CRT in praxis: Library and archival collections at San José State University

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Through various efforts, the staff and faculty of San José State University's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library (King Library) are working towards creating more equitable and inclusive collections. Examining the library's collecting practices and collections by and about African Americans, this article presents the ongoing work of a working group that was formed in 2020 in response to an Anti-Racism Action Plan developed in the library. By using some of the tenets of the CRT framework such as intersectionality, counter-storytelling, and deconstructing colorblindness and white supremacy, the authors discuss the steps that are being taken to revise, review, and revisit the King Library's collecting practices in relation to the history of SJSU's African American Studies program, the Africana Center, and other relevant community history.

Keywords: Collection development, African American resources, Critical Race Theory, Special Collections & Archives

1. Introduction

The year 2020 witnessed two major events that have transformed lives beyond what was considered normal. The global pandemic ushered in by the COVID-19 virus stalled the world and forced everyone to remain indoors in order to protect themselves and each other. A few months in and the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN, resulted in protests against racism backed police brutality across the nation and around the world. The Black Lives Matter movement was proven once again to be as relevant as ever and was embraced by several more countries who joined hands virtually to protest against their specific histories of racism and oppression. Many higher education institutions in the USA were forced to reckon with their complicated histories of racism; academic libraries, as the gateway to research and teaching, stepped up to review their collections and policies in order to address racist practices that affected generations of students, faculty, and librarian personnel themselves (Harvard Radcliffe Institute, 2019).

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At the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library (hereafter King Library) at San José State University (SJSU), the Interim Dean responded to what was affecting library employees by scheduling open conversations among all to raise their concerns about racism and painful experiences. This was followed by a series of consultant-guided discussions about how to engage with racist behavior and racist mindsets. By taking the conversations and written feedback into account, the library administration developed an Anti-Racism Action Plan. The feedback was ranked in terms of importance and relevance based on survey responses from all library employees. The responses were grouped under Best Practices, Collections, Policies and Practices, Programming, Recruitment Strategies, Support and Guidance, and Training and Learning. Open calls to form working groups to address these areas were shared. Library employees from different departments volunteered to form the Collections Working Group (CWG) and the Anti-Racism Assessment Working Group (ARAWG). ARAWG's initial task was to review Policies and Practices, Recruitment Strategies, and recommend metrics to assess the design and implementation of practices through an anti-racist lens. In this article the authors will focus only on examining the CWG's work through the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) with an emphasis on African American Studies.

The CWG's charge has been to "implement or determine how to implement action items" under the 'Collections' heading in the Anti-Racism Action Plan. The top two items under 'Collections' were as follows:

1. Determine the criteria for an inclusive, anti-racist collection
2. Analyze the existing collections with an anti-racism, DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) lens

We demonstrate that in revisiting and reviewing some of the library and archival collections and projects in the area of African American Studies, the King Library takes a step toward a more socially just library and renews its commitment to inclusivity, and acknowledges concrete steps to address historical wrongs. We will also refer to other ongoing projects across the King Library that actively critique racist histories by either bearing witness to events and people's contributions that were made invisible by institutional practices or by investigating racial bias in foundational policies such as subject classification and nomenclatures inherent in the LIS profession.

We begin this chapter with a visual representation of the different departments within the library and other campus units that we refer to in our discussion. The organizational relationship will clarify how the different projects across campus have informed our work with CRT.

Next, we will discuss and operationalize the Critical Race Theory framework created for our analysis of (i) CWG's ongoing work with the main library collection (ii) CWG's work with Special Collections & Archives, and (iii) the history of the development of the Africana Center at SJSU.

We conclude the chapter with a glossary of acronyms for easy reference.

Limitations: we discuss findings from a working group. Some projects are still underway at the time of writing and we cannot discuss our findings. The other projects that we refer to are not under the working groups' purview; so, we cannot delve too deep into their processes.

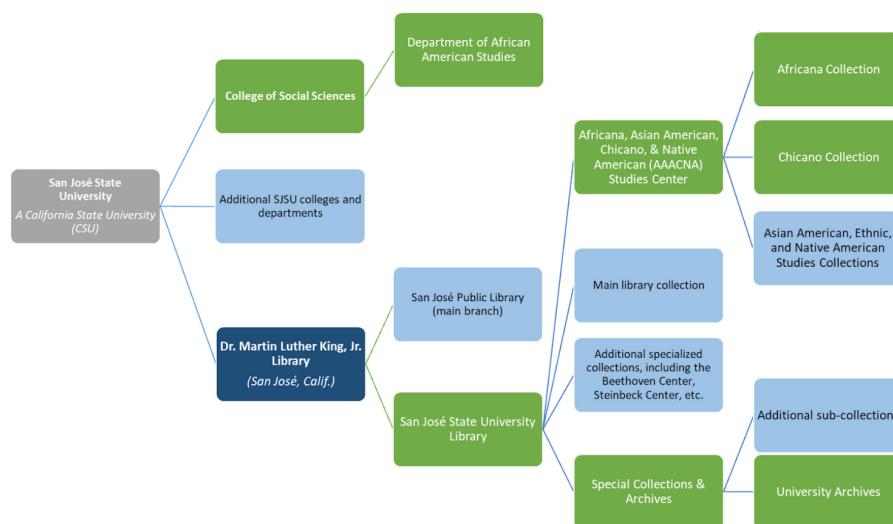## 2. Organizational chart, showing relationship of discussed departments and collections

Fig. 1. University organizational chart. Departments and collections mentioned in the article are highlighted in green in the electronic version.

