

### Statement

Friends of the Library, Montgomery County (FOLMC) envisions a community where all members have every opportunity to thrive. For nearly 40 years, FOLMC has supported Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) and promoted lifelong learning through supplemental funding, programs, and materials. Our work has provided tangible benefits for the community, but our efforts are in vain if we do not acknowledge and address America's painful legacy of racial oppression and the ever-present impact of sustained systemic racism on equity and justice in our county.

The people of Montgomery County are diverse and vibrant with boundless potential, yet many of our residents are plagued by deep inequities in education, employment, income, housing, and criminal justice. FOLMC is one thread in the large tapestry of organizations working for the betterment of all people, still we recognize the power in making a strong and public commitment to securing racial equity across the county.

### Background

On April 24, 2018, Montgomery County Council adopted Resolution 18-1095, affirming the council's commitment to creating a Racial Equity and Social Justice Policy for Montgomery County. Spearheaded by Council President Nancy Navarro and co-sponsored by County Executive Marc Elrich, this initiative has expanded to include a regional chapter in the Government Alliance on Racial Equity, community conversations, data gathering, and content creation.

In September 2019, the Office of Legislative Oversight released a report of findings from racial equity and social justice conversations. When participants were asked what challenges are most critical to achieving racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County, the top two answers were centered around access to information and access to resources.

FOLMC recognizes the critical role that public libraries play in serving as a central destination for access to information and resources in our communities. We commend the county council on their leadership, and we aim to support their initiatives through our work with MCPL.

### Our Work So Far

FOLMC has long supported the pursuit for racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County. Here is a sampling of the work we engage in:

- Board Composition
  - We actively recruit board members in order to build a Board of Trustees that reflect the diversity and geographic spread of the county.
  - Amongst our staff and board members, we foster a culture of inclusion and mutual support to ensure that every person within FOLMC can thrive.
  - To monitor this, we maintain a matrix tracking key demographics of the board and compare the figures against available data.
- Programs and Marketing
  - We sponsor programs and community conversations intended to increase cross-cultural understanding and civic responsibility.
  - When we assemble panels or speaking engagements, we intentionally seek out community leaders and academics to maintain a diverse balance of representation within our events.
  - Further, we recognize the power in providing free programming for the county and we use this opportunity to spotlight voices from marginalized communities.
  - At all of our sponsored events, we strive to create accessible environments for all County residents and offer accommodations as requested.
  - To monitor this effort, we regularly review all programming and assess efficacy through a racial equity lens.
- Professional Training and Development
  - All staff are encouraged to attend professional development trainings on a regular basis.
  - Most recently, the Executive Director completed a Racial Equity course provided by Montgomery County Arts & Humanities leaders.
- Advocacy
  - We agree with the county government's conclusions that the educational opportunity gap perpetuates inequalities across generations. Through that lens, we partner with MCPL to advocate for budget and policy changes to expand library access and services for critical populations.
  - Recent success includes championing the expansion of MCPL staff to include a new outreach children's librarian as a means to extend the reach and impact of their early literacy programs as well as a funding increase to expand library hours at several key branch locations.
  - We support the proposal for a revised policy around late return fines in order to dismantle this economic barrier to library use.

### Our Commitments

FOLMC affirms our commitment to racial equity and social justice. We commit to the following actions to support and generate meaningful change for marginalized populations.

- Provide annual interactive racial equity training for all employees and board members.
- Expand community partnerships to reach underserved populations and share the resources available through MCPL to support their lifelong learning.
- Develop relationships with organizations that challenge institutional racial inequity and work for change.
- Sponsor inclusive programs and community conversations to increase awareness of patterns of power, racial inequity, and social injustice needs within the County.
- Evaluate demographic data from sponsored programs to inform future decisions on programming; adjust programming as needed to ensure all populations are engaged with our offerings.
- Seek all funding requests to directly address in the proposal of how racial equity will be supported.
- Regularly survey FOLMC staff and board members on our working culture to ensure we internally meet our vision of an equitable and just Montgomery County.
- Continue advocacy work to change governmental policies and expand funding to promote the best interests of all communities for generations to come.
- Examine the practices of FOLMC's chapters to ensure their alignment with our racial equity and social justice goals.
- Publicly acknowledge that Montgomery County, and by default our organizational name, is inextricably tied to General Richard Montgomery, a Continental Army officer and owner of enslaved Africans.

