



Redwood City Public Library Racial Equity Story/Case Statement
RCPL CARES: Cultivating & Advancing Racial Equity Systemically
Adopted February 24, 2020, updated March 31, 2023

The RCPL CARES team must build racial equity because the Library recognizes that a need exists in the Redwood City community, 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 – Redwood 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 and advance equity by welcoming all people to experience the shared joys of literacy and learning. Racial equity also connects directly with the four community aspirations that form the basis for our library service priorities: access, inclusion, health, and safety.

Ultimately, as a result of our racial equity work, we envision Redwood City as a community where community members are better off:

- Everyone will be happy, healthy, and successful
- Everyone will achieve their personal goals
- Everyone will feel more connected to their Redwood City 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 started with changes in our own Library practices and policies, including:

- Rewriting policies that created inequities that disproportionately burdened communities of color and other historically marginalized populations
- Expanded 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
- Created and presented uplifting and educational public programming that fosters awareness of racial inequities

The journey toward equity is not a “project” to be completed, but an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. The Library will continue to keep the above efforts moving forward. In addition, we have work that has begun but still requires significant progress, and which we will integrate into the Library Service Priorities going forward.

- Hiring and retaining staff that represent the full diversity of our community
- Collaborating with communities of color to ensure that their needs are heard and met
- Developing 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 Redwood City Public 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 members, 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 city for every community member, regardless of their racial or ethnic backgrounds.