



Witness for Peace Anti-oppression Statement

Our organizational mission and covenant call us to be advocates for peace and justice in Latin America and the Caribbean. For the same reasons that we campaign for just policies in the global economy, we must also strive for peace and justice at home in the United States, in our communities, and in our own lives. This statement affirms our commitment, as members of the Witness for Peace community, to the continued challenge of working to liberate ourselves and others from all forms of oppression by improving our organizational culture, policies, and practices.

We understand oppression to mean systems of inequality that impact us on various planes of our identity: our age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, national origin, our mental or physical ability. The oppressor group receives rewards or privileges for participating in a system that de-humanizes the oppressed group. Messages that further dehumanize the targeted oppressed groups and reinforce oppressive systems are embedded not only in social policy, but also in the media, culture, and social institutions, like schools, workplaces, etc. Both consciously and unconsciously, these messages inform our daily actions and support the very unjust systems that harm us all.

If we are to create spaces that are liberatory, that embrace people's full potential as human beings, we must recognize that these systems of inequality can and do exist within Witness for Peace. It is up to us to work intentionally to undermine these oppressive systems, not only where they impact U.S. foreign policy, but inside our organization and ourselves. We must educate ourselves on how oppression has shaped our lives, both how we have been oppressed and how we have oppressed, and how we can be protagonists and allies in our joint liberation.

The people of the Americas hold many identities and life experiences. Privilege and oppression are found on both sides of artificially drawn borders. It is imperative to our work that our organization be representative of those who are impacted by unjust policies and practices. Diversity is one natural result of a holistic process that aims towards anti-oppressive thought and action.

While we strive to uphold these values, we understand that the work of dismantling systems of oppression in our society is an ongoing process. We each take responsibility for playing our part in making this a reality. We aspire to engage in collective processes of learning and reflection, to open space in the organization for difficult conversations; to make institutional changes that advance equity and inclusion, and to reflect on our individual beliefs and behaviors and how they perpetuate oppression. At the same time, we aspire to approach this work of liberation, within ourselves and with others, with grace and acceptance.