6.

>> Jim Rettig, Naval Academy.

I think our most core, core value is freedom of expression and intellectual freedom. We've heard grumblings about the need to change libel laws so

politicians can sue reporters. We have a big role in this because one of the things that will come up that people may get sued about is because they reported the truth instead of "fake news." And we need to be vigilant about these things, and we have a major role there because we hold these values so deeply, we are going to have some turnover in the Washington Office, but I am sure it will remain vigilant and keep us well informed.

And when I think about these issues, I wonder, those of you who remember Judith Krug, what would she have to say? She would make sure we were vigilant and ready.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Jim, not only for your comments, but your questions.

This is also a time not just to make statements, but put maybe not fully formed thoughts on the table, some wonderings. I am thinking about but not sure. There's space for all of that this morning.

Carolyn, microphone 4.

>> Hi. I'm Carolyn Keywood. I am retired, which makes me empowered.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

Since I started, I have been facilitating at the kitchen table conversations, which is a tool we have to use to continue these discussions without a 3-minute limit and 4,000 people crowding into a room. So I would hope that at Annual, we will dig into this more deeply at those.

The first speaker, whose name escaped me --

>> Sarah.

>> She read the statement from the Code of Ethics, make me wonder, those of you who do programming particularly, do you tell people, do you show them our three core documents, the Library Bill of Rights, the Code of Ethics, and Libraries American Value, when you do programming, showing them why you are doing this? Do you take them, when you do outreach, and explain that we care about the entire community no matter how rich or how marginalized?

I think we need to educate the public on what we really are all about. And those documents can help us do it.

And finally, I am President of the local PFLAG chapter, and the tagline PFLAG uses is PFLAG's values are America's values. Well, I submit that the American Library Association's values are America's values too. Let's tell them about it.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Carolyn.

(Applause)

Over in microphone 6.

>> John Sandstrom, past councilor, and speaking for myself as a member.

What I have heard quite a bit since this election and what has come forward to me is the fact that we really need to find some balances. We need to balance between our positions as an organization and a representative of all of our members and the needs of some of our members who work in smaller communities for more conservative communities who can be materially hurt by the positions that we take as an organization.

We have spent many years working to be part of the conversation, working and fighting to have a place at the table in policy making, in politics, in our communities. We have to remember that we have to maintain those places. If we walk away from the table because we don't like who is sitting at the head of it, we will hurt ourselves. We have to strive for that balance, the balance between the needs of our organization and the needs of our members and the needs of the libraries that we all work at.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, John.

Back over to microphone 4.

>> Andromeda Yelton, LITA President Elect.

As I was looking at the statements that came out at ALA after the election, I found they had a lot to say about funding, and that's important because that's how we pay our people and collect materials and keep the lights on.

But my concern was that they seemed to talk only about funding, and I found myself wondering if they come for copyright, will we say that's okay as long as we've been bought off? If they come for net neutrality, will we say that's okay, as long as we've been bought off? When they come for the NEH and the NEA, the artists who make the content that we collect and preserve, are we going to say that's okay, as long as we get bought off?

When they come for free speech -- and five bills were introduced in five states just, I think, on Friday, to criminalize protest -- will we say that's okay, as long as we've been bought off?

I look at how people I know react and the past actions of the current administration. The fact that every trans person I know was in a panic to get their documents in order before last Friday because they don't think they will be able to in the next four years. The fact that we have a President who will mock disabled people just because they are disabled and disagreeing with him. The fact that we

have a literal white supremacist in the White House who co-wrote the inauguration speech. The fact that the architects of Gamergate, which has been harassing women in technology for years, is now a White House staffer. The fact that we have many high-level people in the administration who support conversion therapy, which drives gay and lesbian teenagers to suicide at unbelievable rates. Trans people and people of color and disabled people and women and gays and lesbians are us, they are our staff, they are our patrons.

Funding matters, but so do our values, and so do our people. Funding is important, but so is our soul. And when I look at our messaging, I wonder, do we have a soul? Can it be bought? Or are there lines we do not cross?

Thank you.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Andromeda. From the heart and responded to in kind.

Over at microphone 6.

>> I don't think I was next.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: We are alternating mics.

>> Okay. Thank you very much. Ann Symons, ALA member.

I think that I work in the GLBT arena with our Round Table, and we recently have done an advocacy campaign called Open to All. We are hoping to add that tagline "welcome to all." I think that no matter where you live, in a blue state or red state, we need to remember that our libraries are open to all without discrimination. And I think we need to -- one of the things that we -- I think we need to keep at the forefront is policies that discriminate and speak loudly against them as an association.

Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Ann.

>> Hi. My name is Sarah Houghton, ALA member, public library director from California.

The words we use matter. We as librarians know that better than most. My current concern is with a narrative that's forming over why people were and are upset with ALA's post-election actions.

During this conference, I have attended two different meetings of two different official bodies of ALA's governance structure, at which, both of which, it was first subtly implied and then overtly stated that the only people upset about ALA's actions are young, which I hear as coded language for millennials, which I am not one, I am a Gen Xer. And that these colleagues of ours are too young to

remember transitions in past presidential administrations and ALA's responses to them and that these inexperienced librarians seem to be unable to separate their personal convictions from their professional duties.

I respectfully and vehemently disagree with that. The demographics, age, or otherwise of people upset with ALA's actions to date are as diverse as our membership. I also find it troubling to hear people in positions of influence say that the only reason one could be dissatisfied with these press releases is because of a failing on our part of separating the personal and the professional.

This, what we are living through right now, is not normal and should not be normalized by any aspect of ALA. There are a lot of smart, amazing people doing good work throughout this organization, and I want to acknowledge that.

As a member, I do not want a future where our organization sells its soul for scraps at the federal table, and I do not want a future where our organization ignores the opinions of any of our members. And this is a good beginning to that, so I thank you for today.

All ALA members' voices matter and our words matter. We need to stand strong together for our core values and for our communities during these challenging times. And we all need to be heard. I would like to see us all be a little more thoughtful in how we treat each other going forward.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Sarah, thank you.

Just before you start, just to be clear, my role is not to moderate, so I am not responding to the content of your comments, as was agreed in the formatting that I was asked to present. But I would -- we have had steady flow to the microphone, but I would encourage people, in addition to identifying the issues that you really think need attention as a priority, if you are also thinking about manners and ways in which that can happen. So Carolyn mentioned one tool around kitchen table conversations, but it would be very helpful, I think, to leadership to hear from you the kind of things that you'd like to see happen in order to allow this deeper conversation to happen and these tough choices to be discussed and those trade-offs to be discussed.

Nancy.

>> So Nancy Kranich, member at large. I want to start by saying I have never been prouder to be a librarian, and it's because of our values that make me feel so good, that

we can come forward like this and be what is truly American and speak for America. I have never been prouder to be a woman after yesterday. And I think I've never been prouder to be a democrat with a small "d." That brings me to what's so important to me is what's so valuable about ALA is we come together across our differences, and we unify. What's so disturbing to me about this election is how it's divided us. And I urge you to use some of these wonderful processes to really give you voice to come together, not to divide you, so we can stand unified and our voice will be so much more amplified.

And thank you. I love you all.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN. Thank you, Nancy.

>> Bryan Carson, chair, RUSA Access to Information Committee.

On a personal level, I understand what Andromeda and some of the other people have said.

As a Jewish American whose father was alive during the time of the Holocaust, I am darn, darn scared. That has nothing whatsoever to do, however, with my being willing to talk to the administration, to talk to Congress, to talk to my legislators. And yes, funding is important. So, however, are our core values. And in order to hold our core values up, we have to actually be talking.

As somebody else said, we have to be part of the conversation. If we are not sitting at the table, then we have no power.

I feel like this is really the basic thing. We have to talk.

Now, the Association represents such a diversity of opinions that it is hard sometimes to feel like we can come together. But what we should come together over are those core values in those core documents that were brought up by the first people to speak. I think that's really what we need to emphasize. And we need to be talking to everyone about those.

Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Brian.

>> Amy Fifarek, Arizona Councilor and LITA President, as well as public librarian in a red state.

I would like to echo the comments of the previous speaker to say that one of the things that I am most concerned about is the fact that not that we have a great turnout in this room today, but that there are thousands of people at this conference who either can't or aren't interested in being in this room today. And I do think

we do have a disconnect between people who are engaged in the leadership process in this organization and the rest of the membership who may not understand the advocacy role that ALA plays and the importance of that.

Many members get personal direct benefits from their membership and being involved with divisions and ALA as a whole, but not everybody is aware of the large and important work that ALA does. And it can be very intimidating, and I think it's incumbent upon those of us who are leaders in round tables, divisions, and throughout the organization to make sure that all of our members are aware of the great and important work that ALA does and that, as Carla Hayden said, we need to remember our power. And that power can be used for good or for ill or something in between. So again, I would also like to echo the sentiments of the gentleman who spoke at this microphone earlier about the idea that there are communities that can be materially hurt by our actions.

