



EQUITY STATEMENT CIRCLE YOGA COOPERATIVE

Dear Circle Yoga Community,

Since Circle Yoga's founding in 2003, we have envisioned being a welcoming community for all.

Like so many of our workplaces, neighborhoods, places of worship, schools, hospitals, and civic organizations, we at Circle Yoga are asking tough questions of ourselves and learning from teachers from diverse backgrounds in order to become a more inclusive, equitable, and anti-racist community. At this moment, Circle Yoga is focusing very intentionally on **racial equity** and the ways that addressing racial equity will enable us to address the many other types of inequity experienced by our community. The following statement describes our collective commitment and values that undergird our work toward racial equity, which will be described in a subsequent set of updates.

We are well aware that intentionality doesn't always equate to effectiveness. We have made our share of stumbles in this process. These stumbles have only reinforced our commitment to continuing to pursue greater racial equity at Circle Yoga.

Why **racial** equity? As we take a deeper dive into our equity work, we are choosing to use a race-based lens, recognizing that many of the tools and frameworks for addressing all areas of marginalization and oppression (including sexism, classism, ableism, sizeism, and more) grew out of the work and emotional labor of Black and brown scholars and activists. By starting with race, we can better build a foundation of shared understanding, language, and goals that will allow us to address **inequity** in all its forms in our community, so that we are an inclusive community that embraces all the identities our students embody.

What does this mean? It means that we promote the acceptance, integration, and celebration of the human experience. It means we maintain a lively engagement that supports every individual in the community and guides all aspects of our operations. It means that we affirm the rightful presence of each individual and their distinctive offering to our community.

It means we commit to awakening. Thích Nhất Hạnh wrote: "The problem that faces us is the problem of awakening. What we lack is not an ideology or doctrine that will save the world. What we lack is mindfulness of what we are, of what our situation really is. We need to wake up in order to rediscover our human sovereignty."

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It means that we acknowledge and honor the ancient roots of yoga in India as an eight-limbed path — a path that includes the modern asana (poses) practices we share together but is a much broader philosophy and set of practices meant to support our awakening in body, mind, and spirit.

It means that we recognize the way white dominant culture is entangled and implicated in all the ways we experience oppression and othering, and creates harm that too often goes unnoticed or unacknowledged.

It means we recognize that Circle Yoga is based in upper Northwest DC, a predominantly white and affluent community in a city that has seen its share of racial injustice, segregation, and gentrification - and that we commit to working outside our physical location in building an inclusive community.

It also means that we back up these carefully chosen words with similarly considered action. Racial equity is, for us, less of a destination and more of a daily practice, like yoga itself. It will require mindfulness and curiosity about our deeds, words, intentions and reactions. Like yoga, it will include effort and ease in different measures, throughout the life of our practice.

As we work, we will be sharing with you periodic resources and updates on our work to both illustrate the changes we are pursuing and to share what we have accomplished, learned, and need help with.

Sincerely,

Circle Yoga Racial Equity Team and the Circle Yoga Board of Directors