

## **INNOCENCE NETWORK STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

The Innocence Network acknowledges the historical and pervasive systems of racism, privilege, inequity, colonialism, sexism, and oppression of minority groups present both in the United States and throughout the world. These historical and systemic forms of injustice represent the repeated failures of our institutions and systems—including institutions like the Innocence Network—to uphold values of equity and justice, particularly for Black and African-American people, for Indigenous people and communities of color more broadly, and for the LGBTQ+ community.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential to our work redressing the causes of and advocating for the eradication of wrongful convictions. Diverse, equitable, and inclusive environments make us better colleagues and better advocates, as we take opportunities to learn from each other and grow. To promote justice and equity for all, the Innocence Network commits to advocating for, enacting, and embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Network, as well as throughout the work of the Network and its member organizations.

### **Our Definitions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

- **Diversity** is the representation of differing backgrounds and points of view, particularly with regard to race, ethnicity, sex, gender expression and identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, immigration status, prior contacts with the criminal legal system, political viewpoints, and socioeconomic background. Diversity brings different voices together in a respectful manner, and highlights the value in our differences.
- **Equity** seeks to recognize, understand, and counteract the societal structures that have created and perpetuated unfairness, injustice, and oppression among marginalized populations. Accordingly, equitable practices promote fair and respectable treatment, universal access to opportunities and resources, and just outcomes for all.
- **Inclusion** recognizes the inherent value of a diversity of people and perspectives in any institution, organization, or movement; creates balance in the face of power differences; and cultivates a culture of welcoming, worth, safety and belonging for the entire community.

## **Affirmation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as Core Values**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values of the Innocence Network. We acknowledge and honor the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals. We pledge ourselves to creating and maintaining an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, and experiences. While recognizing that the interests of our clients are at the center of our work, we commit to instilling in our member organizations the importance of cultural humility, and we hold ourselves accountable to recognizing and eradicating inequities that may create barriers to empowering our colleagues and our clients. We will continually assess diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Network, and will be transparent about our efforts and progress. We reject behaviors that are inconsistent with our DEI values.

## **Our Work and Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

The Innocence Network works to:

- Overturn the wrongful convictions of innocent people while highlighting the fact that, especially for clients of color, such convictions often stem from systemic inequities including racism, sexism, discrimination based on gender identity and/or expression, and socioeconomic imbalance.
- Practice cultural humility with our clients, and have full and informed relationships with them.
- Recruit, hire, and retain more attorneys and staff of color at all levels of innocence work, particularly for leadership roles, using equitable employment practices. Do so with an eye towards supporting colleagues of color in the Network, and providing clients--largely people of color themselves--the opportunity for positive legal interactions with people with whom they might feel a shared group identity.
- Grow cultural humility within the Innocence Network through added opportunities for guided self-reflection and critique, as well as opportunities to interact with and learn from clients and colleagues with diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- End unjust and inequitable practices that disproportionately affect marginalized people in our criminal legal system (for example, the manipulation by the police of youth, the mentally ill, mothers who are grieving the loss of a child, and people of color, to obtain false confessions).
- Recognize and address the consequences of wrongful incarceration and amplify the voices of the wrongfully convicted, their families, and other affected persons.

The Innocence Network recognizes that additional forms of inequality and oppression persist that are not outlined in this Statement, which is meant to be inclusive, but not exhaustive. The Innocence Network further commits to remaining apprised of the changing nature of injustice, and of shifts in power and privilege over time. Accordingly, this statement will remain a living document, to be re-considered and revised every three to five years, because our drive to attain a diverse, equitable, and inclusive society is unending.