I don't think this should prevent us from engaging in conversations around that, and I definitely don't think it should prevent us from sticking to our core values. That is truly what unites us. But we have to realize and have reasonable discussions about where we can compromise, where we can delay, and where we can wait for a better opportunity and where we must draw that line in the sand and stick to it. Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Amy.

(Applause)

>> Millie Gonzalez, Council member and also REFORMA member.

Where was ALA? Where was ALA when all last year we heard hateful rhetoric against Latinos, GLBT, Muslims, African Americans, those with disabilities, women, journalists, and countless of others? Where was ALA? No statements, no guidance, no reaffirmation about our core values.

We should take the time to reflect about this first before, about our inaction, so we can move forward.

Thank you.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you.

>> Good afternoon. I'm April Hathcock. I am an ALA councilor-at-large. I am also a millennial, and I am 34, so I just want to point out that millennials are not just high school students. In fact, millennials aren't high school students. I am a librarian. I am also a lawyer. This is my second career. Millennials, we do know a thing

about a few things.

And I just want to express that I know a lot of people have talked about how membership doesn't understand the importance of ALA or the importance of the advocacy work that goes into securing funding. And I would argue that a lot of us do and that we are not arguing that we should not talk to the current administration, that we should not do the work that we need to do to protect our libraries and particularly our libraries that are in areas where using particular language or standing out against particular issues might cause the material harm.

What we are saying, though, is that just as the, you know, ALA administration may assume that we don't understand the important work they do, we want you to know that in a lot of ways, you don't understand the issues and the concerns that we have. Hearing that there are ALA administrators who assume that everyone who has an issue with what's been going on is young, is a millennial, hasn't been around the block, that's horribly offensive because that means that you have not been listening, and that is what this town hall is supposed to be about. That is what all the emails have been about, the blog posts, the Twitter feeds. That is what we are talking about. We are not saying we don't want you to fight for funding. We are not saying we don't want you to sit down with the Trump administration. We are saying that we want you to understand where we are coming from.

Some of us are scared. Some of us are not able to separate our personal and professional lives because as soon as we walk into our libraries, who we are personally is about who we are professionally. And we want you to understand that.

So as you sit at the table with the administration, with Congress, with local leaders, whoever you are talking to, also consider our concerns, also consider our issues. When you send us statements, when you send us emails about the work that you are doing, don't treat it like it's business as usual but acknowledge the fact that we have these concerns, acknowledge the fact that there are issues here, acknowledge the fact that some of us feel we are in danger as you are fighting for the funding. We don't have to choose between our souls and the money. We can do both, and we ask that you understand our issues and concerns as you pursue both.

Thank you.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, April.

>> Hello. I am Christine Lind Hage. I am speaking as a person member of ALA.

Anyone that knows me knows that I am known for being very practical, and I have been a Library Director for 30 years working in three different communities, and one of the things I always have done regardless of political opinions is that I always welcome newly elected officials, look forward to working with them, and say that the library is there to support them. And I think ALA has to do that with the new administration. You have to sort of put your politics aside. It's a fact, we have a new administration. I think it's our job to identify people in the administration or even at the local level that have input to the administration to put our agenda forward and to insert our core values.

There will be something that we can hang on to. And that doesn't mean we don't push back when we don't agree, but we need to -- we are going to have to live with these people, so we need to work with them.

An example I would like to mention is Betsy DeVos for the Secretary of Education. And Betsy's husband, Dick, in 2002 or 2003, something, early 2000s, supported -- was very involved in a Boy Scout initiative for STEM education. This may not be a huge issue in ALA, and he's not being nominated for Secretary of Education, but there is a link that he supported at one time something that we support, and I think we need to work those links. And ALA is going to have to count on all of our members to say from their local library, the Vice President, his sister, his mother, his wife was active in something that is something we care about. And to insert our core values and maybe work from that way. We need to identify things that we can support but not neglect pushing back on things that really impinge on our core values.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Christine.

(Applause)

>> Hi. Aaron Dobbs, life member of ALA, moderately involved, and lucky enough to live within a hundred miles of DC.

My involvement in ALA hasn't been very heavily canted towards the Washington Office since 2000-something, mumble, mumble, '02, '3, '4.

What I want to just highlight here real fast is I am the same guy I was ten years ago, only now I have met all of you and I am smarter and better for it.

