

Anchorage Youth Development Coalition's Commitments to Liberation

Joining a culture of belonging

Developed in 2021

The goal is for Anchorage Youth Development Coalition (AYDC) to better recognize structures of privilege and oppression that cause harm, especially those rooted in racism, classism, and adultism. It will restore ways of being that center the voices of the people AYDC's work impacts most, leading to liberation.

"Justice, equity, diversity and inclusion are the path. Liberation is the destination" - AYDC JEDI Advisory Group



**Anchorage Youth
Development Coalition**

Housed at Center for Safe Alaskans

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This section includes the following terms: liberation, belonging, justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, oppressed and dominant identities, tokenism, decolonize and indigenize, BIPOC and POC, status quo, and a description of how we are using the term "this work" throughout this document.



Purpose of this Document

"For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change." -Audre Lorde

Note: This document will take approximately 20-25 minutes to read at an average reading speed.

The purposes of this document are abundant. Its primary intent is to guide the transformative process of Anchorage Youth Development Coalition (AYDC) to become a coalition rooted in liberation¹. It will infuse a new way of working and connecting with the AYDC community. This process is inherently emergent and iterative and will be a continuous journey for AYDC. However, the goal is for AYDC to better recognize structures of privilege and oppression that cause harm, especially those rooted in racism, classism, and ableism. It will restore structures and ways of being that center the voices of the people AYDC's work impacts most, leading to liberation. **This document is a starting point, with complete understanding and intention that it will grow and change in an interactive and emergent way as the path before AYDC unfolds.**

The intent is also to increase AYDC's accountability within the community to move forward on this path towards liberation. It is aligned with the [AYDC 2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#), calling out specific areas of alignment between this document and the Strategic Plan in the Transformative Practices section.

Intentional Partnerships

This work cannot be done alone or in silo. It must be rooted in authentic relationship and in partnership, as is highlighted by the commitments in this plan. AYDC intentions are to build and expand relationships and partnerships to support the learning and growth process inherent in working towards liberation, and to move through organizational and culture change *with* partnership and relationship with people who hold marginalized identities, especially people of color and youth.

Additionally, AYDC is housed at Center for Safe Alaskans (Safe Alaskans). Safe Alaskans will embark on a process to assess, plan, and move toward justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI)¹ as an organization in a way that also supports AYDC's commitments.

Finally, the hope is that the journey of AYDC will serve as a support for other groups on their own journeys, in which AYDC shares the lessons learned and the process of transformation in a way that opens the path for other groups to move towards liberation as well.

¹ How we are using these terms is described in The Importance of Language section.



Commitments

"Imagine if we institutionalize healing in the same way we have institutionalized violence. What kind of a world could we create?" - Kazu Haga

These six commitments are the central elements to the transformation of AYDC. These will be the consistent guide to how to approach the transformation of the culture of AYDC towards a culture of liberation. While these may change and morph over time, the hope is these provide the ground, the foundation, in which this work is rooted. These are intended to resonate in the body, to be simple enough to be felt and understood on an embodied level. These commitments are put into practice through the "Transformational Practices", which will shift more over time as AYDC moves along its journey.



CENTER the
voices of the
people most
impacted

We will seek out and center the voices and decisions of the people most impacted by our work, with particular attention to the influence and leadership of BIPOC youth and people who hold oppressed identities.

CONNECT
with people
where they
are

We will go to people where they are located in the community to build meaningful and authentic relationships. We will also meet people where they are in their journey and understanding of JEDI.

CREATE
cultures and
spaces of
authenticity &
belonging

We will create safe, supportive, and inclusive environments that foster authentic relationships in which people of all identities and languages belong and are valued.

CULTIVATE
relational
trust

We will cultivate authentic and trusting relationships across differences, especially with youth and BIPOC, and recognize that relational trust is the foundation of all work to move towards belonging.

REFLECT
and grow
intentionally

We will embrace the iterative and emergent nature of this work. We will use intentional reflection, both individual and in partnership, as an integral part of our collective learning and developmental self-work. We will use these learnings to inform and guide how we create change.

