

## YWCA Missoula Summary of Anti-Racism Audit Results - 2023

In October 2023 [Widerstand Consulting](#) conducted an anti-racism audit for YWCA Missoula, evaluating six key areas: Identity & Mission, Organizational Culture, Program Initiatives, Staffing Patterns, Accountability, and Structure & Constituency. The audit emphasizes the importance of intentional, committed, and deliberate actions to transform YWCA Missoula into an anti-racist institution.

The audit identified YWCA Missoula's position on a [continuum](#) from stage 1 to 6 in each key area, using markers of anti-racism institutional transformation:

- **Identity & Mission (Stage 4- Claims anti-racist commitments, articulates core principles):**
  - YWCA is in the "proclamation" stage, clearly stating its mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote justice, freedom, and dignity.
  - Implementation efforts include policies on wage equity, Indigenous smudging, and an anti-racism task force.
  - Discrepancies exist between aspirations and on-the-ground practices, particularly in serving a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community with a predominantly white staff and board.
- **Organizational Culture (Stage 3- Denies white supremacy culture):**
  - YWCA is in the "cosmetic" stage, acknowledging racism but not fully addressing white supremacy culture in daily operations, decision-making, and power dynamics.
  - Lack of explicit acknowledgment of systemic issues affecting clients and BIPOC staff.
- **Program Initiatives (Stage 3- Initiatives focus on celebration of diversity):**
  - Programs are in "cosmetic" stage, addressing diversity but not hierarchy, privilege, and oppression.
  - External programs addressing racism are seen as additional tasks rather than central to the organization's activities.
- **Staffing Patterns (Stage 3- Less than 20% BIPOC staff, short stays):**
  - Predominantly white leadership raises questions about diversity and inclusion efforts.
  - Mixed messages on the organization's commitment to anti-racism, with internal discrepancies and a need for genuine internal transformation.
- **Accountability (Stage 2- Deemed unnecessary):**
  - Accountability to the BIPOC community is in the "neutral" stage, with insufficient consideration of the essential role of BIPOC perspectives, voices, and leadership in decision-making processes.
  - Recognition that intent is not sufficient, and accountability must be actively integrated into the organization's structure and practices.

- **Structure & Constituency (Stage 3- Leaves control and access untouched):**
  - Historical examination reveals the YWCA's origins as a Christian institution, initially focused on aiding white women and upholding practices of settler colonialism.
  - Existing structure, including an overwhelmingly white leadership, indicates a cosmetic commitment to change without addressing systemic barriers to white dominance.
  - Emphasizes the need for intentional efforts to challenge and dismantle existing systems, critically evaluate policies, and actively promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### **Key Recommendations and Action Items for Accountability:**

- Recognize the impact of racism within our structures and systems rather than just intentions.
- Commit to decolonization and address colonialist "multicultural" practices.
- Actively work to diversify leadership.
- Develop specific methods of accountability and transparency to BIPOC community members, residents, and staff.
- Understand the root causes of homelessness for Indigenous people and work to avoid replicating historic harm.
- Continue anti-racism training for staff and board, including trainings that address issues of power and privilege and focus specifically on dismantling white privilege.
- Establish a community Accountability Council with BIPOC outside of the YWCA staff, to assist in reviewing policies to ensure they are culturally appropriate.
- Build partnerships and relationships with BIPOC institutions and organizations and actively participate in their events and initiatives.
- Revisit agency policies and procedures through an anti-racism lens.
- Commit to creating a welcoming environment for BIPOC staff and participants and establish clear guidelines and policies that promote diversity, inclusion, and antiracist practices throughout all levels of the organization.