



August 19, 2020

To the members of the Board of Trustees, Fairfax County Public Library:

The Virginia Library Association is a statewide association representing 4700+ librarians, library staff, and members of Boards of Trustees and Friends of Virginia's libraries. We are committed to excellence in libraries in the Commonwealth. Statements made during the Fairfax County Board of Trustees meeting on July 29, 2020 run counter to the goals of a library, especially in one of the most diverse counties in Virginia.

As librarians, we follow the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>), which states "Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval."

In its Strategic Plan, the County of Fairfax states that its duty/charge/responsibility is "To protect and enrich quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County." In order to protect and enrich their community members, print and digital materials must reflect all community members.

The Fairfax County Public Library indeed provides its users materials by authors and creators of all backgrounds and perspectives. It is a carefully curated and rich collection of items that are meant to educate and inform its community.

Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop published an essay in *Perspectives: Choosing and using books for the classroom*, Vol 6, no 3, Summer 1990, which shares the concept of "mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors." It is important to see others represented in books; is important to have the ability to step into other worlds, and it is important to see oneself represented in books.

A library's mission is that diverse, inclusive, and equitable materials are available to all. A diverse or inclusive book (or audio book) is not just for that community member; it is for everyone to read, listen to, or enjoy. We encourage people to read about stories from people that do and do not look like them.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind people that their proximity to Blackness or Black people does not equate to an empathic or deep understanding of Black people. The catalog and collection have grown to provide *more* stories, *more* books, and *more* materials that highlight and feature all members who make up Fairfax County.

P.O. Box 56312
Virginia Beach, VA 23456
(757) 689-0594 • fax (757) 447-3478
vla.lisav@cox.net



Members of minority communities, be it racial, ethnic, LGBTQA+, and many others, have not always had opportunities to tell their stories. Not sharing those important diverse, inclusive, and equitable stories flips around mirrors, closes those windows, and shatters sliding glass doors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa R. Varga".

Lisa R. Varga, VLA Executive Director and the 2020 VLA Executive Committee

Jennifer Resor-Whicker, President
Jessica Scalph, Past-President
Regina Carter, 2nd Vice-President
Bill Edwards-Bodmer, Treasurer
Kayla Payne, Secretary
Lucinda Rush Wittkower, ALA Councilor

P.O. Box 56312
Virginia Beach, VA 23456
(757) 689-0594 • fax (757) 447-3478
vla.lisav@cox.net