

# WE ARE THE 99%

WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE. ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE.



## CATALYZING LIBERATION TOOLKIT:

Anti-Racist Organizing to Build the 99% Movement

A resource compiled by Catalyst Project and Chris Crass





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# Introduction to this toolkit

By Amie Fishman and Chris Crass

## Why anti-racist organizing?

Catalyst Project believes that anti-racist practice and organizing can help us to build the vibrant massive movements for global justice we need to create a world where all people are free from oppression. We are fighting for a world where everyone has housing, income, food, education, health care and is able to live in a way that is sustainable and in harmony with the earth. We call this collective liberation, and it is at the core of our work.

In the United States, we have seen that racism is deeply ingrained in the structures of every institution and in white people and white communities, including those of us who are a part of the struggle for justice. Institutional and internalized white privilege and racism have hindered our ability to build the strong movements we need by keeping communities divided and pitted against one another. Anti-racist vision, leadership, and practice can help to ensure that visions for liberation are not compromised by divide and control tactics and keep us focused on long-term social and institutional transformation instead of short-term gains that oftentimes come at the expense of communities of color.

## What better time to engage in anti-racist work than now?

We are living in extraordinary times, with a rising popular movement for economic justice in the United States full of potential to make profound social change. Under the banner of Occupy and the 99%, millions of people have marched, camped, taken direct action, been arrested, participated in and led General Assemblies, sent food and supplies to encampments, brought issues of inequity to their community gatherings and kitchen tables, led political education sessions, joined committees at encampments, defended foreclosed homes, closed down banks and bank accounts, made connections between encampments and local racial and economic justice organizations, mic checked politicians and CEOs, shared stories of hardship and resistance, made art and media, and stepped into their power.

The 99% movement has grown quickly, and as with all popular movements, it manifests the deep and painful dynamics of privilege, oppression, and power that permeate the world we live in. As always, the lack of anti-racist politics and practice among most of the white activists in a majority white movement has damaging consequences. Rather than distance ourselves from these issues, the problems of racism and white privilege in a movement moment like Occupy require anti-racists to bring our leadership, dive into the messiness and possibility, and build together.

We know that the majority of people reading this have been actively working to challenge racism and white privilege in the 99% movement. We have assembled this resource to support your efforts. For those who haven't, please consider that Occupy is an incredibly significant opportunity to build movement and win victories for positive



social change. We hope this packet will inspire deeper participation. It is designed specifically for white activists to work with white people in Occupy and in the 99% because we believe that white people have a responsibility to address the racism within ourselves, as well as within our families, organizations and communities. However, many of the essays and materials in this tool kit are useful for work with a wide range of people and communities.

In addition to these resources, we also send our love and encouragement. What this movement is doing is profound and historic, and could have long-term impacts on the future of our society and the planet. You are vital to what happens next.

### **Goals of the Catalyzing Liberation resource packet**

**1. We want to build up powerful, working class, feminist, multiracial movements for collective liberation. The movement of the 99% is a powerful convergence of movements for economic, social, racial, gender, and environmental justice. It not only resonates with millions of people, but it actively invites millions of people to participate in creating both the movement and the vision of global justice that we are working towards. This resource guide is a tool to help build up the movement of the 99%, deepen its anti-racist analysis, and support respectful and transformative multiracial alliances and collaborative organizing efforts.**

2. The movement of the 99% opens tremendous opportunity to work with a wide range of people and communities. **We want to give anti-racists around the country tools for organizing in white communities, including those already involved in Occupy and those who have no relationship to it yet.** We want anti-racist organizers and leaders to support other white people in finding ways to express their outrage about the profound inequalities of capitalism while challenging white supremacy. We want white people to have meaningful ways of working together with communities of color for justice. We want to support anti-racists to step into this political moment, and move hundreds of thousands of white people to understand that racism hurts everyone and is part of what keeps the inequalities of capitalism intact. We want to support white people to take action for economic and racial justice, in ways that help them understand the necessity of ending white supremacy as part of their own liberation from systems of oppression.

**3. We want to challenge the ways that racism divides movements for justice, and give white people tools to work against these divisions.** We want to support white people standing with communities of color in ways that feed and nurture a culture of solidarity, dignity, and love. While we work against the impacts of systems of



oppression in our communities, families, and lives, it is essential that we also build up liberatory culture, relationships, alliances, and practices.

