

NORTH SEATTLE PROGRESSIVES COMMUNITY AGREEMENT

A. PURPOSE

North Seattle Progressives (NSP) is a grassroots, community-based, all-volunteer, organization. We support political policies that promote tolerance, equity, civil liberties, the environment, and social and economic justice for all. We believe in the ability of an educated and informed electorate to make sound decisions democratically. We oppose unjust political policies based on exclusion, racism, bigotry, inequality, hate, lies, and fear. We oppose the Trump administration's agenda and oppose racist, fascist, and totalitarian policies in our society. We seek to encourage progressive values at all levels of government from the federal government down to the state and local level.

The bedrock of NSP is our hands-on, boots-on-the-ground activism. We put our principles into action and fight to resist Trump, those who enable him, and the injury he is doing to all us, particularly marginalized communities. We support policies that promote participatory democracy, social and environmental justice, inclusion of marginalized communities, and the integration of intersectionality into all our actions. Understanding intersectionality will allow us to work more effectively to address the obstacles marginalized communities face and the intensity of the oppression they experience. We understand that we have work to do in our own communities to educate ourselves and others on institutional racism. Our goal is to unite all Americans regardless of party affiliation, demand that our elected officials uphold justice for all, and elevate the voices of members of marginalized communities.

This Community Agreement outlines our expectations for all who participate in our group. We invite all those who participate in NSP to help us create safe, inclusive, and constructive experiences for everyone. This Community Agreement applies to both in-person NSP meetings and events and to discussions on our Facebook pages and other forms of social media. Our Facebook groups are moderated to ensure posts are constructive, action-oriented, and comply with this Community Agreement.

We encourage members to be informed and conscientious citizens of our diverse local community. We encourage members to consider privilege and how to ensure that our group is open to people of color, other members of marginalized communities, those in need of help and assistance, and to engage in constructive alliances. We seek ways to network with other advocacy groups to support our purposes.

B. COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

The following behavior, which promotes community and civil discourse, is agreed to for all NSP members:

1. **Be authentic.** Participate in activities that contribute to NSP's purposes. Members are welcome to initiate actions to share and amplify those purposes.
2. **Be compassionate.** Approach your engagement with compassion for your fellow NSP members. These are difficult times and we are wrestling with emotional issues. The anonymity of online conversations, using only written words, can lead us to say things we would never say in person and to miss important social cues that are present when engaging in person.
3. **Build community.** Look for ways to build relationships and alliances.

4. **Listen.** Stop and listen actively. Reach out with empathy to ask why someone has said something you find disturbing. Many disagreements are the results of misunderstandings. Avoid being defensive. Feelings of defensiveness or anger can be an indication to step back and take a break.
5. **Explain.** When you disagree with what someone says, focus on the reasons you disagree. We encourage respectful dialogue and recognize that we will not always be in full agreement. Avoid taking opposing views personally.
6. **Be aware of privilege.** Think about what you are saying or writing especially if it relates to a group that lacks privilege and/or power.
7. **Be respectful.** Not all of us will agree all the time. We might all experience some frustration now and then, but we cannot allow that frustration to turn into a personal attack. It's important to remember that a community where people feel threatened is not a productive one.
8. **Tone policing.** Members should strive to avoid shutting down emotional expression and instead listen to content. Mutual respect is essential.
9. **Call in.** We urge our members to utilize the "call-in," speaking privately with an individual who has said or posted something perceived to be oppressive, in order to address the comment without public shaming. We discourage call-out culture, which refers to the tendency among activists to publicly name instances or patterns of oppressive behavior and language used by others and seeks to make a spectacle of the call-out itself. We each come to NSP with varying levels of experience in political activism and we strive to make NSP conducive to learning.

See <http://www.filmsforaction.org/articles/a-note-on-callout-culture>;
<http://coyotecommunications.com/coyoteblog/2017/06/19/callingout/>

C. COMMUNITY RULES

The safety of our members, both online and in person, is of paramount importance. These Community Rules refer to harmful behavior which will result in consequences issued from online moderators or the NSP Organizing Team (OT).

1. **No bullying.** Bullying, piling on, mobbing and other personal attacks are prohibited. Demeaning and harassing behavior and speech are prohibited.

“When conversations descend to the level of name-calling, mocking, sneering, belittling, threatening or other forms of harassment, pleas to others to curb abusive behavior are not tone-policing. Lashing out with the express intention of hurting someone is not activism, it’s bullying.” See <https://www.villainesse.com/think/what-tone-policing>

Complaints of “tone-policing” are inapt “when arguments are personal rather than targeting a large group or structure.” “In ‘pile-on’ situations (where a large number of people ‘call out’ an individual online, sometimes for days or weeks), even the most justified argument, when repeated by a large volume of people in variously polite and abusive ways, can cause high levels of distress.” See <http://feministing.com/2015/04/23/words-for-cutting-why-we-need-to-stop-abusing-the-tone-argument/>

“When we talk about ‘toxicity in activism’ this is one of its most crucial vectors: the use of things like the tone argument to excuse any and all expression, no matter how abusive, because it can be garlanded with pretensions to forthright opposition to oppression. You’re not brutalizing someone to tears, you’re attacking patriarchy or white supremacy. You’re not a bully, you’re a fiery radical. You’re not rhetorically violent, you just won’t be silenced by bourgeois norms of politeness.” “Not every emotion we have is a great strike against oppressive forces. Sometimes you *are* just being too loud, abusing people verbally, triggering them, and so forth. Sometimes you *are* just being a jerk and our tone is a fairly reliable indicator of this.” See <http://feministing.com/2015/04/23/words-for-cutting-why-we-need-to-stop-abusing-the-tone-argument/>

See also <https://gomakemeasandwich.wordpress.com/2015/07/21/on-tone-policing-and-acceptable-expressions-of-anger/>

2. **Check prejudice.** Statements which prejudicially distinguish individuals based on the characteristics of marginalized groups with which they are affiliated are prohibited.

