



WFTDA Anti-Racism Team (ART) Project Report

1. Introduction

In August 2020, the WFTDA began an anti-racism organization-wide change process to make WFTDA roller derby a safer, more collaborative space for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) members of our community. The project was called the [Anti-Racism Team \(ART\) Project](#). This process was initiated based on calls for action from WFTDA membership, as illustrated by the example in [Appendix A: The Original Catalyst For Change \(Racism Experienced at ECDX by Atlanta Roller Derby in 2019\)](#).

This project had the aim of prioritizing those BIPOC voices and lived experiences that our organization had excluded and silenced over the course of our 15 years of existence up to that point. Our commitment began with acknowledging that we were not speaking to our full community, and that we have actively caused harm and disengagement in the WFTDA by upholding systems built in white privilege.

We recruited a team of qualified and passionate individuals for the ART Project who participated in a process that centered the voices most affected by institutional and organizational racism.

In Phase One of the project, the ART Team panelists, in collaboration with the WFTDA Board of Directors, Staff, and volunteer leadership, discussed and envisioned anti-racist and equity-based functions in every aspect of the organization. The early meetings focused on knowing the experiences of BIPOC and non-American participants in WFTDA in order to find out possible harm caused by our own structure.

This report includes recommendations for WFTDA going forward based on the ART Project Team's assessment of the current situation. Furthermore, the ART Project has published the [Guiding Principles From The ART Project](#) (Appendix B) for the ART Project and WFTDA at large, which should be considered as the basis for any decision-making process. WFTDA is also encouraged to promote these principles within the governance of its member organizations.

The Art Project Team Panelists:

Tracey Hughes (Dreadlocked N. Loaded), Kansas City Roller Warriors, Kansas City, KS, USA

Abigail Tijay (Wasabi), Amsterdam Roller Derby, Amsterdam, Netherlands

May-ek Querales, Mexico City Roller Derby, Mexico City, Mexico

Danielle Mireles (Dana Skull E.), Sylmar, CA, USA

Voon-Li Chung (Vector), Western Australia Roller Derby, Perth, WA, Australia

Iris Bigornia (Viris), Toronto Roller Derby, Toronto, ON, Canada

Jarral Boyd (Assault N Pepa), Bear City Roller Derby, Berlin, Germany

Janette Wallace, Austin, TX, USA

Special Thanks To:

The WFTDA Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Atlanta Roller Derby

Erica Vanstone

Kimberly Eisen, MSW

Lesley Wachsman

Catherine Bohnert

Karen Kauffman

April Fournier

Meghan Schuttler

Dara Monasch

Tess Harrison

Simone Radway

Ana Lucia Guarido

And for additional structural guidance:

[CommunityWise Resource Centre](#)

[Mohkinstsis, Treaty 7 Territory, Calgary, Alberta 2019](#)

[Everydayfeminism: Beyond Diversity: How to Build a Truly Anti-Racist Organization](#)

2. Goal of This Report

The main goal of this report is to share the ART Project's recommendations that the WFTDA should commit to implementing in order to move towards becoming an antiracist organization.

It has been written with the WFTDA's Board of Directors and membership in mind specifically, but should also be shared publicly. This document will serve as a way to hold WFTDA accountable for any action or inaction in their endeavor towards becoming an antiracist organization.

3. Recommendations

Our recommendations to the WFTDA Board of Directors can be categorized into five broad categories, and are listed below.

3.1. Structural Change

3.1.1. Long-Term Goals

- Implement a structure based on regional governance of the sport, governed by centralized values, rather than WFTDA working as a centralized, US-based organization.

3.1.2. Mid-Term Goals

- Promote meetings between regional or local governments (NGBs) to implement a restructuring program to keep WFTDA values active.
- Design an equitable compensation program for teams to travel to play and train teams in developing countries.
- Design an equitable compensation program for skaters and officials who provide clinics in developing countries.

3.1.3. Quick Wins/Short-Term Goals

- Build dialogue routes with teams in each country in order to discuss a regional governance structure that will better respond to their real conditions.
- Share the WFTDA goals with existing local or regional organizations (NGBs).
- Promote the design of regional tournaments that help isolated teams participate in the ranking system.

