

ALA Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (TF-EDI)
Report to the ALA Council and Executive Board
ALA Midwinter Meeting, January – February 2015
Chicago, IL

Background Information

Embracing and celebrating diversity, and creating a more inclusive profession have been long-standing goals of the American Library Association. However, the impetus for creating the Task Force was the grave concern expressed by some members about the Association hosting its 2016 Annual Conference in Orlando, FL in light of Florida's *application* of the "Stand Your Ground" laws as it relates to the Trayvon Martin case [Appendix I – [the BCALA statement](#)].

Following the release of the statement from the BCALA, ALA president Barbara Stripling engaged by e-mail and phone with leaders from ALA and the Ethnic Caucuses who subsequently issued a joint statement [Appendix II – [the Joint Statement](#)]. The ALA's Executive Committee and BCALA's Executive Board decided that the best way to respond to the Florida situation is by turning it into an opportunity to educate, build awareness, and advocate for equitable treatment, inclusion, and respect for diversity. Among the agreed-upon items was the creation of a special task force.

The Task Force

The ALA Task Force on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion was created in the spring 2014 by then ALA President, Barbara Stripling. The charge of the Task Force reads as follows:

The Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will develop a plan and strategic actions to build more equity, diversity, and inclusion among our members, the field of librarianship, and our communities. The most important Task Force outcome is the public and honest conversation that will be generated by its plan and recommended actions. The final Task Force report will include recommendations for ensuring that a continuing focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion is embedded throughout the ALA organization.

The membership of the Task Force will be inclusive of the following perspectives:

- ALA Executive Board
- ALA Council
- AILA
- APALA
- BCALA
- CALA

- REFORMA
- ASCLA and Accessibility Assembly
- ALA Committee on Diversity and Diversity Council
- ALA Chapter Relations Committee
- GLBTRT
- SRRT

The roster of members, including our staff liaisons, is available at <http://www.ala.org/groups/task-force-equity-diversity-and-inclusion>.

Many members of the Task Force met informally at the 2014 ALA Annual Conference in Las Vegas. Formal meetings of the TF, however, did not begin until August, after which time the TF members have met bi-weekly, via teleconference.

Actions and Accomplishments

Before moving forward with programs, actions, or recommendations, the TF members believed it was important to first *define* what we mean by equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to solicit feedback on those definitions from the library community. The TF developed the definitions and circulated them on ALA Connect and via various listservs during September and October 2014 for comment. We incorporated the comments we received in the final version of the definitions, attached as Appendix III.

To further address continued concern about the ALA Conference in Orlando in 2016, the TF also issued a separate statement noting why the conference will be held in Orlando. The TF members also direct the library community's attention to the ALA-produced web page on how conference locations are selected (<http://www.ala.org/offices/conference/confservices/cccf/faq>). Although some information on that site is dated, much of the information about conference site selection remains relevant and accurate.

Because the work of the TF got underway in the fall 2014, we are still in the information-gathering phase. To aid with information gathering, we will launch a series of short ALA member surveys to understand the culture of the association, the profession, and our communities with respect to equity, diversity and inclusion. The first survey will be conducted in January/February 2015 [Appendix IV]. Subsequent surveys will launch at or around the time of future ALA conferences.

At the 2015 Midwinter Meeting in Chicago, the Task Force will host a facilitated dialogue with conference attendees. This conversation, which will use the Harwood Approach [<http://www.theharwoodinstitute.org/about/>] and will be facilitated by ALA past president Nancy Kranich, continues the recent "kitchen table conversations" that have taken place at recent conferences to gather information about members' perception of a desired future within ALA and the profession.

The TF has also begun planning for a program to be held at the 2015 ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco. We will share additional information about this program when it is available.

Future Plans

Although TF members represent a wide variety of areas within the Association and the profession, we know that many divisions, round tables, caucuses and others are engaged in work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. Following the Midwinter meeting, we intend to reach out to all groups interested in this topic so that we can coordinate a cohesive plan for our efforts within the Association and our affiliated organizations.

As recent events in Ferguson, Cleveland, and New York have shown, our country and our communities continue to struggle with divisions based on race and other differences. For libraries to show our continuing relevance to our communities, the task force believes we must demonstrate how libraries must be an essential part of helping our communities work towards wholeness and healing. Therefore, we also intend to plan activities that will engage the communities in the cities in which ALA conferences are held not only to highlight that we, as librarians, are a part of the communities we serve, but that we are – and can be – change agents working for social justice.

