

June 6, 2020

Dear Members,

As incoming President of the Children's Literature Association, I am grateful to those individuals who continue to hold us accountable by pointing out racial problems within our organization. None of us is exempt from accountability.

The murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, George Floyd, Eric Garner, Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor, and countless others are a direct result of anti-blackness and racism. I am committed to continuing ChLA's efforts to address systemic racism, anti-blackness, and white supremacy across our organization. ChLA will continue to do the work of owning our errors, keeping them visible, and fostering change not only through words, but also through action.

Many actions by the organization will take time to implement. However, we cannot wait to begin this work. As such, beginning on my first day as President (June 20, 2020), I am implementing the following:

- I will be hosting monthly virtual "office hours." During those times, members will have an opportunity to meet in an informal setting to share thoughts, concerns, and to discuss matters related to our organization. Please know that during those meetings, I will not be able to speak on behalf of the organization. However, my goal is to hear--directly from you--whatever it is that you want to share regarding ChLA. I will bring what I learn during those sessions to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors on an ongoing basis.
- Building upon work that began at the 2019 conference, we will organize anti-racism book groups. It is my hope that these book groups will become an official part of ChLA. More information will be forthcoming on June 20, but we envision that there will be multiple small groups that meet regularly across the year to discuss professional texts on anti-racism as well as anti-racist literature for young people. Initial groups will be organized around the following texts:
  - *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (Alexander, 2010)
  - *Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements* (Carruthers, 2019)
  - *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America* (Forman, Jr., 2017)
  - *How to Be an Antiracist* (Kendi, 2019)
  - *Stamped from the Beginning* (Kendi, 2016)
  - *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* (Love, 2020)
  - *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing America's Heartland* (Metzl, 2019)

- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix* (Reynolds & Kendi, 2020)
- *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Taylor, 2017)

Again, these are small actions that will be implemented immediately. As incoming President, I will build on the work of Presidents Karen Chandler and Kate Capshaw. Later this month, for example, the Board will be voting on the implementation of the ChLA Ethics Committee based upon work done by board members over the past year. Once I begin my official tenure as President, I will be proposing to the Board that we hire an external consulting group to assess and help ChLA implement actions to address issues of equity and justice across the organization.

Finally, if you can, please join me in donating to [Black Lives Matter](#), the [African American Policy Forum](#), the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), and/or other anti-racist and civil rights organizations committed to creating change across the country and around the world.

As always, I welcome your feedback, input, and suggestions.

With gratitude and in solidarity,



Thomas B. Crisp

Vice President/President-Elect of the Children's Literature Association