

Proposal: Lowered Quota for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Members

Proposed By: Alexis & REAL Team, Jeli and Summer & RET

Date: 1/2/23

This is a follow up to the proposal Kaz-x started about offering a lowered work quota for BIPOC members in recognition of the emotional labor BIPOC members have to engage in to live at TO. Kaz proposed a quota of 38 hours for BIPOC members. The REAL and RET teams are now putting this out as a firm proposal to continue Kaz's work. Since quota may change over time, we would like to propose a 10% lowered quota for BIPOC members to ensure the lowered quota policy can move with any future changes. Given our current quota of 42 hours, the proposed BIPOC lowered quota would be 37.8 hours. If the community moves ahead with offering a lowered quota for BIPOC members, REAL/RET feels this needs to be on a self identified and voluntary basis for BIPOC members to opt into the lowered quota. If the community is in favor of offering a lowered work quota to BIPOC members, the REAL and RET teams would work with the labor team to figure out the logistics to put this policy into effect.

The REAL Team would also like to address the use of the name "reparations hours" to refer to Kaz's proposal. The REAL Team does not feel the use of the word "reparations" is appropriate for this proposal. We feel reparations is an action that is attempting to make amends for a large, systemic issue that has caused harm to a specific community or group of people. Offering a lowered quota for BIPOC members is not an act of reparations because the problems are still ongoing and it is not addressing the large, systemic issues that we are still grappling with. We feel the lowered quota proposal is a reparative action (not reparations), it is trying to mend or repair something that is happening in the present.

If there are any questions or if anyone would like to give their input directly to the RET, please feel free to email RET@twinoaks.org.

HOOTHS IS A TOUGH ONE. AS A COMMUNITY (I MAYBE AS LARGER CULTURE), WE LACK THE ABILITY TO OPENLY DISCUSS THESE SORTS OF ISSUES WITHOUT FEAR OF THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF BEING LABELED RACIST. IF I WERE TO READ A POLICY LIKE THIS, I THINK "WELL, I'M KINDA UNCOMFORTABLE WITH GOING DOWN THE ROAD OF ASKING DIFFERENT QUOTA FOR PEOPLE BASED ON WHO THEY ARE (RACE, GENDER, ETC.), RATHER THAN THEIR NEEDS (SICKNESS, DISABILITY, AGE, ETC.)," WELL, I MIGHT THINK THAT, BUT I DON'T THINK I WOULD PUBLICLY OPPOSE THIS POLICY, AS IT'S NOT WORTH BEING LABELED A RACIST. - EZ - Good points, Ezra. Pam

I like the idea. I'm interested in us pursuing this
- Foy "Lindsey" "Esterle" "Esterle"

YES. I think the 10% suggestion is perfectly reasonable
Let's do this! - Jayme "Esterle"

I have asked those promoting this proposal 4-5 times, over the last several months of it being discussed and variously suggested, what our current self-identifying BIPOC members think about this idea - if it has been discussed with them, if those members are in favor of it, etc. My present understanding is that none of those conversations have taken place. I am in favor of asking those concerned before proposing or enacting a policy that may have profound effects on the way those individuals are treated - both systemically and socially. - Michael "Pam"

I support this proposal whole-heartedly. - FAE "Esterle"

Hmm this is a tricky one. My first thought is that this proposal is grounded in a viewpoint of "rest as reparations/resistance," which has been more in the forefront lately due to projects like Nap Ministry and acknowledges the legacy of slavery (Black people working against their will for white folks) and the continued devaluation of BIPOC within capitalism (being paid less than white folks, working in sub-standard conditions, etc). In the context of Twin Oaks, the easiest way to measure potential rest time is by lowering quota, so that may make sense.

On the other hand, in the context of Twin Oaks, we are working *with* each other not *for* someone else. So it feels a little weird to be like, "Welcome to the collective! We expect you to contribute less to our shared society." It's also true from a Labor standpoint that BIPOC haven't historically been the ones with problems making quota (it seems like emotional burnout rather than quota-making stress is what drives most BIPOC away), so I'm curious as to whether or not this proposal would solve any specific problem rather than simply serve as a symbolic gesture. While symbolic gestures could also be potentially useful, I generally prefer that our policies have a concrete effect. I know this policy would be a piece of the larger puzzle and that one single policy is not going to solve racism, but I'm also wondering if there are other more effective ways to offer BIPOC the support they need to thrive here and reinforce that their presence and work here is valuable rather than asking them to contribute less. Of course, I would be okay with it if current/future BIPOC members thought it would actually make a difference.

