

# THE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE POLICY MANUAL



## **Preamble**

“We believe social justice is both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure...The process for attaining the goal of social justice, we believe, should also be democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and capacities for working collaboratively to create change.”

*-Lee Anne Bell, Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice (2007)*

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*Acknowledgements*

## **1. Purpose**

This document contains definitions, policies, and guidelines for the Diversity Committee to follow in addition to the standing rules. This document may also serve as a resource for the ICC as a whole.

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## 2. Definitions

This policy manual includes specific terms on identities, oppression, and social justice. The following words, referred to throughout this policy manual, will be defined as such:

- **Agent Group Identity:** A social identity that yields an unfair advantage of power and privilege over other groups.
- **Target Group Identity:** A social identity that has historically been, and still is, marginalized, disenfranchised, oppressed, or exploited.
- **Ally:** An individual outside of the target group identity who is committed to ending injustices through education and action. Furthermore, the Diversity Committee recognizes that allyhood is a developmental process, not simply a label.
- **Oppression:** Social dominance over a group of people.
- **Cultural Oppression:** Social norms that reflect and reinforce the power of an agent group.
- **Individual Oppression:** Demeaning and oppressive behavior towards and treatment of a particular group or category of people, expressed through individual attitudes, beliefs, and values.
- **Societal Oppression:** Policies and individual behaviors that have a differential and/or harmful impact on target groups.
- **Prejudice:** A set of beliefs about a social group that causes individuals to judge others.
- **Discrimination:** A policy or behavior, typically based on prejudices, which unfairly distribute resources or denies access to members of social groups.
- **Safe Space:** An inclusive, supportive, and engaging culture where all individuals feel comfortable expressing themselves regardless of their social identities.

*Definitions based on The Program on Intergroup Relations – University of Michigan 2008 and CCR Anti-Oppression Policy – Canadian Council for Refugees 2009*

*\*Edited by the ICC Diversity Committee 2013-2014*

## 3. Social Justice within the Inter-Cooperative Council

The Diversity Committee recognizes that...

- The humanity and integrity of all peoples and individuals are to be respected, and that all people are deserving and capable of contributing to the Inter-Cooperative Council
- Equality and equity among members is a core principle of the cooperative movement, and necessary for democracy
- Oppression toward target social identities (racism, sexism, classism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, etc.) is widespread and internalized throughout society, as well within the ICC. Within the ICC, oppression can manifest in many forms, whether intentionally or not, such as within policies, standing rules, and bylaws; individual words behaviors; and social norms and expectations within houses and other ICC group settings.
- Oppression is antithetical to the values and mission of the ICC, and the wider cooperative movement.

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By dismantling oppressive attitudes through awareness, education, empowerment, and member accountability, the Inter-Cooperative Council can better realize its mission, improve the overall quality of life in its houses for members, and set a precedent of respect and acceptance for the wider Ann Arbor community and the world.

### **4. Steps for Social Justice Activism**

Issues of diversity, power and privilege, and social justice are difficult to identify and address, and vary depending on context. The following framework shall be used to help the Diversity Committee and its collaborators ensure the relevancy and effectiveness of its projects:

#### **Step 1. Identify issues** through

- Annually surveying the membership
- Increasing communication across committees and teams
- Continuous education for the Diversity Committee and the ICC as a whole

#### **Step 2. Investigate** through...

- Annually hosting focus groups and forums for members
- Ensuring open-ended responses within membership surveys
- Providing members opportunities to communicate experiences and concerns through raising awareness of the Diversity Committee, its collaborators, and external resources

#### **Step 3. Raise awareness** through...

- Addressing issues of prejudice and stigma, discrimination, harassment, and sexual assault through educational programs
- Creating engaging and appealing educational materials

#### **Step 4. Educate and empower** through...

- Providing members the knowledge and skills to be effective allies, including ways to intervene against microaggressions, discrimination, harassment, and sexual assault through educational programs for members

#### **Step 5. Sustain and institutionalize progress** through...

- Annually reviewing the Diversity Committee's policy
- Communicating with staff, the Coordinating Committee, and Board of Directors on a regular basis
- Providing intensive training for the future V.P. of the Diversity Committee

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### 5. Initiatives of the Diversity Committee

**Safe-Space:** The Diversity Committee will strive to cultivate safe-spaces in our community.

**Disability Accessibility:** The Diversity Committee will strive to increase the physical accessibility of our houses and ensure that the board is working toward its long-term goal of increasing disability accessibility in ICC houses through...

- Researching opportunities for funding to make houses ADA-compliant
- Raising awareness about demands for accessible housing through local organizations (e.g., Center for Independent Living, Services for Students with Disabilities)
- Advocating for the Board of Directors to allocate funds for modifications
- Provide recommendations to the board to ensure houses remain sensitive to disability issues
- Coordinate with the Sustainability Committee and the Financial Committee to improve physical accessibility of houses

**Education and Empowerment:** The Diversity Committee will strive to empower all members of the Inter-Cooperative Council to acquire the knowledge and skills to cultivate safe spaces. The Diversity Committee will collaborate with the Education Committee, create educational materials, and synchronize workshops for the general membership.

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