
Shiraz Durrani, *Information and Liberation: Writings on the Politics of Information and Librarianship*. Duluth, MN: Library Juice Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-9802004-0-9

This volume is a collection of the writings of Shiraz Durrani, British-Kenyan library science professor and political activist (Durrani is Strategy & Commissioning Officer at the London Borough of Merton). It is much more than that, navigating through almost thirty years of his inspiring articles, interviews and reports.

It impregnates the reader with the desire to 'get out there and do something' for the sake of public libraries and information rights, to become part of what Durrani – a political refugee who writes with an understanding of the issues which has taken a whole life of activism to achieve – calls relevant librarianship.

Written with great passion and moral conviction, as well as originality of mind and years of study and practice-based knowledge, Durrani's third book serves as a tribute to all the library workers in Kenya and Britain, the

activists who have implemented some of the ideas he passionately describes; from taking information to rural areas to improve the living conditions of their residents, to populating public libraries' shelves with books relevant to the communities they serve and in languages they can actually understand – things that sound like common sense but which in fact are still a struggle in many communities.

Although Durrani does not disguise his profound dislike for what he calls Western Imperialism, his arguments do not appear bitter or mind-twisted; his critical views seem to develop from personal experiences and love for his community and the people's movement. This somehow influences the reader, attracting us towards even his most radical ideas.

In some articles Durrani puts ideas into practice and focuses on the lessons learnt. He

also encourages debate by putting libraries and librarians into perspective in a social context – as human rights activists and as contributors to economic development and social change. He talks about ‘information activists’ such as Progressive Librarians in the USA (<http://www.libr.org/plg/index.php>); describes what he calls ‘Black Librarianship’ as a vehicle to combat xenophobia and racism by empowering victims of racism; and mentions others who use information as a tool for liberation, while criticising those ‘divorced from social responsibility’ who perpetuate the status quo through the de-politicisation of information.

In some parts inspiring and in others most

definitely thought-provoking, this book also talks about the future. Durrani’s latest project, the Quality Leaders Project (<http://www.seapn.org.uk/qlp>), explores new territory and could be the model for initiatives to come aimed to attract a diverse workforce into the profession, empower new generations of librarians to continue the work on social exclusion, and shape the future of public libraries, in Britain and elsewhere.

The book itself is well structured, has a good table of contents, a comprehensive index and other book reviews.

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Notes for contributors to *Focus*

Articles for publication in *Focus* are always welcome.

Focus is not peer-reviewed, and articles are primarily intended to keep readers (who are professionals from a variety of different types of library and information services) informed about what is going on in the international library and information world, to introduce new ideas and programmes, report on activities and experiences, etc., rather than be ‘academic treatises’.

Articles are normally between 1,500 and 2,000 words, though can be a little longer if necessary. The inclusion of references and URLs links to further information is valuable, as is a relevant photo or two (640 × 480 at good resolution), if appropriate.

Focus is published in March, July and November and copy deadline is normally the end of January, May and September, respectively.

Please e-mail material for consideration to the editor at <iligfocus@cipilip.org.uk>.

Articles should not have been previously published, or be under consideration elsewhere.