In Massachusetts, I am a conservative. In Tennessee, I am a liberal. In Pennsylvltucky -- excuse me, central

Pennsylvania, where I live/work now, I am a flaming liberal. So, while I agree that we need to speak up on our values, we need to make sure we say it in a way that doesn't drive people away.

We have some very positive core values, we have a lot of expressions of core values, and we have to make sure we don't say hey, you idiot, you are dumb, and you're not right, and you voted for that guy, and oh, my God. We have to say we support all of our positive values in a way that they go, hey, I am for that too.

So everyone says ALA this, ALA that. I hate to say it -- actually, I don't hate to say it -- I love it say it. "I" am ALA. "You," "us," all of us together, "we" are ALA. If ALA is not doing something, do it.

Speak.

(Applause)

We are ALA together. Please join me, as you can, however you can. Go to your local legislator's office and say hi, my name is Aaron Dobbs -- well, you don't say Aaron Dobbs, please. (Laughter) Unless you want to. Don't drop my name. Hi, my name is Aaron Dobbs. I have two kids in school and I am a librarian, and these are how I help people, and this is what my library does for my community. And my community is your community because we elected you, Bozo -- excuse me, sir, ma'am. But phrase it positive. "We" are ALA. "We, ALA," can't do jack unless "we" stand up and say something to those people.

Thank you.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Aaron.

Those of you who know me know how hard it is for me not to moderate. My whole body of work is around facilitating conversation and those active discussions, but I can't help but state that I noticed the number of speakers that have talked about the importance of agency and not looking and waiting for someone from on high to take action. So it's very striking in your comments around the importance of agency.

>> Hi. Can everyone hear me?

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Yes, we can.

>> I apologize to anyone behind me who is going to now have to adjust that microphone down.

I am Ruth Bader, personal member of ALA and ACRL. I am also a millennial, and I guess I would like to say that when those particular press releases came out, I felt very caught off guard. For me, throughout this election cycle and then on the morning of November 9, I have been thinking

really hard about what I, as a personal individual, want to do, how it is that I want to take my values and let my values guide my actions. And when I saw those press releases come out, I felt that ALA was not letting its values guide its actions.

So you spoke about wanting to have some suggestions for concrete things to do. Maybe that's one concrete thing that we can do is start thinking about -- well, so yes, we have these values. We all are committed to those values. But what is it going to look like at the association level, at our individual library level, at us as individual librarians' level? What is it going to look like to be putting those values into action so we are not caught off forward by each other's actions over the coming years.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Ruth.

(Applause)

>> Hi. My name is Sarah Slymon, and I am here as a member. I am a public library director from Massachusetts. I want to thank ALA for hosting this. I think it's very important that we are here and have the opportunity to have this voice.

I am also clearly not a millennial, so I think what Sarah said about it being extremely insulting that the suggestion has been made that the only people upset about ALA's recent actions are millennials cannot be stated enough times.

We keep talking about preserving our funding. We've been politely asking for a long time, and we continue to be more and more marginalized. Maya Angelou said when someone tells you who they are, believe them the first time. This administration has told us who they are. It's clear that the route to success for libraries will come not by appealing to the government but by concentrating on activating the American people, our patrons and our staffs. We need a loud and proud appeal directly to the public. By demonstrating our value to the people, they will mobilize to demand our preservation.

We need to revolutionize our model and stop looking inwardly and being so self-congratulatory.

Thank you.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Sarah, thank you.

>> Joan Weeks, councilor-at-large and other constituencies. I want to be very pragmatic and offer these suggestions. We have a strategic plan for advocacy. And it only stays as a strategic plan sort of out there

in the sky, but I think it's time to be very pragmatic about that where we actually have action plans is, and I want to draw kind of a line between our direction for the Washington Office, which a lot of us just assume or want to believe that they advocate for the Association, and that's it, and they are done. But I think what we have here, we want to send them very clear, specific, focused agenda items that they are to carry forward to Congress.

So that covers one aspect of it. But how many of us go out in the evening to our local county council meetings and advocate for our libraries' budget? And I'll get to it in a minute. I have a former life as a lobbyist. So one of our other ALA strategic objectives was professional development. How many of us have really gotten into the ins and outs of advocacy and learned how to do it? Writing the letters to the members of Congress is one thing. But I feel particularly impeded because I am from a blue state. How do I write to a member of a red state and advocate for libraries in that state? Where are our state chapters? Are they meeting with their state representatives? And advocating strongly for libraries? And teaching courses on this?

