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University of Florida Levin College of Law

From the Selected Works of Shamika Dalton

Summer 2018

Navigating Law Librarianship While Black A Week in the Life of a Black Female Law Librarian

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Navigating Law Librarianship While Black: A Week in the Life of a Black Female

Law Librarian*

Shamika D. Dalton,** Gail Mathapo,*** and Endia Sowers-Paige****

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Introduction

¶1 The ideal work environment provides a sense of purpose and validation.¹

Inevitably, however, unconscious or implicit biases permeate the workplace because we all have them.² These biases can be based on race, age, gender, religion, socioeconomic

* © Shamika D. Dalton, Gail Mathapo, and Endia Sowers-Paige.

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¹ See, e.g., Greg Willard, Kyonne-Joy Isaac & Dana R. Carney, *Some Evidence for the Nonverbal Contagion of Racial Bias*, 128 ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAV. & HUM. DECISION PROCESSES 96 (2015).

² See, e.g., HORACE MCCORMICK, THE REAL EFFECTS OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE 2 (2015), <https://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/~media/Files/documents/executive-development/unc-white-paper-the-real-effects-of-unconscious-bias-in-the-workplace-Final>.

status, physical disability, and other characteristics. Implicit bias in the workplace can “stymie diversity, recruiting and retention efforts, and unknowingly shape an organization’s culture.”³ People of color, in particular, experience challenges as a result of racial microaggressions in the workplace.

Racial Microaggressions

¶2 Racial microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.”⁴ Racial microaggressions may not raise an eyebrow right away, but they are harmful to the work environment. Due to their subtle nature, racial microaggressions can be “difficult to identify, quantify, and rectify.”⁵ For this reason, Derald Wing Sue and colleagues identified three forms of racial microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations.⁶

¶3 Microassaults are “explicit racial derogation[s] characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions.”⁷ Microassaults are what one would consider “old-fashioned” racism.⁸ Microinsults, more subtle and frequently unknown to the perpetrator, are “communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s racial heritage or identity.”⁹

³ *Id.*

⁴ Derald Wing Sue et al., *Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice*, 62 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 271, 271 (2007).

⁵ Jaena Alabi, *Racial Microaggressions in Academic Libraries: Results of a Survey of Minority and Non-Minority Librarians*, 41 J. ACAD. LIBRARIANSHIP 47, 48 (2015).

⁶ Sue, *supra* note 4, at 274.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

For example, when a [W]hite person says to a person of color, “Wow! You’re so articulate,” he may intend this to be a compliment. However, the person of color this statement is directed toward may interpret it as a back-handed compliment . . . [that] people of my race are stereotyped as unintelligent or inarticulate.¹⁰

Microinvalidations are “communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color.”¹¹

Colorblindness, or “accusing a Black person of being racially hypersensitive instead of acknowledging”¹² that racial biases exist “denies the experiential reality of people of color who are treated differently because of their race.”¹²

¶4 Racial microaggressions are not limited to human interactions; they can also be environmental. “[O]ne’s racial identity can be minimized or made insignificant through the sheer exclusion of decorations or literature that represents various racial groups.”¹³ It can also be evident in the small representation of people of color in middle- and upper-level management positions in law librarianship. While these numbers have improved recently,¹⁴ the shortage of people of color in leadership positions remains, and for those in entry-level positions with aspirations to move up in the profession, this can be discouraging. It is important that we recognize all forms of racial microaggressions that exist in our organizations and in our profession.

¹⁰ Alabi, *supra* note 5, at 48.

¹¹ Sue, *supra* note 4, at 274.

¹² Chavella T. Pittman, *Racial Microaggressions: The Narratives of African American Faculty at a Predominantly White University*, 81 J. NEGRO EDUC. 82, 83 (2012).¹² Alabi, *supra* note 5, at 48.

¹² Alabi, *supra* note 5, at 48.

¹³ Sue, *supra* note 4, at 274.

¹⁴ Ronald Wheeler, *Let’s Talk About Race*, 106 LAW LIBR. J. 267, 272, 2014 LAW LIBR. J. 16, ¶ 13.