3. CRT and the Collections Working Group's (CWG) work

The CWG is responsible for sharing its recommendations with library administration to advance the 'Collections' goals as outlined in the Anti-Racism Action Plan. The CWG began its work by first creating a bibliography for learning how to develop criteria for an anti-racist collection. As group members became familiar with how different institutions have approached similar work, some members formed a smaller group to develop a Code of Conduct for the group. Over weeks of discussion about the readings and possible projects, the group decided to focus on a specific BIPOC (Lambert, 2020) group for a pilot project. Given the population size and the specific history of the department with respect to SJSU's history, we decided to focus on the African American Studies program and our corresponding library and archival collecting practices and collections.

Editors Sofia Y. Leung and Jorge R. López-McKnight in their book *Knowledge Justice: Disrupting Library and Information Studies Through Critical Race Theory* (2021) define Critical Race Theory (CRT) as:

> . . . critically examining the structures and systems that maintain white supremacy's chokehold on our society. It is about how we reconstruct our laws, our policies, and our systems so that change can happen at a broader, deeper level instead of at

an individual level. Moreover, it provides opportunities to identify points of integration across dynamic and multifactorial forces that together work to re-create and sustain historical systems of racial power and oppression and provide new, actionable paths toward a liberatory future. (p. 7)

Among other ways that CRT helps to critique systemic racism and injustice is its focus on how BIPOC knowledge and experience have been historically excluded from informing the development of institutions in our society. LIS as a field forms the foundation of how knowledge is identified, curated, preserved, and accessed. The lack of inclusion of BIPOC perspectives has intensified the privileged position of whiteness in the way the knowledge economy functions.

It is arguable that only hiring BIPOC librarians can do little to undermine the stronghold of white supremacy in the field. The recent resistance to and politicization of CRT (Zahneis, 2022) in teaching and learning makes it more urgent for scholars and practitioners of all disciplines to embrace it for socially just institutions.

In the following section, we point to some of the core tenets of CRT as they apply to the CWG's work in progress. We include separate sections on general library collections and archival collections because collecting practices are distinct and so are budget lines, specific goals, and staff members' expertise and subject specialties. As part of the work of analyzing SJSU's collections, each member of the group focused on a different area of the library, depending on their areas of work.

3.1. King Library's general collections

Beginning with Black feminist scholarship in the 1980s and continuing with Kimberlé Crenshaw's use of the word for jurisprudence in the 1990s, "intersectionality" came to refer to a way of understanding the complex and multifaceted nature of subjugated identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Scholarship and critical praxis as tools of social justice also inform the concept of intersectionality (Vamvaka-Tatsi, 2020). In "Making a new table: Intersectional Librarianship" Fobazi Ettarh (2014) questions the 'neutrality' supposedly assumed in librarianship. Arguing that collection development and programming are inherently political, Ettarh cites the example of how Black history-related displays of materials and programming are relegated to February as the designated time for them to be highlighted above, rather than subsumed underneath, the dominant white, male, heterosexual, middle-class perspective, which is otherwise maintained as 'normal' and 'neutral'.

Applying this concept to its work, the CWG looked to examine the SJSU collection through multiple disciplines simultaneously. Team members used a combination of keywords such as race, gender, class, disability, and sexuality in order to locate the areas of widest intersectional coverage. Based on those preliminary searches, and the available scholarship to use as guidance, it was determined that holdings related to Americans of African descent (i.e. African Americans) were the best set to examine first. Moreover, anti-essentialism is a core theme of concern for CRT. When a group

of color is essentialized with certain unflattering character traits and represented on TV, movies, cartoons, and books, that group becomes fixated with those traits in the majority white perception. CRT, through its concern with anti-essentialism as related to differential racialization, helps to question the stereotyping informing the group's perceived identities (Delgado et al., 2017). The CWG team, in selecting multiple keywords, actively searched for titles that would reveal the anti-essentialism of the African American focus in our collection.

Anti-essentialism is very close to another CRT tool: enabling the voices of the marginalized to be heard in the narratives from their own perspectives. Counter-story is a critical tool because it exposes the narratives that were silenced and bears witness to the processes of silencing. Library collection building adapts the tenet by acquiring resources that counter the dominant privileged narrative. Recently, when the subject liaison librarian for African American Studies met with faculty members to discuss areas of focus for teaching and research so that their feedback could inform the titles she would acquire, she was told that neo-narratives of slavery need not be part of her search. The faculty member emphasized the need to move away from dominant themes of police brutality and incarcerations in the community and instead focus on the artistic achievements of the community and related scholarship that would enhance the visibility of positive narratives about the community.

