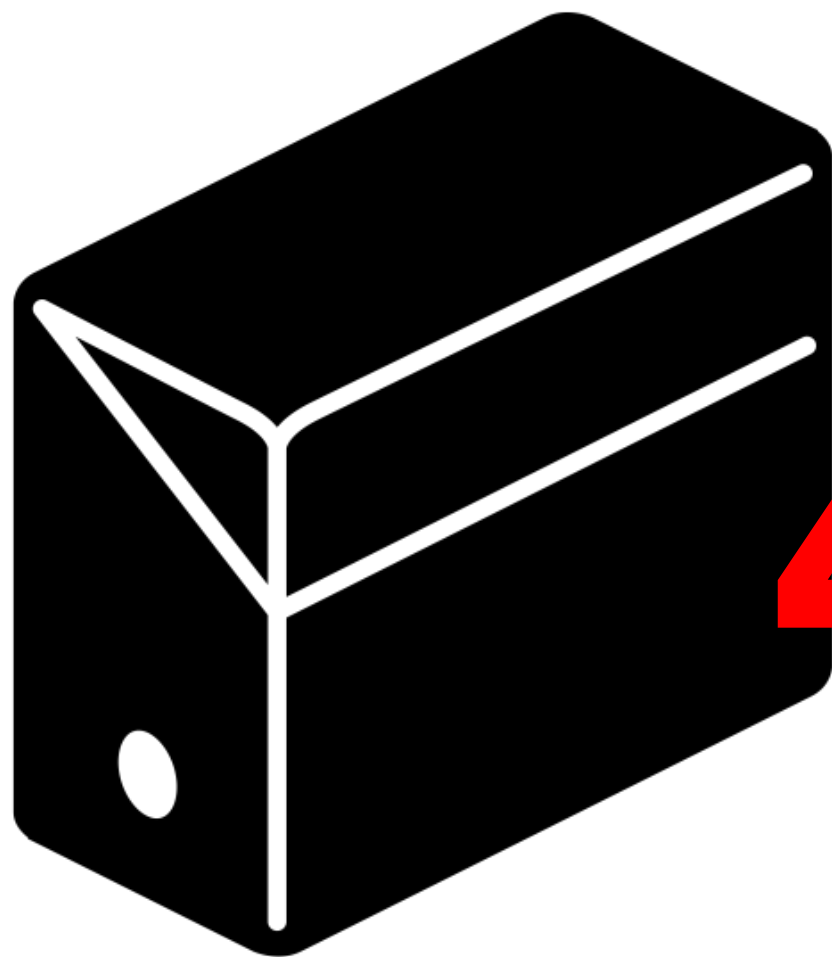


A decorative horizontal bar consisting of a teal segment on the left and an orange segment on the right.

ArchivesForBlackLives: Archivists respond to Black Lives Matter

Nerd Nite: Archives Take-over
October 23, 2018
Celia Caust-Ellenbogen

Archives For Black Lives in Philadelphia (A4BLiP)




4

BLACK

LIVES

MATTER

A grey t-shirt is laid flat on a light-colored wooden surface. The t-shirt has a crew neck and short sleeves. In the center of the chest, the words "ARCHIVES ARE NOT NEUTRAL" are printed in a bold, black, hand-drawn font, arranged in three lines. A small white manufacturer's tag is visible at the top of the neck.

**ARCHIVES
ARE NOT
NEUTRAL**

<https://github.com/rappel110/A4BLiP>

Branch: master ▾


New pull request

Find file

Clone or download ▾

 **rappel110** Rename 20160109 to 20170109

Latest commit 8710228 on Jul 27, 2017

 20170109	Rename 20160109 to 20170109	a year ago
 readme.md	Update readme.md	a year ago

 [readme.md](#)

#ArchivesForBlackLives in Philadelphia

Version released January 9, 2017. 40+ archivists, librarians, and information professionals in the Delaware Valley contributed to the creation of this document. Join the conversation at <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/a4blinphilly>

Three years after the #BlackLivesMatter movement began, we continue to be appalled by recurring incidents where killing of and police violence against Black citizens occur with impunity. In a talk at the 2016 American Library Association conference, our colleague Jarrett Drake called on archivists to engage the issues surrounding the #BlackLivesMatter movement and to do better to promote #ArchivesForBlackLives. As a community of Philadelphia-area archivists, we come together to discuss these critical concerns and identify areas for action.

Archivists appraise, collect, preserve, organize, and provide access to archives in adherence to international standards and a professional code of ethics.

