



Our Commitment to Addressing Systemic Racism

The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery have once again highlighted the ways in which our justice, healthcare, and other systems commit violence against Black people. In light of this reality and inspired by the insight and expertise of reproductive justice leaders we'd like to help bridge understanding from these events to our work at Converge.

Converge was founded because we saw the need for people to have access to person-centered, non-coercive, high quality family planning care that prioritizes reproductive autonomy. Too many organizations are focused on increasing access for some women to certain longer-acting methods of birth control (LARCs) and not enough on ensuring all people can access quality care. We reject the idea that women should be pushed toward form of contraceptive over another and instead have devoted considerable resources to developing tools and trainings that promote shared-decision making for family planning care.

Structural and individual racism have long been acknowledged as a blight in the reproductive healthcare space. We are based in Mississippi, a state with a long history of exploiting Black bodies; in fact, forced sterilizations of Black women were so common in Mississippi that they were known as a "Mississippi appendectomy." Fannie Lou Hamer shed light on these injustices and was a leader in the Mississippi Civil Rights movement.

In 1994 Black women scholars created the Reproductive Justice Framework to address how race, gender, class, ability, nationality, and sexuality intersect. As white women, we continue to call ourselves to account for learning and engaging in questions of equity, antiracism, and commit to listening to our communities and our peers in the reproductive justice space.

Converge developed values and definitions as part of our strategic plan. We are committed to these being present in all our external and internal work.

- **Equity:** Race, income, geography, and/or identity should not determine whether a patient has access to high quality family planning care.
- **Collaboration:** People from different organizations and the community are given equal opportunity to share their perspective. Big problems require listening and the honest perspective of diverse partners.
- **Innovation:** We want to do things in a new way that no one else has done before; we develop new solutions to old problems
- **Quality:** We value the addition of patient-centered approaches to the ongoing discussion of what "quality family planning care" means. Definitions of quality that include patient experience and patient-centered focus would mean patients would feel more valued and trusted.

All people have a right to reproductive justice. While Converge is not a reproductive justice organization, we are committed to:

- Partnering in meaningful and lasting ways with reproductive justice partners and activists to ensure that our work aligns with the urgent need to ensure all work is noncoercive and honors the autonomy and lived experiences of all people.
- Paying people for their labor, in particular Black woman consultants we engage to inform our work.
- Continuing to increase the diversity of the Converge Board.
- Recruiting a diverse staff.
- Including Reproductive Justice principles and education in all Converge -branded trainings, developed in partnership with Reproductive Justice experts.

We recognize that this is life-long work and we are committed to having honest, on-going, challenging, and courageous conversations about how our work is addressing systemic racism in reproductive health care.

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