

## **COMMON GROUND COLLECTIVE: Guiding Principles and Practices**

The society and institutions of the US were built intentionally to benefit the white, male ruling class. They are systematically marginalizing, oppressive and exploitative of indigenous peoples, peoples of color, immigrants, poor people, non-native speakers, women, youth, seniors, workers, LGBTQ students, and differently-abled people.

Our backgrounds have not give many of us the tools to build a just and sustainable society, so we have to recognize, learn from, and work with each other to build these visions.

These principles and practices are meant to give us some common agreements to work together. From these agreements we can build stronger relationships and more an accountable organization rooted in trust and respect.

We support these principles not only in our actions, but in the practices within our own organizations.

### **Principles**

- We recognize our work is to support historically marginalized and neglected communities and to dismantle all forms and systems of domination and oppression within our society and within ourselves
- We believe in being accountable to the communities and people we serve as well as ourselves and embrace the full dignity of all human beings.
- We work for all forms of justice: environmental, social, political, racial, gender, and economic and believe that access, equity and in each of these areas is a basic human right.
- We believe in root changes to our current society based on respect, mutual aid, cooperation inclusiveness through the honoring of differences across cultures
- We believe in participatory, democratic social change. This requires shared leadership and decision-making in an environment that is safe and inclusive for all participants
- We believe in creative grassroots organizing and action that brings forth the voices and power of historically marginalized communities and enable communities to take action on their own behalf.
- We value peace and practice non-violence in our processes. Peace is not the absence of conflict, but resolving conflict nonviolently
- We believe in the power of love, compassion, creativity and spirit—however one defines it-- to transform lives and communities
- We believe in living the change we want to see in the world

## **Guidelines for Respect**

- Everyone has a piece of the truth
- Everyone can learn
- Everyone can teach or share something. (We ALL have experiences & information to share)
- Remember all of this a process. (What happens along the way is as important as the goals.)
- Honor the work and abilities of others
- Create safe and inclusive environments for all participants
- Take risks within yourself (If you don't usually participate, give it a chance; have some trust to try on new ideas.) Overall remember to Step Forward, Step Back (Give space for ALL voices to be heard).
- Critique inappropriate behaviors NOT the person. (Remember, we are ALL still learning.)
- Actively listen to each other: (listen to what others are saying, before speaking).
- Be accountable to the people and communities we support and yourself (Only make commitments that you can keep and be consistent.)
- Speak only for yourself. (Remember we all have different experiences and values to share.)
- Avoid defensiveness (Be open to legitimate critique or challenges of ideas, patterns or behaviors.)
- Mistakes will be made by all of us. (None of us is perfect.)
- Recognize and honor the differences across cultures in regards to experiences, languages etc.
- Be aware of the effects of your actions on the communities and others around you.
- Challenge oppressive behavior in a way that helps people grow
- Take cues from people in the communities you are working with in the way you interact
- Watch the use profanity in situations.
- Respect peoples traditions, religions and cultures even if you don't agree with them
- If you see a behavior that is inappropriate intervene, don't wait for someone else to address it. (Especially around issues of oppression or drug/alcohol use.)
- Keep Confidentiality (If necessary.)
- Don't use acronyms (It can make people to feel left out on 'not in-the-know'. For ex, say: Anti Racist Action, not ARA).
- Be on time (Be respectful of the value of others time).
- Be mindful of appropriate times and uses alcohol or drugs (For ex. Not during meetings or work times etc.)
- Don't use alcohol, drugs or weapons in places where they can endanger people. (These both have been historical problems)