We welcome your continued feedback on the work of the task force and look forward to your participation in our activities.

Respectfully submitted,

Trevor A. Dawes (Co-Chair)

Martin L. Garnar (Co-Chair, and GLBTRT Liaison)

Melissa I. Cardenas - Dow (APALA Representative)

Danielle Geller (AILA Representative)

Andrew P. Jackson (BCALA Representative)

Majed J. Khader (Chapter Relations Committee Representative)

Max Macias (REFORMA Representative)

Mike L. Marlin (ASCLA Accessibility Assembly Representative)

Louis Munoz, Jr (Diversity Committee Representative)

LaJuan Pringle (SRRT Representative)

Mark A. Puente (Member-at-Large)

Lian Ruan (CALA Representative)

Teri Sierra (Membership Meetings Committee Representative)

Nancy J. Snyder (Member-at-Large)

Barbara K. Stripling (Executive Board Liaison)

Appendix I

[HOME](#) [ABOUT US](#) [GET INVOLVED](#) [RESOURCES](#) [AWARDS](#) [NEWS & EVENTS](#)

17 Mar

Black Caucus of ALA Denounces ALA's Decision to Hold 2016 Annual Conference in Orlando, Fla

Posted by [Super User](#)

0 Comments

The Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), condemns the American Library Association's (ALA) decision to continue with plans to hold the ALA 2016 annual conference in Orlando, Fla. in the wake of the George Zimmerman verdict and that state's refusal to revise or repeal "Stand Your Ground" laws, which were included in jury instructions in Zimmerman's trial for second degree murder for fatally shooting unarmed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Fla. in 2012.

BCALA believes that "Stand Your Ground" laws enable a "shoot first, ask questions later" mentality against African-American men perceived without merit to be threats or assumed without evidence to be engaged in criminal behavior. Kenneth Nunn, a professor at the University of Florida's Levin College of Law, wrote in the *New York Times* in 2012 that, "African-Americans, black males in particular, have been constructed in popular culture as violence-prone and dangerous," and that this construct produces a fear in Americans that deadly force against such people is consequently reasonable in general.

BCALA therefore contends that Florida law should require more than perception of a threat before use of deadly force is deemed justifiable. BCALA predicts "Stand Your Ground" will be used in future killings where racial bias played a factor in the actions of the accused. Months after the Zimmerman verdict, another travesty of justice occurred when a Florida jury failed to convict Michael Dunn of murder for shooting into a car and killing 17-year-old Jordan Davis. Dunn said he fired because he felt threatened by Davis and other Black teens in a car Davis was riding in, but the unarmed Davis had not exited his vehicle or physically confronted Dunn. Dunn was convicted only for attempted murder after he continued firing at the vehicle as the teenagers attempted to flee.

BCALA believes that ALA, which claims various commitments to diversity and tolerance, should have begun plans to find a new venue for ALA 2016 following the July 2013 acquittal of George Zimmerman. BCALA must question ALA's true commitment to diversity and racial tolerance when ALA, North America's largest and strongest library association, still plans to hold its largest and most financially lucrative function in a state that has become Ground Zero in initiating weapons laws, as well as voting policies, that potentially put the rights and safety of African-Americans at risk. ALA annual conferences are generally well-documented and publicized, and BCALA fears that librarians, 20,000 strong, conducting business and spending money in Orlando will negate any claim that librarians have to being advocates of equality and social justice.

BCALA, rather, is committed to creating, supporting and cheerleading initiatives that facilitate success in young Black males. The organization is particularly encouraged by President Barack Obama's recent unveiling of the "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, which the president hopes will, "(I)mprove significantly the expected life outcomes for boys and young men of color (including African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans) and their contributions to U.S. prosperity." An initiative to support Black male success coming from national leadership will hopefully catch on with those who otherwise wouldn't care or would see these youths as a threat.

BCALA was formally established in 1970 and remains the forefront networking and professional development vehicle for African-American librarians. An independent non-profit organization, BCALA sponsors scholarships and travel assistance, produces a quarterly publication and holds a biennial conference. BCALA serves in an advisory role to the American Library Association and collaborates with other ethnic affiliate organizations on diversity initiatives in libraries. More information about BCALA is available at www.bcala.org.

DETAILS



Joint statement from the presidents of AILA, APALA, BCALA, CALA, REFORMA and ALA

For Immediate Release
Fri, 03/28/2014



Contact:

Macey Morales
Media Relations Manager
American Library Association
312-280-4393
mmorales@ala.org

CHICAGO — The values of diversity, equity, and inclusion form the foundation of the library profession and our professional associations. Those values have been challenged by the discriminatory enforcement of the “Stand Your Ground” law in Florida and the fact that ALA’s 2016 Annual Conference is scheduled for Orlando. The Executive Committee members of ALA and the BCALA Executive Board have actively engaged in conversation to determine the best solution to this challenging dilemma. That conversation has been extended to the Executive Boards of AILA, APALA, CALA, and REFORMA with a decision to issue a joint statement of commitment and action.

In response to BCALA’s concern regarding holding the ALA Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, in 2016, the ALA Executive Board thoroughly explored the options for moving the conference. ALA started by clarifying the facts underlying conference site selection, the implications of trying to move the Orlando conference, and the prevalence of Stand Your Ground laws across the United States. The contracts for Orlando were negotiated originally in 2000; the Stand Your Ground law in Florida became effective on October 1, 2005. Cancelling the hotel and convention center contracts would result in a minimum fine of \$814,000. Conferences as large as ALA must be scheduled for specific sites and contracts signed at least 7–10 years in advance. At this late date, it would be highly unlikely that ALA would be able to find another site with availability during our window of late June/early July 2016.

Most troubling is the growing prevalence of Stand Your Ground laws. Twenty-two states have laws that allow for that self-defense provision to be asserted (as of August 2013). An additional 21 states have enacted laws that allow for self-defense within one's home (called Castle Doctrines). However, each state has implemented and applied the Stand Your Ground laws differently, and it is the interpretation and application of the Stand Your Ground Law in the Zimmerman and Dunn cases, as well as the Marissa Alexander case, that has heightened the urgency for discussion and action.

With that information in hand, our ALA's Executive Committee and BCALA's Executive Board decided that the best way to respond to the Florida situation is by turning it into an opportunity to educate, build awareness, and advocate for equitable treatment, inclusion, and respect for diversity. We have agreed on the following actions:

- Town Hall discussions of racial diversity and inclusion in our profession, association, and communities.
 - Major topic of Membership Meeting at 2014 ALA Annual Conference in Las Vegas.
 - Topic of discussion during Virtual Membership Meeting on June 5, 2014.
- Support for conversations and actions at the state level facilitated by state library associations or other organizations within the states.
- Formation of a Special Presidential Task Force involving members of the ethnic affiliates and ALA to (1) develop programs and other opportunities for members to learn about and engage in the issue, (2) build strong advocacy and awareness while at the Orlando conference, and (3) develop communications directed toward the public. The Task Force will be formed immediately. The goal is to use the Orlando conference platform to provoke a national dialogue.
- Collaboration with local Black and Hispanic/Latino community members and organizations in Orlando to determine the best ways for ALA members to be supportive of them. This will include compilation of a list of African-American and Hispanic/Latino businesses in Orlando for ALA members to patronize.
- Outreach to national organizations with vested interest in the Stand Your Ground laws to build alliances and collaborative efforts in advocacy and public awareness (e.g., NAACP, La Raza, Urban League).

Most important to all the ethnic caucuses and ALA is the public and honest conversation that will be generated by our actions. We are committed to building more diversity and inclusion among our members, the field of librarianship, and our communities. We invite all members of AILA, APALA, BCALA, CALA, REFORMA, and ALA to engage with us in moving toward a more just society.

With respect,

Barbara Stripling
President
ALA
(American Library Association)

Jerome Offord, Jr.
President

BCALA, Inc.
(Black Caucus of the American Library Association)

Heather Devine
President
AILA
(American Indian Library Association)

Eugenia Beh
President
APALA
(Asian Pacific American Librarians Association)

Lisa Zhao
President
CALA
(Chinese American Librarians Association)

Isabel Espinal
President
REFORMA
(The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking)

Filed Under:

PR Category:

[ALA President](#)

[Diversity](#)

[Log in](#) or [register](#) to post comments

[Copyright Statement](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Site Help](#) | [Site Index](#)

© 1996–2014 American Library Association

ALAAmericanLibraryAssociation

50 E Huron St., Chicago IL 60611 | 1.800.545.2433

Preface:

In framing the definitions of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for our work as a task force, wanting to change the world by and beyond the Annual 2016 Conference, and realizing we ***may*** fall short of that goal, we offer the following definitions for consideration. We have decided to maintain a fairly global perspective in these definitions, i.e. not to attempt an exhaustive list of descriptors or qualities of disenfranchised groups comprising ALA membership and by extension our various stakeholders and patron populations. We are striving for social justice for ***All*** - and with these definitions desire to achieve a larger rather than smaller common and inclusive denominator.

