



December 14, 2022

Press Release

The Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded Califa Group an IMLS Planning Grant for the **Building Radical Empathy in Archives and Special Collections: Highlighting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (BRE)** project for \$217,497.96.

In the book *Radical Empathy: Finding a Path to Bridging Racial Divides*, Political Scientist Terri Givens describes radical empathy as “moving beyond an understanding of others’ lives and pain to understand the origins of our biases.” ([Radical Empathy](#), TerriGivens.com)

The continued lack of diversity in the archives profession, and the need for more students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) paired with the need to center archival practice rooted in social justice, equity, and reparative work inclusive of diverse stakeholders. inspired the creation of this project.

The project is led by Co-Project Directors Veronda J. Pitchford (Califa Assistant Director), and Dr. Nicole A. Cooke (University of South Carolina’s Augusta Baker Endowed Chair) and the planning committee members are Forum planning committee members content partners Holly Smith (College Archivist, [Spelman College](#)), [Dr. Aisha Johnson](#) (Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Outreach at the Georgia Tech Library), and David Atkins (Dean, University Libraries, East Tennessee State University).

BRE centers archival practice rooted in social justice, equity, and reparative work inclusive of diverse stakeholders. An in-person Forum with leading stakeholders from archives, special collections, LIS, HBCUs, academic recruitment and advising, internship placement and curriculum design will be convened to create a framework for archives professionals to center the voice and experiences of disenfranchised communities whose history is often distorted, muted, or erased from archive collections. The Forum goal is to identify recruitment needs/challenges and design for a program that will enhance LIS education by providing training in radical empathy, a flexible internship model and leadership skill building to ready participating scholars to center social justice in archival collections of the future.

Forum planning committee member Holly Smith explains: “The framework for radical empathy has allowed us to make space for collective vulnerability, racial reckoning, and accountability. This is a proactive departure from the culture, ethics, practices, and theoretical foundations that we have inherited in the archival profession” ([Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies](#)).

For more information please visit: <https://califa.org/BRE>



About Califa: Califa Group is a nonprofit library membership consortium of more than 200 libraries and is the largest library network in California. Its mission is to provide cost effective delivery of services, programs, and products through a membership network of California libraries. Founded in 2004, Califa brokers and facilitates the procurement of library products; works closely with the California State Library in administering a number of statewide projects supported by federal Library Services and Technology Act funds, such as the enki Library ebook platform; offers Continuing Education training through the Infopeople™ project, and manages master contracts and pricing agreements with publishers and vendors. With years of experience and a network of professional contacts, Califa has demonstrated capacity and experience in grant program design, delivery, and management. Califa is committed to unleashing the impact of libraries.



About Institute of Museum and Library Services: The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. Our vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities. To learn more, visit www.ims.gov and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).