



Northlands Storytelling Network Equity Statement and Plan

“White supremacy is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent; for the purposes of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.”

- Robin DiAngelo, *What Does It Mean to Be White: Developing White Racial Literacy*

1. **Black Lives Matter:** On May 25th of this year, a Minneapolis police officer knelt on George Floyd’s neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds until he was dead. Mr. Floyd’s death sparked a surge in the decades-long movement to end structural racism and police violence against Black and Indigenous people and people of color [BIPOC]. As the protests continued, institutions of all kinds across the country responded to the movement’s invitation to identify and eliminate white supremacy within their own organizations. We, the Board, agree it is high time Northlands Storytelling Network answers that call.
2. **Northlands benefits and has benefitted from white supremacy:** The first step in this process is to admit that Northlands has benefitted from white supremacy as defined by Robin DiAngelo in the excerpt above:
 - a. The Northlands Board is now and historically has been disproportionately white
 - b. Performers and presenters at the annual conference have been disproportionately white
 - c. Attendees have been disproportionately white
 - d. Past BIPOC attendees have expressed discomfort with the comments of other attendees at the conference
3. **We’re sorry:** For our part in perpetuating systems that exploit and oppress people and communities of color, we are sorry. We are committed to making amends to our BIPOC membership, to non-member BIPOC storytellers who have felt unwelcomed and unsupported by Northlands, and to communities of color we have inadequately served and from whose stories our membership and organization have profited.

4. Making amends and doing better

a. Board

- i. Anti-racism training
- ii. Rectifying disproportionate representation

b. Representation

- i. Invite BIPOC storytellers outside the audition process
- ii. Invite BIPOC presenters outside the application process
- iii. Consider equitable representation in all aspects of Northlands (website, conference, social media, email communication, etc.)
- iv. Investigate the specific needs of BIPOC storytellers regarding workshop content and other conference offerings

c. Conference

- i. Curate performers' stories/coaching
Northlands takes a strong stand against the majority culture profiting from culturally appropriated stories and materials. A discussion of these issues can be found in five posts on cultural misappropriation on storyteller Donna Washington's blog; here is post 3:
<https://donna-washington-storyteller.blogspot.com/2019/09/cultural-misappropriation-is-easy-to-do.html>
- ii. Offer anti-racism training to annual conference attendees, performers, presenters, and hosts

d. Make anti-racism explicit in our values statement

5. **This is not sufficient:** We, the Board, are under no illusions that this process will be short nor that it will sufficiently address all ways that Northlands participates in systemic racism. We are committed to an ongoing and perpetual process of identifying and dismantling those systems, beginning with:

- a. Formal review and discussion of progress or lack thereof at annual Board retreat; informal review is ongoing
- b. Adding optional demographics questions to conference registration form
- c. Membership feedback and other actions suggested by our storytelling community

6. **We want to hear from BIPOC:** Much as it is the job of white people - not BIPOC - to fix white supremacy in our country generally, it is the job of the Northlands Board - not our BIPOC membership - to fix Northlands. Nonetheless, we anticipate that despite our best efforts and intentions to correct our own participation in structural racism, we will fail to identify and correct all the ways our organization could and should push back against it. As we begin our process, now and throughout, the Northlands Board would welcome and deeply appreciate feedback from BIPOC members and non-members, as well as storytellers of color outside of Northlands, regarding how we can do better. We are listening.