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A Call for Action: Mississippi's Need for Minority Librarians

By Stacy Creel and Elizabeth Haynes

Introduction:

Recently, The University of Southern Mississippi's School of Library and Information Science successfully recruited ten minority students in the following specialties: three public, three academic, two general, one special and one school for "The Minority Scholarship Initiative." The scholarship was funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Service's Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program and created in partnership with the Mississippi Library Commission and The University of Southern Mississippi Libraries. Currently, the minority enrollment at the university is 40%. The minority enrollment for the MLIS is 17%; however; it falls to 11% when not including the aforementioned scholarship students (Factbook USM, 2011; LIS Graduate Students Fall Semester 2011 Ethnicity Report). Continued support of minority students is very much needed, especially for those wanting to work in Mississippi's school libraries.

Why Mississippi Needs Minority Librarians:

According to the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), 41.1% of Mississippians are of minority status in comparison to the national average of 34.8 %, with minority status defined as Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, two or more races and Hispanic or Latino (of any race) (Table 1). The 2010 Statistical Report from the Association of Library and Information Science Education (ALISE, 2010)

indicated that the majority of 2008-2009 graduates from ALA accredited library and information science programs are White (82.3%). Hispanics (5.4%) are the most represented non-White ethnic group followed by African Americans or Blacks (5.1%), and then followed by Asian or Pacific Islanders at 4.1%. All minority groups are underrepresented as graduates in relation to their percentage of the US population.

The number of African Americans attending institutes of higher education is low typically due to social climate factors of limited finances, hostile environment, and lack of African-American faculty members (Hayden, 1994). Library schools should reach out to the African-American community by providing internship opportunities and informal networking, financial opportunities, and recruitment to attract more African-American students into library schools. Statistics show the number of African-American librarians has increased since the late 1970s; however, the increase has not been significant, especially within upper management positions. Also, national and state library associations have only had a limited number of African Americans serving as presidents or directors. Only 6.5% of librarians are African American (Josey, 2000). Kyung-Sun Kim and Sei-Ching Joanna Sin (2008) wrote "despite efforts by LIS schools and associations in recruiting and retaining more students of color, the underrepresentation of ethnic minorities continues" (p. 153).

Race/Ethnicity (One Race)	National Estimate in Percentage	Mississippi Estimate in Percentage	LIS Degrees Awarded
White	63.7	60.8	82.3
Black or African American	12.6	36.4	5.1
Asian and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander*	4.9	.9	4.1
American Indian and Alaskan Native	.8	.4	.6
Hispanic or Latino	16.4	2.5	5.4

Table Sources: See Appendix A & B for tables from U.S. Census Bureau & ALISE 2010 Statistical Report

*Combined due to the fact that they are combined by ALISE.

Table 1: Race/Ethnicity Comparison

Currently, The Mississippi Library Association (2011) offers one one-time scholarship for minorities, the Virginia Brocks-Shedd Scholarship (\$1000). The recipient must attend the School of Library and Information Science at The University of Southern Mississippi at Hattiesburg. Additionally, the American Library Association Spectrum Scholarship Initiative (2011) provides a one-time, non-renewable \$5,000 scholarship award to 50 minority MLS students. Nevertheless, it is clear that scholarships specifically for minorities at state, regional and national levels are limited. Scholarships can assist recruitment and increase the number of minority librarians.

According to 2009-2010 National Center for Education Statistics or NCES (2009-10), 53.9 % of the students in Mississippi's public schools are of minority status as compared to the national average of 44.9%. There are 1097 public schools in the state of Mississippi, of which only 930 have school libraries. A sample survey by the NCES indicates only 29.6% of those libraries are staffed by a "paid professional library media center staff that had a master's degree in a library-related major."

"School libraries and credentialed school librarians play a fundamental role in promoting information literacy and reading for information and inspiration. By collaborating with teachers and engaged students, librarians connect them with meaningful information that matters in the 21st-century world. This connection can lead to opportunities for achievement to all regardless of social-economic or education levels in the community" (Ford, 2010).

Research shows a direct correlation between school libraries, school librarians and student achievement; Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell (2000) report that schools with good libraries produce the highest achieving students.

"Resource-rich school libraries and credentialed school librarians play key roles in promoting both information literacy and reading for information and inspiration. When staffed by qualified professionals trained to collaborate with teachers and engage

students meaningfully with information that matters in the real world, school libraries become sophisticated 21st-century learning environments that offer equal opportunities for achievement to all students, regardless of the socio-economic or education levels of the community" (NCLIS, 2008, p. 1).

The research by Lance (1994, 2000) on the positive impact of effective school libraries and librarians (conversant in information literacy standards and proficient in technology and the curriculum skills necessary for student success) on student achievement has been replicated in multiple states. With fewer than 30% of schools in Mississippi having a librarian with a MLS, students are at risk of falling behind.