ACT
courageously

We will see, talk, and act courageously to make inequities visible and disrupt discourse and practices that reproduce inequality. We will do this both within ourselves and in our work. It includes bravely having hard conversations around race, power, and privilege



Transformative Practices

"I have to use my life to leverage a shift in the system by how I am, as much as with the things I do." -adrienne maree brown

The transformational practices are the ways these commitments will be put into practice now. These will be iterative and emergent, and will change and shift as the work progresses. Ideally, these will be revisited and updated annually, or more frequently as needed.

Center
Create
Cultivate

Youth and BIPOC Leaders

Create permanent positions for youth and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in leadership and decision-making position by adding youth positions on the AYDC Leadership Team.

Center
Create
Cultivate
Act
Reflect

Courageous Conversations

Host conversation on the topics of race, racism, JEDI and liberation during AYDC coalition meetings to intentionally engage AYDC members and partners in this work.

Center
Cultivate
Act
Reflect

Reflect and Improve

Continually reflect on and improve how we do this work. Do this in relationship and paid partnership with the people it most impacts.

Center
Create
Act
Reflect

Accountability

Create structures and strategies that hold AYDC in accountability to this work and support the implementation of these commitments and practices on all levels of AYDC. Approaches may include a specific workgroup and/or champions within existing structures. Intentionally include BIPOC youth in these roles.

Center
Create
Cultivate
Act
Reflect

Listen and Integrate

On an ongoing basis, listen and learn alongside a broader group of people, especially youth and people of color who are impacted by and involved in the work of AYDC. Integrate this depth of lived experience and understanding into how AYDC puts the Commitments into action.



These Transformational Practices are aligned with the [AYDC 2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#) in these ways:

- Transformational Practice 1 is aligned with Aspirations 1b, 7a, and 7b.
- Transformational Practice 4 is aligned with Aspirations 1d, 7a, and 7b.
- Transformational Practice 5 is aligned with 1d, with the relationships built out of this practice informing and building the work of 1d and is directly aligned with Aspirations 9a and 9b.

In addition to the transformative practices listed here, a Safe Alaskans organization-wide investment in JEDI will support this work. Safe Alaskans will embark on a process to assess, make a plan, and move toward JEDI as an organization and in each area of its work. To do this, Safe Alaskans will use learnings and recommendations from the AYDC-centered process.



Overview of Our Process

Our process started with an assessment of strengths and opportunities to grow through a survey of staff, leadership, and partner perspectives and experiences related to:

- Valuing a variety of perspectives and communities
- Organizational and staff competencies around justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI)
- Learning and growing orientation
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Organizational culture
- JEDI commitment

We participated in training by partners and hosted training for our staff, board, and AYDC Leadership Team. The training focused on understanding JEDI and exploring individual experiences and biases.

AYDC developed an advisory group to guide this process by bringing passion for JEDI and perspectives from multiple sectors, professions, interests, and lived experiences, including but not limited to those related to race and gender identity, age, and income. (You can learn more about the members of our Advisory Group in the Lineage section.) The group met for several months to guide our learning. It ultimately developed the commitments and practices contained within this document.



Adaptive Learning: The Story of Our Process

"Water creates the ways for itself, moving with gravity, moving around obstacles, wearing down obstacles, reshaping the world." -adrienne maree brown

The process of generating this plan was emergent and iterative. We practiced what we are putting forward in this document throughout the process. We did this with varying degrees of success. We are sharing our process and lessons learned in hopes others who are walking this path may benefit from our learnings. We fully recognize that there is still much to learn, and we offer these thoughts humbly. While we have attempted to describe these lessons in a linear fashion, our adaptive learning was cyclical. We learned and relearned and unlearned similar things in different moments.



Time

When we started this process, there was a sense of urgency and short timelines created by grant deadlines connected to the funds that supported this process. Because of this, we decided to develop and conduct the assessment survey while we were working to recruit the advisory group. The intent was to expedite the process so the survey results would be ready when the advisory group first met. However, due to the problems with the assessment indicated below, it would have been better to convene the advisory group first and create the assessment together. Realizing we needed more time, we talked to funders to extend the timeline. We found different funding sources to support this project, and we were able to expand to allow the time we needed.