### **Suggestions for using the resource packet as part of building a mass collective action of the 99%/Occupy Together movement**

1. **Share this resource packet with people in Occupy efforts locally and nationally.** When you share it, through email, Facebook, or by handing a paper copy to a friend, use it as an opportunity to express your own thoughts on why this is so important and a way of recruiting people to help move this work forward. Use this toolkit as an opportunity to share your thoughts and ask people questions about what they think about these issues. This offers a way to begin conversations, as well as move existing conversations into action steps.
2. There are a lot of really good articles on analysis, strategy, and action steps. **Take time to study these articles for your own growth as an organizer.** Read them with other people and form both a study and action group.
3. If you are already part of a group of people taking thoughtful action together, you can use the packet to strengthen your efforts. Use the ideas in the packet as a jumping off point either to discuss topics new for your group, or to evaluate the goals you have for the work you're doing, the strategy you are using, and how you would like to move forward.
4. Go big- reach out into broader circles of people, and offer them ways to learn and connect. The Occupy movement has created incredible opportunities to connect with a much wider group of people than many of us are used to. Think about groups, institutions, and networks in majority white communities and beyond that might be open to hearing someone talk about the issues Occupy highlights. Millions of people all over the country are talking about economic injustice and Occupy. Start by thinking about your own (or the people in your groups) connections to different parts of your community. You'll likely be able to come up with a lot of exciting possibilities. Some ideas include:
  - Giving talks or workshops on economic inequity through an anti-racist lens at community centers, places of worship, classrooms, or people's living rooms. (On this, read the interview with the Rural Organizing Project in this toolkit and check out their packet on Occupy organizing in small towns linked on our website.)
  - Arranging with teachers or students you know who could bring you and/or





- another speaker into their classroom or student group event.
- Connecting with people who are members of a spiritual/religious community who might want to host you.
- Gathering a group of friends for a living room discussion.

**Remember to always include “ *What can I do next?*” steps to help people get involved.** Often for those of us who have been to lots of demonstrations or activist events, we assume that it’s easy to figure out what to do, where to go, and what to do once you get there. Helping people who have never been involved in the movement imagine how they could be involved – and supporting them to get there – is key for successful organizing. Not everyone will or is able to join encampments, marches, or demonstrations, and those are not the only meaningful ways to engage. Think outside the box about the endless ways that people can plug into this movement, and help make it happen.

5. Experiment with ways to help more and more people join the movement by participating in demonstrations and events. We all learn a tremendous amount through direct experience. When Occupy is having a demonstration about the foreclosure crisis, corporate greed, immigrant rights, attacks on unions, or economic inequality in general, think about ways you can help bring in new people, particularly groups of people (like those who came to a living room discussion, were at the teach-in, and so on) who can come out together. Help people feel welcomed and wanted at the demonstration or event. Talk to people about what they think, what is exciting/confusing/feels good/feels hard about this event. Ask them how they relate to this personally. Help people understand the context of what’s going on; this gives you an opportunity to frame the demonstration or event in a way that supports anti-racist and liberatory goals. If possible, create space for people to get together at the end to share reflections on the experience, discuss next steps, and build their connection to the overall movement.
6. Find ways to make anti-racism, feminism, queer liberation, and collective liberation politics the norm in Occupy. Reflect on the following questions to help deepen these politics in the movement:
  - What steps could be taken to make these politics the norm, while still being a movement that everyday people can be part of?
  - What would that look like?
  - Why is that important?
  - How will anti-racism \ support the 99% to achieve our goals?
  - What are steps you can take to move Occupy in that direction?



7. Use the power of stories to radicalize and unite people. Remember the “We are the 99%” tumblr (<http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/>)? One of the ways it became clear this was a powerful “movement moment” was when tens of thousands of people began publicly sharing their stories of economic inequalities, and locating themselves in the 99%. Creating space for story-sharing across race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and age is a powerful way to deepen analysis of systemic problems, and to build relationships. Helping people move from sharing stories with one another to taking action together is a key goal for us as organizers.
8. Take space to breathe, connect to your vision, clarify your goals, and ground yourself in whatever helps you feel a sense of your own power and your ability to share/create power with others before and while doing this work. Those of us who are white need to keep trying, practicing, reflecting, and learning how to move through the world in new ways that are shaped by our values instead of our internalized racism. Mistakes, challenges, awkward stumbling moments, are all part of the process. Be loving and kind toward yourself as a practice to help you engage others with love and kindness. Remember, we are not trying to be “perfect” anti-racist organizers-- there is no such thing. We are building a beautiful and powerful movement full of complex, flawed, remarkable, everyday people.