### Glossary

#### Accessibility

An umbrella term for all aspects which influence a person's ability to function within an environment; a measure of how simply a person can participate.

#### Bias

An opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination, often formed without objectivity or accuracy, to evaluate a situation.

#### Cisgender

A person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

#### Classism

The cultural, institutional and individual set of beliefs and practices that assign value to people based on socioeconomic status.

- Ex. Offering a meeting, program, or service that is inaccessible by public transportation as it limits attendance to individuals with private vehicles or disposable income for taxis, rideshares, etc.

#### Cultural Competence

The ability to understand, appreciate and interact with others from different cultures or belief systems than one's own.

- Ex. Avoid scheduling meetings, programs, or events during Shabbat; avoid holding food-centered events during Ramadan, etc.

#### Discrimination

Actions based on conscious or unconscious prejudice that favor one group over others in the allocation of goods, services or opportunities.

#### Diversity

Refers to the various backgrounds and races that comprise a community, nation, or other grouping. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.

- Diversity and "diverse" applies to variation within a group, and therefore does not apply to individuals. You could say, "The crowd at the event was diverse!" but you should not say "The event was diverse" or "He/she is diverse."

#### Equality

Ensures that everyone has the exact same resources regardless of need.

### Equity

Involves distributing resources and opportunities and ensuring access based on the needs of the recipient.

- In determining when to use equality versus equity, consider this: Equity is the goal and equality is a step forward along that path.

### Ethnicity

The social characteristics that people may have in common, such as language, religion, food, history, culture, and ancestral geographical base.

- In determining when to use race or ethnicity, consider the specificity of the information you want to convey.
- Keep in mind that race and ethnicity are not interchangeable. For example, “African American” and “Black” refer to different populations. “African American” is an ethnicity because it indicates a shared history, while “Black” refers to race, as it’s a social construct used to artificially group African Americans, African immigrants, Afrolatinos, etc.

### Historical Trauma

The cumulative psychological harm of an individual or community as a result of experiences such as genocide, slavery, forced relocation, and destruction of cultural practices.

### Inclusion

Involvement and empowerment of all individuals and groups in practices and policies.

### Macroaggression

A large scale form of racial or discriminatory insults based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, economic status etc.

### Microaggression

A subtle, indirect, or unintentional statement, action, or incident against an individual or group on the basis of identity.

- **Agent:** The individual, group, or institution that commits the microaggression
- **Target:** The individual or group to whom the microaggression is directed
- **Bystander:** Individuals who witness the microaggression but are not directly involved

### Non-binary

A person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.

- Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories.
- While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

**Oppression**

The use of unjust and/or cruel treatment or control.

**Prejudice**

A preconceived judgment about a person or group of people, usually indicating negative bias, typically based on unsupported stereotypes or generalizations.

**Privilege**

Unearned access to resources (social power) accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society. It is often invisible to those who have it.

**Race**

A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on observable physical features, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, and/or cultural history.

**Racial Equity**

Changes in historic and present-day structural and policy barriers that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone.

**Racism**

The ability of one group to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society.

**Social Justice**

The perspective that everyone deserves equal rights and opportunities to exercise self-determination and realize their full potential.

**Transgender**

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

- Keep in mind that being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

### Action Plan

Organizational diversity is the collective mix of differences and similarities. It includes individual and organizational values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, and behaviors. Inclusion involves more than numerical representation – it involves empowered participation. Equity is synonymous with fairness and justice.

Friends of the Library, Montgomery County (FOLMC) envisions a community where all members have every opportunity to thrive. For nearly 40 years, FOLMC has supported Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) and promoted lifelong learning through supplemental funding, programs, and materials. FOLMC recognizes the critical role that public libraries play in serving as a central destination for access to information and resources, in our journey towards greater racial equity and social justice, in our communities.

As detailed in our Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Statement (see Associated Document hyperlink), FOLMC is committed to maintaining a culture that embraces individuals with different life experiences and perspectives. This includes developing a shared language, aligning with the strategic plan, and ensuring a broad representation of board members, staff, volunteers, and community partners who promote values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Individuals are welcome to be a part of FOLMC regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or physical ability.

We commit to the following actions to support and generate meaningful change for the Montgomery County community as a whole, and marginalized populations in particular.

### Board of Trustees

#### **Goal 1: Increase representation of individuals from diverse and underrepresented groups on the Board of Trustees (BOT).**

- *Action Item:* Actively recruit board members in order to build a Board of Trustees that reflects the cultural diversity and geographic spread of the county, using demographic information about the current Board members to understand where there may be lack of representation.
  - o *Evaluation/Metrics* Collect and analyze the demographic variables of the Board of Trustees, and members' participation in appointed and elected positions.
- *Action item:* Foster inclusive leadership through shared power, responsibility, and accountability, such that all Board members' perspectives are considered when decision making and not one person or group dominates the decision-making.

#### **Goal 2: Ensure that all BOT members are aware of and support FOLMC's diversity, equity and inclusion principles, programs, and activities.**

- *Action item:* The Board, as a whole, and the Governance committee in particular, will review the RESJ statement at least annually and update as needed.
- *Action item:* Incorporate DEI training, including a discussion of the RESJ statement and definitions, into new BOT orientation, the annual BOT retreat, or other board program.
- *Action item:* Engage in periodic self-evaluation regarding equitable practices.
- *Action item:* Incorporate DEI goals, objectives, and metrics into the strategic plan.

### Staff

#### **Goal: Maintain a core set of values and principles that confirm commitment to a diverse, inclusive, and respectful environment.**

- *Action item:* Incorporate a discussion of the RESJ statement and definitions into new staff orientation.
- *Action item:* Support competency and capacity of staff as related to principles of diversity, equity and inclusion through relevant education, training, resources, and systemic processes such as how we approach problem solving (i.e. Giving everyone a voice and respecting diverse ideas).
- *Action item:* Encourage all staff, including the Executive Director, to attend professional development trainings on a regular basis.

### Community Events & Programming

#### **Goal 1: Ensure that annual award recipients and program participants represent the breadth of community diversity.**



- *Action item:* The appropriate BOT committees will identify a diverse pool of candidates for awards such as the B. Parker Hamilton, Charles W. Gilchrist and Cokie & Steve Roberts awards.
- *Action item:* Continue to collaborate with the Montgomery County Public Schools and the Montgomery County Public Libraries on the *Mosaic Contest* which celebrates diversity through creative writing of middle school students.

### **Goal 2: Maintain a core set of values and principles that confirm commitment to a diverse, inclusive, and respectful environment for FOLMC volunteers.**

- *Action item:* Provide FOLMC volunteers opportunities for education and training on DEI principles and encourage volunteers to pursue such opportunities.
- *Action item:* Recruit and invite diverse members of the communities across the county to volunteer with FOLMC, in support of advocacy, programming, and local libraries.

### **Goal 3: Foster an inclusive environment through engagement of diverse individuals, groups, and organizations.**

- *Action item:* Identify and partner with organizations and individuals from diverse groups to maintain a diverse balance of representation within our events and spotlight voices from marginalized communities.
- *Action item:* Actively solicit and highlight profiles and testimonials of underrepresented groups for library advocacy and program planning.
- *Action item:* Develop messages in support of diversity, equity and inclusion for prospective and new FOLMC members and volunteers.
- *Action item:* Keep public, partners, staff, and volunteers informed on an ongoing basis of DEI efforts through newsletters, promotional messaging, and programming.

### Sources

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- Center for the Study of Racism, Social Justice & Health. Glossary.
- Center for the Study of Social Policy. Key Equity Terms and Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding.
- Human Rights Campaign. Glossary of Terms.
- International City/County Management Association. Glossary of Terms: Race, Equity and Social Justice.
- The Vermillion. Macroaggressions vs. microaggression. What's the difference.

### Revision History