

Community of Care Statement

Within Free Minds, Free People, we strive to build and sustain a community of care. Doing so requires a lot of tough work. It's easy to romanticize the idea of "community" and "community building" in organizing spaces, but we all know there is the potential for activists and organizers to reproduce the same kinds of harm we claim to be opposed to. Does racism go away in organizing spaces? Does sexism, patriarchy, misogyny, or transmisogyny disappear in organizing spaces? Does anti-blackness, settler colonial logic, xenophobia, whiteness and ableism disappear in spaces committed to "social justice"? No! They don't. If you are called out for perpetuating any of



these things, please understand that it is not because we want to shame or put you down; we in fact want to draw you in closer by demonstrating compassion and care and doing the least harm to people in our communities.

We recognize that we are all entrenched in these systems of oppression and all have work to do. We must be principled and intentional about creating a more just and sustainable world. This world might look radically different than the one we currently inhabit, which is why a key value and intention of this year's conference is unlearning.

We see unlearning as an integral part of building a community of care. In order to truly be accountable to ourselves and others, we have to unlearn extractive, exploitative, transactional and generally harmful ways of being with one another when trying to affect transformative change. This might look like unlearning toxic masculinity, patriarchy, misogyny, ableism, and queerantagonism and transantagonism. It might require unlearning the idea that conferences are designed for intellectual posturing and educational opportunism. To bring about transformative change, there is a need to unlearn the notion that we can heal through harm, particularly police, jails, prisons, and the many carceral logics of the schoolhouse. Healing through harm is not sustainable. Healing through abolition and radical love is.

The FMFP virtual space presents its own unique challenges to cultivating a community of care and of individual wellbeing. Inspired by the statement created for the Young Activists, we ask everyone to consider how they show up in our virtual space. If you enact displays of power and oppression, we will not contact Whova, Zoom, the police or other repressive technologies. Instead, we will talk to you. We will check you, lovingly or otherwise. We will invite you to educate yourself, take accountability, and to re-learn how to interact with others in the space without enacting harm. If you cannot or are unwilling to take accountability and address it, we will show you the virtual door and remove you from the meeting. We strive to model transformative justice praxes, with the broader aim to make carceral logics and carceral systems obsolete. In doing so, we become living proof that **we** keep us safe.

Building a community of care begins with being accountable to ourselves and others. We invite you to join us in building and sustaining a community of care that reminds us that another world is not just possible, but present and always in full effect at Free Minds, Free People.

This evolving statement was first written for FMFP 2019 and revised for FMFP 2021.