To capture an accurate view of SJSU holdings on this topic, a collections report was constructed to retrieve the number of bibliographic records using the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) "African American*" (note the wildcard * used to capture all headings that start with the phrase regardless of the words that follow) and "Blacks and United States." As LCSH term usage is painstakingly documented, it was relatively straightforward for an SJSU cataloger to determine that as of 29 November 2000, "African American" would only be used as a descriptive phrase at the start of a heading and never as a stand-alone heading or subdivision (eg. African American abolitionists, African American actors, African American academic libraries) (Library of Congress, 2000). It is used to refer to "works on citizens of the United States of black African descent," whereas "works on blacks who temporarily reside in the United States, such as aliens, students from abroad, etc., are entered under Blacks-United States." (Policy & Standards Division 2013, A-96). Thus, both terms were used to capture the resources which the CWG was looking to address.

While this data is based on the publication date of the book rather than the purchase date by the library, because SJSU acquisitions records are only retrievable electronically from about 2003 onward, there is generally a strong correlation between publication date and purchase date in the SJSU practice. Books are generally purchased within 0–5 years of their publication because the librarians keep collections up-to-date. So, it is likely that dividing this table by decade gives us a general picture, not only of holdings, but of purchasing practice.

The analysis shows that the distinct majority of books on African American topics in the SJSU collection were published between 1990 and 2020, with another large influx of physical books in the 1970's. While there are certainly correlations with

Table 1
Count of catalog records for electronic and physical titles in the SJSU collection

Publication year	Electronic titles	Physical titles	Total titles
1800–1849	8	26	34
1850–1859	7	3	10
1860–1869	9	2	11
1870–1879	12	6	17
1880–1889	27	6	32
1890–1899	65	28	84
1900–1909	34	16	44
1910–1919	24	13	29
1920–1929	34	43	66
1930–1939	25	58	77
1940–1949	18	100	110
1950–1959	35	133	157
1960–1969	71	766	816
1970–1979	47	1,041	1,086
1980–1989	66	711	776
1990–1999	533	1,026	1,546
2000–2009	339	1,226	1,545
2010–2019	512	557	1,069
2020–	66	12	78
Undated	49	117	165
Grand total	**1,981**	**5,890**	**7,752**

these decades and activism at SJSU, the formation of the Africana Collection in the 1990's for example, it is also likely that these dates are a reflection of when books about African Americans were published in the US. The 1970's, for instance, have been referred to as the "heyday of African American literature's canon formation" (Nishikawa, 2015).

Typically, an academic library adds to its collections based on teaching and research needs. However, looking at the holdings information and noticing a drop-off in purchasing of African American titles in the last few years, a subgroup of the CWG began to compare current holdings with the titles grouped under the category of 'Racial Justice' in *Choice Reviews*, a primary database used by library selectors to evaluate publication quality. When the comparison is completed, the CWG will share its findings with the larger Collection Development team and Library Administration to make recommendations for purchase.

Not only does the CWG aim to scrutinize different disciplines' collections with 'African American' and 'Black' as the primary keywords, its members are working interdepartmentally to find the widest approach to reviewing existing resources. The library liaisons for the departments of English Language & Comparative Literature, Nursing, Educational Leadership, and Occupational Therapy work cooperatively to conduct catalog searches, review holdings, and identify gaps in the existing collections. Meanwhile, colleagues from the Data and Resource Management department generated reports to determine if budgetary allocations in the different disciplines could have inadvertently shaped the collection in the wrong direction.

Ideologies of "color blindness, objectivity, neutrality, and meritocracy" (Leung & López-McKnight, 14) have informed every structure of US society that have successfully prevented BIPOC perspectives, merits, and knowledge from being acknowledged. The Library of Congress subject headings, for example, which are used to classify and arrange almost all university libraries in the United States, have been inherently problematic since their inception in the late 19th century (Stone, 2019). Intended to be used as neutral categories within which multiple perspectives have had to be squeezed, they have historically been created and applied by those in the dominant culture and have therefore reinforced the racial biases, racist practices, and historical erasures of BIPOC experiences, to which that group is prone. In the RUSA (Reference and User Services Association of the American Library Association) sponsored webinar, 'Decolonizing the catalog: Antiracist Description Practices from Authority Records to Discovery Layers' (2021) participants discussed how they address this issue, by collecting material from equity- and anti-racism-focused colleagues and engaging directly with the Library of Congress to lobby for alterations or additions. In particular, the group's African American Subject Funnel Project is focused on making African American resources more discoverable and the references to them less biased (African American Studies Librarians Interest Group, n.d.).