We continually adjusted the timelines to allow adequate time for the work we needed to do. We included the time necessary for self-reflection, learning, emotional processing, and well-being. We prioritized taking the required time to avoid causing harm and care for people over getting through an agenda or accomplishing a task we planned. We also focused on taking on bite-sized pieces, prioritizing where we were focusing our energies to focus on what we CAN do right now. To remind ourselves to take the time we needed, we borrowed a quote from the Rising Appalachia song, *Medicine*: "Rushing is violence."





Planning

We began with the assumption that we were creating a 'plan'. Anna McGovern called for a pause for us to reevaluate how we were approaching planning. It was this intentional, purposeful disruption from a woman of color in our planning group that got us to the realization that planning is steeped in the same power dynamics, structures, and processes we were trying to break down. *From this, we realized we had to do the JEDI work now* and change how we went about the whole process to come out with something meaningful. Throughout the process, we continued to remind ourselves to allow it to be emergent rather than needing to control and plan it.



Building the group

At the same time, we intentionally designed the process to break down the status quo. For example, we hired an outside facilitator with the experience and skill to respond and support us throughout the process. And, we recruited advisory group members who would bring perspective and experiences that would challenge the way things are. A constant and ongoing theme in the process was to recognize when we reinforced the status quo. We were intentional about how we collectively and individually adjusted, adapted, and changed to move towards being rooted in liberation.



Assessment

Initially, we went through a process that intentionally included people of color and youth in developing a survey from preexisting, publicly available assessments to highlight areas of need and strength for AYDC. However, the *impact* was that the survey we created was white-centric. For people of color involved in the process, this felt discouraging and like more of the status quo. The advisory group did not find the results relevant or reliable. It brought into question the entire approach we were taking to developing this 'plan'. This theme of discovering where the status quo showed up and pausing to reevaluate and adjust our process emerged again and again.

We learned from this is that a survey was not the right tool for us to use. Not only was the language off, but the approach continued to align with perpetuating current systems. It was an extractive process, asking people to give their time and share their stories and experience to take the survey. It is transactional versus relational and does nothing to build the relationships essential to the core of JEDI work.



Agendas

Typically, a facilitator designs a planning process for an advisory group. In this case, the facilitator holds an incredible amount of power. Instead, we worked to co-create our approach together. We focused on allowing an emergent process to unfold



in our time together while still moving towards our collective goal of creating these commitments. In this, we shifted away from a perfection-oriented culture toward a space of mutual learning. We moved from needing a concrete plan to prioritizing deep discussion. We worked to acknowledge when something didn't sit right and took the time to unpack it. It was messy and uncomfortable and beautiful and authentic. And, in this, we changed our relationships with each other.



The Document

A big part of this was not knowing at the beginning what it would look like when we finished. Part of this was fighting the analytical mind to see something more than just the traditional linear equity plan with goals and metrics and such. We developed something that more wholly reflected our authentic way of working and adapting to learning. In this process, a mantra we returned to repeatedly was to keep things simple enough to feel them in the body.



Relationships

We had the most incredible advisory group. Their commitment, presence, and willingness to have authentic conversations were essential. They called each other out and called each other in, spoke to harm caused, and took the time to address it. Together, we continually learned and unlearned, and all embodied a willingness to adapt and adjust. Furthermore, the advisory group dove into the ambiguous and unknown. It took a level of courageousness, patience, and trust, especially as we worked towards clear solutions and within set timeframes.



Compensation

To compensate advisory group members for their perspective and experience, we offered a contract for participation. The contract amount was higher for those who brought experience as a person of color and/or other marginalized identities (self-identified). The intent was to honor that essential perspective offered to the process. Governing board members were not eligible for a contract but were offered a thank you gift.



Youth Voice

We are incredibly grateful for the youth who participated in our advisory group. We intentionally nurtured relationships between the young people and AYDC staff to support their full participation. We created opportunities for the youth to participate in the facilitation planning process. We held spaces for young people to share first during our advisory group sessions. In this document, we directly incorporated language that youth contributed.





Emotion

The advisory group related to each other in a way rooted in love, care, and compassion. At the same time, frustration, rage, and dissenting opinions had a place in the conversation. We acknowledged the value of emotion, let it inform our process, and honored emotional labor. When something didn't feel right, we paused to look at it.



