

Recommendations for a Racially Equitable and Just Providence

Acknowledgement

We, the Racial and Environmental Justice Committee and our base members, agree that to move forward with racial equity* and justice we must acknowledge the past and current realities of Providence, including the following:

- People of color have been harmed by Providence's history;
- Providence Plantations was built on stolen Native-Aboriginal-Indigenous land, specifically Pokanoket, Nipmuk, and Narraganset;
- Providence's foundational industry was based on the enslavement of Black people;
- People of color have not been represented and continue to be disproportionately harmed by City laws and policies;
- There is a dominant culture* that invisibilizes people of color and asks that they assimilate to it;
- The City has processes that are difficult to access and navigate.

We, the frontline communities of color of Providence* invite the City of Providence to join us in building new systems that are good for all people, and not just a few. A racially equitable & just Providence must actively work against and transform current and historic social inequities based on race, class, gender, immigrant status, and other forms of oppression. A racially equitable and just Providence puts capital and resources where these inequities are greatest.

We invite the Sustainability Office of the City of Providence to adopt the following Principles and Values so that Providence can move forward in achieving racial equity. These principles and values are based on the Just Transition* model.

Definitions:

Buen Vivir: Living well without living better at the expense of others. The fundamental human right to clean, healthy and adequate air, water, land, food, education, transportation, safety, and housing. Just relationships with each other and with the natural world, of which we are a part.

Deep Democracy: A form of governance including direct and ongoing participation of community members in civic institutions and organizations, including equitable problem solving and capacity-building for citizens and City workers

Dominant Culture: One that is able, through economic or political power, to impose its values, language, and ways of behaving within a political or social entity (a city, example) in which multiple cultures are present. In the United States, the dominant culture is that of White people, referred to as White supremacy.

Frontline Communities of Color: Communities of color most impacted by the crises of ecology, economy and democracy, including the Indigenous, African-American, Black, Latino and Southeast Asian communities. There is particular emphasis on people of color who are refugees and immigrants, people with records, speakers of languages other than English, and LGBTQ.

Just Transition: A framework that has been developed by the trade union movement to include a range of social interventions needed to secure workers' jobs and livelihoods and shift to sustainable production, including avoiding climate change, protecting biodiversity, among other challenges.

Quality of Life: General well-being of individuals and societies including access to clean, healthy and adequate air, water, land, food, education, transportation, safety, and housing.

Racial Equity: When a person's outcome is not predicted by the color of their skin.

Self-Determination: Freedom of a people to determine the way in which they shall be governed and whether or not they shall be self-governed.

Solidarity: Mutual respect for and responsibility to support one another's human rights.

Principles and Values for a Racially Equitable and Just Providence

1) A racially equitable & just Providence moves us toward el Buen Vivir*

Buen Vivir* means that we can live well without living better at the expense of others. Frontline communities of color* have a fundamental human right to clean, healthy and adequate air, water, land, food, education, transportation, safety, and housing. We must have just relationships with each other and with the natural world, of which we are a part. Buen vivir* for Providence includes:

- Ensuring that frontline communities of color* enjoy their fundamental right to quality of life* and live free from discrimination and oppression;
- Prioritizing the well-being of our children, youth, and elders;
- Centers conversations about the future of Providence on the communities most affected by inequities.

2) A racially equitable and just Providence supports safe spaces for frontline communities of color*.

For Providence this means:

- Politically and financially supporting physical and psychological safe spaces built by and for frontline communities of color* where we can heal and lead. Safe spaces include: Homes,

Asterisks () indicate a word or phrase that is defined in the document*

schools, public institutions, community centers, non-profits and our streets; and places that provide mental health and other resources for and by frontline communities of color*;

- Supporting existing organizations that provide safe spaces for and by people of color; Supporting people of color's* need to care for ourselves, our families, and our communities without taking away the resources of future generations;
- Acknowledging gentrification and committing to stopping the displacement of people of color, especially by developers and universities;
- An end to police brutality and murder of people of color, specifically focusing on Black people; An end to mass incarceration of frontline communities of color*, especially focusing on Black communities;
- An end to surveillance of frontline communities of color that creates a culture of fear and repression.
- Reduce the barriers to reentry for formerly incarcerated people

3) A racially equitable and just Providence knows people are sacred and respects their cultures and traditions.

