

Justice Equity Diversity Inclusion Officer Report

July 2025 Annual Meeting

REA's Second Stage of its JEDI Focus

I was thankful for the opportunity to continue extending REA's JEDI focus in Oct 2024, one that was instituted when Dr. Christine J. Hong was hired as the first JEDI Officer in 2022.

The path of our guild's second wave of a focus on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion was stabilized with the help of several persons, who assisted in my hiring, orientation, and first steps. I want to acknowledge the support I have received from our leadership and staff team, past and present, who supported my initiation into this role. Without your generosity, my transition would have not been as welcoming. I offer gratitude to: Anne C. Walker, Patricia Bonilla, Christine J. Hong, Karen-Marie Yust, Jennifer Moe, Eser Kim, Eric Celeste, Alex Celeste, and our Board and Steering Committee Members. Other seasoned REA colleagues, like Norma Cook Everist, and Elizabeth Nolan, have been among many, whose wisdoms have represented our guild's foresight, educative ambition, and professional collegiality as I exercise this role.

This report focuses on my appreciations and involvements, questions and hopes for the future, all arising during my 8-month tenure of the JEDI Officer role from Oct 15, 2024 to June 15, 2025.

A. Appreciations and Involvements:

1. REA Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct

The act of articulating a code of ethics, and the conduct that flows from ethics was a significant feat initiated under the leadership of Christine Hong. That which is valued as ethical guides professional organizations and licensing boards who endeavour to protect the public whom they serve. Ethical codes change and evolve over time, and because the bodies of persons who ponder over and shape them also change, the conducts they support, enable, and limit, will also change.

While organizing and editing our work on these codes, I appreciated the fine thinking and attentiveness to numerous categories of ethics and conduct articulated by previous members, primarily among our Board, Steering Committee, Advisory Council, and staff. They drafted and contributed suggestions to these pages as they took shape in my writing between Nov 2024 and Jan 2025. I believe we have robust documents on which to draw to move into the future, and I thank all who contributed to their writing.

2. The Circle Process

In addition to our expression of the ethics and conduct by which we desire to be defined, I spent considerable time reading and isolating what I assessed to be key points in the Circle

Process. I undertook this as one of my first priorities of JEDI work, because our guild embraced the Circle Process as our way of living with and working through the conflict of ideas - a reality that ultimately results in conflict in choices and actions. Kay Pranis' (2005) book, *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking*, was the source of my reading and summarizing.

I also began another project, which involved drafting something like a "training" document I foresaw as a tool that I can use in sharing and imparting a few "essentials" concerning the Circle Process with members in the future. My thinking about this task has been that in this way, when a Circle Process must include persons in our leadership and membership (which includes myself as JEDI Officer), REA members will feel equipped to learn, critique, and change from the Circle Process, toward a fulsome holding and examination of conflict. When well-tended, the crisis of conflict holds potential for new opportunity.

3. Communication and Meeting with REA Staff and Members

Without a doubt, effective communication today draws on knowledge and skill in using technology, the spoken and written word, and postures of attentiveness and listening.

a. *Becoming acquainted with staff roles; REA Gmail and Website; Members*

My work as JEDI Officer involves functioning as part of a team of staff, which includes the Executive Secretary and Networking Co-ordinator, and our Technical Support persons at Tenseg. I invested my initial months in becoming familiar with the most effective ways of using, communicating, and accomplishing our guild's needs and goals via our personal human and technological resources. Meetings with the Committee on Religious Education in Public Life and Global Community contributed to my acquaintance with the international flavour of Religious Education within our guild, and the way members' lived experiences of Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion have shaped their professional and life foci.

b. *Preparations for the 2025 Annual Meeting*

The new year followed with preparations for the 2025 Annual Meeting, influenced largely by my planned absence to attend my graduation congregation in Birmingham, U.K. during the same week in July. However surprising my absence from our Annual Meeting during my year as JEDI Officer was to me, it provided an unforeseen opportunity. I began exploring the idea of fostering and extending our REA "JEDI lenses" among our membership in different ways, starting with our Annual Meeting. My intention now, is to continue drawing on the distinct "lenses" provided by our diverse membership's experiences. For this Annual Meeting in particular, I approached volunteers to contribute their "JEDI Reflections" on evidence of our JEDI ethics and conduct in the context of a conference session they would attend. I am grateful to the leaders and members of the REA Working Groups and Caucus with which I have been

a member (Black Experience Working Group; LGBTQ+ Allies Working Group; Student Caucus), some REA colleagues, and some among the 2024 Advisory Council, who will be part of this new JEDI effort. In line with this effort, I placed an invitation to everyone to participate in “JEDI Reflections” on our 2025 Conference Padlet. This invitation is for all who have some time to complete five brief questions. Everyone is welcome to contribute your thoughts on what you observe, which I will share with our Board in Fall 2025.

In addition to this, I added six new JEDI questions to our Annual Meeting Evaluation form for use in 2025, and in the future. In addition to securing volunteers to be “Circle Keepers” for our 2025 Advisory Council Meeting, I planned with our current Board President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Recording Secretary for them to be available to receive questions, ideas, or concerns around JEDI issues in my absence during our Annual Meeting. I will consider your comments in August, with interest and thanks.

4. REA Website Revisions - JEDI Resources

With the advice and help of my Tenseg colleagues, I also updated and revised the JEDI Resources page on our website. It is important to reflect our guild’s history of JEDI focus and to create room for progress, and this will be a focus in the years to come.

B. Questions and Hopes:

What are my hopes for the REA JEDI Officer in the future?

I value dreaming, planning, and listening as spiritual exercises. So, I have been forming a list, of questions, issues, and potentialities I have been pondering over these past eight months. Asking questions has been among my modus operandi, and I am learning about the ways these and other issues among us are being attended. In year two, I hope to gain a better picture of you as the members who have built our guild, in the past, and more recent times – and your diverse international and educational contexts. I am anticipating that this focus will help reveal the guild we are seeking to become, and what we need to move toward this. In year three – whether via online questionnaires; personal and group emails; virtual and in-person gatherings – my hope is to map out some short-term goals, based on the plurality of persons I appreciate to be shaping our JEDI expressions today. Our JEDI values will germinate through your ethics and conduct. As we work together, I will continue to appreciate your respect and collegial support.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheryl Metzger

REA JEDI Officer

July 2025