*Amie Fishman has been a member of Catalyst Project since 2001. Catalyst Project is a center for political education and movement building based in the San Francisco Bay Area. We are committed to anti-racist work in majority white sections of left social movements with the goal of deepening anti-racist commitment in white communities and building multiracial left movements for liberation. We are committed to creating spaces for activists and organizers to collectively develop relevant theory, vision and strategy to build our movements. Catalyst programs prioritize leadership development, supporting grassroots social justice organizations and multiracial alliance building.*

*Chris Crass is a longtime organizer working to build powerful working class-based, feminist, multiracial movements for collective liberation. Throughout the 1990s he was an organizer with Food Not Bombs, an economic justice anti-poverty group, strengthening the direct action-based anti-capitalist Left. As part of the global justice movement, he helped start the Catalyst Project in 2000, and was part of the leadership collective for eleven years. He is now a stay at home Dad, involved in the Occupy movement, and working on his book “Towards Collective Liberation: anti-racist organizing, feminist praxis, and movement building strategy”. He lives in Knoxville, TN with his partner and their son, River.*



# **Occupy Opportunities for Collective Liberation: Catalyst Project's Anti-Racist Organizing Strategy**

**By Chris Crass**

The Occupy movement is one of the most profound organizing opportunities in decades, because of its mass invitation for the 99% to step forward and challenge systemic economic inequality. For white anti-racists, this is a moment when we can engage with, support, and organize hundreds of thousands of white people to deeply connect economic justice to racial and gender justice.

For the past 12 years, Catalyst Project has been engaged in anti-racist political education, leadership development, organization building, and organizing, with a strong focus on white communities. Through our experience at Catalyst, we strongly believe that moments when people are in motion for justice create enormous openings for transformative anti-racist work in white communities. These moments will always be complicated, challenging, rife with racism/white privilege, and also full of opportunity to advance our overall goals of bringing millions of white people to a collective liberation vision, culture, strategy, and practice.

In the Occupy movement, as in all moments when significant numbers of white people are politically active, there is and will be example after example of racism and white privilege manifesting and damaging the movement. As long as there is systemic white supremacy, this is a given – not to be accepted, but to be factored into how we organize. We cannot escape history—all movements and organizations in this country have to deal with ways oppression and privilege play out externally and internally. A healthy movement isn't one where these issues don't exist; in our current circumstances, that's impossible. A healthy movement develops through recognizing and challenging these dynamics in the context of shared struggle for liberation within the conditions in which we live.

As organizers, our focus isn't to make our movements an island outside of society, but a foundation for the transformation of society. This doesn't mean accepting the hierarchies of oppression and privilege inside our movement, but it means understanding our work against these systems in our movement as deeply connected to transforming the systems of power in society.

## **Anti-racist organizing**

Coming from this perspective, we offer an overview of Catalyst's anti-racist organizing strategy.

Over years of working in white communities, Catalyst uses the shorthand “white anti-racist organizing” to describe our work. What do we mean by that? When we say “white,” we mean the historical and institutional development of white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy in the creation of the United States, conditions which result in my now being a white person. The U.S. was created by the wealthy class to maximize private power and wealth through exploitation of the vast majority's labor and oppression



of the vast majority's humanity. Wealth and power have been and are taken from the majority through slavery, genocide, colonization, indentured servitude, low paying/high profit making jobs, and unpaid reproductive labor in the home and community.

But wherever there is exploitation and oppression, there is resistance. Alongside the history of oppression, there is a vast history of resistance and liberation struggle. Slave masters in the South faced widespread individual and collective resistance from enslaved Africans, and at times joint struggle between enslaved Africans and Native American nations as well as with indentured Europeans. Such uprisings of slaves and servants haunted the master class, which in response outlawed marriages between Africans and Europeans and outlawed gatherings of Africans and Europeans. They passed these laws because people were forming family and building community – not in large numbers, but in significant enough numbers to strike fear into the ruling class. They understood that bonds of love, family, and community across groups of exploited and oppressed peoples – the vast majority of the population – could be a foundation for joint resistance against the minority at the top accumulating and maintaining wealth and power.