However, if the purpose of this proposal is less about "rest as reparations" and more about accounting for the emotional labor that BIPOC do while living with a majority white population, I think that REAL hours would already largely account for that work within the full-quota system (only 25 hrs out of the 1000 hr Diversity budget have been used as of mid-December and the budget has been underspent every year, so there's plenty of hours there). Lowering quota versus having the work be in-budget may seem like a technical difference, but I think it does say something different. If something is in-budget labor, we consider it important enough to be a part of our labor system and not outside of what is considered a valuable contribution to the collective as something folks should do "on their own time." A robust labor budget for racial justice (and/or BIPOC mental health support, note: the Mental Health budget is also historically underspent) would be at the expense of other domestic budgets, which I think may be a good thing in this case since it would have more of an impact on our system than BIPOC just working less. *3 Joplin*

Kaz's exit letter said "Give POC less labor requirements as an acknowledgement that the community structure isn't as good at supporting them as it is for white folks." For me, the lowering quota aspect reads as a short-term stop-gap measure (which may be where we're at right now). The larger longer-term question is how do we effectively change the structure so that it *does* support BIPOC?

↑
THIS IS A GOOD COMMENT. WHO ARE YOU, ops! - *Michael* "Pam"

I CONCUR THAT I WOULD PREFER TO MAKE XTRA HOURS AVAILABLE FOR BIPOC FOLX RATHER THAN TINKER W/ QUOTA. -E2- *4 Pam*

I don't want my home to have any racial standards at all. Any race-based ideas and standards legitimize and promote the idea of race which is a fiction invented by racists to rationalize their racism. To strive to eliminate the attitudes and results of racism means to NOT use race as a standard to identify each other and ourselves. That's actually what I'd expected more of when I came to live here, but sadly the opposite has been true in the last 2-3 years here (and done in the name of "anti-racism").

- Finch, a "racist white man"

I strongly support this policy. In response to Flinch's comment, I'd like to leave a quote from Dr. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, author of Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States:

"If race disappears as a category of official division, as it has in most of the world, this will facilitate the emergence of a plural racial order where the groups exist in practice but are not officially recognized - and anyone trying to address racial division is likely to be chided for racializing the population." In the same book, he wrote "Compared to Jim Crow racism, the ideology of colorblindness seems like 'racism lite'. Instead of relying on name calling (slurs), colorblind racism otherizes softly ('these people are human too'); instead of proclaiming that God placed minorities in the world in a servile position, it suggests they are behind because they do not work hard enough; instead of viewing interracial marriage as wrong on a straight racial basis, it regards it as 'problematic' because of concerns over the children, location, or the extra burden it places on couples."

Twin Oaks has employed a racial strategy of colorblindness for the duration of its existence, at least up until 2020. A refusal to name race does not starve racism - it allows it to flourish

unchecked in the dark. I support my policy that 1) names structural barriers to BIPOC membership, and 2) makes it easier for BIPOC to live here. This proposal is not some nebulous idea by white allies to address the problem - it is the result of a direct request by BIPOC who have lived @ TO.

I think that it's enormously clear that we should pass this policy.

"Jayme"



RET is taking all these comments into consideration. We are also planning to meet with labor folks to discuss how logistics would work, if the community sentiment is ultimately to go with the lowered quota plan.

BIPOC are encouraged to use the Diversity hours that Stephan mentioned, in times when emotional labor around racism feels taxing. ~~That~~ That can just be already happening.

-Summer x Jeli 4 RET

P.S. Please continue to comment if you have opinions/thoughts.

I do think that trying to treat people as humans - and not based on their race, gender, sexuality, etc - is an eventual goal that I do care a lot about. I also think that it's harmful for us not to acknowledge the existence of systemic ^(and prejudice) racism - in our (the US's) medical, education, employment, criminal justice, etc, systems. If we can't be honest and clear about where we are, it seems, to me, challenging or impossible for us to move forward. I also don't think that Twin Oaks is a place for everybody, because I think that a lot of people have different priorities and/or interests; and I believe it's impossible for us (T.O.) to accommodate all of those variations (especially simultaneously).