Equity

Equity is not the same as formal equality. Formal equality implies sameness. Equity, on the other hand, assumes difference and takes difference into account to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair (or equitable) outcome. Equity recognizes that some groups were (and are) disadvantaged in accessing educational and employment opportunities and are, therefore, underrepresented or marginalized in many organizations and institutions. The effects of that exclusion often linger systemically within organizational policies, practices and procedures. Equity, therefore, means increasing diversity by ameliorating conditions of disadvantaged groups. .

(Adapted from University of British Columbia: <http://diversity.ubc.ca/valuing-difference/equity-and-diversity-%E2%80%93-definitions-and-philosophy/>)

The Task Force believes that everyone deserves equitable rights and opportunities. Our goal is to create a just and equitable Association, profession, and society where everyone has access to social power, resources, and physical and psychological safety.

(Adapted from ALA Office for Diversity “Strategic Planning for Diversity”: <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/workplace/diversityplanning> , and

National Association of Social Workers: http://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/cultural_competence.asp)

Diversity

Diversity can be defined as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. Visible diversity is generally those things we cannot change and are external. However, diversity goes beyond this to what we call ‘invisible’ diversity. Invisible diversity includes those attributes that are not readily seen. So, when

we recognize, value, and embrace diversity, we are recognizing, valuing, and embracing the uniqueness of each individual.

The Task Force has chosen to define “diversity” in all its complexity in order to recognize and honor the uniqueness of each ALA member, all members of our profession, and our very diverse communities. The Task Force also agrees with the National Education Association that, “While diversity itself is not a value-laden term, the way that people react to diversity is driven by values, attitudes, beliefs, and so on. Full acceptance of diversity is a major principle of social justice.”

(Adapted from National Education Association): <http://www.nea.org/tools/diversity-toolkit-introduction.html>

Inclusion

Inclusion means an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization’s success.

(Adapted from Society for Human Resources Management <http://www.shrm.org/diversity> and Hewlett Packard: <http://www8.hp.com/us/en/hp-information/about-hp/diversity/meaning.html>)

The Task Force believes that, to be inclusive, our association, profession, and society must recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every member of the community; involve and empower all members to participate and contribute; promote and sustain a sense of belonging; and value and practice respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of all members.

(Adapted from Ferris State University: <http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/administration/president/DiversityOffice/Definitions.htm>)

Task Force on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: Survey on Definitions and

Welcome to our first survey and thank you for your participation!

ABOUT: This first survey is focused on the definitions released by the Task Force on October 15, 2014 (<http://connect.ala.org/node/229669>). This survey is brief and intended to gather information based on your perceptions of the climate within ALA. All answers are anonymous. They can not and will not be traced to the responder.

Should technical issues arise, please contact the ALA Office for Diversity at diversity@ala.org or 800-545-2433 ext. 5048.

PURPOSE: Before moving forward with programs, actions, or recommendations, the members of the Task Force on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion believe it is important to first define what we mean by equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to solicit feedback on those definitions from the library community. To aid with information gathering, we have launched a series of short ALA member surveys to understand the culture of the association, the profession, and our communities with respect to equity, diversity and inclusion.

Task Force on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: Survey on Definitions and

DEFINITIONS of EQUITY, DIVERSITY, and INCLUSION: (see full version with references at <http://connect.ala.org/node/229669>)

In framing the definitions of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for our work as a Task Force, wanting to change the world by and beyond the Annual 2016 Conference, and realizing we *may* fall short of that goal, we offer the following definitions for consideration. We have decided to maintain a fairly global perspective in these definitions, i.e., not to attempt an exhaustive list of descriptors or qualities of disenfranchised groups comprising ALA membership and by extension our various stakeholders and patron populations. We are striving for social justice for *All* - and with these definitions desire to achieve a larger, rather than smaller, common and inclusive denominator.