On a more local scale, a working group was recently formed among librarians of the California State University (CSU) system to evaluate problematic subject headings as a consortium. Since 2017, the 23 CSU campuses have used a Unified Library Management System (ULMS), which allows them to share catalog records, holdings information, and other systems technology. The discovery system included in this ULMS allows the CSUs to make changes to the display of subject headings, without editing the underlying records which must adhere to the Library of Congress standards. This method was utilized recently to change the display of the heading "Noncitizens" to that of "Undocumented immigrants". The group will discuss terms related to African Americans and other BIPOC groups in coming months. As for CWG's charge, in order to critique dominant ideologies, it will study the gaps in the collections as a reflection of dominant ideologies. The investigation itself will become a critique of the dominant ideology in praxis.

Another of CWG's projects is to identify gaps in the African American/Africana Collection by drawing up assessment protocols and by comparing our collection with collections of similar sized public university libraries. CWG members hypothesize that the identified gaps will prompt more questions about collecting practices in the past and their relationship with teaching and learning on campus. CWG will also make recommendations to the Collection Development team about filling gaps in the collection. This process of identifying gaps can be extended to other subject areas. The library has begun to outline discipline-specific collection development policies based on department needs, publication format and currency, curriculum relevance, and quality of publications. Research has shown a lack of representation of African Americans and Blacks as reviewers, editors, and authors in scientific literature (Else & Perkel, 2022). This might pose additional challenges in developing collections in

certain disciplines. However, it is imperative that educators become cognizant about these facts while selecting materials for the libraries and course curricula.

Ultimately, the exclusion and silencing of lived experiences of BIPOC as a source of knowledge is a historical and ongoing systemic practice that has led to a loss of many critical perspectives and enrichment. CRT draws our attention to how important these perspectives are in order to create a socially just ecosystem of knowledge. Members of CWG consult scholarship and their own knowledge (many identify as BIPOC) when we discuss the different steps involved in the projects we develop. In fact, the Code of Conduct for the group was formulated on the basis of discussions among all members and their lived and work-place experiences.

3.2. SJSU's Special Collections & Archives (SC&A)

The task of analyzing the holdings of Special Collections & Archives (SC&A) fell to the Special Collections Librarian. She built on the work of the University Archivist, who created a series of spreadsheets titled "Quantifying Special Collections" and offered them up to use as a model. The University Archivist's spreadsheets focused on archival collections related to the history of the university, while the Special Collection Librarian's portion of the CWG's work centered on non-university archival collections. Along with a fellow faculty librarian colleague, the Special Collections Librarian modified the University Archivist's spreadsheet to list all non-university related archival collections. Along with the filing title of each collection, the spreadsheet included the following fields: collection number, subject, characterization/keywords, date range, link to the finding aid, extent in boxes and linear feet, and Library of Congress authorized subject headings. The addition of fields listing the numerical extent allowed the group to calculate the exact number of boxes and linear feet devoted to archival collections containing Black subject matter. Historically, SJSU's university archives do not adequately and fully reflect the lives of Black students or faculty, and the non-university archival collections contain many gaps in relation to San José's Black community. This spreadsheet enabled the group to quantify the amount of archival collections directly and indirectly related to African American and Black subject matter, and added to the work the group is doing to determine gaps in collection development.

The archivist Lae'l Hughes-Watkins (2018) created a framework for academic institutions to use when addressing historic wrongs in traditional archival practice. Hughes-Watkins calls this roadmap "reparative archiving" and describes the process for

> . . . academic institutions to repair past injuries through a holistic approach, by normalizing acquisitions of the oppressed, advocating, and utilizing primary resources that reflect society and that can provide a means to disengage with and prevent recordkeeping that systematically removes or intercepts the voices of the 'other.'

The concept of reparative archiving (Hughes-Watkins, 2018) is used by SC&A in concert with the CRT framework of this paper to address and update long-standing collection development policies and archival processing practices. The first step in this process was acknowledging the fact that information about marginalized groups on campus is often missing or poorly described, and dedicated efforts are necessary to engage in reparative archival practices. Informed by the Archives for Black Lives Anti-Racist Description Resources, (A4BLiP, 2019) these practices include working to decolonize traditional descriptive procedures through the redescription and reprocessing of existing collections that were previously minimally processed at the box level, or minimally described in the collection's finding aid. Engaging in redescription "as liberatory archival praxis" (Sutherland & Purcell, 2021) serves to reduce harm inflicted on communities affected by the lack of descriptive efforts mentioned above, provides deeper context to researchers, and replaces search keywords that are racist and dehumanizing. Future plans include further expanding digitization projects to provide more equitable access to archival materials, training student workers in reparative archival work, and continued outreach to and collaboration with both the campus and the greater San José community.