Meeting People Where We Are

Bringing people together who are at different points on their JEDI journey can lead to responsive and reactionary behavior. The amount of grace and patience the individual advisory group members brought to working together in this process was crucial. We recognized that the people reading and using this document would be at different places in their journey and understanding as well. We saw the strength these different perspectives brought to our conversations and, in the end, strengthened the Commitments.



We Need Each Other

The advisory group intentionally included a diverse set of people. Even so, we continually discovered that we needed more people who are directly impacted by the work of AYDC, especially more BIPOC and youth, to make the decisions. This lesson learned is evident in these commitments. One of the primary commitments is to develop and deepen into relationships that can provide partnership and guidance and lead future decisions around what comes next in this process. We must do this work as a community. We all need each other. And we need to be needed by each other. We honored that in our advisory group and within these commitments.



Lineage of our Advisory Group

"If you want to get people to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea." -Antoine de Saint-Exupery

A diverse advisory group supported the creation of this plan. It was composed of individuals with varying roles with AYDC and Safe Alaskans. Each individual brought their lived experiences, expertise, and perspective to this project, including the origins of their own learning. Here, we hold space to recognize each individual and the lineages they brought to this process: Lillian, Finn Willson-Octuck, Anna McGovern, Michael Farahjood, Corlis Taylor, Emmanuel Portillo, Justin Dickens, Jess Limbird, Brian Saylor, Ciara Lowery, Marcia Howell, and Ona Crow.

Hello, my name is **Lillian** and I currently am a high schooler at West Anchorage High School, the third most diverse high school in the United States. I am a second-generation Chinese American who has grown up in Anchorage my whole life. My family has taught me the value of compassion, confidence, and love for my cultural identity. My friends have taught me how caring for your peers is one of the powerful things that anyone can do at any time of their life. And my community has taught me that the world we live in wasn't created by one person, but by the work of millions.

This equity plan work is extremely important to me because I hope Anchorage youth are seen, valued, and treated for who they are, rather than their socioeconomic background or race. Throughout elementary school and middle school, I have struggled with the stereotypes that got placed on me as someone who "likes math, lacks creativity, and acts without emotion," knowing they didn't reflect who I am. I hope the youth in my community are seen for the complexities and nuances in their personality, and judged by qualities they decided: that they have just as much importance and value as anyone else.

Anna McGovern

Originating from Western Massachusetts, Anna is a first-generation Chinese-American now living in Eagle River, Alaska. She received her B.A. in Political Science and Chinese from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. Post-grad, she found herself working with youth in a variety of capacities: in the classroom as an early childhood and elementary educator, and in out-of-school time coordinating before and after school programs, coaching lacrosse, and working as a camp counselor. Moving to Alaska she continued her work with youth coordinating a statewide youth tobacco prevention program, and now is currently working at the Alaska Afterschool Network, with the Alaska Children's Trust. In her free time, she likes to be outdoors, keep active, travel, and get lost in books. She is the mama of a three-year-old, a ten-month-old, and a seven-year-old German Shepherd.



Michael Farahjood (he/him) is a Youth Case Manager who has worked with Southcentral Foundation, Cook Inlet Tribal Council and the Alaska Native Justice Center. My background is Persian and also a tribal member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Emmanuel Portillo (He/Him/él) is the Anchorage Youth Development Coalition Director. Emmanuel's lineages are rooted, shaped, and inspired by Departamento 15, the Salvadoran Diaspora transnational imaginary situated in South Los Angeles, California in Tongva nation. Emmanuel shares his deepest gratitude to the community pedagogists and change makers who planted seeds of change; to the artists and creatives for sharing the gift of language and new visions; to the youth for their genius, divergence, and joy; and to the Fam, por un amor sin límites.

