



RURAL VERMONT ANTI-RACISM POLICY

Developed in consult with Writing Wrongs, LLC.

Consented to by Rural Vermont Staff & Board 8/4/2021

Policy accountability embedded in by-laws 11/10/2021

I. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish Rural Vermont's long-term commitment to identify and eliminate all forms of racism within the organization*. In adherence with the following policy and subsequent procedures, Rural Vermont commits to hold its staff, board members, and interns accountable through organizational changes that foster diversity, equity, and inclusion through our anti-racism policy while addressing disparities in agriculture. Rural Vermont commits to being an organization which is actively anti-racist - contributing to growing anti-racism and dismantling white supremacy culture - and eradicating the structural racism that continues to disenfranchise Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, in particular farmers, farmworkers, and food system workers.

The goals of this Anti-Racism policy include:

1. Promoting meaningful conversation regarding the history, contribution, and perspectives of diverse ethnic and social groups in agriculture, specifically those traditionally excluded from mainstream practices;
2. Incorporating engagement opportunities and developing Safe and Brave Spaces that enable Rural Vermont and its staff, board members, interns and affiliates to safely and creatively explore questions regarding race, equity, racism and social identity within the agricultural sector and eliminate White Supremacy Culture within the organization;
3. Ensuring Rural Vermont is using its privilege and platform to uplift and advocate for BIPOC-led grassroots organizing, education, direct action, and policy in support of racial justice and equity within the agrarian communities that connect us all.
4. Committing to education and action addressing racial justice, equity, and reparations initiatives within agriculture and policy; and
5. Establishing Rural Vermont as an accomplice to BIPOC-led organizations.

*This policy is supported by Rural Vermont's beliefs outlined in our [Affirmation of Solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives](#).

II. Policy Scope

This policy applies to all programs within Rural Vermont and to Rural Vermont staff, Board members, and interns. *This policy does not apply to Rural Vermont Members unless named otherwise.* Rural Vermont strongly encourages volunteers, members, and collaborators to review and adopt an anti-racism policy that suits their contexts. This policy will serve as a foundation for Rural Vermont's work to organize, educate and advocate to strengthen the agrarian communities that connect us all in their fight for racial justice in collaboration with local and global movements.

III. Policy Statement

It is the policy of Rural Vermont to:

1. Commit to a collective responsibility within the organization to address, eliminate, and prevent actions, decisions, and outcomes that result from, and perpetuate, racism.
2. Affirm the need to provide Brave Spaces for learning and growth for all staff, Board members, and interns and members.
3. Acknowledge that racism is often compounded by other forms of discrimination.
4. Eliminate inequitable practices that create prejudicial or disparate outcomes for staff, board members, and interns based on social or cultural factors, such as race, class, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, or gender identity.¹
5. Respect and celebrate the diversity of varied life experiences of all community members which contribute to the organization's goals of inclusivity, equity, and justice.
6. Incorporate racial, social, and environmental justice throughout the organization's mission through education, advocacy, and organizing.
7. Welcome feedback from within and outside the Rural Vermont community about our progress and process of becoming an anti-racist organization.
8. Prioritize building trust and authentic relationships with BIPOC community members and organizations, with an emphasis on those within agriculture.
9. Proactively recruit BIPOC community members to increase diversity within its staff, Board of Directors, interns, and members.

IV. Definitions

Accomplice: Being an accomplice is the next step beyond allyship. The actions of an accomplice are meant to directly challenge institutionalized racism, colonization, and White supremacy by blocking or impeding racist people, policies, and structures. Accomplices build trust through consent and being accountable - this means not acting in isolation where there is no accountability. Accomplices are not motivated by guilt. Instead, they recognize that all of our freedom is bound together and actively work toward making systems and structures more just.²

Ally: a person who uses their privilege to advocate on behalf of someone else who does not hold that same privilege; who not only notices injustice, but takes action by bringing attention to the injustice.³ Being a true ally is different from performative allyship because the action taken is driven by a genuine desire to help correct harm and not elicited by societal pressure or trends.

Anti-racism: the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures and behaviors that perpetuate systemic racism.⁴

¹ Albemarle County Public Schools, *Anti-Racism Policy*, <https://www.k12albemarle.org/acps/division/anti-racism-policy/Pages/policy.aspx>, (last visited: June 9, 2020)

² <https://www.whiteaccomplices.org>

³ Lona Davenport, *Ally is Not a Noun*, UMKC Division of Diversity and Inclusion, May 15, 2018, <https://info.umkc.edu/diversity/ally-is-not-a-noun/>.

⁴ Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, *Anti-Racism Defined*, <http://www.aclrc.com/antiracism-defined>, Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat (Last visited: June 7, 2020)

Brave Spaces: an environment that allows individuals to engage with one another over controversial issues like race, diversity, and social justice with honesty, sensitivity, respect. The intention is to help reassure those who feel anxious about sharing their thoughts and feelings regarding these sensitive and controversial issues.⁵

Community Listening Session: a public convening to garner information and input from community members

Ethnicity: the social characteristics that people may have in common, such as language, religion, regional background, culture, foods, etc. Ethnicity is revealed by the traditions one follows, a person's native language, and so on.

