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**Book Review**

## **Review of *Using Open Education Resources to Promote Social Justice***

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### **ABSTRACT**

A review of the book Ivory, CJ, and Pashia, Angela (Eds.). *Using Open Educational Resources to Promote Social Justice*. Association of College and Research Libraries.

### **KEYWORDS**

Open Educational Resources, OERs, social justice, higher education, textbooks, critical race theory

### **SUGGESTED CITATION**

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*Using Open Educational Resources to Promote Social Justice* developed out of an invitation that editors CJ Ivory and Angela Pashia received to write a book chapter about their research on social justice and Open Educational Resources (OER). Their intention was that the chapter would discuss not only the cost saving aspect of using OER, but also introduce the idea of incorporating critical race theory (CRT) into the curriculum. When the book's publisher would not allow them to retain the copyright, they turned the idea of a book chapter into this open-source book. They emphasize that "OER implementation [that focuses] on increasing access without careful consideration of social justice implications will only perpetuate system inequities" (p. x). They identify these systemic inequities as a lack of diversity among librarians, collection practices and policies that do not adequately include diverse perspectives, and limitations to whose voices are represented in scholarly resources.

The book examines how we move beyond pursuing OER purely for its cost-saving value and towards embracing it as an opportunity for the development of diverse materials that are inclusive of more perspectives, experiences, and ideas. By discussing theory, practice, experiences outside the United States, and the impact of institutional support on OER initiatives, along with other aspects of OER, this book provides a panoramic view of OER and the possibilities adoption of OER present. In the introduction, the editors set the stage by elaborating on how the Black Lives Matter movement helped bring the structures of whiteness in academia and the systems of scholarly communication to the forefront of the conversation. The connecting theme that runs throughout the book is the inclusion of social justice within OER efforts.

CJ Ivory, an associate professor and librarian at the University of West Georgia, teaches information literacy and research with a focus on social justice. She advocates for open education and supports faculty in the implementation of open textbook alternatives. Angela Pashia, an academic librarian who focuses on teaching critical information literacy, mentoring colleagues, working against structural oppression in libraries and growing as a collaborative leader, is the head of the learning and research support department at Ingram Library at the University of West Georgia.

The sixteen chapters of this book are organized into five thematic sections: Theory and Problematizing, Open Praxis, Decolonizing Learning in the Global South, Scaling Up with Institutional Policies, and Building and Decolonizing OER Platforms. In these tumultuous times of backlash for critical race theory (CRT), the pervasiveness of white institutional presence (WIP) and the police brutality videos that led to a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, this book emerges as a means to bring about meaningful change in higher education. The authors and editors advocate the use of the flexibility afforded by OER to bring forth the topics we need to be discussing and researching today. Section 1 provides a theoretical foundation and an analysis of where OER stands at this time. Topics include how the westernized bias of OER succeeds or fails at addressing equity, diversity and inclusion (p. 5)

while dismissing oral histories, and zines and student work as legitimate sources of content. The authors demonstrate that OER could be the tool we use to give voice to all marginalized groups. In Section 2, theory is put into practice. Some of the topics addressed include moderator training, planning for discomfort and incivility, culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy, and critical race theory and social work principles. Chapter 4 describes an open course that addresses police brutality, while the subsequent chapters address the impact of OER on Pre-K to 12 education, how OER can make social work education more equitable, and how culturally responsive pedagogy should spearhead the development of information literacy courses. The focus of Section 3 is the use of OER to address social justice in the curriculum in sub-Saharan Africa, especially South Africa. Section 4 examines the impact of institutional support (particularly faculty support) on the development of OER. Specifically, Section 4 addresses barriers to engaging a wide range of faculty, approaches to embedding OER development into the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) plan and a focus on training. Section 5 describes cases that are more specialized, including a discussion about decolonizing Wikipedia, including in OER materials recordings of music whose sheet music is in the public domain but no open access recordings of the music exist, supporting the teaching of music theory, and building a collection of materials to teach Caribbean studies.

The strengths of this book are its organization and completeness. The book begins with theory, and then moves into practice and social justice application and institutional support; it encompasses the gamut of information the reader could be seeking and is useful for OER newcomers and experts alike. Ending with very specialized cases, like music theory, opens the door for further, more detailed engagement.

The only chapters included that focus on a country outside of the United States are the two on South Africa and the one on several sub-Saharan countries. Including a perspective from outside the United States is invaluable, but not having any examples from Latin America or even Europe is a shortcoming and limits the book's usefulness regarding non-United States examples and perspectives.

This book covers a wide range of topics and is organized into sections that build on one another. First, the theory of OER is established, which flows into the practice. That OER provides cost savings is well established. Greater and strategic development and adoption of OER needs to move forward. *Using Open Educational Resources to Promote Social Justice* shows us where we go from here to develop the diversity, equity and inclusion aspects that can come from the use of OER. With the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement and the villainizing of critical race theory, as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, this book is showing us we have an opportunity to maximize the benefits of creating and adopting OER if we intentionally choose to focus on social justice in the development of its use.