3.2. Officiating and Rules

Given that the events that precipitated the creation of ART center around the discriminatory application of “discretion” in enforcing the WFTDA [Rules of Flat Track Roller Derby](#)¹, making changes in officiating and rules offers the best “bang for our buck” in terms of positive change vs effort.

3.2.1. Long-Term Goals

- Increase the diversity of the officiating pool in roller derby. With improved diversity, the impacts of racism and other forms of bias can be diluted, reducing their impact.
- Create a compensation and/or exchange program to support travel for Officials from isolated regions to other regions so that they can help strengthen officiating in their own region.
- Move the ruleset towards provision of more explicit examples in areas where rules are not clear, in order to ensure that all officials have the same information as to how to enforce the rules. Additionally, this will help enable a culture where discriminatory officials can be held accountable because too much discretion may hide racism and other forms of bias in officiating.
- Reduce reliance on peer review to achieve advancement in Officiating Certification, facilitating a reduction in gatekeeping caused by subconscious bias and inequality in the availability of officials willing and able to provide appropriate peer review.
- Eliminate or reduce the need to travel for low to intermediate certification levels.

3.2.2. Mid-Term Goals

- Publish all WFTDA Officiating training materials in languages other than English.
- Offer WFTDA Officiating Clinics in languages other than English.
- Expand the number of languages in which the WFTDA *Rules of Flat Track Roller Derby* is published.

¹ See Appendix A

3.2.3. Quick Wins/Short-Term Goals

- Acknowledge that officiating plays a role in perpetuating racism when there is too much discretion and areas lacking clarity in *The Rules of Flat Track Roller Derby*, and a lack of equal access to officiating training and certification.
- Create staffing and selection processes to develop criteria for all events at all levels that improve ethnic diversity in officiating on a global level, and to provide more opportunity for officials in remote areas.
- Implement anti-bias/anti-racism training/testing that must be completed as a precondition of renewal/advancement/recognition in Officiating Certification (see *Appendix C: [Officials Anti-Racism/-Bias Training](#)* for examples).

3.3. Educational Programming

3.3.1. Long-Term Goals

- Provide baseline education for the WFTDA Board of Directors, volunteer leadership, and staff members.
- Provide baseline education for WFTDA Member Leagues on values and the [WFTDA Code of Conduct](#):
 - This could be in the form of workshops, book clubs, and other online events.
 - It could also include educational campaigns, and providing information to members in the form of accessible educational articles and video clips in multiple languages.

3.3.2. Mid-Term Goals

- Use our social media channels to repost content from BIPOC social media creators, giving credit and small financial donations to them. This helps our social media presence stay relevant while possibly avoiding mistakes of the past when WFTDA has created its own content.

3.3.3. Quick Wins/Short-Term Goals

- Discontinue only showing support for Olympic athletes from the U.S. on our social media channels and consider avoiding shows of support for institutions like the Olympics at all, which notoriously police the bodies of Black athletes.
- Create programs to uplift member leagues, or outside organizations, who are doing work that is in line with the ART Project values on social media and other platforms.

3.4. Accessibility of Information and Communication

Accessibility of information and communication is explicitly about making sure people with various disabilities are able to access WFTDA publications and events. However, in the international context that WFTDA operates in, accessibility of information and communication also explicitly includes overcoming language barriers.

3.4.2. Mid-Term Goals

- In addition to translation of materials listed in Section 3.2.2 above, provide translations of important WFTDA materials for membership and other areas of the organization.
- Create a protocol for implementation of accessibility technologies across all WFTDA platforms.
- Implement internal and external communications pathways that transcend the "traditional" pathways.
 - Determine best practices for reaching individual WeFTDA Collective members, Member Leagues, Non-Member Leagues, and Non-US Leagues.

3.4.3. Quick Wins/Short-Term Goals

- Develop a list of closed captioning and translation apps/integrations for the organization.
- Based on recommendations and finances, write a policy for WFTDA and its subsidiaries.
- Write a policy for producing summary documents for all WFTDA communications and programs.
- Review current Communications/Marketing documents for accessibility.
- Reinvigorate translation volunteer program.

