

1. Thank you, Jane. I'm here today to talk with you all about the shifting role of the music library. In the U.S., this role is increasingly as a facilitator of community conversation. I'm going to talk with you about one such event which took place in my library at Dartmouth College. This genesis of this event involves an interweaving of the scholarly music community, racial tension at Ivy League institutions, and American political events.

2. To begin, I'd like to talk a bit about reparative musicology. Reparative musicology aims to repair damage inflicted by broken systems in the world through local means; namely, by demonstrating genuine interpersonal care in our scholarly interactions.

3. This term came about as a response to combative arguments rampant in the scholarly musical community. William Cheng, professor of Music at Dartmouth College, posits in his book *Just Vibrations*, "that people who work with music for a living can lead by example in agendas of interpersonal care and communication." The musical skills of listening and performing, or "sounding good," become the basis for what Cheng calls a reparative musicology. Cheng suggests that the ability to "sound good", in both musical and scholarly situations, could also imply a responsibility to *do* good in those same arenas.

4. As music librarians, we are armed with listening skills in both the music and library realms. In our reference work, we are trained to listen deeply to our patrons' needs; to clarify their questions by listening with an expert ear. We are also trained to listen to our colleagues in musicology, identifying shifts in the field which we must support in our collections. In our metadata creation, we are thoughtful about our vocabulary, making resources discoverable by the modern scholar. With this training, I posit that the music librarian is doubly prepared for the caring work of recognizing opportunities for repair. But what does reparative music librarianship look like in practice? To show how creative listening unearthed opportunities for repair at Dartmouth, I should set the scene.

5. Dartmouth College is a primarily undergraduate liberal arts college in Hanover, New Hampshire, founded in 1769. While a part of the college's founding mission was to admit Native Americans, the founders slighted the Native population, admitting only whites. More than 200 years later in 1972 only about 10% of students were people of color. Incidentally Dartmouth became the last American Ivy League school to admit female students that same year. I mention all of this not to shame my home institution, who have graciously supported my presence at this conference, but to historicize what comes next. In 2015, roughly half of the students admitted were people of color and roughly half were women. This shift in the demographics of our students reflects a larger cultural turn toward inclusion in the United States. However, as reflected in our current political moment in America, the mere presence of marginal groups on campus does not solve the problem of systemic oppression against them. For instance, while the makeup of Dartmouth students has come to an equilibrium, women and people of color are still grossly underrepresented in positions of power, namely on the faculty, where only about one-third of Dartmouth's full time faculty are women and only about 18% are racial and ethnic minorities.

6. It is this idea of systemic oppression, which has inspired peaceful protests across the country, including those by movements like Black Lives Matter, which was founded in 2013 as a response to acts of state and vigilante violence against black people. Their mission is "to imagin[e] and creat[e] a world free of anti-Blackness, where every Black person has the social, economic, and political power to thrive." The Black Lives Matter movement has grown in the past five years to include over 40 official chapters across the globe.

7. Their reach has even extended to tiny Hanover, New Hampshire, where, in 2015, following the admission of Dartmouth's most diverse class to date, student Black Lives Matter protesters held a demonstration in the Dartmouth library. This peaceful protest took place in the main atrium and in the stacks. It included roughly one hundred students, who marched through the library with signs chanting, "Black Lives Matter!" and "If we can't study, you can't study!"

8. The protest was caught on film by a student in the library and the footage was widely circulated by conservative news outlets. As you watch this footage, notice the point at which this student, a part of the protest, changes his view from being a supporter of the protest, to arguing against the protesters' tactics. As the student in this interview noted, no violence was captured on film. In fact, the College released an official statement that no evidence of violence was ever submitted in the investigation of the protest.

9. This characterization of an audible disruption *as* physical violence is important because it shows that 1) tension between opposing groups on a college campus is often played out in silence by those on the side of the status quo (for instance via the racist virtual messages mentioned by the student in the Fox News interview) and that 2) resistance to the ways in which institutions oppress marginalized peoples often plays out in the open, in the form of loud, political statements in what are otherwise considered quiet and neutral spaces, like the library. The status quo attempts to silence these statements by calling them not only disruptive, but violent. But what happens when such statements of resistance are made quietly or in a less disruptive manner?

10. To find out, we move forward almost a year later to the day of the Black Lives Matter protest in the Dartmouth Library. This was the day that Donald Trump was elected to the U.S. presidency. Again, like the Black Lives Matter protesters, Dartmouth students recognized the centrality and supposed neutrality of the library, posting messages of support for minorities on campus who might be suffering that day in the library main hallway. These signs were a silent, non-disruptive act of resistance. And yet, at around 9 AM that morning, a library staff member removed the signs. (tap x2) While the removal of the signs was neither loud nor disruptive, like the actions of the Black Lives Matter protesters a year earlier, this action spoke just as loudly as those protesters. This action would seem to point to an idea that there is no "right" way to protest. It is a perfect illustration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s statement that the:

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"... great stumbling block in the stride toward [racial] freedom is not the White Citizen's Council-er or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action..."

