



# THE TENETS

DIVERSITY-INFORMED TENETS FOR WORK  
WITH INFANTS, CHILDREN & FAMILIES

“It is our duty to fight for our freedom.  
It is our duty to win.  
We must love each other and support each other.  
We have nothing to lose but our chains.”  
- Assata Shakur

“things are not getting worse, they are getting uncovered.  
we must hold each other tight and pull back the veil.”  
- adrienne maree brown

*[This letter discusses state violence, particularly police violence, and demands for justice, reparations, and liberation for Black people.]*

Dear Tenets Community,

We say their names:

Breonna Taylor

George Floyd

Ahmaud Arbery

Tony McDade

Dreasjon Reed

*And countless other Black people who have died because of state and community violence since the colonization of Turtle Island and the becoming of the “United States”*

We recognize that the racialized violence, the lack of justice for the survivors/victims, and the depth of impact on Black and Brown communities by the COVID-19 pandemic is only made possible by the ways that white supremacy and anti-Black racism is woven into the fabric of our country's values, institutions, systems, and structures.

We also recognize that the collective grief, exposure of the truth, and demands for justice and reparations for Black people carries centuries of resistance, re-imagining, and re-building led by Black people.

In this time, we return to the Tenets as our rooting, our compass, and our vision. The Tenets remind us that in order to see and create change we must start with ourselves.

By **beginning** with Tenet #1: (Self-Awareness Leads to Better Services for Families) and Tenet #3 (Work to Acknowledge Privilege and Combat Discrimination), we commit ourselves to...

- (For those of us who are Black) Experiencing and acknowledging what is happening in this moment, including noticing how oppression is rooted in our minds and bodies, and how we care for ourselves.
- (For those of us who are Black) Noticing how we internalize oppression and what that means for how we respond or not respond in this moment and how we care for ourselves during this time.
- (For those of us who are non-Black) Facing, disrupting, and transforming the ways that we have been socialized in anti-Blackness, the ways that anti-Blackness shows up in our families, and our perpetuation of anti-Blackness.
- (For those of us who are non-Black) Leveraging our privilege, power, and platforms to expose the truth about historical trauma, racial violence and white supremacy rather than using words that contribute to veiling/sugarcoating or are complicit with a legacy of racial terror, particularly towards Black people.

By **reflecting on** Tenet #4 (Recognize and Respect Non-Dominant Bodies of Knowledge), Tenet #6 (Understand that Language Can Hurt or Heal), and Tenet #7 (Support Families in Their Preferred Language), we come to understand that...

- Each expression of grief has meaning. For those of us who are non-Black, we have no place in judging or policing those expressions.
- Acknowledging and making visible the various expressions of white supremacy at work and in our personal lives has an impact
- Choosing to name expressions of white supremacy has power and potential in our personal and professional relationships
- No single policy or practice will change what is being exposed and intensified.

By **applying** Tenet #2 (Champion Children's Rights Globally), Tenet #5 (Honor Diverse Family Structures), Tenet #8 (Allocate Resources to Systems Change), Tenet #9 (Make Space and Open Pathways), and Tenet #10 (Advance Policy that Supports All Families), we place into practice...

- Ensuring that people directly impacted have space, time, and flexibility to grieve, heal, rest, and engage in the ways that they can and want.
- Exposing how anti-Blackness manifests in our work and organizations and choosing to transform it.
- (For those of us who are non-Black) Taking on additional work to ensure change.

With the Tenets in our mind and heart, we commit to re-building and re-imagining this world from an understanding of intertwined fates -- that it is only when every Black life matters, is protected, and has liberation that we can truly have the highest possible standard of equity, inclusivity, and justice for all.

We are the systems and bridge builders. There is no one but ourselves that can create change and take action.

In Community,  
Tenets Initiative Advisory Council

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Developed and disseminated by the Tenets Initiative, The Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children and Families (Tenets) are a set of strategies and tools for strengthening the commitment and capacity of professionals, organizations and systems that serve infants, children and families to embed diversity, inclusion and equity principles into their work.

The Tenets Initiative offers workshops and technical assistance to help individuals, organizations, and systems link the Tenets to their spheres of practice by reaching new levels of self-understanding, unpacking programmatic and

organizational practices, and analyzing policy efforts to effect change. We start by engaging with a central assumption: we cannot do work in diversity, equity and inclusion without beginning with ourselves.

The Tenets were created from a working group of [Irving Harris Foundation](#) grantees and staff committed to advancing work with infants, children and families by thinking about diversity, inclusion and equity as core values in which all who work with families should aspire to. The Foundation seeded the Tenets and plays a central role in nurturing the development of the Tenets. Today, the Irving Harris Foundation also serves as the Tenets Initiative's fiscal sponsor.

To learn more, visit: [diversityinformedtenets.org](https://diversityinformedtenets.org).