We have our Committee on Library Advocacy, and the training kit that they devised several years ago -- I was on that committee -- and if we have those kits and get our members to go out on the specific, clear, focused agenda items, then we are going to begin to have an impact, local, state, and national. And that will bring up the ground swell.

Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Joan, thank you for those very concrete ideas.

>> Good morning. Carol Brey, personal member and Past President of ALA.

So I think -- we've talked a lot about power, and we do have incredible power. I have been thinking about this on three levels -- personal power, power as librarians, and power as ALA.

Many of you may know that I currently work for the U.S. Government for the State Department. Pray for me. And I am currently based in Buenos Aires at the U.S. embassy. So as an individual, the thing that's most important, of course, is to vote. I was amazed at how many people I heard about that did not vote in this last election. The midterm elections are coming up. Vote. Shape our congress. It is hard to vote when you live in another country, but I did it. People can do it here much more easily than I can.

Certainly, write, call, talk to your legislators on the local, state, national level. I still do it. I am allowed to do that. I can still talk to my legislators on my personal time, and I do it.

As librarians, we have the greatest power in the world, really, I think, to provide information that helps people understand what's happening in our democracy, understand democracy first, understand democratic principles, and then know that they have a voice. And we can do that in every little library, everywhere in the country.

Believe me, I work with countries now where they don't have that voice. We should be proud of that voice and use it, use that power in any way that we can.

And thirdly, as ALA -- and I think this is something that hopefully is already in the works -- but there needs to be a resolution, a strongly worded resolution, on the part of our association that states all that we've been talking about today, our core values, why we, as an association, support democratic principles, and all of that is based in our policy. I know because I was chair of the Policy Monitoring Committee. It was my very first ALA appointment, and I will never forget the importance of our policies. They are there. All of this that we are saying, it's already there. We just have to bring it together. I am not on Council anymore, but I know that there are many of you here who are great writers and can come up with a resolution that states what we believe, that goes to the people in power. And I think as an association, that will bring us together, so I think it's a good place to start.

But I am very proud of all of you. I am so happy we are having this meeting, and I am really thrilled that I have the opportunity to participate. Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Carol.

(Applause)

>> Hi. My name is Violet Fox. I am an Act librarian in the middle of Minnesota. I come from a very red district. My district was the one that elected Michelle Bachmann, if you remember here. So that's telling you where I come from.

I have heard that people say that rural libraries, red districts will be materially hurt, the funding, but you know, if you think that speaking out is a threat to our funding, then not informing our communities about our core values is going to be the real threat to our funding, the silence.

You asked for concrete suggestions. So I'd like to

ask ALA leadership to get serious about communication, reduce the opaqueness of, you know, the website has a lot of work. Replace Connect. I mean, you have been talking about it for a long time, and it's just not getting done. That will help people understand what we do and how they can get involved.

You know, open up the ALA Council discussions so that it's not just on an email list and anyone can find it. I mean, that would be huge.

And again, encourage new members to get involved with governance, specifically, reach out to the New Members Round Table or the Social Responsibilities Round Table and say "get involved." Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Violet, thank you.

(Applause)

>> Chris Corrigan. I am coming from a point of privilege in that I was born in '81, so I straddle both gen X and millennial, so depending on which generation embarrasses me the most, I can disavow one.

(Laughter)

So back in 2015, in May, before Annual, my wife and I took a trip to Kentucky, and we went to Harlan County, Kentucky, and that is a county that was very proud of its past. People, Italian immigrants immigrated there, went to work in coal mines, helped build this country through their energy, through their foundation. They are very proud of themselves for doing that, they are very proud of their past.

Then a month later, I went to San Francisco for annual. I have a cousin, I had dinner with my family, where my cousin said why did you go to Kentucky? Did you just randomly point at a map?

That coastal -- that sort of elitism is emblematic of the disenfranchisement that people in that part of this country feel. And I am really afraid that by saying not my ALA, we run the risk of further alienating people because they may not necessarily think like we do.

I understand people being afraid, but I worry that the reaction to a 33-word rescinded press release mirrors a type of populism that I've been really scared about over this past year, a reaction against institutions. In our case, the institutions happen to be the Chicago and Washington Office.

I think forgiveness is in short supply these days, and I call upon you for your compassion and your empathy and for your sense of forgiveness.

Thank you.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Chris.

>> Nann Blaine Hilyard, former Councilor, former Executive Board member, and now just a retired member.