Effects of Racial Microaggressions

¶5 Individuals who are confronted with their microaggressive acts often try to explain away their actions or accuse the victim of being overly sensitive.¹⁵ Victims may be told to “let it go,” “get over it,” or not waste their time addressing the acts. Because these acts are done unintentionally, people believe that the harm is minimal. However, overwhelming evidence supports that racial microaggressions have major consequences for people of color.¹⁶ Due to their cumulative nature, microaggressions

have been found to (1) contribute to a hostile and invalidating campus and work climate . . . (2) devalue social group identities . . . (3) lower work productivity . . . (4) create physical health problems . . . and (5) assail mental health issues due to stress, low self-esteem, and emotional turmoil.¹⁷

For women of color, these effects are amplified as they have to endure both racial and gender microaggressions in the workplace.¹⁸

Racial Microaggressions in Higher Education and Law Librarianship

¶6 Most colleges and universities strive to increase and promote racial diversity on their campuses. Despite these institutional efforts, faculty of color experience disturbing occurrences of racial microaggressions on campuses nationwide.¹⁹ Faculty of color, at predominately White institutions, are more likely to (1) experience being “the only one,”

¹⁵ Sue, *supra* note 4, at 278–79.

¹⁶ See DERALD WING SUE, MICROAGGRESSIONS AND MARGINALITY: MANIFESTATION, DYNAMICS, AND IMPACT (2010).

¹⁷ *Id.* at 14–15.

¹⁸ Hilary A. Beard, *Is Your Job Making You Sick?*, ESSENCE, Mar. 2002, at 64.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Madonna G. Constantine et al., *Racial Microaggressions Against Black Counseling and Counseling Psychology Faculty: A Central Challenge in the Multicultural Counseling Movement*, 86 J. COUNSELING & DEV. 348 (2008).

which leads to feelings of isolation; (2) lack mentors of color; (3) have their scholarship devalued or considered illegitimate; (4) experience elevated levels of stress; and (5) face a biased tenure and promotion process.²⁰ The challenges and struggles of faculty of color are well documented in quantitative and qualitative research and personal narratives.²¹

¶7 An increasing number of librarians of color are sharing their personal experiences dealing with racial microaggressions in the workplace. Ronald Wheeler was the first law librarian to introduce the concept to law librarianship.²² We want to “pick up the baton” and share our experiences, feelings, thoughts, and reactions to racial microaggressions as Black female law librarians. We tell our stories vicariously through a fictitious character named Monique Stevenson. While the accounts are based on actual events and interactions, we have altered the details to avoid identifying our colleagues and students. Our goal is not to humiliate or condemn anyone, but to give a glimpse into our unique challenges and provoke change in our profession’s culture.

Monday

¶8 It was 9:00 A.M., and I had the first reference shift of the week. As I was filtering through the usual Monday morning e-mails, a White man in a blue shirt walked up to the desk. He said, “I have a really tough research question. Is there a man available who can help me?” I was not sure I had heard him correctly, but my hesitation prompted him to repeat the question, this time with a smile. He continued, “I have a legal issue,” putting emphasis on the word *legal*. “Is there a man available who can help with my

²⁰ Derald Wing Sue et al., *Racial Dialogues: Challenges Faculty of Color Face in the Classroom*, 86 CULTURAL DIVERSITY & ETHNIC MINORITY PSYCHOL. 331, 331 (2011).

²¹ *Id.*

²² Ronald Wheeler, *About Microaggressions*, 108 LAW LIBR. J. 321, 2016 LAW LIBR. J. 15.

question? I need to speak with someone who went to law school.” A nearby circulation technician had overheard the patron’s question and was staring at me aghast.

¶9 I paused. In this all-too-familiar moment, I began an internal dialogue that people of color often have when encountering microaggressions.²³ Should I tell him that his question was rude? Should I say something? I did not want to escalate the situation. Why should I be responsible for managing the escalation of a scenario that I did not create? I had experienced the same internal dialogue during a recent library staff meeting when a colleague made a condescending remark about where a professor attended law school, a school that happened to be a historically black college (HBCU).

¶10 The blue-shirted man casually shuffled his papers and leaned against the reference desk, looking to me for a response to his question. He seemed to be oblivious to both my nonverbal cues and the sign prominently displayed on the reference desk that listed my name and job title. I had chosen to speak up in the staff meeting in response to the HBCU law school comment, but today I did not have the energy to engage. I have learned that when confronting these kinds of comments, you have to be ready for any response, and I did not want to open myself up to the uncertainty of his reply.²⁴

¶11 “I’ll find someone who can help you,” I said. I called Jon, an older White male colleague. Jon agreed to assist the patron, so I walked over to reorganize a book display and put some distance between myself and the patron. A few minutes later, Jon approached me with the man in the blue shirt following shortly behind. “Here’s the

²³ Derald Wing Sue, *Race Talk: The Psychology of Racial Dialogues*, 68 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 663, 667 (2013).