3. **Respectful disengagement.** Not every commenter is going to want to discuss every issue, and nobody should be forced into a discussion against their will. If a commenter refuses to engage in a discussion, that decision must be respected and not ridiculed.

4. **Stay on subject.** Comments should be relevant to the original post and not disruptive of the discussion.

5. **Be patient.** Communities are built on volunteer time. It is possible that your question or suggestion might not receive an immediate response. Be patient and consider the norms of the community. An occasional reminder is welcome, many reminders in rapid succession are not acceptable.

6. **Educate don’t ridicule.** If a member finds another member’s comments to be ignorant on a topic, step back, take a deep breath and consider a constructive response. Another member’s perceived ignorance should not be ridiculed. Instead, politely offer a link or two to online resources that the other member may choose to self-educate themselves by reading. Members may only suggest, not demand that other members consume any particular material. It is important to recognize that all members are at different stages in their journey of political awareness.

Avoid “*gotcha*” moments where there’s very little learning and listening, but there’s a lot of efforts to control, and often, at least a bit of humiliation.” See <http://coyotecomunications.com/coyoteblog/2017/06/19/callingout/>

7. **No sustained disruption.** Sustained disruption of NSP events, including talks, presentations, and online discussions is prohibited. Sustained disruption means conduct, speech or posts which interferes with or stops civil discourse or constructive debate.

8. **No fake news.** Post articles from reliable news sources. Do your best to fact-check any information before you post it, including checking the date on articles, looking at Snopes.com, Politifact.com, or Google.

9. **No inappropriate sexual behavior.** Posting or displaying sexually explicit material or sexualized comments or jokes is prohibited. Unwanted sexual attention is prohibited.

10. **No doxing.** Posting or threatening to post another person's personal information is prohibited.
11. **No intimidation.** Purposeful intimidation, stalking or following (online or in person) is prohibited.
12. **Be careful with jokes.** Humor is not a free-pass to indulge in discriminatory language.
13. **No touching.** Do not touch someone without their permission.
- 154 **No violence.** Violence, threats of violence, violent language, and the promotion of violence are prohibited. We are committed to nonviolent civil disobedience.

C. WEAPONS POLICY

No weapons will be allowed at NSP events or in other spaces covered by this Community Agreement. Weapons include but are not limited to guns, explosives (including fireworks), and large knives, such as those used for hunting or display, as well as any other item used for the purpose of causing injury or harm to others.

D. IMPLEMENTATION OF EXPECTATIONS AND RULES

1. This Community Agreement applies equally to all NSP members and participants, including the NSP OT.
2. Any NSP member or participant who is asked by a moderator or NSP OT member to stop behavior which violates the above-described standards is expected to comply immediately.
3. Warnings for online conduct which violates the above-described standards will be issued in comments to the same post along with a brief explanation of the NSP standard violated. Questions about moderator decisions should be directed to appeals@NorthSeattleProgressives.org. New posts about moderator actions made in a prior thread are prohibited. If an inline warning is not complied with, the moderators may freeze further comments on the post, mute a participant for 24 hours, and/or remove a participant from the page. No one will be removed from any NSP online forum without first being warned about unacceptable behavior.
4. Warnings for in-person conduct which violates the above-described standards will be issued in person and/or privately by PM along with a brief explanation of the NSP standard violated. If there is any public discussion about the incident or the NSP response, NSP will issue an explanation on the NSP Facebook group.
5. Moderators may delete posts that are inaccurate, out of date, misleading, repetitive or which violate this Code of Conduct.
6. Moderators will not participate in NSP online conversations which they are moderating.
7. More than one moderator must agree before anyone is removed from an NSP online forum and/or from NSP membership.
8. In cases of imminent physical threat, a person may be immediately removed from in-person NSP gatherings.

E. REPORTING GUIDELINES

If you are subject to or witness behavior which violates the above-described standards in an NSP online forum, notify a moderator as soon as possible. To report a post or comment, click on the “report to admin” link on the post.

If you are subject to or witness behavior which violates the above-described standards at an in-person NSP meeting or event, notify an NSP Organizing Team member as soon as possible.

F. ADDRESSING GRIEVANCES

If you feel you have been falsely or unfairly accused of violating this Community Agreement, notify appeals@NorthSeattleProgressives.org with a concise description of your grievance. Your grievance will be reviewed and evaluated by two people who are NSP moderators or NSP OT members and who had no role in the underlying situation or discussion. You will be advised in writing of the final determination.

G. CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions about the Community Agreement, please contact:
moderators@NorthSeattleProgressives.org.