The Difference the MLS Would Make:

Neely and Peterson (2007) wrote that increasing diversity is more than a discussion on bringing equality to the workplace. It is about the makeup of the community served. According to ACS demographics, Mississippi has the nation's top minority population. In line with the mission statement of the American Libraries Association (2011), libraries exist "To provide leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all." Minority librarians are needed in Mississippi to build the profession because they are representative of the community served. Their presence can enhance learning and ensure access for the underserved and therefore determine whether libraries can remain relevant.

Increasing the number of qualified professionals in Mississippi public schools would result in an increase in use of school libraries. Acree, et al. (2001), stated that in the next twenty years, minority groups will form an increasing segment of the American workforce. It is clear that people of color need to be trained in the library and information profession, not only to serve their own communities but to serve all communities. Acree wrote "Librarians of color are crucial to the provision of services in communities where knowledge of the language, the values, and the cultural heritage of the growing racial and ethnic

minority communities is imperative" (p. 49). If multicultural services are offered by minority librarians, an element of authenticity enters the library service community and with it, improved access to the resources within libraries.

In Conclusion:

Although much has been done to create equality in librarianship and libraries, many issues still remain. "We want to believe that libraries are politically neutral and colorblind" but the reality is that libraries often reflect local politics and socioeconomic stratifications (Hall, 2007, p.33). Mississippi needs more minority librarians – in all types of libraries but especially in its schools. As Mississippi's minority population is larger than most states, minority students need to be exposed to professionally credentialed librarians that reflect multicultural composition, increasing the visibility of the profession for this group of individuals and in the long term contributing to more minority librarians. So what does this mean for the School of Library and Information Science? Recruiting librarians that reflect the diversity of their communities is an important recruitment goal for library schools, public libraries, and school libraries. What does this mean for everyone else? Recommend someone get an MLS today!

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About the authors:



Dr. Stacy Creel received her Ph.D. in August 2007 from the University of North Texas, Denton. Before joining the faculty at the School of Library and Information Science at Southern Miss in August 2010, she taught at St. John's University in Queens, New York. Dr. Creel worked for over ten years in public libraries in Florida, New York and Texas. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of Mississippi and a MLS and Specialist Degree from Florida State University.



Dr. Elizabeth Haynes received Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Sciences degrees from Texas Woman's University and MLS and Ph.D. degrees from University of Texas at Austin. She has been a school library media specialist at various levels and district library administrator for the El Paso (Texas) Public Schools. For three years, Dr. Haynes was a library media specialist for the Texas Education Agency. In 1998, she joined the faculty of the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.



B03002

HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN BY RACE
 Universe: Total population
 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Supporting documentation on code lists, subject definitions, data accuracy, and statistical testing can be found on the American Community Survey website in the Data and Documentation section.

Sample size and data quality measures (including coverage rates, allocation rates, and response rates) can be found on the American Community Survey website in the Methodology section.

Although the American Community Survey (ACS) produces population, demographic and housing unit estimates, for 2010, the 2010 Census provides the official counts of the population and housing units for the nation, states, counties, cities and towns.

	United States	
	Estimate	Margin of Error
Total:	309,349,689	*****
Not Hispanic or Latino:	258,609,600	+/-10,655
White alone	196,929,412	+/-20,392
Black or African American alone	37,897,524	+/-47,313
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	2,074,523	+/-18,440
Asian alone	14,566,264	+/-30,769
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	474,799	+/-9,473
Some other race alone	558,211	+/-22,986
Two or more races:	6,108,867	+/-55,206
Two races including Some other race	303,389	+/-14,531
Two races excluding Some other race, and three or more races	5,805,478	+/-53,019
Hispanic or Latino:	50,740,089	+/-10,655
White alone	32,468,060	+/-133,455
Black or African American alone	977,101	+/-27,481
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	479,043	+/-20,928
Asian alone	162,038	+/-9,667
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	33,117	+/-4,589
Some other race alone	14,331,229	+/-122,022
Two or more races:	2,289,501	+/-45,719
Two races including Some other race	1,196,036	+/-34,027
Two races excluding Some other race, and three or more races	1,093,465	+/-30,244

Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. The degree of uncertainty for an estimate arising from sampling variability is represented through the use of a margin of error. The value shown here is the 90 percent margin of error. The margin of error can be interpreted roughly as providing a 90 percent probability that the interval defined by the estimate minus the margin of error and the estimate plus the margin of error (the lower and upper confidence bounds) contains the true value. In addition to sampling variability, the ACS estimates are subject to nonsampling error (for a discussion of nonsampling variability, see Accuracy of the Data). The effect of nonsampling error is not represented in these tables.