In addition to the Quantifying Special Collections spreadsheet, SC&A launched an exhibit titled *Black Spartans (1907–1948)* based on ongoing research into the history of Black student life at the university, beginning with the first Black graduate, Lucy Turner (Johnson). This work arose from researcher inquiries related to the first Black students and faculty at the university, along with conversations among an informal group of CSU archivists interested in researching and highlighting Black history at their respective campuses. These inquiries and conversations led to a research project focused on surfacing the stories of Black students beginning with Lucy Turner (Johnson) up to the present day. During the time period the research focused on, 1907–1948, Black students were often left out of accounts of student life. The yearbook did not list Black-led groups or events, and photos of Black students were lacking labels containing identifying information in the same page spreads that listed white students by name. As Richard Delgado points out in *Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others*, "The stories or narratives told by the in-group remind it of its identity in relation to out-groups and provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural." (2013). Examples of this form of shared reality include the omissions related above, which positioned white-led student groups as the only affinity groups on campus, despite the fact that BIPOC affinity groups existed at the same time. One instance involved the 1930s-era student Verse Speaking Choir, which had a Black counterpart, the Negro Verse Speaking Choir. The student newspaper mentions both choirs, but the yearbook only contains photos of the white choir's members.

The King Library's adopted CRT framework is a tool that informs the work SC&A is doing to better understand historic racial inequalities on campus. The Black Spartans research project and exhibit seeks to bring to light the point of view of Black students throughout the university's history, and gain an understanding of their experiences on

campus when confronted with racism embedded in institutional practices. Without the fundamental understanding that racial inequality does exist, the university cannot move forward in addressing these issues. By critiquing the dominant ideologies that the university holds about itself and its history, the project was able to begin to address the long-standing marginalization of Black students on campus, and uncover stories of Black student life. The project involved identifying problematic dominant ideologies, namely that the narratives the University shares about its history as a "diversity university" (Stevenson, 2016) are not bolstered by our research. SJSU was originally established in 1857, and graduated its first Black student in 1907; the assertion that the university has always been diverse is belied by the fact that it took 48 years for the administration to admit its first Black student.

During the period the project focuses on, minstrel shows and blackface were often part of student-led campus events. These types of practices did not solely impact Black students; they also affected other students of color including Asian-Americans and Mexican-Americans. Racist costumes were worn by white student performers without consideration of the damage that this kind of dehumanizing activity would have on their classmates, nor were these activities frowned upon by university faculty and administration. Delgado writes about how "dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labor market" (Delgado et al., 2017). This statement is shown to be true throughout SJSU's early history, when Black students were celebrated in campus press for their expertise in the money-making industries of sports and entertainment, but rarely acknowledged publicly for their academic achievements.

Using the CRT tenet of counter-storytelling as a goal, the stories of the first Black students at SJSU began to be told through their own history, rather than through the words of their white counterparts. During the creation of the exhibit, a primary focus was finding materials by the students, or told in the student's own words. As a result, the Black Spartans exhibit features books written by the students or books containing quotes from them, which range from poetry to autobiography. Purchasing these books is one way of addressing the gaps in our collection and helps create a fuller picture of the activities of Black alumni throughout the University's history. The dearth of information coming directly from university sources led us to find much of the background about the first Black graduate, Lucy Turner (Johnson), from resources created outside of SJSU. The 1978 book *A History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley* was written by a local Black women's organization, the Garden City Women's Club, and contained vital information about Lucy Turner (Johnson) and her family. Adding these resources to the collection demonstrates a new storytelling as more voices are included. Effectively, "Counterstory, then, is a method of telling stories by people whose experiences are not often told. Counterstory as methodology thus serves to expose, analyze, and challenge stock stories of racial privilege and can help to strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance." (Martinez, 2017).

An additional component of importance within the King Library's adopted CRT framework is interdisciplinary engagement. When researching Black student history and adding relevant related materials to our collections, the university and the greater community need to be involved. The full story of Black student life at SJSU can only be told with the inclusion of Black alumni, community members, and current students. Part of the Black Spartans exhibit and project involves outreach to these communities inviting them to participate, as well as direct involvement from departments across campus. Portraits of nineteen Black students were created by a Black Digital Media Arts student using images from the student newspaper and yearbook as well as original art, and the exhibit was co-sponsored by the Department of African American Studies, and the Mosaic Cross Cultural Center, among others. Research assistance was provided by current BIPOC student assistants. In addition, outreach to San José public librarians resulted in the Black Spartans exhibit going on display in three SJPL branch locations from June-August 2022. These interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and intersectional choices were purposeful, resulting in participation from as wide a body of contributors and collaborators as possible.

4. African American Studies and the Africana Center at SJSU

We begin our discussion of African American collections at the King Library by distinguishing between the work being done by the University's Department of African American Studies (AAS) and that being done through the Africana Collection and Study Center, which are part of the Library's Africana, Asian American, Chicano, & Native American (AAACNA) Studies Center.

The AAS is part of the College of Social Sciences. Its mission is to teach, research, and cultivate knowledge about the African diaspora in Silicon Valley and to engage with the intellectual traditions of peoples of African descent. The Africana Center was the result of a long struggle by SJSU students, staff, and faculty to persuade campus administration to support the academic and social needs of its African American students, staff, and faculty.