3.5. Accountability of Membership

Develop an explicitly antiracist system for accountability that focuses on addressing harm/violence and changing the conditions which allowed that harm/violence to happen in the first place.

3.5.1. Long-Term Goals

- Include an accountability system in the WFTDA Membership Policy.
- Create clear language in the WFTDA Membership Policy to help leagues understand how changes in policy help address and reduce harm.

3.5.2. Mid-Term Goals

- Develop a complaint-reporting system in line with the accountability system.

3.5.3. Quick Wins/short term goals

- Establish a single point of contact (a.k.a. “at arms-length hotline”) to allow victims of racism to report incidents of racism from anywhere within WFTDA-based roller derby.
- Develop a names/logos/numbers guide for leagues and individuals.

Appendix A: The Original Catalyst For Change

[Racism Experienced at ECDX](#)

June 26, 2019

Ana Cheng, Atlanta Roller Derby

Originally posted on the WFTDA Member Forum

This past weekend my team (Atlanta) attended ECDX. Our black skaters experienced a series of microaggressions that, although in no way new in derby, were altogether staggering. I have gathered some accounts from our skaters and coaches of incidents from the weekend:

- During an OR we asked for a low block committed against one of our skaters. The decision from the head ref was that there was no penalty— that contact to "black blocker" was first shoulders, causing her to fall.
- At one point a ref approached our coach to say there had been contact made to a ref but they "couldn't tell which one it was" so there was just a warning.
- On several occasions some of our black skaters were sent to the box for penalties committed by other black skaters (contributing to several foul-outs and near foul outs throughout the weekend).
- Skaters repeatedly being called "black, ##, penalty" by refs or "black, ##, stand" by box NSOs
- In our captains meeting before our final game our coach told the HR that we don't wear black and have never worn black, therefore saying "black, ##" is completely unacceptable but it still happened in that game.
- Announcers (both in-house and on the feed) repeatedly mixing up skaters of vastly different skin tones and body shapes being mixed up, sometimes when one of them wasn't even on the track. One of our leaguemates watching from home said that they heard it on the feed and that "in one game it seemed like they'd gotten feedback about it and seemed like they were reticent to name any black skater with certainty, which is like A LOT OF SKATERS, sometimes a whole pack, which just made the commentary rambling and kind of bizarre."
- Our black skaters were more harshly penalized. Any big hit resulted in a call, regardless of legality. In instances where we felt that a penalty had been committed against them, the refs ruled that our skater was the initiator (even if they clearly weren't). We're not saying that none of our penalties were deserved, but there were several blatant miscalls and the metric for impact appeared tighter for our black skaters.

We understand that it's unreasonable to expect announcers and officials to be perfect every time, but these things happened frequently enough that our team, our opponents, and viewers noticed it happening specifically with our black skaters. I know these aren't new issues and have even been discussed on the WFTDA forum before, but we'd like to see some big changes made and some policy written to address what to do if this happens mid-game. Aside from the direct impacts (more penalties), these kinds of events take an unfair emotional toll on skaters who are already working hard to play a good game, and have suddenly been dealt some mid-jam racism to handle with sportswomanlike conduct or risk insubs or expulsions.

I'm in communication with some of WFTDA leadership who have mentioned that Officiating and Education are already working on some things to address this, but I'll leave it to them to enumerate what they're doing here. From social media we've heard from many other skaters/leagues that have experienced the same things, so I wanted to start this thread to hear from more people how we can make sure this stops happening.

Editing to add: I'd like to mostly hear from POC (or reps relaying info from POC) about their experiences and how they would like incidents like this to be handled. I'd also like to hear from those in leadership/in positions to actually do something about this or anyone with constructive feedback.