My name is **Jess Limbird** (she/they) and I'm a queer, single mama living in Anchorage. I'm originally from Nashville, TN. Other important identities I hold include being adopted, being sober, and being an elder millennial. My lineage of race equity, education, and racial justice began as a bio-sibling to my older brother who is a trans-racial adoptee and brown-skinned man. Our experiences were very different, growing up inside a white family that coded us both as white while the world coded my brother as other. I honor his experience, which I seek to understand more deeply. I honor Jermaine Shute, who gave me an initial education during some critical conversations about race inside our high school classroom about what it means to be a young Black man in America. Jermaine also introduced me to prolific Black American thinkers and activists, like Malcolm X. I honor the education I received at the Evergreen State College and the students of color who were protesting racism on campus. I honor the learning that happened both inside and outside of the classroom via Angela Davis, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, bell hooks, Linda Hogan, Edward Said, Eduardo Galleano, and students enrolled through the Gateways program at Maple Lane and Green Hill youth correctional facilities. I learned so much about the world and my place in it. I honor the artists and musicians who tell the story of their experience through creativity and connection. I honor my graduate school thesis advisor and master teacher, Theresa Lenear. I honor the everyday thinkers, storytellers, and sharers of internal thought and experience via social media that have continued to impact my worldview. I honor adrienne maree brown and her contributions to systems thinking and emergent practice. I honor Solomon, my Iñupiaq son, who is forced to learn how to navigate white supremacy in social systems while maintaining his dignity, culture, and self, often alone because I never had to learn that. I honor everyone surviving systems of harm because we trust there is something calling us from the future and we trust our hands to do the work.

Brian Saylor, PhD, MPH has been active in Alaskan health affairs since 1974. He became interested in health care planning and policy as a Peace Corps volunteer in Malaysia in the early 1970s. Since then, he has been a health systems planner, Legislative staffer,

University health services researcher, health care and long-term care facility and hospital administrator, and Deputy Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. He served as the Director of the Alaska Psychiatric Hospital. He retired from the University of Alaska Anchorage where he served as the Director of the Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies. He continues to teach and conduct applied health services research as the owner and principal of Saylor and Associates, an Alaskan health and human services consulting firm.

Saylor is on the Board of the Center for Safe Alaskans. He was a member and former Chair of the Health and Human Services Commission of the Municipality of Anchorage, and on the Boards of Akeela, Inc, and the Anchorage Community Theatre.

He holds an undergraduate degree in Psychology from Penn State, a Masters of Public Health from the University of Michigan and a Doctorate in Health Policy from the Heller School at Brandeis University, where he was a Pew Health Policy Scholar.

Now retired, he designs and builds theater sets in Anchorage.

Ciara Lowery (she/her) has worked with center for Safe Alaskans since 2014 and currently serves as Program Director, supporting collaborative work to improve wellbeing of Alaskans across the lifespan. She brings experience in facilitation, project management, and program and curriculum development. Prior to joining Center for Safe Alaskans, Ciara worked in youth development and education with non-profit and government organizations including Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Caring for Cambodia, and Heifer International. She received her Master's degree in Globalization and Educational Change from Lehigh University.

Marcia Howell, JD. My work since law school has focused on providing services to vulnerable and underserved populations. As an attorney at Alaska Legal Service I spent 10 years providing free legal help to Alaskans. As a staff member and Executive Director at Center for Safe Alaskans since 2000, I have worked to make sure our services and work are culturally responsive and reach broad populations. Descendant of Northern Europeans. Pronouns- she/her.

Ona Crow (she/her) of the OMNI Institute served as the lead facilitator for this process, holding space for change. Ona's lineage is rooted in nature-based spirituality, Forrest and Earth Ways yoga, and formal education in the field of macro social work, including study on privilege and oppression. Ona's lineages include a childhood full of time in nature, John A. Powell's work on Othering and Belonging, Adrienne Maree Brown's Emergent Strategies, and the wisdom, challenge, and love of friends and colleagues, especially Isaac Grody Patinkin, Kit Jones, and Paola Molina. Ona's recent book, Holding Change, inspired a deeper integration of these varied traditions into the way

Ona facilitates. The process of creating these Commitments with this incredible group allowed space to explore this integration in practice. Ona is a white, cisgender woman.

Dr. Cynthia Hazel, Dr. Paola Molina, Danielle Walker, and Rebecca Larson of the OMNI Institute also contributed throughout this process.