So, my opinion is that I would like to take the most direct guidance on topics like this one from those who are affected by systemic racism, who would be affected by the proposals in question, and especially those who have demonstrated that T.O. is in line with their priorities - namely, by living here, continuously. I realize that this is a bit of a Catch 22, because our problems addressing systemic racism's effects are probably - it is my understanding - making it more challenging for BIPOC folks to live here. But, some do choose and have chosen to continue to live at and invest in Twin Oaks and our larger mission. These are the voices and perspectives that I feel most inclined towards letting guide our policy on topics like this one. Also, I accidentally caused this proposal to be posted without the authors' consent; please see the next page for an explanation. - Michael

Michael's PSA about this proposal's posting:

I am sorry. This proposal was actually posted on the O&I board accidentally, and it is my fault. Over a week ago—as a result of explainable but kind of ridiculous circumstances—I ended up in possession of this draft of this proposal. While I was in possession of this proposal, I was at the O&I board the evening before Bubbles (previously Jason Taylor)'s naming party, and Paxus was looking for a clipboard to bring up to the conference site. I had a clipboard in my backpack, so I offered for him to use it. The clipboard had this proposal and, I think, about 4-5 blank pages of paper under it. I should have removed this proposal from the clipboard before offering it to Paxus. But, I did not think to do that until later that night, after I had already given it to him.

When I gave Paxus the clipboard, I asked if I would be receiving the clipboard back or if I was making a permanent donation. Paxus told me, explicitly, "I will put this clipboard back into your mailbox after the party." Once I thought about the fact that *someone else's* unpublished policy proposal was on the clipboard, I felt really bad and nervous, like I had made a mistake by leaving the proposal on the clipboard that I lent out; but, I trusted that Paxus would take care of the clipboard and that he would honor his word to return it, without complication or anybody even reading what was on it, to my mailbox. I did not receive the clipboard back immediately, so I assumed it either got lost in the shuffle of items up at the conference site or that it was in Pax's possession and would eventually make its way back to me.

Meanwhile, I saw that the proposal for lowered quota for BIPOC members was posted. I thought that this was done independently, by Summer and/or Jeli, and I commented on it accordingly. This is especially embarrassing, because I made a comment on this proposal regarding something that I had talked to Summer about—making sure self-identifying BIPOC members currently living at Twin Oaks had been checked in with about this proposal. When Summer and I were discussing the policy, I expressed that I thought it was important for those conversations to take place, and it seemed that Summer shared this concern and wanted to prioritize addressing it before releasing the current draft of the proposal (the one that is one the front of this clipboard).

When I saw the draft of the proposal come out in the exact state I had seen it last, and without having heard anything more from Summer, I felt surprised and a little bit saddened that it seemed like some amount Summer's intentions to continue to do the work of getting the proposal into the best possible, final form had been abandoned or triaged (in favor of other work, beyond this policy). So, I felt critical that it was unclear if those conversations had taken place, and I made a comment (that I'm not proud of, in context of this inappropriate mistake that I made) that critiqued the lack of making sure the voices most affected had been heard (an observation that was my understanding at the time of posting that comment).

Summer and Jeli, as far as I understand, are actually okay with this draft of the proposal having been accidentally posted. So, in that sense, it is not as terrible as it could be that this has happened. But, it was truly irresponsible and inappropriate for me to have handled this unpublished information so carelessly, and I'm sorry that it has led to something taking place which did not, fully, honor the consent and intentions of those involved in creating it. This was a huge mistake, and I feel terrible that I caused confusion and have wasted anybody's time making this situation (and our lives) more complicated, in what I view as being a very silly and nonessential way, by allowing this to have happened and then needing to write a lengthy explanation to create transparency about its taking place. Thank you Summer, Jeli, Alexis x, and others for caring about and doing this work, and I'm sorry to have detracted from y'all's ability to do it as well as you possibly can. - Michael 1/25/23

I think having a labor budget and allowing POC to take the 4 hours weekly as they decide is good, coming from a not so confident self ID POC it allows for taking when needed, but not like a forced gift which may feel alienating or even patronizing
(But I like the policy a lot) - QNMR "Ian" Pam
(and I am a guest so take that!)

I appreciate people working on this. I really like Stephan's idea too. Of having budgeted hours available for quota-support for POC. To me that idea seems exactly like how we already provide quota support to people with various needs. It is completely normal here to have hours like health supplement/mental health/sick/pension/eLOA hours and I think it could be very normal for people to ~~use~~ have quota support in the way Stephan is describing as well. I think that would be extremely reasonable thanks again for working on this.
Sabrina "Pam"

Thinking back on when I lived here, I would have been more into taking hours as needed vs. having a lower quota. There were definitely times I would have loved to take an afternoon off after difficult conversations or community meetings. It would have felt less supportive to think "well, at least I don't have to work as much cause lower quota". Maybe it's the same thing, ~~but~~ but one def feels different.

