

ANTI-RACISM STATEMENT

Art Refuge is committed to challenging racism in all its forms, and we stand in solidarity with anti-racism movements in the UK and internationally. We recognise racism as structural, institutional and interpersonal, whilst recognising the responsibility we hold as an organisation working with people who have experienced displacement, conflict and discrimination.

Our charity is registered in Bristol, which, as a City of Sanctuary, aims to provide welcome, safety and hope for all. However, we acknowledge that Bristol was historically central to the UK slave trade, from which the city reaped the benefits of diversity and we recognise that the legacies of slavery and empire continue to shape inequalities, including for people seeking asylum and refuge today. We work in partnership with local organisations to make that welcome tangible through creative, trauma-informed spaces.

Ongoing racial violence around the world and widening global inequalities, often exacerbated by global emergencies, highlight the deep-rooted racism present in our societies. These realities reinforce our own commitment to opposing racism, reflecting on our practices, learning from these experiences, and taking meaningful action within our organisation in our work with displaced communities, throughout our partnerships.

Many displaced people face challenges along their journeys to safety. After arriving in their country of destination, they may continue to experience oppression, persecution and victimisation within a wider 'hostile environment' that criminalises movement. Displaced people may also face the complexities of asylum, including threats of deportation, racialised barriers to access support, and unfavourable policies. Rising up to meet such challenges is central to refugee advocacy and the movement for racial justice, including recognising colonial legacies and their links to asylum and refuge. We acknowledge that experiences of racism and exclusion are often intersectional, shaped by gender, class, disability, age, faith, language, sexuality, and immigration status. Where possible, we seek to centre the leadership, knowledge, and creative practices of people with lived experience of displacement and racism in the design and delivery of our work, supporting their strength, dignity, and resilience while recognising these wider contexts.

As a small organisation, we commit to taking practical, proportionate steps to embed anti-racist practice across our work. Art Refuge resolves to:

- Strengthen our collaboration with global majority heritage artists and art therapists, especially those originating from regions of conflict, persecution and poverty.
- Partner with artists and art therapists from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, as well as those from a refugee background.
- Widen the racial/ethnic diversity of our Board whenever a recruitment opportunity arises.
- Educate ourselves and continuously listen and learn about the history, contemporary forms and impacts of racism, including how they relate to forced migration/displacement.
- Remaining familiar with-relevant anti-racism legislation and guidance.
- Learn from our colleagues, artists and community members of all races/ethnicities.
- Contribute to environments where racism and discrimination are actively challenged.

- Recognise that institutional racism is ingrained throughout society and commit to challenging it through our work and conduct.
- Review this statement annually as part of our governance cycle.

This statement supports and complements Art Refuge Equality & Diversity Policy and Safeguarding Policy. Art Refuge remains committed to contributing to racial justice through our creative, therapeutic and community-based work.

The arts and art therapy sectors, like many other sectors, have simultaneously suffered from and perpetuated systemic and structural inequities. We pledge to be part of the anti-racism work that needs to take place so that these sectors can embrace and celebrate the diversity of the arts and art therapy communities.

Art Refuge will continue using the transformative power of art and art therapy to contribute to the social justice, equity and positive social change that is greatly needed in order for all individuals in society to feel safe, respected and valued.