

## **JRI Health Law Institute Anti-Racism Statement**

The JRI Health Law Institute (HLI) is a small, statewide grassroots legal team providing representation for eviction defense and tenancy rights, public benefits appeals, healthcare access, criminal record sealing, and more. We represent people living with and at high risk for HIV/AIDS using a low-barrier, Medical-Legal Partnership model. As legal advocates we recognize that our profession and the systems within which we operate are racist and rooted in white supremacy. We recognize that the law has been used to steal land, enslave communities, erase cultures, and justify killings. The outcomes from these systems create and perpetuate significant racial disparities, and those disparities fall disproportionately on Black and Indigenous people and other people of color. As central to our mission, we actively reject all racism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, anti-Semitism, ageism, classism, ableism, and all other forms of hate speech or actions that attempt to silence, threaten, and marginalize the oppressed. We commit to:

- (1) Fighting injustice by working in partnership with our clients and their support systems to help them achieve the health and justice we all deserve;
- (2) Prioritizing racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and lived experience diversity amongst our own staff and in our partnerships; and
- (3) Using client-centered and trauma-informed practices to advance social justice and anti-racist transformation.

Currently we engage in anti-racist lawyering by using preventative and proactive interventions for our clients, educating the legal and medical communities about longstanding structural racism in HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, and engaging in self-education about anti-racism and white supremacy. We believe our role is not to simply instruct our clients in the course of decision-making but to support them by centering their needs and goals in assessing legal issues. We value the diversity and lived experience of our staff and partners as a critical asset in building client trust and understanding, while recognizing that we all come to this work with biases and barriers that we must overcome. Moreover, we embrace community-based approaches and collaborate with a wide range of chosen supports, including family, friends, medical case managers, and other relevant partners. This collaborative model has often enabled us to provide holistic legal services that are culturally-responsive across racial and ethnic identities, but we know this is not enough.

Our goal moving forward is to expand our capacity to disrupt racist systems, institutions, and policies. We will better amplify the voices of our clients of color by leveraging the data we collect and applying a social context, reflecting upon client feedback, and remaining engaged and flexible as the needs and priorities of our clients develop or change. We will utilize the many strengths and perspectives of our team to support our clients in their legal issues and lives, and develop opportunities to foster diversity among our staff. Most importantly, we will prioritize the use of our legal services to confront and combat racism. We fiercely believe in a world in which our clients' health and wellbeing is not impacted by white supremacy and all its forms of hate, and we hope to help lay the foundation of that future.