Deep gratitude for Anna McGovern whose brave intentional, purposeful disruption of the problematic approach to our process completely rerouted our planning journey and gifted us with a profound learning opportunity. Special thanks to Ona Crow and her colleagues at the OMNI Institute for their support through the entire process. They developed and analyzed the assessment, facilitated our meetings and training, provided technical assistance for all phases of the work, and drafted the plan itself through multiple sets of revisions. We offer deep gratitude to all who gave their time, knowledge, experience, energy, and labor to develop this document.



Closing and Continuation

The next steps include accountability and tracking. While much of this work is complex to measure, AYDC will work toward measuring and sharing back to the community the meaningful progress it makes. This especially includes sharing how it makes a positive and meaningful impact with people who hold oppressed identities. Additionally, we hope to show how we, as the AYDC Coalition, deepened our awareness and understanding around these commitments and continue to grow this plan beyond this one point in time.

With hope, we put forth this document to live, grow, and change through continuous feedback loops with people who regularly engage with it.



Appendix: The Importance of Language

The language section includes the following terms:

Liberation	18
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Justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) ...	19
Oppressed and dominant identities	20
Tokenism	21
Decolonize and indigenization	21
BIPOC and POC	21
Status quo	22
and how we are using the term “this work”	22

We are sharing our use of this language to help readers understand the meaning behind words used throughout this document that may be unfamiliar or have a variety of different meanings. You are invited to read the ones that are helpful for you.

Language either reinforces the current systems of oppression or breaks them down. It also changes and holds different meanings for different people and groups. Language can be imprecise, and we included this section to help clarify our use of words throughout this document. We share thoughts to support readers’ understanding, highlight words that have a variety of meanings, and recognize the problematic nature of some words and language.

Our thoughts below are not definitions and they highlight the conversations we had collectively to create a shared understanding of these terms for our small group and share that meaning with you. We also want to acknowledge that this space simply cannot hold the nuance, detail, or depth required for these complex topics. We hope this is helpful in understanding where we are coming from and an invitation to learn more.

We want to honor and recognize the lineage of the language that inspired and emerged in our conversations. The ownership and use of these words belong in many different spaces, communities, and the JEDI and liberation field as a whole. We name many of these in the “Lineages” section of this document. We want to honor the interconnected, collaborative, and shared origin in which our work is rooted. Thank you.

Liberation

Liberation is the vision—the dream and vision for the future—and we fully recognize we have a long way to go to get there. Liberation is rooted in love and speaks to a world that distributes resources, opportunities, and belonging with abundance for everyone

and where everyone can thrive and reach their full potential. It is a world in which disparities related to identities like race, gender, and age, are a thing of the past. A world with liberation is one where we ALL belong, where we all have the space to be authentic and contribute our gifts to the collective. Beyond the individual, it is a world in which systems, organizations, and governments have shifted to center liberation for all people. Yes, this is a lofty dream, and no one has figured out how to do it yet. That's okay. We're committed to doing what we can to move in that direction.

Belonging

Belonging is that feeling you get when you walk into a room with others who look like you, where you feel at ease in the space and with the people, where you don't have to put up guards/shields, and you can be yourself. People who hold identities of privilege experience this a lot more than people who hold oppressed identities.

Beyond the individual level, "structural **belonging** requires mutual power, access, and opportunity among all groups and individuals within a shared container (such as a society, organization, club, etc). [This] means that all groups and individuals can contribute to the evolution or definition of that to which they seek to belong..." ²

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI).

JEDI represents a constellation of tools used to move towards liberation and belonging. They are interconnected, interdependent, and most effective when used together.

Justice has transformative power. It is holding people, organizations, systems, governments, etc., accountable for the harm they cause. It means no longer allowing dehumanizing views, violence, and exploitation to continue by addressing these directly. Justice is also rooted in love. It is justice that breaks the cycles of violence through healing, learning, reconciliation, restitution, and change. It means owning the ways harm is caused and putting an end to it, once and for all.

Equity is removing systemic barriers and building power within communities that experience oppression. But it also means recognizing the inherent power these communities already hold and have held. It is shifting the entire system and dynamic to put power and control in the hands of people whom the system has historically denied that power and control. It is trusting people to know what is best for themselves. It looks like a transformation from the status quo to liberation in all spaces.