For Providence this means the City:

- Acknowledges and respects that there is more than just the dominant culture* in Providence; Values and honors the abundant cultures and traditions of the peoples of Providence;
- Learns about the full range of perspective, cultures, and knowledge in the community, including Indigenous communities' self-determination*, healing practices and cultures;
- Protects, restores, and preserves cultural, historic, and sacred sites of Native-Aboriginal-Indigenous people and captured Black people;
- Respects and honors Indigenous peoples' inherent rights and dynamic cultures, deeply and richly interwoven in lands, languages, spiritual traditions, religions and healing beliefs and ceremonies and artistic expression, rooted in self-determination* and self-governance.

4) A racially equitable & just Providence upholds self-determination*.

Frontline communities of color* are autonomous and have the right to craft decisions that impact their lives and their communities. Frontline communities of color* have the resilience and expertise to be our own leaders. It is only in the dignity of our self-determination* that we can thrive as a community.

5) A racially equitable and just Providence co-creates and co-leads governance with frontline communities of color* and the City of Providence to protect the space for communities' self-determination*, and ensure equitable access to resources, information, and power.

These systems should allow for deep democracy* with meaningful and ongoing processes of governance that are transparent and allow for equal power and ability to influence Providence decisions.

For the City of Providence this means:

- All community members have access to participate in decisions about the City. Access includes: compensation so that people without the resources of money or time can afford to participate

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without sacrificing their well-being and that of their families; information sent out in video, paper, online and offline formats; translated into Providence's languages; and using language that all residents can understand;

- Respecting and valuing the lived experience of Providence frontline community members of color as an essential source of expertise and wisdom;
- Addressing the inequity in power and resources that frontline communities of color* hold in Providence; and
- Being accountable to frontline communities of color*.

6) A racially equitable and just Providence values education for our children and youth. Education is a fundamental right for our children and youth.

The City of Providence should:

- Support education that embraces diverse teaching and learning methods and roots us in our communities' culture and traditions;
- Provide accessible and equitable academic resources and pathways that take our children and youth where they desire to go in their career and life;
Implement restorative justice practices in our school systems and end criminalization of our children and youth of color;
- Ensure educators and administration reflect the ethnic and racial makeup of the student body; and
- End the school to prison pipeline.

7) A racially equitable & just Providence practices local, regional, national and international solidarity.*

This means the City of Providence should:

- Work across cities, states and countries to support racial equity* and justice; and
- Fight for the rights of frontline community members as they are their own.

8) A racially equitable and just Providence must create meaningful work.

Meaningful work entails full employment for all frontline communities of color* in Providence. For the City of Providence this means:

- Openly encouraging the formation of worker's democratic structures;
- Supporting collective bargaining for retaining working communities and building a life of dignity and inclusion;
- Ending the exploitation of black and brown bodies, in prison, and in providing work for little or no pay;
- Supporting work that lifts up and centers the beauty and intellectual brilliance of our communities;
- Ending employment discrimination and nepotism in municipal employment; and
- Creating work that does not harm our people or the earth.

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9) A racially equitable & just Providence requires building a sustainable local economy now, one in which we produce and consume to live well without living better at the expense of others.

For Providence this means we move towards:

- Zero Waste
- Clean and Efficient Public Transportation
- Clean Community Energy
- Regional Food & Water Systems
- Efficient, Affordable, Durable Housing
- Ecosystem Restoration & Stewardship

10) A Racially Equitable & Just Providence Respects Community rights to Land, Water, and Food Sovereignty.

For Providence this means:

- Supporting land ownership by people of color; and
- Supporting education for people of color about their rights to land, water and food.

11) A Racially Equitable and Just Providence works to end the extractive economy.

For Providence this means:

For Providence this means:

- Eliminate fossil fuel dependence and wasteful use of scarce metals and minerals;
- Eliminate production of plastics, toxic chemicals, synthetic substances and our dependency on them;
- Reduce waste and eliminate wasteful practices that hurt our environment and ecosystems; and
- Eliminate destruction of nature and invasion of natural spaces (e.g., land, water, wildlife, forests, soil, and ecosystems).

Short-term Next Steps

To be developed by ongoing REJ committee within the next year:

- Ongoing training for City and communities about anti-racism;
- Establish deep democracy* structure for community members to continually set and weigh in on long-term goals and solutions.

This document is intended to apply to implementation plan. Any revisions to this document will occur in one year, unless 2/3 of REJ Committee members agree that it should be edited beforehand.

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