Ruling classes, through hundreds of years of experience, developed sophisticated methods of dividing and controlling people to take land, enslave people, and create a politically docile and economically exploited class of citizens. In the United States, this method was white supremacy. In order to prevent a foundation of joint resistance from forming, a racial order needed to be constructed to divide people. While the vast majority of people were exploited to create profit, citizenship with limited (but significant) political rights became a category in society for “white” people. While these political rights were originally for land-owning European males, this expanded to include all Europeans with European women primarily having access to these rights through relationships to men.

The expansion of these rights came primarily as a result of the ruling class responding to resistance from oppressed peoples. For example, with massive resistance from formerly enslaved Black people in the late 1800s, alongside a growing radical working-class movement with millions of newly immigrated, not-yet-white Europeans participating, the ruling class responded with a classic divide and control tactic: Americanization (white citizenship) process for Italians, Jews, Irish, Germans, Poles, Russians, and other European ethnic groups, and Jim Crow apartheid for Blacks.

### **White privilege**

White privilege is the flipside of racial oppression. As a white person in this country, I have an economic, political, cultural, and psychological relationship of privilege to institutional power. Race is not a biological reality, but rather a position within a hierarchy of power based in one's relationship to the state. The United States was created as a white nation, for white citizens. The devastation of New Orleans because





of defunded levees during Hurricane Katrina, along with the Federal governments' failure to respond, and the current criminalization of immigrants of color from Arizona to Alabama are two high-profile examples of this enduring reality.

"White" is not a category of who I am as an individual person. Rather, white is an historically developed social position I was born into within this country. My relationship to the state and the economy shapes what I have access to, how society interacts with me, and how I understand myself in relationship to others. This is not just a relationship between myself as an individual white person and the state and economy. It is the accumulated experience of hundreds of years of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. In short, white supremacy is internalized within me and has profound impacts on how I relate to the world around me. This internalized white supremacy is based on the material reality of political, economic, and social privilege I and other white people, experience every day as a white citizen of this nation.

It is important to make a distinction here between privilege and power. Most white people in the United States experience economic, political, and/or cultural oppression based on class, gender, sexuality, and ability, as well as race-based privilege. Privilege generally refers to rights, norms, standards, and attitudes that should apply to everyone, but that many people are denied. For example, for most of the history of the U.S., people of color were denied access to most jobs, legal protections, social services, civic participation, and neighborhoods (except to work in them). Additionally, violence against people of color has been social and in many cases de facto legally sanctioned.

Another example deeply impacting the current economic system is the ability to accumulate wealth through inheritance, or debt and poverty through inheritance. For most communities of color, there is a long history of land, labor, and lives of family members stolen through slavery, colonization, and genocide. Hundreds of years of slavery generated enormous wealth for the plantation master class in the South and the industrial capitalist class in the North, while Black communities inherited poverty, enforced illiteracy, trauma of families brutally pulled apart, and so on. In short, while many white people have and do experience profound economic hardships, the economic hardships of communities of color have been and are far more devastating, brutal, and enduring as that hardship is part of an overall white supremacist capitalism that daily denies the full humanity of people of color.

### **Social relationship of power**

So, when we say "white," we are primarily talking about a social relationship of power to the state and in the economy that shapes the culture of society. This relationship has been created to privilege white people, oppress people of color, and accumulate the majority of institutional wealth and power to the ruling class.

By "anti-racist," we mean engaging with white people to develop anti-racist politics,



commitment, and practice as well as developing and strengthening powerful multiracial alliances and collaboration. We do this by taking action on issues impacting white communities, such as economic and environmental injustice, in ways that foreground white supremacy in the problem, anti-racist/multiracial movement building in the solution, and joining with and/or supporting similar struggles in communities of color. We also do this by joining organizing in communities of color and developing a strategy with organizers and leaders of color for bringing white people in large numbers into such struggles.

We specify here large numbers because in almost all racial justice struggles there are small numbers (from dozens to thousands) of white people involved in many ways (from leaders, organizers, educators, participants in events/demonstrations, volunteers, donors, supporters and more). While we work to develop skilled, visionary organizers and leaders to increase the effectiveness and size of this small number, we also look for ways to bring in tens and hundreds of thousands of white people to participate in meaningful ways to end white supremacy, and advance collective liberation in ways that have both immediate positive impacts and long-term transformative impacts.

Furthermore we want to build up and expand liberation culture and practice that supports white people to bring these values and commitments into how they are building community, family and raising children, and how they can bring leadership in their places of worship, schools, community activities, work places, neighborhoods, and networks. We want to develop effective anti-racist leadership to help further profound solutions based in economic, racial, gender, social, and environmental justice to the problems our communities face.