Equity

Equity is not the same as formal equality. Formal equality implies sameness. Equity, on the other hand, assumes difference and takes difference into account to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair (or equitable) outcome. Equity recognizes that some groups were (and are) disadvantaged in accessing educational and employment opportunities and are, therefore, underrepresented or marginalized in many organizations and institutions. The effects of that exclusion often linger systemically within organizational policies, practices and procedures. Equity, therefore, means increasing diversity by ameliorating conditions of disadvantaged groups.

The Task Force believes that everyone deserves equitable rights and opportunities. Our goal is to create a just and equitable Association, profession, and society where everyone has access to social power, resources, and physical and psychological safety.

Diversity

Diversity can be defined as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. Visible diversity is generally those things we cannot change and are external. However, diversity goes beyond this to what we call 'invisible' diversity. Invisible diversity includes those attributes that are not readily seen. So, when we recognize, value, and embrace diversity, we are recognizing, valuing, and embracing the uniqueness of each individual.

The Task Force has chosen to define "diversity" in all its complexity in order to recognize and honor the uniqueness of each ALA member, all members of our profession, and our very diverse communities. The Task Force also agrees with the National Education Association that, "While diversity itself is not a value-laden term, the way that people react to diversity is driven by values, attitudes, beliefs, and so on. Full acceptance of diversity is a major principle of social justice."

Inclusion

Inclusion means an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization's success.

The Task Force believes that, to be inclusive, our association, profession, and society must recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every member of the community; involve and empower all members to participate and contribute; promote and sustain a sense of belonging; and value and practice respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of all members.

Task Force on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: Survey on Definitions and

1. Based on the above definitions, do you feel that ALA is an equitable, diverse, or an inclusive organization?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know/Unsure

Please tell us a little bit more about your answer:

2. Based on the above definitions, do ALA events have a welcoming climate?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know/Unsure

Please tell us a little bit more about your answer:

3. Do you consider yourself to belong to a group(s) that has/have experienced some form of marginalization within the association or the profession?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know/Unsure

Please tell us a little bit more about your answer:

Task Force on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: Survey on Definitions and

4. Is there an ALA Round Table, Division, Committee, or Ethnic Caucus to which you belong that serves your interests as a member of a marginalized group?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know/Unsure if a group exists
- I don't consider myself a member of a marginalized group

If yes, please tell us the member groups to which you belong that serve your interests:

5. Do you think ALA endeavors to include your group(s) at ALA meetings, events, conferences, etc.?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know/Unsure

Please tell us a little bit more about your answer:

Demographic Information

6. Are you currently a member of ALA?

- No
- Yes

7. What best describes your current position? (check all that apply)

- Libraries/Archives/Museums professional who does not supervise
- Resident/Intern/Temp
- Director/Dean/Chief Officer/Administrator
- Student
- Retired
- Not Employed in Libraries/Archives/Museums
- Libraries/Archives/Museums professional who manages others
- LIS Educator
- Vendor

Other/Additional Comments:

8. How many years of professional Libraries/Archives/Museums experience (post MLIS or equivalent) do you have?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 year - 5 years
- 6 years - 10 years
- 11 - 20 years
- 21 to 30 years
- Over 30 years

Additional Comments:

Task Force on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: Survey on Definitions and

9. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (Please provide origin, for example, Argentinean, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, and so on.)

10. How would you describe your race? (check all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native (Use the comments field to let us know name of enrolled or principal tribe.)
- Asian Indian
- Black or African American
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Guamanian or Chamorro
- Japanese
- Korean
- Native Hawaiian
- Other Asian (Use the comments field to let us know more info, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.)
- Other Pacific Islander (Use the comments field to let us know more info, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on.)
- Samoan
- Some other race (Use the comments field to let us know more info)
- Vietnamese
- White

Additional Comments:

11. What is your gender identity?

12. Do you identify as LGBT?

- Yes
- No

13. What is your age?

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 or older

14. Do you identify as a person with a disability?

- Yes
- No

15. If yes, please share more (check all that apply)

- Independent Living Disability
- Self-Care Disability
- Ambulatory Disability
- Hearing Disability
- Cognitive Disability
- Visual Disability