White library folks, I believe that change will begin from each one of us personally, to affect the systems that keep racism in place structurally. As the nation reflects on what we can do better to support Black lives and build a better society, we all have a part to play in our libraries.

I hope my thoughts echo the voices of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) that inform us, guide us, and keep us honest as we white people try to do better. I am listening to my colleagues here in Minnesota, but also those in kidlit who have been trying to do this work for so long, including Edie Campbell, Sarah Park Dahlen, Debbie Reese, and folks I only know through social media like Robin Bradford, or authors that I follow like Jason Reynolds, Angie Thomas, Melinda Lo. I am not asking them what I should do. I am hopefully digesting what they say into answers and actions for myself. Luckily for librarians, this starts by reading all the things.

So here is what I’m suggesting we try to do right now:

1) **Follow BIPOC authors on social media.** What are they saying? Follow the literary folks they follow – this is truly how you hear from the communities you’re not a part of. You love “the Sympathizer” by Viet Thanh Nguyen? Follow him on Twitter. You love The Crossover? Follow Kwame Alexander, he has so much to say he started a whole imprint.

2) **Collections have consequences.** I took this from a Kelly Jensen Tweet (@TLT16) and couldn’t agree more.

   A. **Count the number of books by BIPOC authors** you’re purchasing, county the number by white authors. Count how many of these titles you order also. What you buy for your collection reflects the world as you see it. If you aren’t measuring to see if you’re buying titles by authors of color and indigenous authors, how do you know what kind of collection you’re building?

   B. **Buy more items by BIPOC authors and illustrators.** If you look at your collections now, chances are you have not been purchasing titles that reflect your community, your state, your country or your world accurately. You have many, many years to make up for. Pew Research just released this article about Gen Z; they will be the most educated generation and 48% identify as Hispanic, Black, Asian or other. Maybe JUST order books by POCI authors right now. Maybe challenge your collections managers once a month to do this. More likely, set a guideline percentage of BIPOC authors and illustrations. This is not the time to say, “Those books don’t get read.” Which leads me to part three:

   C. **Challenge yourself and your coworkers to read the books you’re ordering.** Now hand sell those amazing titles to your community. Put these items face out, and make booklists of ONLY BIPOC titles that say “My favorite reads so far this year.” Your community trusts that you are an expert. Be an expert in all books, not just white books. Only read genre? There isn’t any reason you can’t find Black authored romances, Asian authored mysteries, Indigenous authored thrillers and Latinx authored science fiction.
D. **Review your non-fiction.** Do you have books about preparing for college by authors that are not white? Does your Civil War history include Black authors? Are your biographies a cross section of life or only white life? Are your biographies about folks of color written by their community? For instance, are all of your Martin Luther King, Jr. biographies written by white people? Who has written the biographies of Barak Obama, Cesar Chavez and Mahatma Gandhi? Who gets to tell their stories?

3) **Hire people of color and indigenous folks to run your library and your programs.** This is really hard work – you already have your go-to resources and you might need to start over. You might need to think outside the box. You may need to put money into changing your hiring and vetting processes. That’s OK – you can do this a little at a time, but the important thing is you do it. Are you not the person that hires? Can you give that person suggestions or ask about the process?

4) **Build relationships with your local schools.** Give teachers book lists. Ask if you can come talk to schools and prep BIPOC authors to book talk. Use examples for database searches that are not white. Get into conversation about what books teachers are reading for literature classes, and find out which books they would like to read. Suggest that the library provide “book club in a bag” and ebooks of the titles they can’t afford. Ask your Friends fund it. In a dream world, get rid of To Kill a Mockingbird and replace it with The Hate You Give. Downgrade Grapes of Wrath and buy Stamped from the Beginning. Talk with teachers and students about why Little House on the Prairie is no longer considered a “safe” read for Minnesota children, and purchase more Birchbark House. Find out if you can deliver books to the alternate high school programs, the adult basic education, head start; the places that have fewer resources and the most at risk folks. We know that those programs are disproportionately represented by communities of color. If you have limited time and resources, focus in these communities first.

5) **Really question your structures.** No clear guidelines here. We are all upside down right now. Can we change things to make access easier and better? If we move all our storytimes to evening and weekend hours, how would that change dynamics? If we offered computer access outside of normal open hours, who would benefit? Take away fines and fees now, barriers that make the library easy for those with money, and hard for those without, and what changes?

6) **You have power.** You control services that should be available to everyone but are overwhelmingly “owned” by white people. Walk into every meeting every day thinking about how you can ally with your communities better. Keep reading and listening to BIPOC thought leaders and echo their questions in your overwhelmingly white meetings.