

# Nashville Continuum of Care Homelessness Planning Council

## **ANTI-RACISM PLEDGE (i.e. “Here’s how I’m going to show up.”)**

As the Nashville-Davidson County Continuum of Care (CoC) Homelessness Planning Council, we take the following pledge to dismantle racism:

We define racism as racial prejudice plus the misuse of power by systems and institutions (misuse can be intentional or unintentional). We are mindful of the racial inequities across housing, economic mobility, health care, criminal justice, and other systems. These all contribute to racial inequities in homelessness. For example, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are overrepresented in the population of people experiencing homelessness. Implicit (i.e. subconscious) biases of service providers can result in fewer housing opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Cognizant of institutional and structural racism as well as the daily realities of all forms of bias, prejudice and bigotry in our own life, our family, our circles of friends, our co-workers and the society in which we live, with conviction and hope:

We pledge to stay mindful of the power and privilege that we bring into every space that we enter and conversation that we have.

We pledge to actively and intentionally practice antiracism when participating on the CoC Homelessness Planning Council, representing this council and the CoC in the community, and in talking about homelessness and housing issues in Nashville. While the realities of racism are much larger than us and this council, the decisions we make day-to-day as professionals can literally either open or close doors for people. We have an opportunity to learn and make different choices about how we interact with colleagues and clients, which can in turn directly impact access to and experiences of housing and services, as well as health and economic outcomes of members of our community.

We pledge to use the knowledge we obtain and differing perspectives to which we are exposed to view each choice we make in our professional and personal lives as an opportunity to move towards racial justice or away from it. And we pledge to move towards it.

We pledge to educate ourselves individually on racial justice issues. We pledge to share what we learn in our own communities: with our family, our partner, our children, our friends, our co-workers and those we encounter on a daily basis, even if and especially when this means challenging people around us in the process. We pledge to have difficult conversations and endure uncomfortable interactions in order to deepen our own understanding through this sharing as well as give others the opportunity to come along with us so that we can move together towards justice. We pledge to choose being uncomfortable so that others can be safe.

We pledge to cultivate a life that encourages us to be confronted, accurately and often, with how racial injustice and inequity show up in our society.

We pledge to ally with others who commit to dismantling institutionalized racism in the wider community.

We pledge to remember and honor intersectionality: that all aspects of an individual's social and political identity, including their gender, race, class, sexuality, physical and mental abilities, cultures of origin and current cultural context, contribute to a person's experience and treatment, and that any combination of these aspects creates a unique lived experience. We will consider the intersection of these identities in thinking about how systems advantage or disadvantage people based on marginalized social identities and understanding that individuals' identities will impact how they experience racism.

We take this pledge, fully aware that the struggle to eliminate racism will not end with a mere pledge but calls for an ongoing transformation within each of us and the institutions and structures of our society.

We pledge to reflect internally and continue ongoing introspection to identify internal racial bias; to rebuke the use of racist language and behavior towards others; to root out such racism in our daily lives and in our encounters with persons we know and with strangers we do not know; and to expand our consciousness to be more aware and sensitive to our individual use of overt and subtle expressions of racism and racial stereotypes.

We recognize that no matter the level of our efforts to end racism, we will inevitably make mistakes in how we encounter this transformation. We therefore pledge to move forward with humility and compassion about the experiences of others, with vulnerability and sincerity about our own experiences, and with understanding of disparities that exist between our lived realities. We will remember that correction and accountability are vital to this process and commit to listening to others completely, to being challenged both privately and in group settings about our individual beliefs, and to take necessary time to consider the thoughts others offer us without reacting defensively.

We pledge to actively support practices and policies that prominently, openly and enthusiastically promote racial equity in homelessness and housing; and to actively support and devote our time to the CoC Homelessness Planning Council, as well as other groups and organizations, working to eradicate racism from our society.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*The term intersectionality was coined by Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989.

*This pledge has been adapted by members of the Nashville-Davidson CoC from the YWCA USA Stand Against Racism Pledge, which was adapted from the Pledge to Eliminate Racism in My Life, YWCA Bergen County which is an adaptation of the Pledge to Heal Racism in My Life, Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace, April 10, 2006.*