



## Anti-racism Statement

Louisiana has worn the dubious crown of *Mass Incarceration Capital of the World* far too often. We understand the impact of incarceration on our community, especially as it affects young people of color. According to the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, 95% of detained juveniles in New Orleans are BIPOC youth. The roots of racism run deep in this community, reaching back hundreds of years and still impacting youth today.

In 2020, we saw recordings of incredible violence against Black people in our country. This violence - not new, but now more visible than ever - is only possible because we live in a systemically racist society founded on the white supremacist notion that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are inherently less worthy. YEAH! YOGA is an explicitly anti-racist organization committed to dismantling systems of oppression through our work and in the ways our organization itself is structured and operates.

As an organization dedicated to sharing the tools of yoga and meditation with youth involved with or impacted by the carceral system in the Greater New Orleans area, we aim to disrupt the cycle of incarceration that disproportionately impacts young Black men. We are committed to the ongoing anti-racist education of our team members, so that we as individuals, and we as an organization, can continue to examine and address the ways in which we, directly and indirectly, inflict harm.

We are committed to continuously and consistently using an anti-racist frame in our decision-making, including - and especially - in decisions pertaining to the formalization of our organizational structure and processes. Driven by the belief that we, as an organization, must embody our vision of just and equitable structures, and recognizing that power dynamics are inherent to all systems, we strive to create non-patriarchal and non-hierarchical organizational structures in order to minimize power asymmetries. We also recognize that the majority of the youth we teach and serve are BIPOC, and that they need to see themselves represented in the organization's leadership and offerings. To this end, we are committed to actively and continuously engaging with the young people we serve to hear what they have to say and to honor their voices through action. We are committed to the diversification of our leadership team and the continued cultivation of young leaders with the ultimate goal of creating a leadership team that is truly reflective of the people we serve.

We also recognize that now, more than ever, healing is of the essence. Trauma lives in the body and influences how we act and move through the world on a daily basis. Trauma is not limited to an individual's experience: violent systems - like racism - traumatize everyone, not just those who are oppressed. As Resmaa Menakem puts it:

While we see anger and violence in the streets of our country, the real battlefield is inside our bodies. If we are to survive as a country, it is inside our bodies where this conflict will need to be resolved. [...] We will not fix the problem of structural racism and racial violence in this country unless we heal the ways that racial trauma lives in our bodies. It will not happen.

We are committed to continue sharing the healing tools of yoga and meditation with young people impacted by the carceral system, to help build a more just and equitable society.