

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## **NEW COLLECTION OF LIBRARY BOOKS SUPPORTS EQUITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PEACE**

### **Students from St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute Fundraise to Support the Efforts**

Promoting a culture of understanding, equity, peace and kindness is the idea behind a new collection of books available at the downtown Buffalo Central Library, the Frank E. Merriweather, Jr. Branch Library and the Butler Library at the State University of New York College at Buffalo.

Today officials from Project Flight, Inc., the Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries, as well as students from St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, Congressman Brian Higgins, Deputy Erie County Executive Lisa Chimera, Erie County Legislator Howard Johnson and representatives from the Butler Library unveiled the new ***Literacy Library Collection for Equity, Social Justice & Peace*** at the Merriweather Branch Library on the East Side of Buffalo.

Project Flight co-founders, directors and Buffalo State Professors Dr. Geraldine Bard and Dr. Elizabeth Cappella created and selected the 111 books as a way to highlight the simple power of supporting equity, social justice and peace to help others thrive. St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute raised funds for the books placed at the Merriweather Library and Project Flight funded the collections at the Central and Butler Libraries.

"We were devastated by the violence that occurred on May 14 right down the street from the Merriweather Library on Jefferson Avenue here in Buffalo," said Dr. Cappella and Dr. Bard.

"These books help develop empathy and build shared background knowledge that highlights the simple power of kind deeds and advocacy that help others thrive. Learning is also an effective violence prevention strategy – a proactive effort designed to stop violence and abuse from happening in the first place by interrupting the cultural constructs that support it. We hope these books will be helpful for readers of all ages and backgrounds to develop the knowledge, values and skills beneficial to understanding, building and sustaining peace in our communities," stated Dr. Cappella and Dr. Bard.

"Libraries have always been at the forefront of advancing the ideals of social justice," said Library Director John Spears. "Collections are diverse and inclusive. Buildings and employees are welcome and we strive to represent the full spectrum of human experiences in all that we do."

Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries are grateful to house for the community this collection which supports the principles of creating a non-violent world."

Student leaders from the Equity & Justice Club at St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute participated in the announcement. "We raised funds for this initiative by holding a schoolwide dress down event," said Club Co-president Dion Anderson, class of 2023. "In the days leading up to the dress down day, information about Project Flight and the **Literacy Library Collection for Equity, Social Justice & Peace** was shared with all students. \$1975 was raised to fund the Literacy Library for this Branch! It is our hope that this collection of books will be a salient reminder to the Jefferson Avenue community that they are not forgotten."

Congressman Brian Higgins stated, "My friend, the late-Congressman John Lewis said, 'Freedom is not a state; it is an act...and each generation must do its part to create an even more fair, more just society.' We applaud Project Flight, St. Joe's, and Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries for taking this action that advances social education through books and fosters a community that embraces non-violence, inclusiveness, and compassion."

Also attending the program from St. Joe's Equity & Justice Club were Vice President Benjamin Spillman, class of 2025; Secretary Breon Campbell, class of 2025; Atem Kat, class of 2024; and Hlakee Day, class of 2025. Annie Golden, the school's Equity & Justice Club moderator, and Principal James Spillman also attended.

The broad selection of books in the **Literacy Library Collection for Equity, Social Justice & Peace** can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/PeaceLibrary>. Books are available to borrow with a Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Card and can be transferred from one library to another at no charge. Free library cards are available to those who live, work or go to school in Erie County. For details call 716-858-8900 or visit [www.BuffaloLib.org](http://www.BuffaloLib.org).

#### **About:**

**Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System** is comprised of 37 libraries, the *Library on Wheels* and *Library2GO* mobile units. There are over 410,000 library cardholders and more than 3.2 million materials available for borrowing, including traditional books, eBooks, magazines, DVDs, Chromebooks, hotspots, youth sports equipment and more. Onsite and virtual free public programs celebrate El día de los niños/El día de los libros (Children's Day/Book Day), Black History Month, Women's History Month and Disability Awareness. Health and wellness, business, job, financial planning, technology, genealogy, children's literacy, teen, family programs and more are offered year-round. [www.Buffalolib.org](http://www.Buffalolib.org)

**Project Flight**, founded in 1994, is a not-for-profit organization devoted to promoting literacy in children and caregivers, through school and family literacy initiatives. It works collaboratively with practitioners, schools, libraries, community organizations and businesses locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally to achieve its objectives. Project Flight's mission is to provide every child with a book of their own and to read it at grade level; that children will live in a literate environment whether at home or at school and that literacy is an entree out of poverty. <http://www.projectflight.org/>

**St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute** is a Lasallian college-preparatory school for young men, dedicated to not only responding to the needs of each student, but touching hearts and minds as we prepare our young men for lives of accomplishment and service. <https://www.sjci.com/>

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