Who We Are: Spotlighting Diversity in Government Documents

L.E. Eames |@liblarrian | Digital version: bit.ly/EamesALAO19

Project originally created for the University of Washington Libraries, Government Publications, Maps, Microforms and Newspapers Unit

Project Background
In the process of planning an update to another guide, I identified an opportunity to further develop diversity and inclusion in the Government Publications guides. To that end, inspired by a National Parks Service project and using our “Sources by Subject” guides as a launch pad, I created the “Who We Are” guides.

Project Methodology
Organizing principle: “What stories are told here?” A narrative orientation provided a framework for exploring how gov docs represented identity groups speaking for themselves as well as the government imposing policy on those groups without their input.

Scope: United States borders. The items selected deal with American domestic policy (with some exceptions). I made the call not to do a “Who We Are” page on Indigenous Americans, because a “Sources by Subject” guide already existed.

Product: There are 7 sections: African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Jewish Americans, Latinx Americans, LGBTQ+ Americans, Muslim Americans, and Women. The stories are unique to each group and the guides are unified by shared anatomy, some of which is described below.

Project Results
The goal of the project was to daylight alternative ways of using government documents as primary sources, and the final guides are at: guides.lib.uw.edu/research/whoweare. They are designed to grow and expand as new documents are created and new stories are told in policy and in legal precedent.

The Making Of: Transparency
Identity is personal and important. Creating these guides meant making choices about how to represent people, so I made a point to share my process.

Latino, Latin@, Latinx, Latino?
One of the aspects at the intersection of gender and race is pronoun gender. This is a complicated discussion with many different perspectives. A few of them are listed below. We have decided to use Latinx in this guide, taking our cues from the UW Latinx Student Union, but will preserve the usages of the various gender-neutral/gendered language from the resources we quote.

- Hispanic vs. Latino vs. Latino: A Brief History of How These Words Originated
- Latino, Latin@, Latinx
- Latinx vs. Latino: Which Word Best Serves Spanish Speaker’s Pronoun Preference?
- The case against ‘Latina’

The Making Of: Key Images
To give each guide a visual identity, I chose a celebratory image to represent each group in the guides.

The Making Of: Table of Contents
These allow for quick access to individual stories by using each story’s title as an anchor. This one is from the Asian American and Pacific Islander guide.

Religious Attire & The Law
- Leslie Hobbs v. Miami-Dade County Correctional Facility: In early 2017 a case found Florida’s ban of religious attire lawful. It said it was justified by a “substantial government interest,” but in reality, the ban was a way of avoiding legal scrutiny.
- Quebec, Conseil 40: 85: Perhaps the most controversial part of Bill 21, the ban on public wearing of any religious symbols in the performance of their duties.

The Making Of: International Docs
Sometimes including documents from beyond US Borders enriched the story, as in this example from the Muslim Americans Guide.