

# Witness Against Torture Community Values

The following statement is meant to identify a set of core beliefs, values and commitments held in common by members of Witness Against Torture. It is intended for the purposes of guidance and accountability, whenever we come together in our collective working spaces or for public actions. It should also inform what we say as a collective through public statements and social media.

## **We believe...**

that building community together is an essential, primary and ongoing task, one that makes our political work sustainable, effective and life-giving. The WAT community seeks to be inclusive, mutually supportive and outwardly focused, while placing the men at Guantanamo- those who have been torn from their own loved ones and communities- at our center. We strive to make decisions collectively and consensually, to share the task of leadership, to encourage free expression and resolve conflict nonviolently. Our community will make space for all human emotions, particularly anger and grief, as we work together toward freedom for those imprisoned as well as for ourselves. We commit to collectively holding, respecting and working through these emotions when together, in an environment of safety and support. Mindful of the ravages that racism, sexism and white supremacy have wrought on our culture and society, and ourselves, we pay particular attention to various ways in which these pathologies present themselves in our words and deeds, individually and as a collective. We will protect and look out for one another. As a beloved community, we will maintain an outward focus, supporting the struggles of others involved in anti-oppression work, linking arms with them whenever appropriate or expedient, and inviting them into our circle as well.

## **We recognize...**

expressions of spirituality as ways of tapping into unseen realities that move the world toward love, justice, healing and freedom. Our gatherings and public actions are rife with music, poetry, storytelling, life-giving reflections, visual art, dancing, fasting, feasting, prayer, and silence. Our spirituality is nonsectarian, respectful of all spiritual traditions, and embraces a morality based in human rights and dignity for all. As a way of expressing this spirituality politically, we embrace a circular methodology of reflection and action: Collective reflection enables us to “locate” ourselves within the context of the socio-political situation, and to clarify what the times demand of us. Thus our reflection moves us toward action, which leads us into deeper reflection, and so on. Leaving space for all forms of spiritual expression enables us to take action on behalf of justice in a unified, inclusive and rooted way.

## **We seek...**

to center the voices of those most affected by the systematic oppression which we oppose, and to embrace their collective struggle, in all of our deliberations, as well as our public actions. We seek to grow in political awareness, building a clear understanding of structural and institutional oppressions. We articulate a critique of militarism, racism (including islamophobia), mass incarceration, economic injustice and all of the atrocities inherent to war. We are about the hard work of dismantling personal, cultural and systemic racism, and understanding our positionality as a collective. (ie our group's historical whiteness and christianity).

## **We are...**

an action-based collective occupying public spaces with creative, artistic political actions lifting up the voices of the men in Guantanamo; expressing love, rage, hope, solidarity, resistance. We come out of a tradition (include catholic worker/jonah house) that embraces creative non-violence, including civil disobedience and civil resistance.