

## **BLOUNT COUNTY SHOWING UP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE (SURJ) – Values that Guide our Work**

SURJ encourages white people to act with passion and accountability as part of a nonviolent and nonpartisan multiracial majority to challenge racism in all its forms and to achieve the goal of ending racism in the United States. SURJ members believe that all people deserve access to the gifts of this life and that racial injustice is inconsistent with the values of compassion and integrity. We work to increase white people's awareness of benefits and power we may not personally choose or use, but have anyway. White people often have opportunities to challenge racism that people of color do not have. Blount County SURJ challenges white people to recognize our power, to talk with other white people about racism and to take responsibility for challenging the systemic racism of American society. We take action with others to change policies, practices and systems along with attitudes. Our local chapter is guided by the following values, adapted from general principles from the SURJ national network.

### **Call People In, Not Out**

- We call in white people to take action for racial justice. We work with white people who consider themselves opposed to racism yet who may not be publicly active in work against racism as well as with people who are already actively engaged.
- We do not shame or blame others who may not be ready to act. We meet people where they are and encourage them to become active.

### **Take Risks, Make Mistakes, Learn, and Keep Going**

- We know that we will have to take risks. Every day, people of color take risks living their lives with full dignity. We challenge ourselves and other white people to take risks as well, to stand up against racist actions, systems and structures.
- We know that in this process, we will make mistakes. We do not have all the answers. Our goal is to learn from our mistakes and keep showing up again and again for what is right and for racial justice.

### **Tap into Mutual Interests**

- We engage in work for racial justice from the understanding that our own humanity as white people is inextricably linked to racial justice, not from a perspective of 'helping others.'
- Mutual interest means our own freedom is bound up in the freedom of people of color. Sustained change happens when people of conscience take action based what is right for all people.

### **Accountable through Collective Action**

- Accountability means we work together with organizations led by people of color. Accountability does not mean waiting for people of color to tell us what to do. It means developing plans to organize in the white community, seeking feedback, and working with other organizations committed to racial justice.

### **There Is Enough for All**

- There are enough resources in the world for everyone's basic needs to be met (decent housing, food, health, safety) but the resources are unequally distributed and structurally contained to limit access for all. Racism keeps us divided instead of united, instead of united in working for what we all need to live full lives.
- Part of SURJ's role in organizing white people is to raise resources and other forms of support for people of color-led efforts, while engaging more white people in racial justice work.

### **Grow our Work**

- We need millions of white people to join the movement for racial justice. This means that SURJ groups need to grow.
- In order to build a movement, we need to be open to working with anyone ready to take action. We make opportunities for new members to learn new skills and do new things.

### **Put Class at the Center**

- White supremacy is a divide and rule strategy employed by the economically powerful in our capitalist system that exploits the poor and marginalized. If we want real change, including the end of racism, then the economic system has to change. We have the obligation to work to replace the dominant system with one that meets the needs of the world's people and respects the planet that sustains us.
- Middle- and owning-class white people disproportionately support and benefit from policies and practices that uphold white supremacy. Poor and working-class people of color and white people have shown up at the front lines of anti-racist struggle for generations. We need people of all class backgrounds in this work.

### **Other ways to connect with SURJ:**

- Find us on Facebook:
  - Public page: <https://www.facebook.com/blountcountysurj/>
  - Private group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/399359150436578/>
- Contact the Leadership Team: [blountcountysurj@gmail.com](mailto:blountcountysurj@gmail.com)
- Visit our website: <http://blountcountysurj.weebly.com/>