The Africana Collection was created in late 1995/early 1996 thanks to the efforts of the African American Faculty and Staff Association and was formally recognized in October 1997. The framework used to develop the collection was based on the philosophy of W.E.B Du Bois, the premier African American intellectual, historian and activist of the 20th century. Du Bois coined the phrase 'Africana' in 1909, when he began to speak of working on a "comprehensive compendium of 'scientific' knowledge about the history, cultures, and social institutions of people of African descent" (Gates, 2000). The Africana Center at SJSU had a similar scope in mind as it mapped how to function as both a library resource center and a community center. With the goals of scholarship, leadership, and community responsibility in mind, the Africana Center supports and sponsors programs and scholarships related to "Africana life, history and culture." (Paul, 2007, p.15).

Table 2
Timeline of the Africana resource center

1991	1994	1995	1996	1997, Spring
SJSU's African American community disrupted with demolition of the Scheller House	Grand grant, first proposal for Center submitted by *BSU, *AAS, *AAFSA	AAFSA submits initial proposal for Center to President Caret	Plans, mission & goals; AAFSA planning retreat (Dec.) Library admin selects rooms in Wahlquist Library	Black history month celebration for Center; Formal proposal for Center submitted to Provost

Fall 1997–2000	2000	2002	2003
Center opens in Wahlquist Library with student assistants, volunteer director and other volunteers	Joint Library plans require ARC move to modular buildings; space sharing with CLRC. Demolition of Wahlquist Library	Library Dean plans merger of ARC, CLRC and an Asian American Studies (AAS) collection. Dean works with advisory boards for buy-in, selects a Librarian Director to work with advisory boards, programming, & collections	Joint Library opens (August), includes the merged collections ARC, AAS, and CLRC into the Cultural Heritage Center (CHC) with programming room, study spaces, and art work

SJSU's support of its African American students has always had a mixed history. SJSU would recruit and admit students but then fail to support them through retention and graduation. The African American staff and faculty on campus and in the African American Studies (AAS) department had worked hard to provide students with the support they needed. Initially, the African American Studies (AAS) department was housed in the Scheller House on 5th & San Carlos streets where it functioned as an advising center, study hall for individual and small groups, meeting space and center for cultural activities. In 1991 the building was scheduled for demolition, and AAS was relocated to Washington Square Hall, Room 216 where there was only space for faculty offices (African American Task Force, 1997). As stated in the statement of purpose for the Africana Resource Center (n.d.), "once this location was lost, the African American students lost more than an old dilapidated building. They lost a sense of community, a sense of self, and a sense of belonging".

In response, members of the Black Student Union (BSU), African American Studies department faculty, and the African American Staff and Faculty Association submitted to the Lottery Funds Committee a grand grant proposal for an African American Resource Center on October 3, 1994. The proposal requested $319,177.15 to lease space, pay for equipment, utilities, and computers. Included were the salaries for a director and student assistants. Publicity and miscellaneous expenses were included. The then Director of Student Development Services, wrote a letter to support the proposal. One can only surmise that the grand grant proposal was denied because the African American Faculty & Staff Association (AAFSA) made a formal request again for a center to SJSU's President, Dr. Robert Caret, in December 1995.

When President Caret arrived at SJSU, he was eager to meet with all campus student constituencies and embrace the diversity of the campus. AAFSA, in particular,

described SJSU as having an unacceptable campus climate and reminded him that the Educational Opportunity Program's (EOP) history began as a Black EOP designed to support SJSU's Black students. In a memo to Caret, AAFSA included the following plan:

Step I. Communication – AAFSA Advisory Committee Meeting." Create an AAFSA Advisory Committee to serve as a liaison between the President, AAS and AAFSA.

Step II. Campus support, respect & acceptance – [Creation of] African American Library Resource Center. The Black Library/Resource Center (AKA The Harriet Tubman Center) will function similarly [sic.] to the Chicano Resource Center." A librarian from the Clark Library agreed to work on goals and objectives for the Center's proposal.

Step III. Commitment to institutional reform – Establish a permanent Vice President of Racial Affairs." (African American Faculty & Staff Association [AAFSA], 1995)

Two additional names for the Center were proposed: "The Black Library/Resource Center," and "The Harriet Tubman Center." Under the leadership of AAFSA President Nehanda Imara subsequent meetings with African American students, staff, and faculty led to the creation of the new Africana Resource Center. Funding for the Center provided for materials, student assistant staffing, and expenses for maintaining the Center, but there were no funds to pay for a director. AAFSA's President served as an unpaid volunteer, coordinating activities and managing students without formal compensation, while working a full-time position for the university (Imara, 2022). This unpaid service is an example of lack of support for BIPOC people on campus. BIPOC faculty and staff serve their communities willingly and selflessly, yet are unpaid for the extra cultural service they provide to the students by the institutions they serve. Giving its African American community the Center they had long requested demonstrated the University's "interest convergence" because the President was conscious of the unfavorable racial climate on campus (Delgado et al., 22–24).

