

Forest ReLeaf of Missouri: Statement of Racial Inequality

Forest ReLeaf of Missouri condemns racial injustice – both seen and unseen – in all its forms. We stand with those that are suffering from police brutality, limited by white supremacy, and fighting for racial equality. Black lives matter.

Forest ReLeaf of Missouri believes in the power of “trees +people” to help create healthy, resilient communities. We strive to bring these benefits to all Missourian regardless of race or economic status. Acknowledging that systemic racism has limited green infrastructure investments in predominantly Black neighborhoods, we have taken steps to enhance support in these areas. Through our Priority ReLeaf program we provide over 3,000 trees/year in under-resourced communities. With intention, we have expanded planting projects and programming with partners working deeply within these communities including Beyond Housing and Better Family Life. Guided *Forward through Ferguson*, we have supported youth jobs through the St. Louis Green Teen Alliance, provided trees and other support for Plant for Peace projects across the City, and cultivated relationships with grassroots groups in neighborhoods that need trees the most.

Forest ReLeaf is moving closer to our equity ideal but we have a long way to go to fully reflect social and environmental justice.

At Forest ReLeaf we pledge to take this action in 2020 to better serve our organization’s mission to enrich all communities:

- Expand resources and volunteer opportunities to more BIPOC people and communities (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).
- Continue to reach out to BIPOC - led organizations and places of faith to partner on community-driven projects, promote available programs, and facilitate participation.
- Shine a light on the important environmental contributions of BIPOC individuals.
- Increase racial diversity on our board and in our spheres of influence to better represent the communities we serve.
- Use our platform as a voice for social and environmental justice.

The voices and messages of our fellow citizens marching ring loud and clear in our ears. All people deserve to be seen, heard, welcomed, included and respected. ReLeaf is dedicated to listening and learning as much as we can from our Black community members and will take their lead on how we can best serve as allies, advocates, and helpers. We will also set and share measurable benchmarks to hold ourselves accountable for real change. If you have something to offer or would like to have a deeper dialog about this topic, please reach out directly to me. I, along with the entire Forest ReLeaf of Missouri family, welcome your insight, perspective, resources, and recommendations.

Meridith Perkins, Executive Director, mperkins@moreleaf.org

6/5/2020