The ACS questions on Hispanic origin and race were revised in 2008 to make them consistent with the Census 2010 question wording. Any changes in estimates for 2008 and beyond may be due to demographic changes, as well as factors including questionnaire changes, differences in ACS population controls, and methodological differences in the population estimates, and therefore should be used with caution. For a summary of questionnaire changes see http://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/questionnaire_changes/. For more information about changes in the estimates see <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hispanic/reports.html>.

While the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) data generally reflect the December 2009 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) definitions of metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas; in certain instances the names, codes, and boundaries of the principal cities shown in ACS tables may differ from the OMB definitions due to differences in the effective dates of the geographic entities.

Estimates of urban and rural population, housing units, and characteristics reflect boundaries of urban areas defined based on Census 2000 data. Boundaries for urban areas have not been updated since Census 2000. As a result, data for urban and rural areas from the ACS do not necessarily reflect the results of ongoing urbanization.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey

Explanation of Symbols:

1. An '***' entry in the margin of error column indicates that either no sample observations or too few sample observations were available to compute a standard error and thus the margin of error. A statistical test is not appropriate.
2. An '-' entry in the estimate column indicates that either no sample observations or too few sample observations were available to compute an estimate, or a ratio of medians cannot be calculated because one or both of the median estimates falls in the lowest interval or upper interval of an open-ended distribution.
3. An '-1' following a median estimate means the median falls in the lowest interval of an open-ended distribution.
4. An '+1' following a median estimate means the median falls in the upper interval of an open-ended distribution.
5. An '****' entry in the margin of error column indicates that the median falls in the lowest interval or upper interval of an open-ended distribution. A statistical test is not appropriate.
6. An '*****' entry in the margin of error column indicates that the estimate is controlled. A statistical test for sampling variability is not appropriate.
7. An 'N' entry in the estimate and margin of error columns indicates that data for this geographic area cannot be displayed because the number of sample cases is too small.
8. An '(X)' means that the estimate is not applicable or not available.



ARIZON NEW MEXICO

OKLAHOMA

ARKANSAS

TENNESSEE

NORTH CAROLINA

SOUTH CAROLINA

C02003

RACE

Universe: Total population

2005 American Community Survey

NOTE. Data are limited to the household population and exclude the population living in institutions, college dormitories, and other group quarters. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see Survey Methodology.

	Mississippi	
	Estimate	Margin of Error
Total:	2,824,156	*****
Population of one race:	2,799,589	+/-4,392
White	1,716,444	+/-3,238
Black or African American	1,030,075	+/-6,224
American Indian and Alaska Native	12,280	+/-1,563
Asian alone	21,523	+/-3,179
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	588	+/-494
Some other race	18,679	+/-2,903
Population of two or more races:	24,567	+/-4,392
Two or more races including Some other race	1,988	+/-1,057
Two or more races excluding Some other race	22,579	+/-4,034
Population of two races:	23,270	+/-4,248
White; Black or African American	8,072	+/-2,163
White; American Indian and Alaska Native	7,159	+/-2,141
White; Asian	1,884	+/-847
Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native	2,968	+/-1,770
All other two race combinations	3,187	+/-1,198
Population of three races	1,100	+/-654
Population of four or more races	197	+/-262

Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. The degree of uncertainty for an estimate arising from sampling variability is represented through the use of a margin of error. The value shown here is the 90 percent margin of error. The margin of error can be interpreted roughly as providing a 90 percent probability that the interval defined by the estimate minus the margin of error and the estimate plus the margin of error (the lower and upper confidence bounds) contains the true value. In addition to sampling variability, the ACS estimates are subject to nonsampling error (for a discussion of nonsampling variability, see Accuracy of the Data). The effect of nonsampling error is not represented in these tables.

Explanation of Symbols:

1. An '*' entry in the margin of error column indicates that too few sample observations were available to compute a standard error and thus the margin of error. A statistical test is not appropriate.
2. An '***' entry in the margin of error column indicates that no sample observations were available to compute a standard error and thus the margin of error. A statistical test is not appropriate.
3. An '-' entry in the estimate column indicates that no sample observations were available to compute an estimate, or a ratio of medians cannot be calculated because one or both of the median estimates falls in the lowest interval or upper interval of an open-ended distribution.
4. An '-' following a median estimate means the median falls in the lowest interval of an open-ended distribution.
5. An '+' following a median estimate means the median falls in the upper interval of an open-ended distribution.
6. An '****' entry in the margin of error column indicates that the median falls in the lowest interval or upper interval of an open-ended distribution. A statistical test is not appropriate.
7. An '*****' entry in the margin of error column indicates that the estimate is controlled. A statistical test for sampling variability is not appropriate.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey