**TO:** PLA Board of Directors

**RE:** Task Force on EDISJ

**DATE:** October 9, 2020

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**

Action Requested

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:**

Leighann Wood on behalf of Lois Langer Thompson and Christina Fuller-Gregory

**DRAFTS OF MOTIONS:**

1. By resolution of the PLA Board of Directors, the PLA Task Force on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice (EDISJ) is hereby dissolved and replaced with the Committee on EDISJ.
2. The charge, membership, and terms of the current Task Force be transitioned without change to the new Committee.

**BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

Based on the semi-annual report to the Board in September of 2020, the evolving nature of the work advised by the Task Force, and the revised Charge and Scope of Work, the Task Force Co-chairs stated:

*“We believe that we have moved beyond the Task Force designation and should become a committee. Task Force work is often targeted, short term and focused on one specific issue. We recognize that our work is long-term, frequently evolving, and requires consistent, on-going effort and attention. To that end, we are asking to become the PLA* ***EDISJ Committee****.”*

The Task Force was formed in 2017, approved per PLA bylaws for 2 years. The Task Force was extended in 2019 and will sunset in 2021. The work of the Task Force has grown steadily since its formation. Initial efforts focused on orienting Task Force members themselves and doing strategic planning. The Task Force expanded activity through development of educational programming including the *Equity Starts with Us* regional trainings; creating resources for the field through a periodic e-newsletter and a regular column in Public Libraries magazine; and collaboration with other groups, including the joint framework project with other ALA units (ACRL and ODLOS) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). Most recently, the growing racial unrest in 2020 moved the Task Force to issue a call to action to the field and hold a series of themed Twitter chats and ongoing meaningful conversations with the field. The call to action was adopted by the PLA Board. Despite turnover in Task Force membership and the inability of some Task Force members to contribute substantially due to COVID-19’s impact on their libraries and families, they have remained very busy and have ideas for activity beyond what they are able to accomplish.

**CHARGE**

The Task Force’s charge was updated in summer 2020 and is included below.

*Because we believe that #LibrariesTransform, we also commit to honest reflection and structural change. We acknowledge that libraries have been — and still are — complicit in systems that oppress, exclude, and harm Black people, indigenous people, and people of color (BIPOC). The library profession remains* [*overwhelmingly white*](https://datausa.io/profile/soc/254021#demographics)*, despite decades of emphasis on diversity and inclusion. We see incredible* [*examples of self-determination and resilience*](https://placesjournal.org/article/fugitive-libraries/?cn-reloaded=1) *by BIPOC librarians and educators, yet the profession has largely failed to improve conditions and ensure pathways for advancement among library workers of color. We commit to dismantling white supremacy in libraries and librarianship. We recognize the urgency of this collective work, and commit to hold ourselves, our colleagues, and our institutions accountable when we fall short.*

**ONGOING WORK**

The Task Force intends to continue to write for the PLA journal and consider how to continue to offer educational events for public library staff, in person or virtually as demanded by the COVID-19 situation. As part of its summer 2020 call to action, the Task Force also committed itself to working in the following areas.

* **Convene meaningful conversations about EDISJ in public libraries.**
* **Identify the action step(s)** that we are collectively best positioned to address during our next year of work and develop concrete recommendations for PLA to advance racial equity and organizational change in libraries;
* **Evaluate the structure of the Task Force** with the aim of creating a more diverse and representative entity with the capacity to move this transformative work forward; and
* **Embrace discomfort** as we navigate challenging and emotional subjects. To uproot racism and white supremacy within ourselves and our institutions will require immense courage, compassion, and the honest desire for accountability.

Per PLA bylaws, Task Forces are intended to “perform limited specific functions” and to be disbanded “when the task is completed.” The challenges of creating structural change to address inequity, dismantle white supremacy, empower BIPOC library practitioners, and create systems that center equity and inclusion in libraries and librarianship are long term challenges, mandating that the Task Force continue beyond 2021, which is best accomplished through its transition to a standing committee.

**COMPOSITION AND SUPPORT**

The Task Force is comprised of up to twenty (20) members, led by two (2) co-chairs. Two staff provide support to the Task Force among their many other member groups and initiatives. The Task Force has discussed the need for additional member volunteers to conduct their work, which suggests creating new positions for appointment; ensuring a more diverse and representative entity and potentially requiring that members be BIPOC appointees; and requesting a higher level of dedicated staffing support from PLA. Specific recommendations to the PLA Board of Directors are not ready at this time, but these issues will continue to be discussed.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD ACTION**

The Task Force requests that it be moved, seconded and approved that:

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