²⁴ See generally William A. Smith et al., *Challenging Racial Battle Fatigue on Historically White Campuses: A Critical Race Examination of Race-Related Stress*, in COVERT RACISM: THEORIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND EXPERIENCES 211–38 (Rodney D. Coates ed., 2011).

person who can help you. She's a legislative history expert," Jon said, referring to me. The man looked a bit surprised and asked, "You went to law school?" "I did," I replied. I sat with the patron and showed him a few databases. He seemed to appreciate my assistance. On the way back to my office, I ran into the circulation technician who witnessed the encounter earlier. "Can you believe he said that?!" she exclaimed. I was thinking to myself, "Yes, I can believe it," because it was not the first time I had heard a comment like that.

Tuesday

¶12 It was late afternoon, and I had just left my fourth meeting of the day after being up late the night before talking with a dear friend. She had heard the news about a White supremacist organization being granted permission to speak on our campus, and she wanted to check in with me to see how I was feeling. I told her I was extremely uncomfortable that the KKK would be protesting so close to my office, but the rally appeared to be generating very little conversation among my library colleagues.

¶13 I returned to my desk to read e-mails and write out the next day's to-do list. At the top of my inbox, I saw a message from one of our library vendors and shuddered. She was always helpful with answering database questions in a timely manner, but I was still a bit annoyed that she touched my hair without permission at the recent American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) annual conference. People are often curious about my dreadlocks, and I have gotten really good at dodging when I see hands extending toward my head. But in this instance, the vendor came up behind me and plunged both of her hands in my hair before I could stop her. One of my law school classmates used to

joke that if Black women received a dollar every time someone touched their hair without permission, we would be able to close the wage gap.²⁵

¶14 The next e-mail was from the university’s Public Relations and Communications Office regarding the upcoming KKK rally. The e-mail contained a recommended script for employees on how to answer questions about the rally. The e-mail emphasized the importance of protecting freedom of speech even when we disagree with what is being said. I shut down my computer and decided to go home. Not only would this rally affect my work environment, but later that evening I planned to discuss the topic with my son at home.

Wednesday

¶15 As I get dressed for work on this “hump day,” my heart is heavy. Last night, I had to have a very difficult conversation with my nine-year-old son after receiving this e-mail from his school:

You may be aware that Richard Spencer of the National Policy Institute is scheduled to give a talk at [event location] We have been consulting with law enforcement about the visit, and while we are not anticipating any problems at our schools . . . [t]he district will be rerouting school buses. . . . The delays may not be limited to just those buses traveling close to the [event location],

²⁵ Eleni Karageorge, *The Unexplainable, Growing Black-White Wage Gap*, MONTHLY LAB. REV. (Bur. Lab. Stats.), Nov. 2017, at 1, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2017/beyond-bls/the-unexplainable-growing-black-white-wage-gap.htm> [<https://perma.cc/DU6C-Q2RN>]. From 1979 to 2016, wages for Black women fell from roughly ninety-five percent of what White women earned (\$11 an hour versus \$12 an hour) to about eighty-two percent (\$16 versus \$20).

but may also affect other buses. We ask for your patience as we work to get students home from school safely that day.

¶16 My son goes to a predominantly White (seventy percent White and thirty percent Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander collectively) elementary school, and I wanted to discuss this e-mail with him before he heard about it from his classmates. This reminded me of the first conversation I had had with my son about race, a year ago after attending open house at his new school—the highest-performing school in the county. We were so excited about meeting my son’s first grade teacher. As soon as we walked into the front of the school, we saw a bulletin board with a picture of a large tree with lots of branches. On the upper left side of the tree were five pictures of the janitorial staff, all of whom were Black. On the upper right side were five pictures of the kitchen staff, four of whom were Black. At the center were at least twenty-five pictures of teachers, only two of whom were Black. At the trunk were five pictures of the administration, including the resources officer, all of whom were White.