When I first began learning about ALA advocacy work, a quote from Thomas Jefferson occurred -- I learned that, and I keep thinking about it, and he said: To every obstacle oppose patience, perseverance, and soothing language, and I hope we all remember that as we go forward.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Nann.

And just to give you a bit of a heads-up, we've got about 25 more minutes, so I notice a number of folks leaving early. I'll assume that that is not regarding the conversation that we are having here. Just know that if you don't get time at the mic today, this opportunity will continue going forward through the ALA blog and other mechanisms as well.

>> Hi. I'm Al Kagan. I am a member of the Action Council of the Social Responsibilities Round Table. And I'd like to relate some of my experience at this conference that I didn't expect. A number of people came up to me, both some ALA leaders and some people I had never met before, to thank me for my advocacy, and especially around whistleblowers, and noting that Chelsea Manning's sentence has just been commuted.

(Applause)

Thank you for clapping. That's a point that the Social Responsibilities Round Table really pushed hard here in the Council, not only her, but other whistle-blowers.

And I was very pleased that people said that to me. I think when we look around at the country, what happened here in Atlanta yesterday and what happened all around the country yesterday, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people were marching yesterday. People are coming together all over this country to advocate what needs to be done in the face of a major threat.

ALA needs to be part of that. And let me put it this way. Now is the time, more than ever, for ALA to raise its voice as a progressive force in this country. We should not be thinking compromise. We should be thinking raise our voice.

Thank you.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Al.

>> Hi. I am Erin Leach, an ALA member. I wanted to

start by saying that I appreciate the comments the previous speakers have made and the bravery it takes, especially for those of us who don't often speak at these microphones, to be vulnerable enough to speak.

I can appreciate the dual role that ALA has in supporting both libraries and the people who staff them. As we commit to equity, diversity, and inclusion as core values of the Association, I want to challenge ALA leaders at every level to consider how the decisions we make and the decisions we don't affirm those values. Otherwise, our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion ring hollow.

Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Erin.

(Applause)

>> Ismail Abdullahi.

I am an educator by profession. I have been teaching in library information science for 27 years in three schools. One of the classes that I teach is the Foundation of Library and Information Science, and in this class, we take the core values as our model of understanding the library and information science. And the core values of ALA, it took many years, since 1876, and it took many hard work, many fights. ALA is not the first time it is facing these challenges. The library profession is not the first time we are facing these challenges. There has been many, many.

And the past generations have worked so hard to get us to where we are today. And today we have a responsibility, as professionals of this generation, for the past generation, and for the new generation, the new generation that I am teaching at the school, students of library and information science, are also concerned about their profession, especially with the kind of debate this election has brought. That it has started its first shot on diversity, on issues of diversity.

The library profession is a diverse profession. And ALA also stands for a diverse society. America is a diverse society, and that is one of its core values. And we stand by American core values. What it says about equality, what it says about freedom of expression, intellectual freedom, we are the defenders of these core values. We are not going to move backward. We have to move forward as ALA has always done and is always going to do.

This is not something wrong. It is just speaking on behalf of the people, and ALA does that by speaking on behalf

of its members.

Another thing we have to look, I travel a lot in international arena, international countries. Many library associations are looking to ALA what ALA is doing with this new phenomena that has started in the United States. We have that international responsibility also. So therefore, colleagues, we have to continue to move forward. Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Ismail.

(Applause)

Julie, can I just check, are you trying to get into the speaking order? Yes? Up to 6 if you wouldn't mind. Thank you.

Go ahead.

>> Mary Biblo, councilor-at-large.

It's very interesting to hear all of these wonderful remarks about equality, core values, and everything.

I have been working here at ALA for over 40 years. On Council, elected by petition, not elected by the Nominating Committee. I don't know if it was because of the things I was saying or my different attitude, where I felt we, as an organization, was going.

I felt that ALA should be, it's sounding more to me like they want some real action, the people here. I was very in support of the woman who said where were we when the issues were that challenged the freedom of speech, and even today challenging the press. It reminds me -- not that I was part of this, but I was a student growing up, and I recall how fascism came into being in the world in Germany. First they attacked the press. That was the main direction of the power structure. Then they started attacking other people within who would speak out.

I think ALA -- I am not saying you have to be in the forefront of the leaders, but ALA should have a role of grabbing the issues that are related to our core values. And they should give leadership. They shouldn't let issues like we are going to lose our funding or our petition where -- I forget the exact name of it -- where we would lose our recognition and we would be taxed.

To me, these are the excuses that we have for not really taking an active part in what's happening to not only our memberships but to our communities and to the United States as a whole.

