

## Assumptions

1. Growing up in the USA, we have absorbed considerable misinformation about people who are 'different' from us and our families. Because racism, sexism, classism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia (as well as other forms of oppression) are so widespread, we have been imprinted with negative beliefs, prejudices, and stereotypes about groups of people we barely know. This began to happen when we were young before we could recognize misinformation or object. Now that we are older, we have a responsibility to think for ourselves.
2. Dismantling racism, sexism, heterosexism, and unlearning the oppressive attitudes will take a lifetime. Most of us have been struggling with these issues for years and years already. None of us are beginners and none of us have perfect clarity. This work is a journey; there is no endpoint.
3. Racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression have damaged us all. People in the target groups are oppressed and people in the dominant group are hurt. Hurt and oppression are not the same, but we have all been damaged.
4. Individuals and organizations can and do grow and change. Change which happens quickly is usually cosmetic and temporary. Meaningful change comes after resistance, denial and pain have all been worked through.
5. Racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and all the 'isms' are connected. While they are connected, they are not the same and cannot be compared one to the other. We may have more experience with one 'ism' than with others; we may feel that one is more important than others. But, we will not be able to dismantle one without understanding the connection between them.
6. We cannot dismantle racism in a system that exploits people for private profit. If we want to dismantle racism, then we must be about building a movement for social and economic justice.
7. While single individuals can inspire change, working together as an organized whole, in groups, communities, and organizations, makes change happen.
8. How we do our work is as important as the work we do. Social justice organizations which mistreat, exploit, or otherwise oppress people while working towards a justice mission will not be successful in the long run. We must honor our values at every level of the organization.

## Guidelines

### **Keep it here.**

Exercise good judgment and respect if people share things that are obviously not meant to go any further.

Avoid sharing who said what.

### **Show respect.**

Show respect for yourself as well as for others.

Challenge statements and behavior without putting down the person.

### **We don't have to agree.**

When we disagree, challenge the statement or the behavior instead of the person.

Avoid using blame, shame, and guilt on ourselves or others.

### **Step up/step back.**

Fully participate and be sure to give everyone else a chance to talk.

Listen to others and avoid interrupting.

### **Speak for yourself and from your experience.**

Use "I" statements.

### **Take risks and encourage others to take risks too.**

Take advantage of this opportunity to talk to each other.

Feel free to be open and spontaneous with your ideas, even if they seem incomplete or contradictory.

Use this opportunity to test new ideas, however brilliant or wacky they might be.

### **Express feelings – emotions are good.**

### **There are no stupid questions.**

All questions are valid.

Ask questions yourself and support others when they ask.

### **Understand the value of discomfort.**

It is when we are uncomfortable that we have the biggest change to learn something. This is especially true for those of us who are used to being in control.

Those of us with power and privilege tend to have less experience with discomfort, and sometimes feel that being comfortable is our right.

Use this time as an opportunity to see what our discomfort can teach us.

### **Help create a shared experience of learning.**