



Renewable Northwest: Statement on Systemic Racism

By: Nicole Hughes

On June 16, 2020, Renewable Northwest Executive Director Nicole Hughes sent the following letter to Renewable Northwest members.

As I reflect on the unrest we are experiencing in this nation over the continued oppression of people of color, I have been asking myself, what role do I and the organization I represent play in the system of white supremacy? As a white leader of a mostly white organization whose members too are led by predominantly white leadership, I encourage us all to reflect on our individual and organizational roles in systemic racism and work towards its eradication. To me this means making room for voices of the underrepresented and oppressed to be heard. It also means using the organization's platform to amplify the voices of people of color. It most definitely means taking a close look at ourselves, the makeup of our organizations, the organizations we support and what they stand for.

While the work of Renewable Northwest has been very narrowly focused on the renewables industry and the benefits of decarbonization, as any other organization in this nation, we cannot ignore or excuse ourselves from addressing issues of systemic racism. In our industry we see systemic racism in the disproportional effects climate change has on communities of color. We also see inequitable access to clean energy and associated economic benefits in underserved and mostly minority communities. Fossil fuel combustion and the effects of climate change are the greatest public health threat we face. However, without acknowledgement that these impacts are proven to affect people of color to a degree far greater than white populations, we are merely perpetuating the system of white supremacy. While we cannot slow down or back off on our goals to transition our region to a clean energy economy, we do need to make space for consideration of how the impacts and benefits of our work may affect communities of color.

Renewable Northwest does not have the answers to the questions of how to end our nation's continued practice of white supremacy, however, we do have the ability to elevate voices of organizations that do. Organizations whose mission it is to expose and dismantle systemic racism — and to provide a platform for and support the underrepresented and oppressed — need our support now more than ever. Renewable

Northwest will be supporting and listening to organizations that do this work in our community. We will also make space to ensure these groups' messages are heard and will commit to continual reflection on what role the organization plays in either perpetuating systemic racism or working towards solutions. I encourage all white leaders to take the time to listen to and support the organizations in your community that advocate for equity and an end to systemic racism.