

CCFN Nondiscrimination and Anti-racism Policy

Crossroads has a strict zero-tolerance nondiscrimination and anti-racism policy. We recognize that systemic racism is historical and persistent. Our food system was built under colonialism, institutionalized racism, and capitalism, and many negative aspects of it continue to disproportionately affect members of historically disenfranchised communities, including Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other People of Color. We are working toward creating more inclusive spaces and calling out oppressive behavior, defined as any conduct that demeans, marginalizes, rejects, threatens, or harms anyone on the basis of ability, age, cultural background, education, ethnicity, gender or gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, physical appearance, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Understanding Crossroads' place within the spaces known as Langley Park and Takoma Park includes acknowledging that white European colonizers stole the land from First Nations peoples. Additionally, we recognize that this nation was founded on the enslavement of African people, and the legacy remains as institutionalized racism and food apartheid. We know that to dismantle the detrimental effects of our country's history, we must center the voices, perspectives, ideas, and contributions of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people as well as women, immigrants, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, non-binary and trans people, and all other historically underrepresented community members. As an organization, we are working to create a platform for more of these voices to be heard.

This policy is a work in progress, and we are grateful for the work of Leah Penniman, Naima Penniman, and others at Soul Fire Farm, Karen Washington of Black Urban Growers, and many others whose activities and policies inform and inspire our approach to being an anti-racist organization.

Healthy Eating Program:

We believe there's more to being healthy than just the absence of illness. Wellness embodies the power of choice and freedom from anxiety, particularly around food, nourishment, and income inequality.

Food apartheid is an intentional practice of excluding Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other People of Color from positions of power in the food system; as a result, these groups of people disproportionately face diet-related diseases. The Healthy Eating Program strives to bridge the health gap by holding space for sharing practices and methods for cooking with whole, locally available, and culturally appropriate ingredients. To best accommodate this:

- We meet people where they are and reject the white European idea that there is only one way to be healthy.
- We uplift the vast, rich, expansive knowledge that exists within the communities that make up our network of food growers, makers, and consumers.
- We seek to cultivate supportive learning communities at various community sites.
- Diverse experiences and perspectives through story sharing enhance our programming.
- We offer programming in English and Spanish.
- Organizational partners, farmers, chefs, and others in our community often lead programming.

Crossroads Farmers Market:

The US agriculture system is built on a history of oppression, privilege, land theft, and disenfranchisement. White European descendants continue to maintain and hoard priority access to land and resources, including farmers markets. In Maryland, farms and farmers markets are majority white spaces, and as a result, communities of color have unequal access to land ownership, fresh produce, representation, and economic opportunities. These white-dominant spaces have excluded communities of color including farmers, food makers, and shoppers. In our ongoing work to build more equity in the food system and uplift voices and businesses of the majority Black, Brown, and immigrant communities of the Takoma/Langley Crossroads, the Crossroads Farmers Market supports and recruits producers, food entrepreneurs, and small businesses that represent its diverse community.

We actively listen to and request feedback from vendors and the community, and it is the community that informs and guides the programs, services, and foods at the market.

By welcoming Black, Brown, and immigrant farmers and vendors, we hold space for:

- Culturally responsive produce that community members desire
- Meeting the local demands of diverse shoppers
- Trainings, resources, applications, translation services, and business support in English and Spanish

By offering matching money to federal nutrition benefits, we:

- Prioritize shoppers' freedom to buy the foods they want for their families at accessible prices
- Ensure farmers receive a fair price for their product

By employing and empowering local community ambassadors, we:

- Build trust within the community and increase opportunities for more people to access fresh produce
- Connect more neighbors to resources they may not have previously known about
- Share personal stories and experiences that others can relate to

By partnering with local community organizations, we:

- Exchange resources and knowledge on-site with partners and community members
- Employ de-escalation strategies to maintain a safe community space

- Offer trainings to volunteers, vendors, and staff
- Strive to create an intentional and inclusive community gathering space that is beyond commerce and brings visible joy to all people regardless of age or background

Moreover, the goals of the farmers market are to uplift and support Black-, Brown-, immigrant-, and women-owned businesses and to provide a longstanding space that actively addresses the concerns of the community through food, education, resources, and activities for all ages.

TPSS Community Kitchen and MDP Program:

For Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other People of Color as well as women and immigrants, starting a business can be challenging. There is usually a lack in funding, resources, or access to mentoring, and many start-ups fail. This stems from systemic racism that plays out in many ways, including the prevention of access to loans, credit, and land ownership. The many insurmountable barriers result in a process in which an entrepreneur works very hard to put all of their resources into one business that, if it fails, can frequently be the only shot that person has the capacity to take. Often there is a belief that, “this must succeed or all hope is lost.” Such thinking is not the mindset and growth trajectory of many successful entrepreneurs, and it can limit a person’s ability to try and fail and try again to start a new business.

The Microenterprise Development Program (MDP) and Takoma Park Silver Spring Community Kitchen address these challenges. In response to community demand, MDP was established to assist entrepreneurs who need help to make their food businesses grow and thrive and the shared-use community kitchen provides an affordable means of production. Together, they empower women, immigrant, Black, and Brown food entrepreneurs to overcome barriers in the food industry, enabling them to build self-sustaining businesses by:

- Providing access to wealth creation opportunities
- Bringing diversity into the local food economy
- Developing and bridging resources for entrepreneurship
- Creating networks for sales outlets
- within our community to support Black-, Brown-, and women-owned businesses
- Incorporating skills development for small and medium enterprises
- Developing a kitchen community that shares best practices
- Invigorating diverse experiences in the community with cultural interaction

By merging nonprofit programming with business coaching and infrastructure, MDP and the kitchen are addressing a problem of accessibility for historically disenfranchised entrepreneurs who desire to thrive in business.