

ANTI-OPPRESSION & SAFER SPACES POLICY

WHAT IS ANTI-OPPRESSION?

Anti-Oppression practice requires “actively challenging and removing **oppression** perpetuated by power inequalities in society, both **systemic oppression** and **individual expressions of oppression**” ([CCR, 2009](#)).

PEARL COMMITS TO AN ANTI-OPPRESSION FRAMEWORK

PEARL incorporates an anti-oppressive approach to all aspects of its work including but not limited to internal procedures, human resources, advocacy, research, public education, capacity building, communications etc.

PEARL works to ensure that the individuals it works with and incorporates as part of its community are reflective of the diversity of the Tamil community and its broader support base.

PEARL aims to hold space for and centre the voices, leadership, and participation of oppressed-caste folk, womxn, queer, trans, non-binary folks, neurodiverse folks, LGBTQ+ and others historically excluded from Tamil spaces, in all of its work.

WHAT IS A SAFER SPACE?

“A safer space is a supportive, non-threatening environment that encourages open-mindedness, respect, a willingness to learn from others, as well as physical and mental safety” ([Coalition for Safer Spaces, 2010](#)).

Such definition also includes, open dialogue in a manner that allows various opinions to be expressed without the fear attack. Furthermore, a safer space requires participants to be critical of the power structures that affect our everyday lives. Finally a safer space strives to respect and understand survivors’ specific needs. Everyone who enters a safer space has a responsibility to uphold the values of the space ([Coalition for Safer Spaces, 2010](#)). Below are several rules of conduct that all participants of PEARL events must aim to abide by.

CREATING A SAFER SPACE: RULES OF CONDUCT

1. Respect peoples’ opinions, beliefs, experiences and differing points of view.
2. Respect everyone’s identity and background, including pronouns and names. Do not assume anyone’s **gender identity**, sexual preference, economic status, background, health etc.
3. Zero-tolerance: The following will not be tolerated in this community: **racism, ableism, classism, sexism, bigotry, transphobia, misogyny, casteism, tone-policing,**

SWERF or **TERF rhetoric, ageism, anti-blackness, anti-semitism, islamophobia, fatphobia, homophobia, sl*tshaming** and other forms of exclusionary behaviour.

4. Respect everyone's physical and emotional boundaries. Check in in before discussing topics that may be **triggering** (e.g. sexual abuse or physical violence), and use **trigger warnings** during presentations, events, online forums, and/or any other PEARL affiliated channel.
5. Physical and/or verbal threats will not be tolerated at PEARL meetings, events, online forums, or other channels under any circumstances. Disruptive individuals may be asked to leave the space.
6. Be responsible for your own actions; be aware that your actions have an effect on others, despite what your intentions may be. Listen and change your behavior if someone tells you that you are making them uncomfortable.
7. Be aware of your prejudices and privileges and the space you take up at PEARL meetings, events, online forums, or other channels.
8. The following will not be tolerated: attacking person, beliefs or nationality; being demeaning, belittling, threatening, obscene, intruding or rude; harassment of any nature; disclosing another person's private information without permission.
9. The 3 D's are all good: discussion, debate and disagreement. But please remember, it is important to remain civil and to be polite and respectful. We all benefit from an ongoing of civility and open-mindedness.
10. Kindly remember, "*Hate speech is not free speech*"

The staff at PEARL are empowered to enforce these rules. If you cannot abide by the guidelines mentioned above, PEARL reserves the right to ask you to leave a space, stop your involvement, and/or rectify your behaviour. If you experience harassment, abuse, or sexual assault, or if a perpetrator of sexual violence is interfering with your participation or presence at any PEARL related space, please approach a PEARL volunteer or staff person whom you feel comfortable talking to in person or via email. They are here to help with any conflicts arising from the violation of our policies.

We welcome the continuing discussion about and improvement of this policy.

GLOSSARY*

ABLEISM: Discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities with the belief that “typical” abilities are superior ([Olson, 2019](#)).

AGEISM: A socially constructed perception of older persons based on negative attitudes and stereotypes about aging and a tendency to structure society based on an assumption that everyone is young — failing to respond appropriately to the real needs of older persons ([OHRC, n.d.a.](#)).

