Discoverable at What Cost?: Exploring Issues Related to Archival Description of Mixed Race People

MALLORY FURNIER

Abstract
Many archives contain materials that document the lived experiences of mixed race people, but are current descriptive practices adequately describing mixed race individuals to enable discovery? Over the past decade, archivists have initiated a multitude of reparative description initiatives across the United States. As our profession spends more time reflecting upon past and future ways of describing specific communities, scholarship in our field has not fully addressed representations of mixed race people. Do mixed race experiences get left to the researcher to "discover"? Is there a way to better surface these materials without also using a vocabulary that further validates problematic race and ethnicity terminology that uphold structures of white supremacy? Critical Mixed Race Studies (CMRS) is an emerging interdisciplinary field of scholarship focused on mixed race experiences and multiraciality using critical paradigms. This presentation will situate theory from the CMRS field in conversation with the archival field, and explore ways in which CMRS theory may inform archival praxis related to the description and discovery of mixed race people represented in archival collections.

About the author
Mallory Furnier is the Special Collections & Archives Librarian at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). She is a mixed race person brought into being through her ancestors' engagement with 20th century American empire building. Mallory holds an MLIS from San Jose State University, an MA in History with a focus in Archival Administration from CSUN, and a BA in History from University of California, Santa Barbara. She previously worked as a processing Archivist at CSUN and as Special Projects Archivist at the Autry Museum of the American West. She recently rotated off the Society of California Archivists' Board as Director at Large, and has served in a number of leadership roles with Los Angeles as Subject.