Racial Equity Story/Case Statement
Team RCPL CARES: Cultivating & Advancing Racial Equity Systemically
February 24, 2020

The RCPL CARES team must build racial equity because the Library recognizes that a need exists in the Redwood City and North Fair Oaks communities, and the Library cares deeply about responding to that need. While the Library is proud of our wonderfully diverse community, we acknowledge that structural and historical inequities had a primary role in creating and maintaining racial inequities and segregation in our community. Some of the policies and practices that have negatively impacted our community in the past include land dispossession, exclusion of property to Native Americans and immigrants, anti-miscegenation laws, and racially restrictive real estate covenants. However, we also acknowledge past efforts that celebrated the success of immigrants and protected targeted communities, most notably Japanese and Japanese American residents, during the WW2 period.

Right now, our community is at a crossroads. Without an increase in racial equity, our wonderfully diverse community is at risk of losing diversity, as residents of color are forced to move away to find affordable places to live. Therefore, we need to work together to maintain our diversity and raise equity in our city. As equity increases, everyone in the community will benefit from the results. Racial equity work is closely aligned with the Library’s mission to cultivate community by welcoming all people to experience the shared joys of literacy and learning. Racial equity also connects directly with the five community aspirations that form the basis for our library service priorities: inclusion, equity, awareness, safety, and education.

Ultimately, as a result of our racial equity work, we envision a community where residents are better off:
- Everyone will be happy, healthy, and successful
- Everyone will achieve their personal goals
- Everyone will feel more connected to their community
- Everyone will be engaged with community issues and have their voices heard
- Everyone will have educational opportunities
- Everyone will be able to afford a home in our community
- Everyone will live in a safe neighborhood
- Everyone will live in an environmentally sustainable community
- Everyone will have affordable transportation to get where they want to go
- Every organization will include equity as an operating principle

We must reflect on the ways that Redwood City Public Library perpetuates institutional racism, and to take responsibility for challenging racial inequity and implementing positive change in our Library and in our community. We plan to start with changes in our own Library practices and policies, including:
- Rewriting policies that currently create inequities that disproportionately burden communities of color and other underserved groups.
• Hiring staff that represent the full diversity of our community
• Expand training to build the racial equity competencies of Library staff, including, but not limited to, knowledge of systemic and institutional racism, cultural humility, racial equity, diversity, inclusion, implicit bias, and white privilege
• Creating and presenting uplifting and educational public programming that will foster awareness of racial inequities
• Collaborating with communities of color to ensure that their needs are heard and met
• Develop a toolkit to ensure greater accountability for outcomes, increased public engagement, and to ensure that racial equity will become an essential commitment in all ongoing library strategic planning, programming and policies.

In order to create these changes, we will bring the following assets to the work:
• The strong reputation of the Library as a welcoming, inclusive, and responsive institution
• The passion and commitment of the RCPL CARES team and other Library staff
• The existing community partnerships we have nurtured
• A spirit of open communication and cultural humility

We invite our Library staff, supporters, customers, program participants, fellow City departments, community residents, and partners from the education, nonprofit, and business communities to join us in working to ensure that our policies and practices live up to our aspirations of being a welcoming, inclusive, equitable community for every resident, regardless of their racial or ethnic backgrounds.