I've been fighting or been concerned, either way you look at it. When I got married to my husband --

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Mary, I am going to respectfully, could you bring your thoughts together.

>> That was nearly 70 years ago. It was an interracial marriage, and our main purpose was to educate people how to move forward, to speak out, and to voice your opinion in order to preserve your rights.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Mary, I am going to have to -- excuse me. Mary, there's a lot of folks waiting.

>> I know, but --

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Please finish.

>> But this is important. I speak to every young --

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Mary, I am so sorry. I am not trying to be disrespectful. You really need to let others speak.

>> -- and say learn how to speak out and think. Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Mary. I appreciate it. I am so sorry to have to cut you off.

(Applause)

>> Good -- oh, I am sorry.

>> I am Martin Garnar, Intellectual Freedom Round Table Councilor.

>> I am Melissa Cardenas-Dow, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Implementation Working Group co-chair.

>> I am the other co-chair. We do everything collaboratively, which is why we are here together to share our time.

>> Just to address the last question, if there was one thing that hasn't been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding and clarity, what would that be?

From the work that we have been doing for the past, I don't know, three years, we have been very focused on one thing that has been very much implied here already, and that is that institutions are made out of people. Now, there has been a lot of talk about concerns of funding for institutions. One of our biggest concerns is really about ALA membership and individual people and then cascading from that the institutions, the patrons we serve, and, yeah, that's what we have been concerned about.

And when the "not my ALA" hashtag came out, I really want to just lend my support and echo what has already been said, which is there are people within our midst who have grave concerns. We are not saying that we should not be concerned about funding for our institutions. What we are concerned about are the people.

>> As a past chair of the Committee on Professional Ethics, I can also remind us that the preamble says that ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. Our core values, which we have been talking about but haven't actually named, we have 11 listed, and they include

democracy. They include social responsibility. They include diversity. And I think it's important for us as an association, as a profession, to revisit these core values so that we can really discuss and embrace what they mean to us and what they mean to us as an association. I think especially in this time, as members of our association, members of our profession, who come from marginalized communities feel especially exposed, that we need to perhaps focus more on the values of diversity and social responsibility. And as members of the implementation working group, we would welcome you to join us. The Task Force's job was to create the recommendations. Now we have to do the work, and we need you to work with us and volunteer to help us to get these values into the fabric of what we do.

Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Martin and Melissa, and also for sharing your time.

(Applause)

>> Good afternoon, colleagues. It's good to be with you again. My name is Betty Turock. I identify myself very broadly as professor and dean emeritus, Rutgers University, but more importantly, as a past president of the American Library Association who has been given the Honorary Membership award, mainly, I think, for my work with others in establishing the Spectrum initiative.

I want to tell you -- I don't have to tell you, just look at me -- I am not a millennial.

(Laughter)

But -- but -- I have two granddaughters who are, and I want to tell you that we are in total agreement about our concern for what can happen to the core values of our democracy as well as the core values of this association over a very short period of time in the future.

I was so distressed when I saw the communication coming from the American Library Association on American Library Association letterhead that I immediately sat down and wrote a very long -- because I am a verbose -- as you can see or will learn -- a pretty verbose past president. I sent it to the Executive Board and the officers of the Association. I will not regale you with everything that it said, but I would like to share a couple of things to show you that I, like you, have been thinking about this.

The first is we should not forget that we have had and continue to have champions within the Congress who have propelled libraries to a very good place in our democracy. They understand that we are a site to disseminate

information freely to all people, that we believe in equity of that distribution, and we stand behind it.

We also, I would like to see, make certain that the voice of this association is its president. Why? Because one voice speaking for us with agency talking about the number of libraries, the number of librarians, and the people -- the number of people whom we serve, is not a statistic that can be denied in the halls of Congress.

I want to tell you also that my document sent to the Executive Board and the officers was received extremely well. It was answered in detail. In fact, some of my own words were used in it. I say that so that I can share with you that I believe we have an Executive Board we can trust who will listen to all of us, not just me, but all of us, and whom we can expect to have answers and directions from shortly.

Thank you.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Betty, thank you very much.

>> My name is Deb Lolli. I am the finance officer of a public library in a rural, red area. I just want to let you know that it doesn't matter what ALA says; my local government officials who fund us don't care what you say. They hardly even know you exist. So you don't need to use us as an excuse for not speaking out.