Because we have the privilege of choosing what goes into the historical record, we also bear the responsibility to safeguard accurate representations of contemporaneous events. We believe archives exist to hold power to account; to speak truth to power. Because records serve as evidence for factual claims, it is archivists' responsibility, as stewards of records, to stand against their exploitation or abuse.

1. Collect, support, lift up Black history narratives





2. Work to make archival spaces more inclusive



**OVERT
WHITE SUPREMACY
(Socially Unacceptable)**

Lynching

Hate Crimes Swastikas

The N-Word KKK Burning
Crosses

Racial Slurs Racist Jokes Neo-Nazis

**COVERT
WHITE SUPREMACY
(Socially Acceptable)**

"Make America Great
Again"

Hiring Discrimination

Police
murdering POC

School-to-Prison
Pipeline

Confederate
Flags

Discriminatory Lending

Racial Profiling

Not Believing
Experiences of POC

Mass Incarceration

Paternalism

Police Brutality

Assuming that Good
Intentions are Enough

Virtuous Victim
Narrative

Euro-centric Curriculum

Anti-Immigration
Policies/Practices

Denial of White
Privilege

English-only Initiatives

Housing
Discrimination

Fearing People of Color

Self-appointed
White Ally

Expecting POC to
Teach White People

Believing we are
"Post-Racial"

"Don't blame me, I
never owned slaves"

Celebration of
Columbus Day

Denial of
Racism

"But what about me?"

"But we're just one
human family"

Bootstrap Theory

Blaming the Victim

Cultural Appropriation

Tokenism

Racist Mascots

Claiming Reverse
Racism

Not Challenging
Racist Jokes

Colorblindness

"It is just a joke!"

White Savior Complex

Identifying & Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives

An Incomplete List of White Privileges in Archives and Action Items for Dismantling Them*

Context provided in Michelle Caswell's *Archives, Race, and Money* class, Fall 2016, UCLA. Poster Design by Cecelia Brimner

*All of the following call for nuance, context, and an awareness that oppression is structural.

Identifying & Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives

DESCRIPTION

PRIVILEGE

When I look for materials from my community or archive, they will be described in the finding aid and finding records using language I can understand.

ACTION

- Train all archivists to have cultural humility and describe materials using anti-oppressive language.
- Educate yourself continually and actively.
- Use your authority of color to describe materials.
- Engage communities to ask how they wish to describe themselves. Compensate them for their labor.

PRIVILEGE

When I look at descriptions of archival materials, I am not always bombarded by/remembered of my otherness.

ACTION

- Hire more archivists of color to describe materials.
- Update finding aids that use excluded white supremacist language. Keep a note of your changes so that users can examine the history of the finding aid as an artifact.
- Engage communities to ask how they wish to describe themselves. Compensate them for their labor.

PRIVILEGE

Materials are described using my native language.

ACTION

- Hire multilingual people as archivists and translators and translate finding aids into appropriate languages.
- Translate value, history, and/or language of color in ILL programs and continuing education.

Identifying & Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives

APPRAISAL

PRIVILEGE

I can be sure I can find materials representing people of my race created by people of my race.

ACTION

- Implement policies to collect materials representing and created by people of color. Note that it will take time to build trust and change mindsets.
- Contact archivists of your local repository and tell them you want to see collections created by people of color.
- Increase participatory appraisal models that share appraisal decision-making power with communities of color.

PRIVILEGE

The objects I feel are valuable for my culture are also deemed valuable in archives.

ACTION

- Expand our cultural values to value materials created by communities of color.
- Educate yourself continually, especially about specific communities of color values. Don't expect communities of color to do the work for you.
- Work collaboratively with communities of color as equal partners in appraisal decisions. Compensate them for their labor.

PRIVILEGE

I can assume archives will be committed to the preservation of materials from my community.

ACTION

- Educate yourself about what open the communities of color value.
- Document commitments to those communities through relationship building and power sharing over time.
- Learn and honor culturally specific protocols for what should be preserved or destroyed.
- Train and hire archivists of color so they are making appraisal decisions.

Identifying & Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives

ACCESS/USE

PRIVILEGE

I can visit an archive without exhibiting surveillance.

ACTION

- Hire more archivists of color to describe materials.
- Update finding aids that use excluded white supremacist language.
- Translate value, history, and/or language of color in ILL programs and continuing education.

PRIVILEGE

When I go to the archive, I can be relatively sure that I will see someone of my race behind the reference desk.