Appendix B: Guiding Principles from the ART Project

The following outlines the principles and practices that will be used to guide all work within the WFTDA. The ART Project and its members recognize that racism is institutional, so the work of the WFTDA must consider antiracism at all levels of operation and in all of its decision-making processes. We suggest the use of these principles to inform the work of the WFTDA, and the ART Project, so that we can continuously center antiracist practices which recognize racism and ideologies of white supremacy as embedded and multilayered. These include, but are not limited to: ideologies of individualism and competition, power (im)balances, perfectionism, etc.²

- A commitment to community and community-building.
 - Recognize Ideologies of competition are rooted in whiteness and minimize the importance of interdependency and community-building.
 - Decenter notions of competition which position it as the only conduit for growth of team, community, and individuals.
 - Reimagine competition for the WFTDA by centering Member Organizations, and dismantle “global” competitive structures which privilege member leagues in the US and Europe.
 - Engage in community-building activities that support competition in a regional capacity which increases the accessibility of play regardless of location.
 - Shift away from competition models focused on US and western constructs of “success” (e.g. winning at all costs) which center individualism.
 - Allow and uplift definitions of competition which center community growth and inclusion of all skaters regardless of ability (e.g. “you’re welcome here as you are and we can build on what you currently have”).
- A commitment to inclusion and accessibility.
 - Accessibility for all members regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, ability, etc.
 - Include people who participate for the love of sport, the love of competitive opportunities, the love of the people involved, and any other reason that brings someone to roller derby, without fear of exclusion and discrimination.

² White Supremacy Culture Characteristics. From *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups*, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

- Deconstruct the ability and skills based hierarchy and commit to creating a space where skaters of all levels are not only welcome, but are recognized as important members of the community.
- Transcend and acknowledge nations, borders, and cultures by centering the experiences of skaters and member leagues whose lived experiences are often overlooked and underemphasized (e.g. marginalized and multiply-marginalized skaters; member leagues in Latin America, Asia, etc.)
- Commit to accessibility of information.
 - All communications are accessible to all audiences.
 - Closed captions, signed language interpreters, interpreters/translators for spoken languages.
 - Accessibility will be intentional and not an afterthought.
 - Not to be sacrificed in the name of urgency or hierarchy.
- A commitment to addressing harm and violence.
 - Acknowledge the racist history of the WFTDA, and how that has contributed to the inclusion/exclusion of certain groups of people on the basis of race/ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, ability, and so on.
 - Recognize and commit to dismantling harm and violence at the individual and structural level.
 - Create pathways for harm to be addressed which do not rely on policing or the state.
 - Create systems where individuals, communities, or leagues have the opportunity to be accountable for harm caused and rebuild where necessary.
 - Move forward with harm reduction in mind and directly address harm when it occurs.
- A commitment to accountability.
 - Approach harm through a transformative justice lens which centers accountability.
 - Create consciousness and endorsement of transformative justice practices such as creating safety and intervening in violence, strategies for resistance and healing, and spaces for accountability.

- When actions toward transformative justice fail, the responsibility to continue engagement is reviewed and acted upon in the interest of reducing further harm.
- Understand that education is always a part of justice.
- Commit to upholding the transformation of accountability, even when that includes dismissal or removal.

Appendix C: Officials Anti-Racism/Anti-Bias Training

1. SIGN UP for the [Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism](#) WFTDA Online Communities and find resources like:
 - a. Diversity & Inclusion workshop with Dr. BA
 - b. Ownership workshop with Iggy Perillo
 - c. WFTDA Code of Conduct Toolkit and additional guides
 - d. Other resources and workbooks
2. WATCH the [recording](#) of the webinar Beyond Diversity: How to Build a Truly Anti-Racist Organization - Understand How Your Organization is Complicit in Systemic Racism and White Supremacy Culture with Training Leaders: Jessica Vazquez Torres and Emily Drew
 - a. USE the [Anti-Racist Check-In](#) presentation as additional guidance, based on the webinars questions/topics.
3. COMPLETE the RISE training
 - a. [Reflection](#) exercise on Privilege by RISE/risetowin.org
 - b. Complete the [Racism 101 digital learning module](#) from RISE. You do not need to submit proof that you watched it; the policy quiz has material from the module.
4. TAKE the [Harvard implicit bias tests](#).