(Applause)

I am obviously a boomer. 50 years ago, I was standing protesting many of the same things that the 3 million women and people of color and people of gender were protesting yesterday. Many of my contemporaries were out there in those marches yesterday. And I want to tell ALA that I do remember history, and 50 years ago, my libraries were a place where I could go to get help, to get support, and to have people who understood our needs and the needs of people like me who were looking for help with our protests. They weren't telling us to suck it up and go with the flow because this will pass. Because we knew it wouldn't pass then, we know it won't pass now. So ALA is responsible to speak the truth. There's a lot of people out there right now in the current administration who are trying to bury the truth, and that is what we, as ALA, cannot allow to happen. We need to speak the truth. We need to put the truth out there. And also, those 3 million people who were protesting yesterday are our customers, and we need to make sure that they know that this is a safe place for them.

The statement that was put out originally was not a safe place for them, and it turned those people off. So

we need to make sure that all of our constituents know that we are a safe place for them, for all of them. Thank you.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Deb, thank you very much.

>> Hi. My name's Eileen Palmer. I am an ALA member, serve on the Committee on Legislation, but for the purposes of these comments, I am the Chair of the New Jersey Library Association, Public Policy Committee.

I think that this conversation here will be very helpful at the chapter level as well as the national level. We had been directed by our Executive Board in early December to develop -- to work with them to develop a statement for our association to make, and I thought it would be easy, even having seen what ALA went through. New Jersey's a blue state. I mean, we have a governor, but -- (Laughter) -- but and large, New Jersey is a blue state. We collaborated on a document, on a statement, and took it to our intellectual freedom and public policy committees, and we had such diverse reactions to it, to the statement. And so many people who did not want us to make the statement that it really surprised me.

But I appreciate the fact that our Executive Board has accepted our recommendation that we have to go back to the drawing board and we have to look at this again and did not force us to rush forward.

I agree with Martin's comments. I really do believe that in many ways there are at least people who feel that we are in a conflict of values situation in our associations, whether they be ALA or the state chapters. And until we have an honest discussion about those conflicts and values and find a path to resolve them, I think it's going to be very difficult to move forward. I think it's going to take some time and some willingness to, you know, accept, for example, in our blue state, we have members of our own association who voted for every candidate that was on the Presidential ballot. And those that voted for the candidate that is now President are very protective of their thought process and how they got there, and we have found that sometimes we say things from another perspective that is very hurtful to them and makes them feel like they don't have a place in the Association.

So I just, I guess, mostly want to say don't forget the chapters. We are going to learn from this as well, and hopefully participate. Thank you.

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Thank you, Eileen.

(Applause)

We've got time for one more speaker.

>> My name is Lisa Rice, and I am the chapter councilor actually from Kentucky, so we feel like we have been previewing what some people believe is happening now with the attitudes and the thought processes that are coming into the current administration. However, I will say that through the past year, the first thing we did as a chapter, as an advocacy group, was to sit down with that current administration and talk about what we were concerned about, what they were concerned about. Through that legislative year, every effort that we pushed was approved, everything we wanted defeated was defeated, and we got money when no one else did. So you can disagree on many parts and still be respected. And I think that's probably core.

One thing I do want to say, because I know there's been some issues about where was ALA. I cannot thank ALA strongly enough that through the processes -- we've been sued in last year, we've been under -- you know, had many challenges in Kentucky. ALA was always there but respectful of how things work in Kentucky. As the speaker who spoke before me, my governor, my legislators, they don't really care what ALA thinks. They care what their residents think. And through their help and support, we were able to work with these legislators.

I also want to say that both our governor and our Lieutenant Governor, in their inaugural addresses, credited library for their success. If we continue to build relationships, even though we disagree, we are in a unique position as a respected institution to make some change.

(Applause)

>> CHERYL GORMAN: Lisa, thank you.

So thank you to all those in the room and our live audience through the webcast for your candid thoughts.

I won't be able to do justice, so I am not going to try to make any kind of summary statement. I opted to give the time to you, as was most important.

As a Canadian who loves this country, I just want to speak personally for a moment. There are countless people around the world that are wishing you good will and the energy to work through the things that are dividing you. We know you can do it. You are a great people, and we're behind you.

(Applause)

ALA staff and elected leadership, as I mentioned at the outset, will provide follow-up on next steps as soon as they can. They will -- that will also include response to questions that were raised here today and the many great

suggestions that were put forward, as well as the things that were previously posted on the AL blog.

I would like to thank my colleagues, Eli, Heather, and Phil for their support in making this town hall possible, and that concludes our session for today.

Be well. Thank you.

(Applause)

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