

PUBLIC STATEMENT

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STLS Denounces Acts of Violence and Hate in Washington, D.C.

The acts of violence and hate that took place in our nation’s capital this week are beyond tragic. They serve as a reminder that our democracy is fragile, imperfect, and should never be taken for granted. We take comfort in knowing good will always overcome evil, and Americans will find a way to restore peace and prosperity.

The Southern Tier Library System denounces these acts of violence and hate. It is clear the January 6, 2021 riots stemmed from false information and hateful conduct, two issues public libraries seek to overcome, and both of which threaten to destroy our democratic way of life.

America’s public libraries have served as pillars of democracy for more than 150 years. They provide access to life-changing information, resources, and security for all community members. They are the people’s university, empowering all individuals who live within this great nation to seek opportunity, and be given a voice.

Recent studies through the Pew Research Center indicate more than 80% of Americans say that public libraries help them find reliable, trustworthy information. Moreover, ongoing academic research highlights that public libraries serve as non-judgmental, free, community-centered places available to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, background, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ability, or socioeconomic status.

It is our hope that community members of the Finger Lakes, Southern Tier, and Western New York will continue to rely on their local libraries for information, resources, and security for the purpose of lifelong learning, civic participation, and advocating for those who have been discriminated against. Together we can strengthen our community and uphold American values.

Wishing safety, wellness, and peace to all Southern Tier community members.

Sincerely,

Brian M. Hildreth, Executive Director
Southern Tier Library System

Resources:

Chancellor, R. L. (2017). *Libraries as Pivotal Community Spaces in Times of Crisis*. *Urban Library Journal*, 23 (1).

Geiger, A.W. (2017) *Most Americans – especially Millennials – say libraries can help them find reliable, trustworthy information*. Pew Research Center, online