

M4BJ | Black Lives Matter–Canada | Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism Policies and Procedures

Equity & Anti-Oppression Policy
Date Reviewed: August 15, 2022
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Author: Executive Director
This policy applies to: ☒ All personnel of M4BJ, Black Lives Matter – Canada, and Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism ☒ Others in a work context which may include guests, volunteers, independent contractors or consultants
References: • Ontario Human Rights Commission: Suggested contents of an internal policy • Toronto Arts Council: Equity Priority Policy • Scarborough Campus Students' Union: Anti-Racism Policy

PREAMBLE

As an organization actively committed to dismantling all forms of anti-Blackness, we affirm that the ultimate goal of M4BJ (which include Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism and Black Lives Matter Canada) is Black liberation. This entails a future in which Black people on these Lands and across global colonial borders are free from white supremacy, capitalism, colonialism, misogyny, cissexism, heteropatriarchy, and all other forms of institutional, systemic and/or societal oppression.

At M4BJ, we oppose any/all discrimination on the grounds of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability, receipt of public assistance and/or record of offences. At the same time, we prioritize servicing all Black people, which include African, African-American, African-Canadian, Afro-Arab, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Indigenous and Afro-Latinx persons. Ultimately, working toward liberation for all Black people is embedded across all our programs, services, operations and strategic priorities.

M4BJ is also deeply attuned to the many ways in which inequities that enable power imbalances within our world, may show up within our own workspaces as well. In turn, this may trouble our ability to carry out our goals. As such, we have created a set of practical organizational commitments that reflect our dedication to fostering dignified, responsive and inclusive environments for all:

UNITY AGREEMENT

In order to become officially affiliated with Black Lives Matter Canada, each Chapter is required to abide by the guiding principles found below. By proxy, M4BJ extends these principles to all

others who are part of our network - staff, board of directors, volunteers and others. Every day, M4BJ and all its affiliates recommit to healing ourselves and each other through the following commitments, co-created alongside comrades, allies, and family a culture where each person feels seen, heard, and supported:

1. We are committed to Black-led chapters and we center Black leadership.
2. We acknowledge, respect, and celebrate differences and commonalities.
3. We work vigorously for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension, all people.
4. We intentionally build and nurture a beloved community that is bonded together through a beautiful struggle that is restorative, not depleting.
5. We are unapologetically Black in our positioning. In affirming that Black lives matter, we need not qualify our position. To love and desire freedom and justice for ourselves is a prerequisite for wanting the same for others.
6. We see ourselves as part of the global Black family, and we are aware of the different ways we are impacted or privileged as Black people who exist in different parts of the world.
7. We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status or location.
8. We are a trans-led organization and take direct leadership and guidance from trans people.
9. We build a space that affirms Black women and is free from sexism and misogyny.
10. We practice empathy. We engage comrades with the intent to learn about and connect with their contexts.
11. We make our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with or without their children by creating the conditions that support parent involvement in organizing.
12. We dismantle the patriarchal practice that requires caregivers' unpaid labour and create room for public and private caregiving that nurtures participation in public justice work.
13. We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and "villages" that collectively care for one another, especially our children, to the degree that mothers, parents and children are comfortable.
14. We are queer led and commit to ensuring we create a queer-affirming network. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormativity.
15. We cultivate an intergenerational and communal network free from ageism. We believe that people of all ages show up with the capacity to lead and learn.
16. We embody and practice justice, liberation, and peace in our engagements with one another.
17. We are an abolitionist organization.
18. We root our work in disability justice and Mad justice and justice for Deaf people. We recognize that we will only be free when we make the world safer for those who are most marginalized and we recognize the fact that many of the folks killed and affected by state violence are disproportionately from Deaf, Mad and disabled communities.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Employees, board members, space users and volunteers may refer to the Complaint Procedure within the organization's Violence and Harassment Policy. These sets of practices include suggested pathways for addressing systemic or interpersonal experiences of violence, harassment, abuse, and harm within our organization. Drawing on this policy is a way in which we create safety, justice, reparations, and healing without relying on police, prisons, childhood protection services, or any other state systems.

ADDITIONAL PRACTICES

- All M4BJ Policies are written and reviewed through an anti-oppressive lens, using our Unity Agreement as a foundational basis for our understanding of that perspective.
- For job opportunities across M4BJ, skills-based checklists based on the job description and requirements are used to help the evaluation process. At the same time, since candidates who identify as Black and hold other marginalized identities are the primary interest group of our organization, they are more strongly considered and prioritized for each role.
- M4BJ's workforce, its board of directors, all committees and other decision-making bodies reflect the diversity of Black artists, cultural workers, activists and other people who exist on these Lands.
- In order to facilitate inclusive internal communication, M4BJ encourages all team members to share, refer to, and respect gender pronouns used within Email Signatures, Zoom Names, Name Tags, Introductions, or other direct/indirect communication.
- We believe that learning and unlearning institutional, systemic and/or societal oppression is an unending journey. As such, anti-oppression workshops are scheduled on an annual basis. All staff and board members are required to attend, participate, and/or watch the discussion within 21 days of it being recorded. Volunteers and other affiliates are encouraged to attend, participate and/or watch the discussion recording.

MONITORING THE POLICY

If you have questions or comments about the policy or its application, please speak to your direct supervisor. M4BJ is open to making any required changes or amendments to its policies, and commits to an annual policy review.