ACTION

- Hire more archivists of color to describe materials.
- Update finding aids that use excluded white supremacist language.
- Translate value, history, and/or language of color in ILL programs and continuing education.

PRIVILEGE

When I go into an archive, no one questions why I am there.

ACTION

- Hire more archivists of color to describe materials.
- Update finding aids that use excluded white supremacist language.
- Translate value, history, and/or language of color in ILL programs and continuing education.

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/692299>

Identifying & Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives

PROFESSIONAL LIFE

PRIVILEGE

People assume I'm unbiased because of my race.

ACTION

- Do your own research on archiving practices. Name it. Cite it. Chicago it. Address it.
- Intervene when you see white supremacy perpetuated in a neutral field or workplace.
- Make your anti-racist values known and hold institutions accountable for the white supremacist values they perpetuate.
- Stop perpetuating the myth of archival neutrality.

PRIVILEGE

People assume I behave "professionally" because of my race.

ACTION

- Question assumptions about professionalism. Think critically about where these assumptions stand white supremacist values.
- Interrogate colleagues and users about their own racist things.
- Practice a phrase to keep in your back pocket (such as "that racist" or "would you say that about a white person?") to disrupt racist comments.

PRIVILEGE

I can be sure finders will see the value of my collections rather than designate them as "niche."

ACTION

- Communicate to finding agencies and advocates that their finding practices often favor whiteness at the expense of people of color.
- Disrupt white supremacist thinking when you serve or review policies and making budgetary decisions.
- Uncover the whiteness of supposedly "neutral" projects that do get funding. Name it. Discuss it. Address it.

Identifying & Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives

EDUCATION

PRIVILEGE

I can be sure that archival practices and concepts from my culture will be represented in my education.

ACTION

- Examine and deconstruct archival education.
- Create syllabi that reflect authors and communities of color.
- Read and engage with the history of color. Amplify their voices.
- Hold your professors accountable for disrupting white supremacy in the classrooms.

PRIVILEGE

I can assume that when I attend an archival outreach or classroom instruction session, materials created by my community will be represented.

ACTION

- Use materials created by communities of color in educational outreach activities.
- Create assignments based on them.
- Challenge whiteness as a default or "neutral" category.
- Don't assume users are not capable of understanding nuance and complexity about race. Address white supremacy in your instruction sessions.

PRIVILEGE

I can be sure there will be other students of my race in my classes. I can be sure there will be instructors of my race.

ACTION

- Recruit more undergraduate students of color into ILL programs to train to be archivists.
- Encourage students of color to pursue PhDs and become archival studies faculty.
- Provide financial and non-financial support for MLTs & PhD students of color so that they complete their programs.
- Hire archival studies faculty of color.

Identifying & Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives

DESCRIPTION

PRIVILEGE

When I look for materials from my community in archives, they will be described in the finding aid and catalog records using language we use to describe ourselves.



ACTION

- ▶ Train all archivists to have cultural humility and describe materials using anti-oppressive language.
- ▶ Educate yourself continually and constantly.
- ▶ Hire more archivists of color to describe materials.
- ▶ Engage communities to ask how they wish to describe themselves. Compensate them for their labor.

PRIVILEGE

When I look at descriptions of archival materials, I am not always bombarded by/reminded of my otherness.



ACTION

- ▶ Hire more archivists of color to describe materials.
- ▶ Update finding aids that use outdated white supremacist language. Keep a note of your changes so that users can examine the history of the finding aid as an artifact.
- ▶ Engage communities to ask how they wish to describe themselves. Compensate them for their labor.

PRIVILEGE

Materials are described using my native language.



ACTION

- ▶ Hire multilingual people as archivists and translators and translate finding aids into appropriate languages.
- ▶ Encourage, value, and give credit for language courses in MLIS programs and as continuing education.

3. Education and advocacy around police records



"Mayor Rizzo reviews first graduates of new mounted unit," 1972-04-28 (P461120B). *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, SCRC 170, Temple University



Promoting the value and diversity of archives and archivists.

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<https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa>

HOME



Issue Brief: Police Mobile Camera Footage as a Public Record

SAA Position

Footage from police mobile cameras, including body-worn cameras, dash-cams, and unmanned aerial vehicles, is a public record with informational and evidentiary value. Footage produced by police-operated cameras should be handled according to local, state, or federal records retention policies; managed in systems that ensure their authenticity; and made available to the public according to government records transparency and privacy laws. Records retention policies for law enforcement agencies should explicitly address camera footage in alignment with these principles.