I Support QNMR & Ian's take. - Ian -x
Make sure the hours are there when POC need them, don't assume all POC's wants and needs are the same.
-Xian "Pam"
"Elizabeth"

There are all sorts of quotes by black people we could point to. One of my recent favorites was from a 2021 letter by over 40 black intellectuals (that included veterans of the civil rights movement) asking a college to end forced & accusatory anti bias training, "...many black americans find [anything] that reduces us simply to a racial category profoundly condescending and dehumanizing." I have seen news stories of black people, politicians, single mothers, athletes and others, supporting and opposing reparations, abortion, affirmative action, pick your issue. Black politicians span the entire left to right spectrum (although I haven't heard of anyone other than blatant outspoken racists and bigots actually against universal civil rights). I read that the BLM website originally had anti-nuclear family as one of its core values until black women spoke out against that. There are many groups of black, hispanic, and other "POCs" who are as much anti-abortion on the grounds of their own religious beliefs as any blatant right-wing evangelicals. The lists go on and on.

I don't think a policy like this would help support people with darker skin so "they" could more more easily survive here. The "POC" members who've lived here before and left didn't seem to have much problem meeting quota. The members who have left because they couldn't meet quota were not "POC." I think a policy like this would only do what the "POC lounge" does: segregate. (By the way, did anyone ever find out who put up the No White People sign on the door in 2020?)

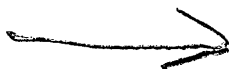
I'm not talking about "color-blindness." I can see you and recognize that you are "white" or "black" or "asian" or whatnot, however those are defined, and may even recognize that identifying that way may be very important to you and to how you want to be treated BUT still realize that's a fiction of the racists. I can try to treat you how you want to be treated (as long as you reciprocate, fair is fair after all) while still understanding there's really no such thing as "white" or "black" or "asian" people, even though most of us habitually think and act like there is. Thinking and speaking in these categories is something I learned growing up (as most of us do) and still easy to fall into, but having learned how these are false ways of thinking is as liberating as learning why class-ism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, are wrong, why any kind of bigotry, of hatred of others because they are different, why prejudice, deciding who others are and how you'll treat them before you know them, are all wrong IF we believe all persons deserve the equal rights despite their individual differences or how they are categorized.

After all, think of how many Oakers see me as white and others as POC. Then think about how I've had that all my life here in this country, and then I still get that same shit here from you all. Everywhere I go, who am I seen as this time? Why should I even try to be who you think I am or expect me to be?

Flinch 4 a person's a person no matter how small hated, marginalized, and ostracized



I support raising quota for white people rather than lowering it for BIPOC, if we are going to make quota changes rather than follow a budget approach (which I prefer). If we really mean white people like me should carry more of the community load than POC, that makes more sense. We white people should be stepping up ^{individually} to do more, not diminishing the community by "letting" some people do less! That only makes the community poorer. Each and every white person needs to personally do more to counter institutional racism. Hiding behind "the community" providing does not tackle racism. It just downgrades TO. Pam 2/3



I still support this proposal! It's streamlined and easy to understand, and I know several BIPOC x-members who have requested this in the past. However, some folks have expressed discomfort at an "othering" status and/or "forced gift," so I wanted to throw a slightly different idea out there! Expanding on Stephan's comment about BIPOC members using Diversity/REAL hours to cover mental health/emotional overload needs - I do think there's something to be said for the symbolism of having these hours be a part of our labor system, rather than creating an "othering status" within the community - and therefore inspiring misplaced jealousy and frustration on the part of other struggling members. Some issues I think might come up (or already have?) with taking hours from REAL/Diversity Budgets are: 1. Our constantly fluctuating budgets, 2. Confusion over prioritizing on the form BIPOC member needs with Diversity initiatives in outreach/^{larger} racial justice arenas, 3. The indignity of having to ask an area manager(s)' permission for the hours/need to eloquently justify their use. What I'm interested in Brainstorming is an option where BIPOC members have access to Rest as Reparation without utilizing a paternalistic, permission based system. I do think this current proposal offers this, but it also comes with some virtue signaling vibes. Maybe there could be a "BIPOC member Self Care PSC Pool" where the community budgets a certain amount of hours every year to throw into the PSC Pool, and members are also allowed to donate personal hours, and maybe leftover REAL and WAT hours end up in the pool as well. BIPOC members could be allowed to draw from the pool as needed, without asking anyone first. REAL team could manage the pool and decide exact parameters for hours usage. Anyone have thoughts to expand on this? ♡ Jayme