

Core Assumptions

This document lays out some core assumptions that serve as the foundation of why and how SURJ DC teams and organizers do our work together. We don't expect everyone joining SURJ DC to know these things already, but we expect our members, leaders, and organizers to grow in their understandings around these topics, and to understand why we hold them as central to our work.

First is that **white supremacy**, as a system, **is real and has noticeable harmful effects on people's lives**. White supremacy takes on multiple forms -- racism, anti-Semitism, colonialism, imperialism, etc. -- and is interwoven with other forms of oppression -- heteropatriarchy, ableism, Christian hegemony, etc. -- which are also real and also have noticeable harmful effects.

Second -- as has been articulated many times, for many years, by Black people, Indigenous people, and other People of Color -- **white people must actively work to dismantle white supremacy**. This is the core of why SURJ, and SURJ DC -- as organizations that deliberately organize white people -- exist. We open-heartedly welcome People of Color who choose to organize within SURJ, recognizing that our focus is on organizing white folks.

Third, we believe that **white supremacy upholds capitalism**. We define capitalism as the current social and economic system that accumulates wealth in the hands of a few people, extracting that wealth from the lives and bodies of so many of us, as well as from the world's ecosystems. If we act as though white supremacy is not deeply connected to capitalism, we address only part of the problem. To root out white supremacy, we also have to change how economic power functions in this country.

Fourth, we recognize that **we have a personal and communal stake in collective liberation**. We're not doing this work to save others. White people need to do deep internal and communal work, particularly in healing from the deeply-entrenched lessons and traumas of Christian white supremacist heteropatriarchy. We also need to learn new ways of being, both individually and communally, to divest ourselves from what we've been taught and to join in solidarity to work together for the common good.

Fifth, to end white supremacy **we need a movement that asks all of us to grow into our most powerful, fullest selves**, one where we recognize all people as valuable and whole, where we can creatively and generatively build community and power. We work in collaboration and partnership with Black, People of Color, Indigenous, and Immigrant-led organizations; for more on this, please read our [Model of Accountability](#).

And finally, to work together powerfully, **we don't need to understand everything the same way**, even the things core to our organization. Respectful, loving, principled disagreement is necessary to our movement and our future. We encourage and seek vibrant political discourse that understands and responds to existing power structures, including within white communities.