¶17 It was disappointing to think that every day students of color walk through the front doors of their school and see this type of imagery at such an impressionable age. I had a conversation with my son about the display as soon as we got home. I reiterated to him that he was not limited to what he sees around him. He may not see many teachers of color at his school, but I reminded him that his mother is a teacher and he can be one too if he so chooses. My son is fortunate because my research interests are race and implicit bias. Imagine all of the parents of color who are not aware of how to recognize environmental microaggressions and are not having these conversations with their kids.

¶18 After dropping my son off at school, I arrived at work and checked my e-mail. I noticed one from a colleague with the subject line, “Cookies in the Lounge.” My eyes lit up. Who does not want to have a cookie at 9:00 A.M.? So I opened the e-mail, which read, “Good morning all, I visited Charleston, South Carolina, for the first time last weekend. I brought back some delicious Plantation Cookies. Please enjoy.” I was shocked. I blinked my eyes a few times to make sure I was reading the e-mail correctly, and indeed I was. I immediately forwarded the e-mail to my supervisor to let her know I was offended by it. This e-mail is an example of a microinvalidation. I do not believe that my colleague sent the e-mail with malicious intent, but that fact does not negate how I felt or that the word choice may have offended our Black staff.

¶19 At 11:00 A.M., I went to the reference desk to start my final reference shift of the week. Twenty minutes into my shift, I received an e-mail through our library chat reference reporting a loud noise on the second floor. I e-mailed the student, told him that I had forwarded his concerns to our facilities manager, and signed my first name, Monique, to the e-mail. The student responded almost immediately: “Can I please have the library manager’s e-mail address?” I paused before answering. Why would the student think that I am not the manager? Was it my name? Does he not think I am capable of following through with his concerns? I informed the student that I was a library administrator. The student replied, “Oh, ok. Can I expect to hear back from you when you find out what is going on?” He was unaware that he had even offended me, which is why microaggressions are so hard to rectify.

Thursday

¶20 I arrived at work just in time for a 9:00 A.M. librarians' meeting. Included on the agenda was an update from the search committee for our reference librarian opening. During the conversation, a colleague said, "Sharon, I mean, Monique, you will be happy to hear that two of the candidates are racially diverse." I replied, "Oh, that's great news," but inside I was thinking, why are you singling me out? Is it because you think the library is doing "my people" a favor by interviewing racially diverse candidates? Because you believe that I am more concerned than non-Black colleagues that the school interview qualified candidates of color? Because you think that my only professional interest is workplace diversity? Any of these assumptions represents a microinsult. Needless to say, it is also frustrating that I am frequently called by the name of a Black librarian who left the institution over a year ago.

¶21 Librarians of color commonly feel as though they are the only ones who care about diversity issues, which can be taxing and discouraging. Everyone at an institution or a firm must value diversity. The mission to promote diversity and inclusion cannot fall on the shoulders of a few. It takes the efforts of every employee to ensure that the workplace is diverse and inclusive. Similarly, AALL's Diversity and Inclusion Committee and minority caucuses cannot be the only entities charged with advocating for diversity in law librarianship. Every member of AALL has to make it a priority to effectuate lasting change.

¶22 One of the challenges for our profession has been recruiting and hiring law librarians of color. Some factors that contribute to this challenge are outside of our control, such as the decreasing number of people of color attending law school. But one

way to ensure we are doing our best is to minimize the role implicit racial bias plays in our hiring practices. It is not enough to include the standard Equal Employment Opportunity Commission language at the bottom of a job posting.²⁶ We have to take an active role to reduce biases in our hiring practices. Here are some suggestions:

- Recruit outside your comfort zone. Most libraries post their job listings on the various minority caucus websites, but we have to take it a step further. Call veteran law librarians of color and request recommendations. Reach out to law librarians of color personally and encourage them to apply.
- Make sure that everyone on the search committee has taken implicit bias training. Most institutions offer free implicit bias trainings or tutorials.
- Diversify your search committee. It can be very discouraging for a candidate of color to interview with an all-White search committee. Whenever possible, there should be a person of color on every search committee.
- Develop a rubric to score résumés before you review them. A study found that Whites receive fifty percent more calls for interviews than Black job candidates with the exact same résumés. The only difference is the candidate's name. Some companies delete any identifiers (e.g., names) from résumés before reviewing

²⁶ Job applications usually include language such as “The University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer, and is committed to building a culturally diverse workplace. We strongly encourage applications from female and minority candidates.”

them. After the in-person interviews, you should also use a standard rubric to evaluate job candidates to ensure that hiring decisions are based on nondiscriminatory metrics.

