

Initiate Justice Community Values

Incarceration is a hurtful and ineffective practice. We are all in community with each other with the shared goal of advocating to end incarceration. We must be careful to avoid recreating harmful systems or spaces. We commit to these values, and this community of allied and impacted people.

Initiate Justice staff and facilitators commit to creating a place of care and safety. We require you, our community, to be proactive in keeping our spaces safe for everyone.

As a community we all agree that:

We are the experts of our own experiences and we respect others' stories. We can become advocacy and storytelling experts with the help of each other, but our experiences are what make us each unique. We understand that sharing our stories is an effective advocacy tool, and it also impacts our relationships with ourselves, and others. We commit to respecting everyone's story, especially if their experiences are different from ours. In respecting others' stories, we do not share their experiences without their permission and we do not interrogate the experiences of others.

We understand that language matters and we use language that empowers others. We use people-centered language and acknowledge everyone's right to self-identify however they choose. People-centered language has proven to be effective in shifting culture, changing law, and healing. We use and teach this in all of our spaces.

We are intentional about how we show up. How we show up in Initiate Justice spaces, and in other spaces matters. We take space, and make space. We are aware that our communities are connected through our experiences with traumatic systems and we can serve each other better by being mindful of this.

We are always learning. Learning is a transformative and continuous practice. We are always growing together and adding new opportunities for education. We encourage and ask questions for better understanding. Feedback and conflict are best used as learning tools. If we engage in either, we do so to grow our understanding.

We advocate from an intersectional, abolitionist lens. Through our abolitionist lens, we commit to building new systems of care that are rooted in community. We challenge ourselves and others to understand and address root causes of harm. Our intersectional lens reminds us that everyone has a variety of experiences that make up who they are and how they identify. At Initiate Justice, we commit to fighting for the freedom of all people no matter how they identify. We will not liberate some at the expense of others.