

AWARE-LA

Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere - Los Angeles

~ www.awarela.org ~

Core Principles

Like most long-standing, grass-roots community groups, AWARE-LA has had its share of leadership transitions, conflicts, and challenges. We believe it is our core principles that have allowed us to survive and thrive. They have helped guide us especially when new volunteers with different orientations arrived, full of energy, and with attitudes that pushed us to stand firm. We cannot overstate the level of commitment we have to the principles named below.

1. We avoid shaming one another.

We accept that people give what they can. When members need to step back from attendance or volunteer activities, we respect their need to do so, and we welcome them back with open arms when they return. When we create structures, we ensure that they avoid forced commitments like a required number of volunteer hours or monetary donations. We also take care not to shame people for their opinions and feelings, understanding that we are all in process and at different points in our journey. Within this orientation, we also uplift the need to challenge each other with care to facilitate growth.

2. We do not compete with one another.

Competing to be the “most down” white person is seen as counterproductive and discouraged. We avoid an attitude of challenge and/or a “show and prove” expectation. Instead, we offer the invitation that, “All are welcome, especially those just starting to get awoken to these issues. We value you and are glad you are here. Every voice counts, and we’re here to support and strengthen each other’s voices.”

3. We seek to create healthy and whole identities as anti-racist white people.

We do not get stuck in the debate around whether or not white people can be “good” or not. We hold the view that racism has been used as a tool to separate us from others and that it has been destructive for everyone, including white people. Our own humanity has been reduced as we have been largely socialized to care less about people of color. We need to heal from our positions as bystanders and perpetrators to injustice. Being healthy and whole means we create an identity that supports us in being anti-racist.

4. We believe that both action and consciousness-raising are necessary.

We uplift and appreciate all efforts intended to dismantle racism, privilege, and white supremacy. Some people focus more on action, some on consciousness-raising. We are a team and try to avoid attacking any of our various efforts as more essential than the other. And, at the same time, we challenge ourselves individually to *both* take action *and* raise our level of awareness.

5. We believe we must love ourselves in order to love other white people, and loving white people is essential if we are going to be effective allies for change.

We recognized a common pattern amongst ourselves early on. Our increasing consciousness around racism resulted in heightened anger toward other white people who were not yet aware of the issues. In effect, we had little tolerance for those who represented the white people we used to be, those who were just a few steps behind us on this journey toward having an anti-racist practice. It became clear that if we wanted to influence them to join us, we needed to engage them with love. And in order to engage them with love, we needed to love and forgive ourselves for the unconscious white people we had been.

6. We believe that accountability to people of color is best practiced within ongoing, reciprocal relationships.

See the Accountability and Alliance Building document for a full explanation of our history, process, and intentions for being accountable as individuals and as an organization.