

## **GTWA Policy on Discrimination and Harassment**

In our Vision Statement we state:

1. “We are united by an anti-capitalist, anti-racist, feminist, queer-positive, and anti-oppression politics.”
2. To this end, the Workers’ Assembly must ensure an atmosphere welcoming to the full participation and political development of all those marginalized by capitalist society. This is not an optional extra. Capitalism is very effective in dividing the working class – in its broadest possible definition – in ways that ensure the perpetuation of discriminatory practices. Overcoming these divisions is essential to our capacity to build and to inspire a new politics.

### ***Discrimination***

3. Attention to anti-oppression politics must apply in the planning of all meetings, events and activities, and in communication among members. This is not only or mainly the responsibility of those who suffer from specific forms of oppression. Every member needs to actively challenge barriers, in any form; these barriers are based not only on the perpetuation of discriminatory practices, but also on the refusal to acknowledge the impact of the various forms discrimination. These processes target, but are not reducible to: gender identity, including women, queer and trans people; people with a disability; youth and the elderly; those stigmatized by poverty or other forms of class-based marginality; and racialized peoples, including those who experience Islamophobia, anti-Semitism or anti-immigrant and racialized stereotyping.
4. To meet these goals, all Workers’ Assembly members need to be aware of our anti-discrimination policies, goals and practices as a condition of membership. Statements to this end are important. But to leave this as merely a matter of a statement of an abstract principle of inclusiveness is insufficient. After all, inclusive statements are a standard element of liberal capitalist society, the same society that continues to perpetuate systemic discrimination.

### ***Harassment***

5. Harassment of Assembly members, observers and supporters is antithetical to our political project. Assembly members need to be respectful with their language and actions within Assembly spaces, and where ever the name and work of the Assembly is represented. Harassment is usually defined as behaviours, actions and/or comments that are aggravating, aggressive and/or unwelcome. Examples of harassment include:

- Derogatory remarks or jokes
- Belittling or ridiculing another Assembly member or observer
- Threatening and abusive language, including threats of violence or retaliation
- Physically intimidating behaviours
- Yelling or shouting during Assembly meetings
- Unwanted physical contact, including leering and staring
- Unwelcome comments about physical appearance or clothing

- Unwelcome advances or propositions
- Isolating or excluding Assembly members by withholding information, resources or advice
- Offensive and aggressive language in emails and over Assembly listservs

6. This list provides an outline of common harassing behaviours but is not exhaustive. The Assembly needs to address complaints of harassment and work to raise consciousness among members about personal harassment.

7. We also recognize that we want to avoid producing a culture of blame, and acknowledge the need to work collectively to challenge harassing behaviours over time and as an ongoing collective process. At the same time we need to take seriously all complaints against other Assembly members.

### ***Complaints Policy and Process***

8. Our policy is therefore clear. Acts of discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated in the Workers' Assembly. Actions which negatively impact members' ability to participate in Assembly meetings and events (including social events) need to be handled collectively. It is the responsibility of all members to promote a culture that fosters solidarity by taking seriously anti-oppression politics within our organization. In addition, the Assembly needs to handle complaints through a collective process.

9. Each co-ordinating committee should incorporate a commitment to anti-discrimination and anti-oppression policies, including taking complaints and grievances seriously, as part of its mandate. Each co-ordinating committee should designate two members with skills in addressing harassment and discrimination who can address cases as they arise in meetings or any area of work related of the Assembly.

10. We want to ensure a process where a complaints policy works smoothly to this end. If this process is in place, we can advise all members of the Assembly as follows: "If you have experienced or witnessed harassment or discrimination, or if you are uncomfortable and want advice regarding a situation that raises related concerns, you can speak to one of the two members designated to address your concerns. If requested, these conversations will be kept confidential."

### ***Systemic Discrimination***

11. We recognize that we live within and are surrounded by capitalist institutions and ideologies that perpetuate divisions and oppressive hierarchies. Indeed, as our Vision Statement also notes: "Capitalism is a barrier to human development. It has defined our successes as obstacles to progress and has deepened the grossest inequalities here and across the globe in the name of 'competitiveness'".

12. Most forms of discrimination we can expect to encounter in the work of the Workers' Assembly will likely be embedded in "subtle" forms of exclusion (that are in fact harshly tangible to those on the receiving end). These can include discriminatory or biased

language, habits of exclusion or stereotyping, mimicking of unacceptable behaviour cultivated in capitalist society, or perpetuating systemic biases. All members – no matter how long they have been involved in the Workers’ Assembly process – need to be aware of the ongoing centrality of anti-discrimination policies and goals in all of our work, and the consequent ongoing need for education and training in implementation such policies and making our goals clear.

13. Anti-discrimination practices need to be considered, for example, in the development of all our campaigns, in our publications, in the symbols and slogans we put forward on our banners and posters, in the language we use in our communications with members and supporters, in the leadership models we advance, and in the role models we present as speakers at our forums, as chair people, and as representatives of our theory and practice.

14. Moreover, we need to attend to the specificities of each form of discrimination. This is not the same as merely listing multiple forms of oppression in an abstract manner. We cannot assume that those who, for example, are familiar with challenging one form of discrimination, are also attuned to any other. Moreover, as capitalism differentially targets various oppressed groups, there may be times and places when highlighting one specific form of discrimination and the fight against it moves front and centre in a given campaign. This does not mean that we rank oppressions, but that we approach the specific form and character of various types of oppression within any given context.

15. While we oppose all specific discriminatory acts, we recognize that anti-discrimination education and training is an ongoing part of our work, including our development of new norms and practices. These may not be standardized among the various sectors or communities of our work. We need to see anti-discrimination activity and education as an ongoing and continuing process, both among Workers’ Assembly members, and between the Workers’ Assembly and the wider communities we wish to reach. We need to recognize that there are varying levels of knowledge and expertise among our members regarding various forms of discrimination. Listening to those who attempt to address discriminatory practices – even if this might strike some of us as awkward or uncomfortable – is a crucial part of this process. A dismissive or defensive response to calls to attend to specific forms of discrimination can serve to perpetuate divisions. Alternatively, we need to strive to highlight and generalize expertise and skills in various forms of anti-oppression politics, and recognize that we all have much to learn.