- Stick to the script during interviews. “Interviewers naturally create a warmer or more casual climate for candidates they perceive as ‘in-group’ members—say, those who went to the same university or were in the same fraternity. This natural instinct to reach for common ground can advantage certain groups by making them feel at home.” To avoid this, set predetermined interview questions and pay attention to the setting to ensure a level playing field for *all* candidates.²⁷

¶23 Once I returned to my office, I began to reflect on my experiences serving on search committees. I have served on committees where I have witnessed committee members speak negatively about the law school a candidate graduated from, choose not to interview a candidate because the law school ranking of his or her current place of employment was not as prestigious as ours, and advocate for a candidate who lacked experience but graduated from a top-tier law school. These are the types of biases that put people of color at a disadvantage. If we are going to evaluate candidates by the institutions they graduated from or worked at, then we need to be bold enough to include those criteria in the job description.

²⁷ See Jay J. Van Bavel & Tessa V. West, *Seven Steps to Reduce Bias in Hiring*, WALL ST. J., Feb. 21, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/seven-steps-to-reduce-bias-in-hiring-1487646840>.²⁸ Roxanna Harlow, “Race Doesn’t Matter, but . . .”: *The Effect of Race on Professors’ Experiences and Emotion Management in the Undergraduate College Classroom*, 66 SOC. PSYCHOL. Q. 348, 352–53 (2003).

Friday

¶24 For some librarians, Friday may be a slow, relaxing workday—for me, it is a class day. Don't get me wrong, I love teaching, but it is definitely a labor of love. This week was going to be particularly intense because I was covering legislative history, a difficult topic for most students. Because my class is only fifty minutes, I ask that students hold their questions until the end of the lecture. On this Friday, a student raised her hand during the lecture. I relented and answered her question. Ten minutes before the end of class, the same student raised her hand again. I told her to hold her question and I would answer it after class. I had a few more important concepts to review before the end of class.

¶25 The student shouted, "I can't wait until after class because I have somewhere to go." She abruptly gathered her belongings, got up from her seat, and walked out of the class. I was startled, but I kept my composure and continued the lecture. A few students came to me following the class to apologize for their classmate's behavior. Once everyone left the classroom, I began replaying the interaction in my head thinking, "Could I have said or done something different to prevent that situation?" Later when I spoke to my supervisor about it, she assured me that there was no way to excuse the student's inappropriate behavior. While some may be shocked by this behavior, Black female faculty have frequently reported challenges to their competence and control over the classroom.²⁸ This student's behavior was an example of such a challenge.

²⁸ Roxanna Harlow, "Race Doesn't Matter, but . . .": *The Effect of Race on Professors' Experiences and Emotion Management in the Undergraduate College Classroom*, 66 SOC. PSYCHOL. Q. 348, 352–53 (2003).

¶26 This incident made me reflect on a similar incident that occurred on the first day of class. I was standing by the class podium with my teaching assistant (TA). One of the White students walked toward us, turned to my TA, who is a White male, addressed him as “Professor,” and proceeded to introduce herself. My TA immediately told the student that I was the professor of the class. The student did not appear to be embarrassed or apologetic as she proceeded to talk to me about her expected upcoming absence from a future class meeting.

¶27 It is common for women of color in academia to feel “compelled to conceal or mute aspects of their identities . . . [and] sidestep controversial topics in the classroom and in faculty gatherings, shun ethnic hairstyles or attire, and behave in an exaggeratedly lady-like manner to avoid triggering stereotypes, such as the ‘angry black woman.’”²⁹ Students assume that a female faculty member of color is not “as accomplished or credentialed as her [W]hite male colleagues. They question the professor’s competence, challenge everything she says, and become enraged if they receive a low grade in her course.”³⁰ To combat the scrutiny, female faculty of color may overprepare for classes and be hypersensitive about their speech patterns.³¹

¶28 Like many other female faculty of color, Monique has experienced other incidents of microinvalidations and microinsults from students, such as having to consistently remind students to call her Professor Stevenson rather than using her first name; receiving an aggressive e-mail from a White student challenging her classroom policies; and having a White student barge into her office, while she was helping another

²⁹ Carmen G. González, *Women of Color in Legal Education*, FED. LAW., July 2014, at 51.

³⁰ *Id.* at 50–51.

³¹ *Id.* at 51.

student, to complain about two points that he missed on an assignment, arguing that the assignment was not clear enough. It is important for managers to learn how to support teaching librarians who are members of marginalized groups, as many of them may be facing these obstacles in silence.

