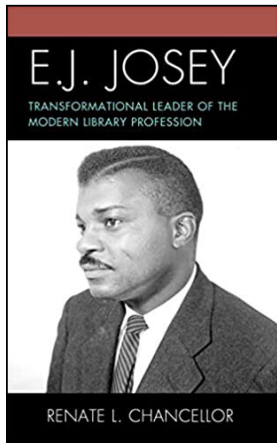


Book Reviews



Renate L. Chancellor. *E.J. Josey: Transformational Leader of the Modern Library Profession.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020. 147p. Paper, \$80.00 (ISBN 978-1538121764).



Catholic University professor Renate L. Chancellor has offered not only an excellent biography of a legendary library activist but also a well-crafted lesson in African-American history with her succinct, easy-to-read *E.J. Josey: Transformational Leader of the Modern Library Profession*. This six-chapter work documents the life and accomplishments of Elonnie Junius “E.J.” Josey, principal founder of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), longtime University of Pittsburgh LIS professor, and second Black president of the American Library Association.

Chapter 1 serves as a setup for the remainder of the book’s contents, providing a concise yet thorough overview of Josey’s character and resolve as a leader. This brief chapter first acquaints the reader with Josey by supplying essential biographical information about his formative years in Portsmouth, Virginia, and how his adolescence bridged him into the civic involvement that he participated in for the rest of his life.

Chancellor then brilliantly explains the concept of “transformative leadership,” originally posed by James Downton and later refined by scholars James MacGregor Burn and Bernard Bass. Chancellor includes an illustration of the Transformational Leadership Model as posed by Bass, which details four qualities of the transformative leader: Idealized Influence, Intellectual Stimulation, Individualized Consideration, and Inspirational Motivation. Chancellor posits Josey’s philosophies and actions within each of these four qualities throughout the remainder of the first chapter, hooking the audience into wanting to learn more about this civil rights leader by demonstrating just how tactical Josey’s methods were.

In the second chapter, entitled “A Dreamer with a Tiny Spark,” Chancellor elaborates on the history of Portsmouth, Virginia. We are treated to a historical narrative that illustrates the ups and downs that Portsmouth experienced from its 1752 incorporation up until roughly the beginnings of World War II. Like many southern cities, Portsmouth experienced turbulent times during Reconstruction. While the city maintained a significant Black population throughout its history, its Black population contended with struggles and second-class citizenship due to segregation and racism well into the 1940s.

It was during these tumultuous times for Portsmouth that Josey would grow up. Born in neighboring Norfolk, Virginia, in 1924, Josey lived in an impoverished area of Portsmouth’s Mount Hermon community. In childhood, Josey was quickly recognized in this community as “studious,” “inquisitive,” and “very smart,” among other accolades. It was through this humble upbringing that he developed his Christian faith through the Black church. The book posits that the Black church “provided the solid foundation for [Josey’s] spiritual and personal development” (20). Josey attended then-segregated Mt. Hermon Elementary School and I.C. Norcom High School before being drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943. Josey’s military service

further shaped his perspectives on leadership and activism, and he went on to enroll in college and then graduate school following his Army service.

“Early Years,” the third chapter in this biographical piece, captures some of Josey’s early career experiences and growth. Beginning his professional librarian career at the Free Library of Philadelphia, Josey quickly experienced discrimination, as he was not able to serve in the roles he was most qualified for and at times was restricted to clerical roles with FLP despite his qualifications. Josey moved on from the Free Library of Philadelphia to spend more than a decade serving as a librarian at two historically Black colleges/universities (HBCUs): Delaware State College and Savannah State College. At these schools, Josey supported radical activism among students even as other faculty members of these schools felt that such activism would undo what little civil rights successes were already realized. He also improved library services and the stature of the library at both institutions before moving on to work for the Division of Library Development at the New York State Library. Josey began to gain a reputation not just as a leader of civil rights initiatives in libraries and on college campuses, but was earning a name for himself in the broader civil rights movement.

“A Leader Rises Up,” the fourth chapter of this work, is where those who really want to learn about the activism of E.J. Josey will get excited as some of Josey’s greatest feats are described. Josey was very active in influencing the American Library Association to not hold conferences in states with segregated library associations, engaged in work to see outdated racial terms removed from the Library of Congress Subject Headings, and—with BCALA—organized protests against the release of ALA’s controversial film, *The Speaker*. Chapter 4 also details Josey’s international work, including his seldom-discussed work with librarians in Kenya. Chancellor includes a discussion of Josey’s work to found BCALA.

Chapter 5 explores Josey’s career as an LIS professor, especially his time with the University of Pittsburgh. The fifth chapter shows us that Josey faced similar challenges as an LIS professor that he encountered as a librarian. Josey chose to engage these challenges with the same fearless determination he had shown as a librarian. Finally, chapter 6 ends the book by discussing Josey’s legacy, including recollections of Josey from others who knew him in life. Following chapter 6 is a convenient chronology of the major events of Josey’s life.

This book does not have any flaws that I could identify. It is an incredible follow-up to Ismail Abdullahi’s 1992 book, *E.J. Josey: An Activist Librarian*. One of the key strengths of this work is that it does not just contain the facts of Josey’s life itself. This work reads like a Black history lesson. Sure, Josey is the centered subject of the work, but there are a lot of historical facts about African-American history included. Much of this information is included to explain how the plight of African-Americans affected Josey and those that he cared about or advocated for. Reading this work will likely also help non-Black readers get an enhanced perspective on how the history of Black people in the United States shapes the plight of Black Americans currently, as well as why community leaders feel such dedication toward helping and giving back.—*Jason Alston, University of Missouri*

Shaun Slifer. *So Much to Be Angry About*. Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2021. 256p. Paper, \$32.99 (ISBN: 978-1-949199-94-9).

Shaun Slifer had never heard of the Appalachian Movement Press (AMP) when he was handed one of its publications while attending a wedding at the Appalachian South Folklife Center (ASFC) in Pipestem, West Virginia, in 2016. Neither had almost anyone else, as its