This issue has taken on particular salience in recent years as a growing number of law enforcement agencies implement mobile camera programs. This trend is due in part to calls from Black Lives Matter, the Movement For Black Lives, and other community organizations to increase transparency of law enforcement agencies and ensure accountability when police use excessive force. The Society of American Archivists has a vested interest in developing and advocating for comprehensive policies to govern these records in the interest of serving the public good and affirming the importance of Black Lives.



Publicizing Statement and A4BLiP



Concerned Archivists @Concerned_Arch · May 1

Hi all! [#ArchivesforBlackLives](#) in Philly is taking over this week. For more info about us read our statement



rappel110/A4BLiP

A4BLiP - Archives for Black Lives in Philly was inspired by Jarrett Drake, Digital Archivist at Princeton University, and his work to end archives' erasure of Black lives. The github.com







media mobilizing project



Metadata/Practice Guidelines Outline/Draft ☆ 🗑️
 File Edit View Insert Format Tools Add-ons Help *Last edit was made on October 1 by Kelly Bolding*

100% Normal text Arial 11 B I U A

Outline

- Metadata/Practice Guidelines: Outline/D...
- Introduction
- Voice and Style
- Audience/Collaboration
- Auditing Legacy Description and Reparat...
- Handling Racist Folder Titles/Creator-Ba...
- Subjects and Classification
- Transparency
- Describing Slavery Records

Handling Racist Folder Titles/Creator-Based Description

- Consider your audience and the potential for harm when making decisions about whether to preserve problematic creator-supplied language. In most cases, **preserve but contextualize** creator-sourced original description when racism is an important context for understanding records. If you choose to maintain some or all racist creator-based description, draw a distinction between the creator-supplied description and archivist-supplied description via quotation marks, processing information note, scope and content note, and/or another method. Other helpful actions may include:
 - Utilize a series-level note explaining that creator-based folder titles were or were not maintained, recognizing that some language is outdated/offensive, and explaining WHY you chose to maintain or not maintain those labels. Creating standardized institutional language that can be reused may be helpful.
 - Recognize that a processing note **in an of itself?** will not be sufficient to communicate to most users.
 - For collections or discovery portals where users may be harmed by encountering offensive language, it may be appropriate to replace offensive language in primary user-facing description. For an example of this approach, refer to the language policy for the Find & Connect website on child welfare in Australia.¹⁴
- Make a distinction between the institutional voice/archivist's voice and the voice of the collection creator. (ex. don't use the same racist terms a creator may have used in folder titles in scope and content notes or other notes that are supplied by the archivist.)
- Research how the community being described feels about certain terms, and weigh MPLP-type re-use of creator description against the use of terms that are really harmful. Finding other institutions that have grappled with similar collections may help. Where possible, speak directly with creators/subjects who may be harmed by legacy description to determine whether the language should be maintained or changed.

Subjects and Classification

- Do not rely on LCSH headings exclusively when creating subject access points.
- Consider avoiding LCSH terms if they are harmful to the people they describe. If you are uncertain, do research to determine whether the subject heading is considered harmful. If terms are not used, consider how this may affect access. Balance access with language usage thoughtfully. Consider working with groups such as the Cataloging Lab [<http://cataloginglab.org/>] to actively try to change harmful headings.

Comments:

- Kelly Bolding** 4:19 PM May 5
Does the current re-working address this now?
- Katy Rawdon** 3:53 PM May 21
I think so!
- Faith Charlton** 8:31 PM Sep 30
Add: "in an of itself?"
- Faith Charlton** 8:38 PM Sep 30
Resolve
lord, would someone do this?
- Kelly Bolding** 1:17 PM Oct 1
they did in the past... but i think we could expand on the point that when doing remediation, it's a different thing to change the supplied vs. original description (and how to navigate that in a way that we're not actually erasing context)
- vjohnson0707** 12:49 PM Sep 28
Resolve
We should also discuss that sometimes this research is not possible and even when you make an informed decision about terms you can still do harm.
- Kelly Bolding** 1:18 PM Oct 1
definitely, and i think we have some citations for this as well. (this is a big point and would probably make sense to acknowledge in our front matter as well as here)



Library Juice Press
 books for librarians with a critical edge

[https:// archivesforblacklives.wordpress.com/](https://archivesforblacklives.wordpress.com/)

Archives For Black Lives

Archivists responding to Black Lives Matter

ABOUT A4BLIP

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

BLOG

