

## MHLS Racial Equity Working Group Meeting Notes | Summer 2020

Prepared by Ric Swierat, MHLS Board President

At the July Board Meeting, we introduced the formation of a taskforce to explore the role of MHLS with the national discussion about racial equity. The taskforce includes Rajene, Stuart, Mark, Debra and Priscilla as well as Rebekkah, Casey and myself.

This taskforce has met five (5) times to address and examine a number of questions and issues related to the current national conversation about racial equity.

First, we developed a guiding statement to express the purpose of this initiative:

***“Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Working Group [EDI is the common phrase used [in the work of ALA](#) and in other industries]***

***To review system policies, procedures and practices in the areas of governance, human resources and system service design and recommend new approaches***

***In a way that promotes equity, diversity and inclusion as a core value of the institution***

***So that MHLS is authentically improving its commitment to racial equity and serving as a model for our member libraries.”***

We then engaged in discussions regarding our personal reflections on the issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. To prepare for these discussions, each of us selected one of the books from the list provided to the board in July.

The taskforce dedicated a great deal of time reflecting on our own personal engagement with the topic of racial equity. It is this self-reflection that brought us to a point where we need to develop clear strategies and plans.

We have agreed to the following:

- Libraries are the primary community institution that provides a non-partisan space for all people to have space for dialogue, discussion and to gain factual information.
- Libraries are working to provide non-bias literacy on a wide range of topics that affect community life.

- We believe that it is important for the System to address issues that impact our entire community in ways that are respectful, factual and informative. The issue of racial equity has become a significant and predominant feature of the news cycle, shared communications through media and community group conversations. We find this an important and relevant topic to inform the work of our board.
- As a consequence of these issues, we are focused on the examination of the role MHLS (staff and board) have in providing space, resources and guidance for conversations and work on the topic of racial equity.

We are now at the point where the taskforce needs to inform the board of our thinking and to gain further insight into what the work at MHLS should look like.

Before we open to the discussion to the full board, I will ask that each of the working group members provide a statement about the journey we have taken so far in this work.