

IN SOLIDARITY

#BlackLivesMatter



Image source: The Seattle Times, June 7

There is movement against systemic racism, against police brutality and racial injustice. There is movement to live without fear.

There is movement that we cannot ignore.

We must work together to tear down the systems that perpetuate racism in our society. We are ALL impacted by systemic racism, whether we realize it or not. Many live it every day. Some face it occasionally. Those that have never experienced it directly, have a bigger responsibility. They must acknowledge their privileges and take action against the racist systems that target and impact people of color.

We can no longer be silent, indifferent, unresponsive. We must fight for racial equity and social justice.

The Sophia Way commits to speaking up and taking action to fight inequity, discrimination, and injustice.

We commit to ***listening*** to people with lived experiences. We commit to ***understanding and learning*** from their stories. We commit to ***amplifying*** their voices. We commit to ***disrupting systemic racism*** that create inequities throughout our society.

We want justice. We want it now. The Sophia Way will continue to use our voice and platform to make progress together.

Racism affects everyone, everywhere. Our nation will change when all – me, you, we, us, they, them – come together to change.



Alisa Chatinsky
Executive Director

"Change starts with me and you. It takes root when we commit to listen and learn. It grows when we stand up for what is right. It blossoms when we open our hearts to the beauty inside each of us. We have started. We won't stop."

- Maya Subramanian
Board Chair

"Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'Life's most persistent and urgent question is, What are you doing for others?'

We are living in unprecedented times and more than ever we need to make systemic changes against racism in our country. There must be equal rights and equality for all. We must create a new legacy, a different tomorrow especially for women experiencing homelessness. We are committed to help build an equitable, resilient, and just society where all women live lives of opportunity, are thriving and have the right to a life of joy, pride, happiness and wealth, rather than a legacy of trauma and shame."

- Evelyn Marymee
Board Member

The Community We Serve

"What we see at the shelter is a mirror of what is happening with society on a bigger scale. There are systemic issues – poverty, racism, lack of living wages, out-of-reach rents – that contribute to rising homelessness, and the disproportionate number of women of color who are homeless." - Dietra Clayton, Director of Client Services & Shelter Programs, The Sophia Way.

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are disproportionately effected by inequities in housing. **46% of women seeking shelter at The Sophia Way are women of color.**

In 2019, the majority of individuals experiencing homelessness in Seattle/King County identified as BIPOC. When compared to the racial demographics of the county's general population, the largest disparities were observed among those identifying as Black or African American ([32% in the Point-in-Time Count compared to 6% in the general King County population](#)), Hispanic or Latino (15% compared to 10%), and Native American/Alaskan Native (10% compared to <1%).

We are informed by the [CDC](#) that current data suggests a disproportionate burden of illness and death due to the coronavirus pandemic among racial and ethnic minority groups. Many black communities often have a harder time accessing health services. Dr. Jeff Duchin, a health officer for Seattle and King County, said in The Seattle Times, *"It's been an ongoing national tragedy and shame that we have communities of color throughout our county suffering disproportionate adverse health impacts from a wide variety of health conditions."*

This Is What We Are Doing

PRACTICES

1. Continue to make shelters a safe space for ALL women seeking support and services.
2. Reaffirm the commitment to offer a safe space, free from judgement and racism for all employees, and a culture of belonging, caring, and acceptance.
3. Continue to provide a rich and fulfilling environment for our staff – recognizing and rewarding staff's work to support and serve women experiencing homelessness.
4. Provide education resources and training to staff and volunteers about systemic racism, racial equity, advocacy, as well as the harmful impact of white privilege.
5. Ensure our hiring practices continue to include recruiting BIPOC for all positions.
6. Training hiring managers to recognize implicit bias and combat against it.
7. Commitment to increase diversity in our staff and board.
8. Create an advisory group of staff, board members, and supporters to listen and hear all voices.
9. Have open conversations to promote racial understanding and equity.

ADVOCACY

1. Advocate for policies and systems of the city and state to eliminate racism and create a safe space for all.
2. Identify and support candidates from different racial and ethnic groups to run for city council and other community-wide governing bodies.
3. Refuse to engage with business or people who discriminate, intimidate, or abuse people.
4. Encourage community members to speak up against racism and be a voice for those impacted.

10. Be proactive in seeking suggestions and helping staff, volunteers, and supporters feel safe in sharing their experiences.

What You Can Do

[Learn and Act: Anti-Racist Resource List](#) from United Way of King County

[Talking about Race & Equity](#): University of Washington



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