Individual Racism: pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race. Individual racism includes both privately held beliefs, conscious and unconscious, and external behaviors and actions towards others.

Institutional Racism: occurs within institutions and organizations that adopt and maintain policies, practices, and procedures that often unintentionally produce inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people.

Racist Act: is a conduct, whether verbal or physical, that demonstrates explicit or implicit prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person on the basis of their membership in a particular ethnic or racial group.

Rural Vermont Core Circle: The Rural Vermont Core Circle, referred to in this document as “the Core,” is the appointed body of staff and Board members whose domain is staff management, human resources management, legal matters and compliance and organizational structure oversight, including functionality of all circles.

Rural Vermont Members: Rural Vermont Members, referred to in this document as “members,” are defined as any individual or organization in the Rural Vermont community whose membership status is “current”.

White Privilege: a web of institutional and cultural treatment and exemption from racial and national oppression that results in preferential treatment for white people.⁶

White Supremacy: the political, economic, and cultural systems in which white individuals overwhelmingly control wealth, power, and access—a form of dominance and not just the overt hate of one group towards another.

White Supremacy Culture: an artificial, historically constructed culture which expresses, justifies and binds together the white supremacy system in the United States.⁷

Safe Spaces: a space that doesn't incite judgment based on identity or experience - where the expression of both can exist and be affirmed without fear of repercussion and without the pressure to educate. While learning may occur in these spaces, the ultimate goal is to provide support.⁸

Systemic or Structural Racism: The way in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various ways to reinforce and perpetuate racial inequity. It is not something we as individual members of society actively choose to practice, instead it is a feature of the social, economic, and political

⁵ Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens, *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators*, Chapter 8: “From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces” (2013), <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching-2/wp-content/uploads/sites/732/2016/06/From-Safe-Spaces-to-Brave-Spaces.pdf>.

⁶ Racial Equity Tools, <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/martinas1.pdf>.

⁷ Showing up For Racial Justice (SURJ), What is White Supremacy Culture?, <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture.html>. To learn more about the history of this term's use, see <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-call-it-something-else.html>.

⁸ Break Away, <https://alternativebreaks.org/safe-or-brave-spaces/>.

systems in which we all exist. It refers to the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies that perpetuate a system of inequity that is detrimental to communities of color.

Race: the *artificial* grouping of humans based on shared hereditary traits and physical qualities-- such as skin color, hair texture, facial features and stature-- into categories generally viewed as distinct by society.

Racism: A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on certain characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, or ethnic classification. This includes the marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people.⁹

Restorative Justice: a practice that allows individuals and communities to be more actively engaged in responding to harm. Restorative justice creates opportunities for people who have experienced harm to have a voice in shaping a response, and for people who caused harm to make amends and be accountable for their actions. Restorative responses to harm honor the individuals and communities affected and allow for tailored and empowering responses appropriate to those most affected.¹⁰

⁹ <https://www.adl.org/racism>; Wijeyesighe, C.L., Griffin, P, and Love, B (1997). Racism Curriculum Design, In M. Adams, L.A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.), *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook* (pp.82-109). New York: Routledge, p 88, <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/oacs/wp-content/uploads/sites/140/Key-Terms-Racism.pdf>.

¹⁰ National Center for Restorative Justice, *Why Restorative Justice?*, Vermont Law School, <https://www.vermontlaw.edu/academics/centers-and-programs/national-center-on-restorative-justice>.

ANTI-RACISM POLICY: PROCEDURES

Purpose of Procedures: To eliminate all forms of racism in Rural Vermont. The accompanying procedures should be reviewed on a three-year cycle to evaluate progress and make updates reflective of ongoing learning.

The procedures outlined below will be implemented throughout Rural Vermont:

1. The following public statement will be posted in the Rural Vermont office, at events, and on the Rural Vermont website.

The public statement shall read, and reference Rural Vermont's statement of racial equity: "Rural Vermont rejects all forms of racism. Racism in any form will not be tolerated within this organization. Rural Vermont is committed to increasing cultural respect and celebration of difference by cultivating greater understandings of diversity, inclusion, equity, implicit bias, white privilege, white supremacy, and systemic racism."

This statement shall be made available in languages other than English, if and when needed.

