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Book reviews

Grassroots information movements in Kenya and Britain

SHIRAZ Durrani builds a strong case for critical theory's application in librarianship, told through a series of compelling stories about the struggles of community-based information workers housed in a corporate culture in which the norm is to 'commodify everything.' He challenges information workers to fight 'TINA' – the belief that 'There is No Alternative' to capitalist domination. Durrani describes grassroots information movements in Kenya and Britain that fought a wide range of oppressions– including classism, gender inequality, political or post-colonial oppression, factory farms, and racism. These projects, born from the community and rank-and-file library workers, were based on the notion that the library can act as a facilitator of freedom by supplying informational needs and space to support creative cultural acts, such as writing, playwriting, and the arts.

Part 1 focuses on information activism of the December Twelve Movement's (DTM) Library Cell in Kenya, which supplied and distributed banned (Marxist, liberation, and Communist) literature to local leaders in the struggle against post-colonial media control. Members wrote and distributed reports of torture and abuse of resistance fighters to human rights organisations and led the struggle against corporate farming. Part 2



Durrani, Shiraz. *Progressive Librarianship: Perspectives from Kenya and Britain, 1979–2010*. London: Vita Books, 2014. 433 pp. ISBN 978 1 869886 20 2. Available as free download at: <http://bit.ly/1Fv5rLa>

covers how its members were exiled in 1986, landing in London, where the struggle took a different form amidst neoliberal policies leading to job cuts in the public sector. Again, his critique is bolstered by stories of librarians supporting with local activities (such as the Liberation Writers Group), fighting an uphill battle against corporate management models.

Durrani's book is rooted in local stories, but the ideas are global, and ultimately hopeful: it is about creating a better world by challenging oppressive power and social regimes by engaging the public in knowledge, supporting public space, and promoting a culture of sharing and creativity.

Jenny S. Bossaller
University of Missouri