To prepare for campus commitment to the Center, AAFSA Executive Officers sent a memo to the AAS Chair to ask for leadership as Chair of the AAS in support of their proposal. They shared the 3 step plan of action shared with President Caret, and urged the AAS Chair to join leadership on these recommendations(Imara & Williams, 1995).

Planning began early January 1996 with the Clark Librarian asking for information to begin work on the Center's goals and objectives: Is it a meeting or reading room? Will it have materials by and about African Americans? Will the collection circulate or be a reference collection? Where will the Center be located? Will there be electricity for computers and internet access? How and will there be funding for collections, personnel and equipment? Will the Center be staffed by a librarian or a director? Will there be student assistants to shelve and circulate materials? There was a suggestion that there be a good rationale for the request given the higher percentage of Asian

American students on campus that could present an argument for a multicultural center based on campus statistics (Friday, 1996).

Documented in the proposal for the Africana Center (April 7, 1997) to the Assistant to the Provost, during Spring 1996 President Caret offered two rooms in Walquist North Library for the Center. A July 1996 memo to President Caret from the President of the AAFSA, thanked him for his support and response to their request for a center, and describes AAFSA's excitement with this opportunity. The memo describes email and meetings between AAFSA and the Dean of the Library to prepare the rooms including repairs, removal of stored items, allocation of furniture and equipment, and paint and telephone installation (Imara, 1996).

In 1997 formal agreements between AAFSA, the Provost's office, and the Dean of the Library began to take shape. A memo from the Assistant to the Provost to the AAFSA President and AAS Chair included a draft detailing the commitment of the President to the establishment and ongoing support of an African American Library Resource Center. Dated December of 1996, the draft lists completed work on the rooms, furniture allocations, an annual allocation for library material acquisitions, a process for recommending library acquisitions, student assistants allocations, the process for funds distribution, and inclusion in the library's base budget equal allocations for postage, phone, and miscellaneous office expenses comparable to funds provided to the Chicano Resource Center, (Phillips, 1997). In response AAFSA's President traced the development of the idea for the African Resource Center back to 1994. The center's goals included scholarship, leadership and community. The emphasis that the Center is not an organized research unit but a library/resource center whose objectives are to improve retention rates of African American students, expand faculty research opportunities, expand educational opportunities, establish the resource library, and enhance the SJSU campus climate. A detailed implementation was planned for completion mid-February (Imara, 1997).

During April 1997, the "Proposal for The Africana Center" was submitted to the Executive Assistant to the Provost, and to the Provost from the Africana Center task force on behalf of AAFSA. The background describes a Fall 1995 task force meeting with President Caret to discuss the issue with AAFSA's members and President, Directors of Student Development Services, and Upward Bound, the campus publicist, and part-time AAS faculty. During Fall 1996 AAFSA continued planning for the Center's scope and mission with a retreat held on December 6, 1996 where twelve members of AAFSA created foundational plans for Center. On February 28, 1997 as part of the campus Black History Month celebrations, a celebration for the Center was held. Plans for the actual opening were projected for Fall 1997 (AAFSA, 1997).

The proposal's significance was AAFSA's creation of their own counterstory for the center, its goals and future plans. It created an administrative structure with plans for student and faculty academic growth, mentoring for student and staff, service learning for students and outside researchers, and collaboration with the San Jose's African American community on programs and as advisory board members. Beyond its well developed plans, the community dreamt beyond the library's four walls towards a

future of a thriving, engaging, academic center of excellence for SJSU's African American community. Due to its merger into the Cultural Heritage Center and now the African, Asian, Chicano and Native American (AAACNA) Center, some plans have been submerged into ones supporting the overall center. Yet, the dream continues into current times with an Africana Center advisory board, a collection with Africana and African American Studies materials, and regular programs organized by campus faculty with the AAACNA Director for students and San Jose African American communities.

In spite of achieving a major milestone in the establishment of the ARC, racist actions continued to plague its growth. When the Africana Resource Center, along with the Chicano Library Resource Center (CLRC), moved to Modular Buildings near 9th Street and San Fernando in April of 2000 along with the Beethoven Center and Steinbeck Center, they received their door signs a calendar year after the Beethoven and Steinbeck Centers (Paul, 2007).

It is important to note here that library funds to develop collections to meet both AAS needs and the Africana Resource Center have separate budget lines as well as separate library liaisons responsible for their growth and maintenance. Historically, the budget for the AAS collection has been dependent on the full time student enrollment numbers.

5. Conclusion

We conclude with questions that CWG will continue to raise in order to make our practices socially responsive. We learn in the fourth section above that the budget for AAS has been dependent on enrollment. The enrollment for Black, or African American students has remained more or less the same in the past 10 years (Office of Institutional Research, n.d.). Data is not available prior to 2011. Looking at the collection and considering inflation, it looks like either the enrollment for Black and African American students was higher prior to 2010, or the budget has never changed if not reduced. If the enrollment was higher, why did it presumably drop in recent years? If the budget remained the same, why has it not been revised as per enrollment numbers?