² University of Berkeley Othoring and Belonging Institute; <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/bridging-belonging>.



Diversity centers around the representation of singular identities held within a person, an accounting of which identities are present, and typically focusing on increasing identities underrepresented in the group. It is the easiest and most concrete of the JEDI tools. Diversity is a surface-level discussion and action, and a group must use it in tandem with the other tools. If not, it may cause further harm.

Furthermore, the simple act of inviting someone to your space holds an inherent power dynamic.

Due to historical and current oppression, there is valid mistrust between communities who hold **oppressed identities** and communities who hold **dominant identities**. We need to acknowledge that going to where people are is essential, rather than expecting people to come to us. We also need people who hold dominant identities and organizations with dominant norms to do internal work to understand the roots of mistrust and ways of relating that create harm. We can learn to do better through all JEDI work, and especially with diversity.

Inclusion means designing to fully include people who hold oppressed identities. It involves creating the conditions of emotional, psychological, and spiritual safety while simultaneously recognizing that no space is entirely safe, where everyone can participate fully. Inclusion is as simple as setting up a meeting in the evening or providing childcare and interpretation. And it is as complex as completely overhauling the decision-making process in your organization. It is creating spaces for BIPOC to



³ Image used with permission from D-L Stewart. Based on this article: D-L Stewart (2017, March 30). Language of Appeasement. Inside Higher Ed.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/03/30/colleges-need-language-shift-not-one-you-thinkessay>



speaking first, and not silencing people or setting their ideas aside. It is complex and nuanced.

Diversity without inclusion is tokenism. **Tokenism** is a form of continuing to engage in patterns of harm towards people of oppressed identities. It expects a person to speak for their whole racial group. It asks them to take on the emotional labor of educating people when they cause harm and be in a position that harms them. Just because someone receives an invitation does not mean they experience inclusion, feel valued, or even heard. Also, an invitation to participate may not even be welcome.

“Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.” — Martin Luther King Jr.

Decolonize is rooting out and removing the systems and cycles of oppression in our systems, bodies, organizations, governments, etc. Decolonization is vital work. And yet, we have decided this term is not a good fit for what we are moving towards. Many have called out that this term centers the colonizer. We intend to center the voices of people of color and youth through this process, so we have chosen not to use this term, despite our agreement with its intent. **Indigenization** is an alternative term that centers an indigenous perspective instead. Yet, we found some people of color who fully support the spirit of this work feel this term excludes them and do not use it.

BIPOC is an acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. It collectively describes people who hold an oppressed racial identity. We interchangeably use this term and the sister acronym, **POC**, which stands for People of Color. There is conversation about the merits of each, and we have decided to embrace both. As with so many terms, we would also note that *not* everyone who holds an oppressed racial identity supports or identifies with these terms.

Throughout this document, we refer to people who hold **oppressed identities and people who hold dominant identities**. When we refer to “identities” here, it includes race, gender, age, sexual orientation, country of origin, citizenship status, language, etc. We are focusing primarily on race and age. They are the most relevant to moving AYDC forward significantly, but not because other identities are not applicable or important. When we refer to oppressed identities, we mean identities that are currently and have historically experienced oppression, including being denied rights, power, access, safety, and more. “Dominant identities” refers to those that society designs systems to benefit, that are considered the norm, and that enjoy

unearned privileges, rights, power, access, safety, etc. For example, People of Color hold an oppressed identity, and White-bodied people hold the dominant identity. All people hold multiple identities, including both dominant and nondominant identities (called intersectionality). There is a great deal of nuance and complexity around this, and we offer this brief description to explain how we use these terms in this document.

Status quo is a shorthand term we use throughout this document to refer to the current state we find ourselves in on a societal, collective level. It is a state steeped in exclusion, injustice, violence, and exploitation through the systems of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and ageism. These play out in our work through a kaleidoscope of ways, from the individual to the systemic levels.

Similarly, we use the term “**this work**” throughout this document as shorthand to refer to the ongoing efforts of AYDC in moving towards a culture of JEDI and liberation in concrete ways.

