

Activists Against Racism Movement (AARM)

Working Program

November, 2008

I. Vision (The Ability to look into the future):

An independent organization of informed and committed community members working consistently and effectively to eradicate racism.

II. Mission (The task, business, and duty that a group is sent forth to carry out):

To: expose, confront, and actively oppose racism within ourselves, and within our local, regional and national communities; facilitate education, responsibility and accountability regarding individual and institutionalized racism --- in order to increase awareness, knowledge, and participation in anti-racism work.

III. Structure

1. Leadership

a) Definition

AARM's work is guided by a Leadership Team, which is charged with the responsibility of making decisions that are necessary in order to coordinate AARM's work. Except in clear cases of emergency, the Leadership Team will collaborate with the organization's general membership regarding all decisions that require official organizational positions (written or otherwise) and/or actions. The Leadership Team is composed of Chairpersons of the following Standing Committees: Education, Technology, Public Relations, and Recruitment. The number of Standing Committees may be expanded in accordance with need and/or membership interests.

b) Roles and Responsibilities

Chairpersons are responsible for convening their respective Committees at least once a month, and keeping the Leadership Team and General Membership informed regarding activities and progress.

c) Committee Descriptions

Education Committee: The Education Committee Chairperson will initiate and help coordinate educational programs and activities designed to increase knowledge, understanding, ability and commitment of AARM's members to effectively expose, confront and actively oppose racism within ourselves, and within our local, regional and national communities; initiate collaborative efforts with

individuals and institutions within the local, regional and national communities relative to increasing knowledge, understanding, ability and commitment to effectively expose, confront and actively oppose racism; develop and/or disseminate information among AARM's members and the general community regarding the historical and continued existence, development and perpetuation of racism within U.S. society and the world; recruit individuals from the General Membership to serve on the Education Committee.

Technology Committee: The Technology Committee Chairperson will work to meet the technical needs of AARM. This includes creating and maintaining AARM's website, email lists and other internet technologies, and also setting up whatever technology is needed to facilitate AARM's events, for example TVs, projectors and sound systems. The Technology Committee should work to spread their knowledge to other members of AARM, and to the community as a whole; recruit individuals from the General Membership to serve on the Technology Committee.

Public Relations Committee: The Public Relations Committee Chairperson will initiate and help coordinate efforts to inform the community about AARM's existence and work; assist in the development and distribution of press releases to the media and/or general public; recruit individuals from the General Membership to serve on the Public Relations Committee.

Recruitment Committee: The Recruitment Committee Chairperson will initiate and coordinate efforts to inform the community of issues related to racism, and in so doing, attempt to gain support and active participation of community members in facilitation and implementation of AARM's Vision and Mission; recruit individuals from the General Membership to serve on the Recruitment Committee.

Treasurer: The Treasurer will preside over all financial matters, including maintenance of accurate financial records; present financial reports at Leadership Team meetings, and upon requests by General Members.

Fundraising Committee: The Fundraising Committee Chairperson will initiate and coordinate activities and events to raise funds for AARM; recruit individuals from the General Membership to serve on the Fundraising Committee

2. General Membership

a) Definition

General Members of AARM includes individuals who agree with AARM's Working Program, and agree to work toward implementation of AARM's goals and objectives.

b) Requirements and process for becoming an AARM member

In order to become a member of AARM, individuals must:

- attend four consecutive General meetings
- decide and inform the Chairperson of the Standing Committee that he or she is willing to serve on.

Acceptance of potential new members into the organization will occur at the second meeting of each month.

c) Roles and Responsibilities

General Members' roles and responsibilities include attending General Membership meetings regularly; joining and participating in at least one AARM Standing Committee; actively supporting events and programs sponsored and/or endorsed by AARM.

IV. Rules and By-Laws

1. Decision-making

a) General Process

The decision-making process for AARM's Leadership Team, Committees and General Membership meetings is based on consensus. All meetings are open to the general public, but only AARM members in good standing may participate in decision-making.

b) Committees

Major decisions should not be made during Committee meetings, especially if implementation of action is required. Such issues must be presented and approved during an official General Membership meeting.

2. Amending AARM's Working Program

a) In accordance with the decision-making process defined above, AARM's Working Program may be amended by the organization's General Membership during an official General Membership meeting.

b) In cooperation with the General Membership, the Leadership Team shall conduct a thorough review of AARM's Working Program during the first, official Leadership Team meeting of each year, and make adjustments and revisions as needed.

3. Core Values

a) **Respect each participant and appreciate each one's diversity.**

b) **Value and consider all contributions; belittle none. Withhold evaluation until sufficient information has been gathered.**

c) **Allow people to express their opinions freely.**

d) **Keep to the mission at hand. Avoid side conversations.**

e) **Expect the truth to surface in the clash of differing opinions. Optimum solutions emerge from a diversity of opinion.**

f) **Contribute to maintaining a friendly atmosphere by speaking with courtesy, dignity, care and moderation. This will promote unity and openness.**

ARM's Decision-Making Process

AARM uses consensus to make decisions. This means everyone takes part in making decisions, and no decision is made if everyone doesn't think it's a good idea -- or at least an idea they can live with.

Consensus is not voting or majority rule. In voting, the community chooses between a set of choices. In consensus, the group works to create a decision that synthesizes everyone's ideas and meets everyone's needs. In majority rule, when 51% of a group want something, then the other 49% have to go along. In consensus, decisions are not made until every person is comfortable with them.

Consensus Process

- 1) **Brainstorming / Idea Gathering** – The first step to making a decision is an open brainstorming session, in which everyone can throw out potential ideas.
- 2) **Rough proposal** – At some point the brainstorming session will begin to move towards a particular direction. At that point, a member of the group should sum it up in a concrete proposal.
- 3) **Proposal discussion** – Once an idea is proposed the group discusses the pros and cons of the proposal. During the discussion, the proposal can be amended and modified. At this point it is important for members to clearly articulate differences in thought. If members have concerns with the proposal, it is their responsibility to put forward alternatives.
- 4) **Calls for concerns/objections** – When the proposal is well understood by everyone, and there are no more calls for changes, the facilitator should ask for a final time if anyone in the group has concerns with it. Concerns generally fall into 4 categories:

Non-approval (“I don’t see a need for this, but I can go along.”)

Reservations (“I think that this may be a mistake, but I can live with it.”)

Standing aside (“I personally can’t do this, but I won’t stop the rest of the group from going forward.”)

Blocking (“I can’t support this decision or let the group go forward with it.”)

If no one has concerns, then the decision is made. If people’s concerns fall into the first three categories, then the decision can still be made, although it’s better if everyone fully agrees. If someone chooses to block a decision, then the group can’t make it. Blocks should be reserved for extremely serious situations where someone believes a decision

goes against their moral or ethical values or would be a major strategic or tactical error for the group to make.

Additional Notes

In practice, decisions are often made without going through every step listed above. For simple decisions it might just be a matter of someone proposing an idea and the facilitator asking, "anyone have a concern with that?" If no one raises a concern, the decision is made. However, for difficult decisions it's important not to rush the process, and to make sure everyone's input gets out on the table before making a proposal and that a proposal is fully discussed before calling the question on it.

A common criticism of consensus is that it seems like decisions will take forever to get made. However if the group is on the same page and if meetings are facilitated well, decisions can be made quite rapidly. Sometimes it will take longer to reach a decision, but the positive side is that better, quality decisions are made when everyone is involved. Also, decisions often get put into action faster when everyone is fully behind them.