Similarly, is adding titles to the collection enough? Projects like the Black Spartans exhibit promote the CRT work that the SJSU Special Collections & Archives is doing to acknowledge racist practices of the past and ensure that anti-racism is embedded in current processes and practices. The Black Spartans curators plan to further discuss and promote their exhibit work via journal articles and conference presentations. The project will also serve as a model for researching and highlighting the stories of other marginalized groups on campus. Developing a well-researched LibGuide and presenting the research conducted by the CWG in conferences are two other ways of promoting the King Library's active engagement with CRT and our commitment to social justice.

Policies matter! CRT originated from critical movements – critical legal studies (Hartlep, 2009), critical race feminism (Delgado, 2017), and black feminism (Hill, 2009) to transform the relationship between race, racism, and power. It was realized that racism and power were embedded in the policies, procedures, practices of sectors including the public education system. CRT based activities such as collection development, collection representation, and collection awareness and use are driven by policies. CRT, in all its tenets, emphasizes a practice of assessment of existing policies and practices that are influenced by social constructs and power dynamics. Assessment, when applied at every stage of the policy creation process can lend opportunities for clarity in communication, purpose, transparency in enforcement, approval process, and exceptions, pathways for policy change, and proper training and professional development. Therefore, assessment should be performed at every stage of the creation of a process, policy, or program, including the start of any library collection project.

As the CWG concludes its ongoing projects, future studies will share the results and lead to more critical engagement with CRT. The Anti-Racism Assessment Working Group may also share their work in different venues. Through wider sharing of the King Library's engagement with CRT, the authors hope newer directions for inquiry will emerge to make the practice of librarianship more socially just.

Glossary

AAACNA – African, Asian, American, Chicano, Native American Studies Center – This is a center, located in San José State University's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. It is a part of the University Library.

AAFSA – African American Faculty & Staff Association – This association was formed in 1974 to foster and promote the development of Black faculty and staff at San José State University. It is now called Black Faculty & Staff Association (BFSA). https://www.sjsu.edu/diversity/resources/groups/bfsa/

AAS – Department of African American Studies – This is an academic department of San José State University.

ARAWG – Anti-Racism Assessment Working Group – This is a working group of San José State University's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library's Anti-Racism Action Plan.

ARC – Africana Resource Center – The original idea was to create a support center for students to be able to do research, host programming and meetings. Currently, it is just a collection within the African, Asian, American, Chicano, Native American Studies Center (AAACNA).

BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, and People of Color – "A term referring to "Black and/or Indigenous People of Color." While "POC" or People of Color is often used as well, BIPOC explicitly leads with Black and Indigenous identities, which helps

to counter anti-Black racism and invisibilization of Native communities" (Sen & Keleher, 2021).

BSU – Black Student Union – This is the umbrella organization which works with other black student organizations at San José State University. The purpose of the organization is to unite, educate, and enrich the University's students of color. https://www.sjsu.edu/blackscholars/studentorgs/#BSU

CLRC – Chicano Library Resource Center – It was a support center designed for students to study, do research, host programming and meetings. It was first housed in Walquist Library and now it is a collection within the African, Asian, American, Chicano, Native American Studies Center (AAACNA).

CRT – Critical Race Theory – "Critical race theory (CRT) is a movement that challenges the ability of conventional legal strategies to deliver social and economic justice and specifically calls for legal approaches that take into consideration race as a nexus of American life" (Demaske, 2009).

CSU – California State University – This is the largest four-year public university system in the University system. The system has twenty-three campuses including San José State University.

CWG – Collections Working Group – This is a working group of San José State University's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. University Library's Anti-Racism Action Plan.

DEI – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – "A conceptual framework that promotes the fair treatment and full participation of all people, especially in the workplace, including populations who have historically been underrepresented or subject to discrimination because of their background, identity, disability, etc." (Dictionary.com).

EOP – Educational Opportunity Program – This is a San José State University's program designed to provide academic support to first-generation, low-income, and educationally disadvantaged students. https://www.sjsu.edu/eop/

SC&A – Special Collections & Archives – This unit is a part of San José State University's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. The unit holds rare and unique books, manuscript collections, institutional records, and other primary sources to support teaching and research. https://libguides.sjsu.edu/specialcollections

SJSU – San José State University – This University is one of the twenty-three California State University campuses, located in the heart of Silicon Valley.

ULMS – Unified Library Management System – The name given to the ExLibris suite of products which is used, negotiated and managed collectively by the twenty-three California State University libraries to order, catalog, maintain access to, and share library resources. The system is managed by the CSU Chancellor's office using a consortial payment model. The user interface (aka OPAC) is called OneSearch. https://libguides.sjsu.edu/c.php?g=706907

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