

Angelic Organics Learning Center

Ally Statement on Restorative Communities and Anti-Oppression

Introduction

Angelic Organics Learning Center, in keeping with our mission and guiding principles, commits to address privilege and oppression as an essential component of our work to help people build healthy local food systems. We encourage individual members of our organization who identify with forms of privilege to become allies in the elimination of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression. Further, we invite members of our community – individuals, food justice educators and practitioners, and partner organizations – to join together with us in this work.

Values that Guide our Commitment

Privilege and oppression are complex cultural forces; becoming an ally is an ongoing process. Ending oppression – the dynamic based on a belief that there are some who are entitled to have power and control over others – is vital to cultivating restorative communities of people and land. Honoring diversity, establishing equality, taking individual responsibility, and creating a regenerative culture shift strengthens the entire movement to end abusive and unjust food systems.

- **We honor the experience and wholeness of all.** We honor our common ancestry as earthlings living on Earth and hold in our awareness the experience of beauty and suffering of our ancestors. We understand that historical trauma is passed generation to generation via both the oppressed and oppressors, and thus we all have personal work to do. We are committed to the survival and wholeness of each of us and of all people on Earth.
- **We honor and cultivate diversity.** Biological and cultural diversity are essential to the health of our world. Just as a diverse farming system is more dynamic, symbiotic, and healthy than a monoculture, so is a diverse human community.
- **We value equality and intrinsic rights.** In paradigms of domination, it has been the practice to believe, *“Just as humans are entitled to have power and control over the land and its resources, white people are entitled to have power over people of color, men are entitled to have control over women, and the rich are entitled to know what is best for the poor.”* (for source, see notes). A paradigm of equality supports self-determination in all aspects of the food system, subverts old power dynamics, and values leadership of all.
- **We are accountable as individuals to examine our own forms of privilege.** As allies in the process of dismantling oppression, we have a personal investment to understand privilege and its effects on us and others; this is ongoing work that includes listening, watching, learning, and being willing to admit when we do not understand, and being able to accept honest – and sometimes harsh – feedback about the reality of our privilege from those who don’t have it.
- **We wield any privileges we possess to create a regenerative cultural shift.** We believe justice and equality can be achieved only if individuals and groups with privilege recognize,

address, and change their own roles in perpetuating oppression. We change our own actions, we hold others accountable, and we work to shift our own organization and broader society.

Angelic Organics Learning Center Commitments to Action

Angelic Organics Learning Center commits to dedicating time, money, and energy to building an organizational culture that is restorative and anti-oppressive. We envision a working environment where individuals can bring their whole selves to our organization. We are receptive and responsive to feedback – even in the face of organizational risk and discomfort. We value the bravery and honesty of individuals who are genuinely engaging in this work. We acknowledge there will be inconvenient or unexpected, but necessary, times when we need to address individual and group issues of privilege and oppression.

In the following ways, Angelic Organics Learning Center will plan for and create intentional structures for building a restorative and anti-oppressive organization:

1. Build organizational capacity through training (internal and external) and conferences (local and national) so that staff and volunteers provide leadership, offer training, and facilitate dialogue around the topic.
2. Ensure that all staff attend initial and on-going restorative communities and anti-oppression training, including using work time for personal development.
3. Conduct an annual assessment of policies, practices, facilities and programs (culturally appropriate training, resources, service delivery) to ensure that our practices reflect our organizational commitment. This assessment is in collaboration with community members, partner groups, and peer organizations.
4. Implement recruitment strategies and create leadership opportunities to foster a volunteer, board, and staff team that reflects the diversity of the communities where we live and work.
5. Encourage and support forums for people of color (and other groups, as appropriate) in our organization to build community and share concerns.
6. Insure that our civic engagement agenda creates space to address forms of privilege as related to the food system.
7. Share this statement with public, participants, partners, and funders (via website, posting in program spaces, job descriptions, grant applications, press releases, and reference in partnership agreements) using approved communications language.

Notes:

1. Angelic Organics Learning Center is grateful to the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance for sharing its materials on anti-oppression and anti-racism and helping to inspire this statement.
2. Approved by the Angelic Organics Learning Center board of directors on September 8, 2014.