PONGO
poetry project

RESJ Vision and Values Statement

Purpose

Pongo's Race, Equity, & Social Justice Committee (RESJ) is dedicated to leading the process of deconstructing institutionalized oppression and racism within our organization by providing guidance, resources, and recommendations that actively support a holistic approach to antiracism, equity, and social justice in both our internal and external relations and across the communities that we partner with. The work of the RESJ Committee is focused on the following core areas:

- Disrupting racial injustice, inequality, and inequities;
- Providing meaningful anti-racist education; and
- Addressing bias in ourselves, our programs, or wherever it may present itself.

These objectives will be met through internal programming, activities, and policies, external awareness and coordination and collaboration with other organizations.

Pongo's Values on Race, Equity, & Social Justice

Our values guide the work of our Race, Equity, & Social Justice Committee and thereby cultivate an intentional, inclusive and equitable culture that permeates through every facet of our organization, allowing us to serve with humility, awareness, and respect.

Justice

We understand that the harm of racial and cultural injustices is inflicted beyond the individual victim of injustice and allow this understanding to inform our policies and practices.

We seek to prevent harm and address harm when it does occur, whether it be within our organization, in spaces monitored by Pongo staff and amassed by Pongo's program activities, or between the beneficiaries of Pongo's services and between members of our organization.

We will develop and continue to build on processes and policies within our organization to ensure that accountability does occur when harm is done by or within our organization.

We commit to developing and continuously improving our racial grievance and restorative justice process as our organization grows.

We commit to creating an on-boarding process where all members of our community (staff/board/volunteers/mentors) have a thorough understanding of

the values of justice, equity, and empathy and agree to uphold them in their work for Pongo. We also commit to improving ongoing restorative justice training for board members, staff, and volunteers.

Equity

We acknowledge, investigate, and evaluate complex systems around equity to understand and improve systemic structures that contribute to disparities between historically marginalized and disenfranchised people groups and how this has an impact on our work and programming.

We evaluate our relationship with the system of incarceration and how we thoughtfully practice in these spaces.

We annually perform a complete program analysis to ensure that our programs are equitable and that we take steps necessary to ensure they are culturally appropriate and mindful.

We consider how we can ensure and improve upon accessibility to Pongo's programs.

We will work to ensure that our grievance process is accessible so that members of Pongo's staff, board, mentors, and volunteers can be held accountable.

Empathy

We appreciate, acknowledge, and work to understand everyone's unique experiences without judgment.

We practice empathy in leadership between members of our Board, staff, volunteers, and mentors.

We practice and work to ensure an empathetic approach to working with the beneficiaries of Pongo's programs and program activities.

We work to integrate an empathetic approach in our policies and procedures.

Inclusion

Our organization is a loving space that encourages our staff, volunteers, and participants to be comfortable showing up as their authentic selves.

We annually review our processes and procedures to analyze how they can be improved to be more inclusive.

We implement new ways to broaden the impact and scope of Pongo's programs to be more inclusive.

We work to ensure that all of our program materials are representative of the populations that we serve.

We work to ensure that we use inclusive and affirming language across all of Pongo's programs and materials.

We celebrate diversity and shine light on poets of color, LGBTQIA+, disabled, and all peoples from historically marginalized communities.

We create opportunities for members of Pongo's community to connect and build relationships.

We seek to diversify our program staff, board members, volunteers, mentors, and program affiliates whenever possible and we value and celebrate people from diverse backgrounds, religions, races, abilities, sexualities, and gender non-conforming individuals.

Action

Pongo understands that it is not enough to be "non-racist", i.e., having an absence of racial bias and attitudes, and instead we have a commitment to being "anti-racist", that is to actively disrupt racial hierarchy and white supremacy while creating loving community spaces that center the experiences and identities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color as we continue to become an organization of anti-racist activists.

Each year the organization will develop and implement a RESJ action plan with concrete goals to continue to a more anti-racist organization. We will evaluate our progress toward these goals annually.