



# OUR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE ANTIRACISM

*"If you want a different fruit, you must plant a new seed."*

Lisa Sharon Harper

# WE ARE

*We are a faith-based nonprofit organization that recognizes that the two urgent problems of environmental degradation and racism are deeply linked, and that the pursuit of racial justice and environmental justice belong together.*

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# ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND RACISM HAVE SHARED ROOTS...

*Two of the biggest threats to life, peace, and justice on our planet are the evils of racism and environmental degradation. We believe that these two problems share roots and that one cannot be effectively solved while ignoring the other.*

***Environmental destruction and systemic racism are both a result of broken relationships.** We believe that we were created for thriving and loving relationships throughout all creation. Unfortunately our world consists of broken relationships- between humans and creation, and between humans and other humans.*

*Our experiences have revealed to us that the answer is spiritual, and that further pursuing our relationship with God leads to healing our relationships with the planet and with each other; we recognize that this pursuit doesn't pull us back from further action. Instead it catalyzes us towards it.*

*We lament the racial injustice that has plagued our world, causing harm to our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color) neighbors and insulting our Creator's vision of diversity.*

*We recognize that racism is a global evil. As an international organization, we are mindful of the destruction it has caused within every border. However, we are beginning our journey towards change at home- in our nation and within our own organization. We recognize and repent from our silence, complacency, and delayed action, and wholeheartedly commit to new courses of action:*

- **Understanding** the dynamics of the relationship between systemic racism and issues like climate change, pollution, deforestation, and soil degradation.
- **Embracing** our opportunities to reverse cycles that perpetuate this broken relationship.
- **Amplifying and learning from** leaders from BIPOC communities to better address the problems present in our neighborhoods and villages.

*We also recognize that many mainstream environmental movements have primarily centered white voices and white narratives, and we will make every effort to create a more inclusive societal discourse in sustainability.*

# FIGURES:

*Black children are five times more likely to suffer from lead poisoning than their white counterparts, and families of color disproportionately live near hazardous waste facilities. (Osorio, 2016)*

*Africa is the most exposed region to the adverse effects of climate change despite contributing the least to global warming. Most countries across Asia and Latin America see similar patterns. (Ritchie, 2017)*

*Food insecurities were the highest for Black and Latino households in rural areas in the United States. (USDA, 2017)*

*Households in poor Black neighborhoods were on average 1.1 miles further away from a supermarket than households in poor white neighborhoods. (Shultz, Sullivan, & Galea, 2020)*

*Indigenous communities manage under 22 percent of the Earth's land, but that land contains around 80 percent of the planet's biodiversity. (Garnett, et. al, 2018)*

*Less than 2% of farms in the United States belong to Black owners, down from 14% in 1920. This represents the loss of over 14 million acres. (Douglas, 2017)*

*Our goal is to adopt an inclusive approach to our sustainability work, acting restoratively towards both people and the planet.*

*We will identify the ways in which injustices that affect marginalized communities and the earth are interconnected. Environmental degradation does the most harm to the most vulnerable communities and exacerbates conditions of poverty and social inequality.*

*We will advocate for justice for both people and the planet.*

*We recognize that*

**WE CANNOT SEEK SUSTAINABILITY WITHOUT ALSO SEEKING ENVIRONMENTAL AND RACIAL JUSTICE.**

*In addition to the commitments made in this document, we are actively leveraging our networks by inviting other faith-based environmental organizations to join us in making a commitment to sustainable antiracism.*

*If you represent such an organization and would like to join us in making this commitment through signing on to a similar statement, please contact us at [info@plantwithpurpose.org](mailto:info@plantwithpurpose.org)*

# OUR COMMITMENT:

- 1) *We will amplify the voices of BIPOC environmental leaders. We will not perpetuate a white savior complex in our programs, messaging and marketing materials. We will avoid the aggressions of erasure while also respecting the boundaries of BIPOC leaders and activists. We will ensure intentional representation of diverse populations in our online and print communications, our educational and inspirational resources, our podcast, and our digital media productions.*
- 2) *We will form a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Board to hold us accountable to our antiracist commitment and to help us identify work that needs to be done within our organizations and our programs.*
- 3) *We will use data-driven evaluations to ensure that our program activities contribute to the reduction, and not the persistence, of social inequities.*
- 4) *We will be proactive about learning more about environmental and racial injustice. We will share these lessons with our communities and other partners. We will leverage our privilege to bring awareness into spaces where BIPOC perspectives are often uninvited.*
- 5) *We will allow staff time to partake in the antiracist work that must be done individually and societally. This time will be used for both activities of individual self-reflection, understanding the link between environmental destruction and systemic racism, and civic engagement towards building an antiracist society.*
- 6) *We will not be silent during pivotal moments in society and culture that impact BIPOC communities.*
- 7) *In honor of our Black brothers and sisters, who have been long denied equal freedoms and opportunities, we will adopt Juneteenth (June 19) as a corporate holiday in observance of the federal order in 1865 that proclaimed all enslaved persons free in the United States.*
- 8) *We will prioritize diversity as an objective in talent acquisition. As our team grows, we will continuously seek out recruitment opportunities in spaces more accessible for BIPOC, and remove common barriers that exist between BIPOC candidates and our workplace.*
- 9) *We commit to building a race equity culture through regular internal training on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This includes intercultural competency, environmental racism, structural racism, institutional racism, interpersonal racism, and internalized racism.*
- 10) *When we call upon BIPOC voices to assist us in a teaching role that creates the toll of emotional labor, we will be mindful to provide compensation.*

*\*\*see the following page for the clarification on certain terms*

## KEY TERMS

### **BIPOC**

A term used to refer to Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color. While this term is helpful for identifying the groups harmed by racism, this term is not interchangeable when addressing an issue related to a more specific group.

### **WHITE SAVIOR COMPLEX**

The white savior complex refers to a narrative that glorifies the actions of a white person done to help a non-white person, while emphasizing that person's lack of agency and minimizing their own virtue. This is a common critique of many international development institutions.

### **ERASURE**

Erasure is the act of silencing voices of color by removing or obscuring their contributions to important discussions. This also refers to the posture of being "color-blind," which erases the diverse contributions and perspectives one brings to the table that stem from one's racial identity. Erasure/colorblindness allows the majority race to dominate spaces and conversations, further perpetuating behaviors of white supremacy and racism.

### **RACE EQUITY CULTURE**

A culture that is focused on proactively counteracting racial inequities inside and outside the organization.

(Equity in the Center, 2019)

**“I NEED YOU TO UNDERSTAND THAT OUR RACIAL INEQUALITY CRISIS IS INTERTWINED WITH OUR CLIMATE CRISIS. IF WE DON'T WORK ON BOTH, WE WILL SUCCEED AT NEITHER.”**

**DR. AYANA ELIZABETH JOHNSON**