12. So why is the seemingly minor event of the removal of posters so important to this presentation of my outreach events in the music library? This seemingly innocuous action by the staff member removing the signs is exactly the sort of daily reinforcement of the status quo which at first appears to do no harm. However, upon closer examination, this action carries the two-hundred year cultural baggage of an institution which, try as it might, is still unable to ease the tension between those who are able to see

something like a library as unpolitical and those who cannot afford to see any manifestation of the academic institution as neutral. This is because their very presence within it is questionable, removable, and quieted. It became apparent to me in the aftermath of the election, that the library should be doing something to acknowledge our commitment to “adhere to the principles of fairness and equality, [believing] that each user of the Library is unique and important.” With William Cheng's idea of reparative musicology in mind, I sought to create an outreach event which might “sound good” in the Dartmouth community.

13. I hoped to create a space on the Dartmouth campus which would allow for reflection on current events through music. My intention was to “sound good” in an audible way, in what, at the time, I considered to be a safe, neutral space; the music library. We would bring together students of the college, faculty, staff, and community members to sing songs of the American civil rights movement of the 1960s. We would work through our feelings of disappointment, fear, rage, and discomfort when it came to matters of race.

14. To give you a quick idea of what these events looked like, here’s the promotional video from the very first sing-in.

When I first saw that video, my heart sank. I was incredibly embarrassed because in this promotional video, we see me, a white woman, claiming for her own the music of the civil rights movement, singing it proudly. And in the same breath, she states that she is uncomfortable teaching this music. I had created this idea for an event to serve the community, but I was unwilling to deal with the discomfort I felt in acknowledging my whiteness. Instead, I asked a person of color to do the work for me. I asked her to teach the music, facilitate the discussion, and to speak for her entire race. Dartmouth students of color are often faced with extra demands on their time. As a masters student at Dartmouth, I have seen students of color routinely asked to act as representatives for their entire race, religion, or nationality in class and in their extra-curricular activities. My asking for the main labor of the sing-ins to be performed by a person of color was a foundational mistake in the planning of the Sing-Ins and something that I am actively working to correct in the future.

15. Despite this mistake, community members showed up to sing. We had wonderful discussions about the ways in which music acts as a motivator, a kinetic force which drives our mutual desire to create a more just world. At the first sing-in, we had five attendees, including mostly library staff. The next week, we had thirty people. The next week, forty. The event continued to gain momentum and institutional support, including funding from Dartmouth’s Department of Institutional Diversity and Equity.

16. This year, we held the second annual sing-in. We expanded to include the music of protest movements beyond the American Civil Rights Movement, including music used in protests at Standing Rock, in South Africa, Jamaica, China, Italy, and others. The Sing-Ins even got a full page spread in the local newspaper. This article in the Valley News stands in stark contrast to the coverage of the earlier protests in the main library. Here, the Sing-Ins are portrayed as using sound as a universal language which brings library users together, making peaceful noise in an otherwise quiet library. The article states that, “A common song can prompt new connections, and perhaps even new levels of understanding.” The Black Lives Matter protesters on the other hand were portrayed as divisive, disruptive, even violent. But these students weren’t violent, and while not everyone agreed with their tactics, the movement and their chants brought them together, just as the songs of the civil rights movement brought community singers together in the music library. The obvious difference is that one

protest was endorsed by the institution while the other was not. This points to an important quality of libraries that we would all do well to recognize and use carefully: Our Power. This power by its very existence makes libraries non-neutral bodies.

17. As stated by Chris Bourg, Dean of Libraries at MIT: “The very notion that shared, consolidated community resources ought to exist is not a neutral proposition. A library as an institution represents a decision about how a community spends its resources, and those decisions are not neutral. Decisions like how much funding a library gets, who should have access to a library, and even where the library is located are not neutral decisions. [...] the origin of public libraries in the US is inextricably tied to the fact that the history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism, of slavery, of segregation, and of state-sponsored discrimination.” – Chris Bourg

18. There is no denying that academic libraries are trusted by their institutions to carry out the work of providing the materials necessary for the education of their constituents. This trust can lead us as librarians to believe that we are just naturally good people; we consider ourselves either colorblind or so hyper-aware of our biases as to render us neutral. But just as a white body is not just a body but a white body, we are not just a library, but an institutional body. And as an institutional body, we must be mindful of our actions as part of the system which oppresses marginalized people and work to repair the damage inflicted by our institutions. Currently in the U.S., I believe that there is a wonderful shift in thinking around collections development, allowing for greater equity in the representation of marginalized voices in our collections. But building equitable collections is not enough. This work is carried out mostly in silence, in closed door conversations between librarians and vendors. If we are to “sound good,” in the world libraries and librarians need to recognize and cultivate their own powerful voices. Selectors can’t go on silently building collections of works by marginalized authors without speaking up for them in public. We must contribute to the active healing of wounds inflicted by the institution. The most audible way to do this in the academic library is by embracing these collections through our programming and outreach efforts. We must sound good in academia, denouncing systemic oppression. Out Loud. Thank you.

19. “It is not possible to have justice without healing the body that has experienced injustice. And it is not possible to heal without transforming this unjust system... We need to develop a new language, a language that centers healing and restoration.” – Patrisse Cullors, cofounder of Black Lives Matter

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