¶29 Faculty course evaluations are the central method for evaluating teaching in legal education. While there are many benefits to faculty course evaluations, extensive research reveals “that conscious and unconscious racial and gender biases may depress the evaluations of women and people of color.”³² Women “who defy race and gender stereotypes, who are tough and demanding rather than warm and nurturing, and who introduce topics related to social justice (such as race, gender, and class) are often punished with negative student evaluations.”³³ Over the years, Monique has received microaggressive comments, such as “I don’t like the way she talks,” or “Her hair is detracting,” or “She walks too close to people and it makes me nervous,” on her course evaluations. It is important for managers and law school administrators to understand the role implicit bias plays in course evaluations, especially when these measures are used to award salary raises, tenure, and promotion.

¶30 After some time to reflect, I returned to the library from class and stopped by the circulation desk to speak with a library colleague. I mentioned I was feeling a little tired and was headed to my office. My colleague suggested that I instead go home and get some much deserved rest. A man wearing a hardhat, who was working on a construction project in the library, happened to be walking by at that moment and told me in a jovial manner, “You better do what your boss says.” He assumed that my White

³² *Id.* at 53.

³³ *Id.*

colleague had to be my supervisor and I the supervisee. Before I could say anything, my colleague quickly informed him that I was the supervisor in charge of the library. He said, “Oh, I am sorry,” and walked off hastily.

¶31 As I prepared to leave work after a long week, I received an e-mail from a former student, who now works at a firm in Miami. She wrote to share that she was recently asked to conduct some legislative history research and she was able to use the skills she learned from my class to complete the challenging assignment. Even in the face of obstacles, e-mails like this remind me of the role I play in the world of legal education, and how important it is for students from all backgrounds to see and hear from me.

Changing the Culture

¶32 To reduce the occurrence of microaggressions in the workplace, we must intentionally minimize implicit bias and learn cultural competence. Mandating antidiscrimination training for all faculty and staff is one way to accomplish this.³⁴ These trainings need to be

structured and facilitated in a manner that promotes inquiry and allows trainees to experience discomfort and vulnerability Trainees need to be challenged to explore their own racial identities and their feelings about other racial groups. The prerequisite for cultural competence has always been racial self-awareness This level of self-awareness brings to the surface possible prejudices and biases that inform racial microaggressions.³⁵

¶33 On a macro level, changes to the work culture must come from the top down. Management must consistently ask the question, “To what extent is our organizational

³⁴ *Id.* at 55.

³⁵ Sue, *supra* note 4, at 283.

culture being affected by bias?” Directors and associate directors (or the like) must actively uncover and minimize bias in the workplace by reviewing every aspect of the employment life cycle: onboarding, assignment processes, mentoring programs, performance evaluations, identification of high performers, promotions, and terminations.³⁶ Howard Ross, a lifelong social justice advocate, and other experts provided the following suggestions to create structures to eliminate bias: (1) conduct employee surveys to understand what specific issues of hidden bias and unfairness might exist at the organization; (2) talk with current employees, particularly women and minorities, to ask them what unconscious biases they have witnessed in the organization and the effects these have had on their own careers;³⁷ (3) conduct salary surveys to identify inequities and make adjustments;³⁸ and (4) conduct exit interviews when faculty of color depart to assess the instructional climate.³⁹

Conclusion

¶34 We hope that sharing Monique’s story will give you some insight into the challenges librarians of color encounter, inspire others to share their stories, offer validation for librarians of color who have had similar experiences, and start a dialogue about minimizing implicit bias in your institution. Awareness is an important first step in effectuating change, but it is even more important to move beyond awareness into actions that are specifically aimed at promoting inclusivity. Creating an inclusive work environment requires intentionality and efforts to promote diversity should not be treated

³⁶ McCormick, *supra* note 2, at 9.

³⁷ Howard Ross, *Exploring Unconscious Bias*, CDO INSIGHTS, Aug. 2008, at 15, <http://www.cookcross.com/docs/UnconsciousBias.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/F34M-AZMZ>].

³⁸ González, *supra* note 29, at 55.

³⁹ *Id.*

as one-time initiatives. If our law libraries aim to align with AALL's core values, which include a commitment to diversity, then our library culture, practices, and policies must include the strategic and ongoing evaluation of how they support workplace inclusion.