2. Rural Vermont shall proactively seek to recruit, consult with, and advocate on behalf of BIPOC communities with the objective of increasing diversity and inclusion within community-scale agriculture.
3. Rural Vermont shall sustain its commitment to lead staff, Board members, interns, and its broader community in social awareness through distribution of educational materials and additional resources.
 - a. The Rural Vermont e-newsletter and social media platforms will prioritize a diversity of voices, highlighting anti-racism educational materials, BIPOC-led events, racial justice initiatives, and BIPOC farmers.
 - b. The organization shall also develop an online resource directory that the Rural Vermont community can access as tools to further their anti-racism education. These materials can include but are not limited to: relevant articles, documentaries, books, and online training opportunities. Whenever possible, these materials should focus on equitable access of land and resources for BIPOC individuals, and racial, social, and environmental justice efforts in agriculture across the state of Vermont.
4. Rural Vermont shall proactively recruit BIPOC community members to increase diversity within its staff, Board of Directors, interns, and members.
 - a. Rural Vermont will work to build trust and relationships with BIPOC community members and organizations, including by showing up at BIPOC events and amplifying BIPOC voices.
 - b. A policy on Board of Directors, staff and intern recruitment shall be developed within one year of the enactment of this policy in an effort to expand the recruitment reach beyond individuals already known by staff and other board members.
 - c. Offer a limited number of gratuitous memberships for BIPOC community members and organizations.
5. Training:

Rural Vermont shall provide all staff, Board and interns with foundational anti-racism training and resources as part of their organizational onboarding, as well as ongoing learning opportunities:

 - a. All staff, Board, and interns shall be trained in this Anti-racism policy, and provided a Brave Space to learn and answer questions or further discuss this policy.
 - b. All staff, Board, and interns shall be provided resources about Black and Indigenous land loss and discrimination in agriculture, and be encouraged to self-reflect about respective cultural practices.

- c. All staff, Board, and interns shall be educated about how institutional and systemic racism produces inequitable practices and outcomes within agriculture in the state of Vermont and beyond.
 - d. Every year, Rural Vermont shall budget monies towards addressing racism through training and/or activities for staff and Board.
6. Core Accountability
- a. Rural Vermont's Core circle will provide support and accountability to ensure that all Circles (inclusive of all staff and Board members) adhere to the policy, and embed it within their programmatic work.
 - b. All staff shall be responsible for implementation and evaluation of organizational strategies for actualizing the goals and procedures outlined in this policy. Where appropriate, staff shall notify and consult with the Core. Staff are responsible for holding interns accountable to the terms and conditions of this policy.
 - c. As part of the three-year review cycle, Rural Vermont shall conduct outreach to seek input from BIPOC community members in order to assess progress and goals outlined in this policy.
 - i. Rural Vermont shall hold at least one Brave Space for this process.
 - ii. Participants who provide written and verbal input shall be compensated for their input.
7. Rural Vermont Accountability
- a. The processes for staff, Board, and interns, and Rural Vermont's broader community, to report racism and other forms of discrimination begin with the informal written or verbal notification of a Rural Vermont Staff or Board member. Any report of a racist act shall be held confidential.
 - b. When a Rural Vermont Staff or Board member notices or is notified about a racist act committed by Rural Vermont staff, Board member, intern or member, Rural Vermont shall follow the following procedure:
 - i. Notify staff who shall raise the issue at the next staff meeting.
 - ii. Staff shall first attempt to resolve the issue through education and communication in writing or brave spaces. The individual will be provided the opportunity to learn about the impact of their actions on others through training resources or practices such as restorative justice and mediation.
 - iii. Rural Vermont shall develop a safe space for victims to cope with race-related stress and disclose their experiences through a safe, non-punitive platform.
 - iv. If the issue cannot be resolved or the behavior continues, staff shall notify the Core to initiate the process outlined in Section 8.
8. Due Process for Membership Revocation/Position Termination
- All current Rural Vermont memberships/positions may be revoked or terminated at any time for just cause and after due process for violations of this Anti-Racism Policy.
- a. Initiating Action
- There are two different pathways to initiate membership revocation/position termination with the Core:
- i. The Core decides that the issue cannot be resolved or the behavior continues after the member or employee has been held accountable as outlined in Section 7, or;
 - ii. The due process may be initiated upon a written request to The Core, supported by a written specification and documentation of the behavior which constitutes just cause for revocation of employment/membership. The Core shall review and consider the written request to commence revocation of employment membership proceedings and decide whether the process of Section 7 would be feasible to initiate conflict mitigation.

b. Notification of Member

Prior to any vote for revocation of membership/employment, the affected member/employee shall be notified of the nature of the behavior giving rise to the request to commence revocation of membership/employment. The Core shall provide a reasonable opportunity for the affected member/employee to respond, in person or in writing, to show cause why membership should not be revoked.

c. Determination of Just Cause

- i. Rural Vermont is committed to certain values, beliefs, and principles which support its mission and are articulated in this Anti-Racism Policy. Behavior which is not consistent with this policy can adversely affect the integrity of the organization and its affiliates. When such behavior occurs, and it has been agreed upon by The Core, the position and/or membership may be revoked for just cause.
- ii. The consent decision to pursue revocation of membership/employment rests with The Core.
- iii. No decisions shall consider a former member/employee's individual's race, age, gender, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or other legally protected categories in making a determination about membership revocation/ employment termination under this policy.

d. Removal of Name from Mailing Lists

When the revocation of membership is final, the former member/employee shall be flagged in Rural Vermont's database and removed from all mailing lists. Past donations to Rural Vermont are not refundable.