ANTI-BLACK RACISM: “Anti-Black racism is prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping or discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and colonization” ([Centennial College, n.d.](#)). Furthermore, anti-blackness is a theoretical framework that emphasizes society’s inability to recognize black humanity ([Ross, 2020](#)).

ANTI-SEMITISM: Hostility or discrimination against Jewish people as a religious, ethnic or racial group ([Merriam-Webster, 2020.](#)).

BIGOTRY: Intolerance towards those who hold different beliefs and opinions from oneself ([Lexico, 2020](#)).

CASTEISM: Prejudice or antagonism directed at someone of a different caste or an oppressed caste ([Lexico, 2020](#)).

CLASSISM: Classism is when someone is treated differently—better or worse—because of their class or perceived class. Where “class” is defined as a relative social rank determined by income, wealth, education, status/position and power ([Class Action, n.d.](#)).

FATPHOBIA: The fear and dislike of fat people and the stigmatization of people with bigger bodies ([SRH Week, n.d.](#)).

GENDER IDENTITY: A person’s internal and individual experience of gender — their sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person’s gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex ([OHRC, n.d.b.](#)).

HOMOPHOBIA: Homophobia is “the fear, hatred, discomfort with, or mistrust of people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual” ([Planned Parenthood, n.d.a.](#)).

* This glossary is not intended to be comprehensive explanation of listed terms but rather a starting point towards better understanding the space that PEARL aims to foster. Feel free to consult other resources or speak to a PEARL member if you have any questions or concerns.

INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSIONS [OF OPPRESSION]: The “demeaning and oppressive behaviour towards and treatment of a particular group or category of people, expressed through individual attitudes, beliefs and values” ([CCR, 2009](#)).

ISLAMOPHOBIA: A is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness ([Definition of Islamophobia, 2019](#)).

MISOGYNY: Feelings of hating women which involves a combination of hatred, dislike or mistrust of women as a whole ([Dictionary.com, n.d.a](#)).

OPPRESSION: “The use of power or privilege by a socially, politically, economically, culturally dominant group (or groups) to disempower (take away or reduce power), marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate one social group or category” ([CCR, 2009](#)).

RACISM: “Racism is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time. Racism operates at a number of levels, in particular, individual, systemic and societal” ([OHRC, n.d.c](#)).

SEXISM: “Attitudes or behavior based on traditional stereotypes of gender roles, as well as discrimination or devaluation based on a person’s sex or gender” ([Dictionary.com, n.d.b](#)).

SL*TSHAMING: Slut shaming is the deliberate effort to discredit people by associating them with sexual deviancy, especially sexual immodesty and promiscuity. Furthermore, as form of social stigma, slut shaming involves creating categories of sexual normalcy and deviancy ([Sweeney, 2017](#)).

SWERF RHETORIC: Sex Worker-Exclusionary Radical Feminist rhetoric refers to feminists who “support the empowering aims of radical feminism, but they don’t extend their support to sex workers, believing sex work, including pornography and prostitution, inevitably objectifies and oppresses women” ([Dictionary.com, n.d.c](#)).

TERF RHETORIC: Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist rhetoric refers to “feminists who exclude transgender women from their interpretation of feminism out of belief that they aren’t women, or that they reinforce sexist, binary roles” ([Dictionary.com, n.d.c](#))

SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION: “Consists of practices, policies, laws and standards that disadvantage a particular group or category of people” ([CCR, 2009](#)).

TONE-POLICING: Tone policing focuses on the emotion behind a message rather than the

message itself and as a result protects privileged people and silence people who are hurting ([Hugs, 2015](#)).

TRANSPHOBIA: “Transphobia is the fear, hatred, disbelief, or mistrust of people who are transgender, thought to be transgender, or whose gender expression doesn’t conform to traditional gender roles” ([Planned Parenthood, n.d.b](#)).

TRIGGER WARNING: “ A statement at the start of a piece of writing, video, etc., alerting the reader or viewer to the fact that it contains potentially distressing material” ([Lexico, 2020](#)).

TRIGGERING: Something read, seen or heard which causes someone emotional distress, typically as a result of arousing feelings or memories associated with a particular traumatic experience ([Lexico, 2020](#)).

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