### **Revolutionary politics**

Talking about white privilege, white supremacy, and anti-racism needs to be connected to a larger revolutionary politics of ending all systems of oppression and creating systems of liberation. This means not only challenging white supremacy in the U.S. but also challenging the role the United States has played in the world. We must understand the centrality of white supremacy in the relationship between the U.S. ruling class and the Global South, as well as in the relationship between the U.S. ruling class and communities of color in this country. This understanding helps unite anti-racist work in white communities in the U.S. to the visions, strategies, and experiences of powerful people's movements around the world. This unity opens deeper possibilities for learning, solidarity, and collaboration.

Revolutionary politics means collective liberation, or a politics committed to the goal of liberation for all people from all forms of oppression. We see the goal of collective liberation as a long-term political commitment that guides our work, shapes our strategies, and helps us think creatively about our vision. This commitment to collective liberation takes shape as 1) recognizing the exploitation and oppression in society; 2)



understanding one's relationship to that exploitation and oppression; and 3) working to form alliances between people who experience both oppression and privilege to transform this society, recognizing the centrality of oppressed people's leadership in that process.

We think of collective liberation as a vision to work towards and as a strategic orientation to help us think about the work we do. We also look at white privilege as a way to unlock the white supremacist worldview that turns white people into individuals solely responsible for pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. For myself as a white person, I see how white privilege distorts my relationship to history and my position in society. This individualism and distorted worldview are barriers to collective organizing; they negatively impact the relationship of white people to other people in general, and to oppressed peoples in the United States and around the world in particular.

White privilege undermines our ability as white people to see ourselves as part of a historical process. It locks down our imagination and narrows our understanding of freedom to that of a scarce commodity that only a few can access. We challenge internalized white supremacy in mostly white sections of the left to push against the many negative impacts it has on the ability of white activists to positively relate to people of color-led collective action and collective organizing as well as multiracial collaborative organizing. The fact is, internalized white supremacy's worldview of inherent hierarchy, domination, "us versus them", fear-based competition for survival, ahistorical individualism, and self-blaming as opposed to systemic power analysis, negatively impacts white people's lives and work for justice.

### **Power of liberation**

Anti-racism is a process of seeing the power of liberation as abundant and socially necessary for the physical, emotional and psychological health of all people. White supremacy leads white people to believe that only certain people can have access to power and that those certain people constitute a ruling class made up, primarily, of white people. Anti-racism is a commitment to changing this worldview through struggles to transform the conditions in society. When we say "anti-racist," we mean the work that makes those changes, and the process of political development white people must go through to actually believe that a liberated world is possible and that all people can – and must – have power over their lives.

By "organizing" we mean breaking the solidarity of white people to the ruling class, by breaking off any and all sections of white communities that we, as white anti-racists, can. History has demonstrated that key constituencies in white communities are more likely to break from the ruling class based on their own experiences exploitation and oppression and their struggles for equality and justice. People who are women, working class, queer, transgender and gender variant, disabled and/or Jewish have historically moved to the left, and have been anti-racist leaders in this country. We believe that powerful,



dynamic movements can and will come from these constituencies, and that their leadership is key to moving significant numbers of white people to work in a multiracial movement for collective liberation.

We also believe that white anti-racist leadership and organizing in white communities for economic and social justice is necessary, and that such organizing can and must connect to issues in communities of color and create opportunities for solidarity, collaboration, and multiracial alliance building. But critically, this organizing needs to be done both to build broad white support for struggles in communities of color, but also to liberate white people from the soul crushing, body punishing, mind distorting, white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

The goals for white anti-racist organizing are to shift any and all sectors of white communities away from an allegiance to the ruling class and towards active solidarity with liberation movements coming out of communities of color in the United States and around the world. To do this, white anti-racist organizing needs to unlock the imagination of white consciousness to conceive of liberation and believe it is possible, and the best way to do this is through firsthand experience. The Occupy movement provides incredible opportunity for exactly that--- not just the experience of one event, but of being part of movement. The job then of white anti-racist leaders and organizers is to think of the immediate goals of these actions/experiences as well as supporting people with political education, mentorship, reflection space, to make sense of their participation grounded in vision and strategy of collective liberation.

In closing, for Catalyst, white anti-racist organizing is shorthand for how can we move as many white people in this country to a revolutionary agenda with a collective liberation vision, in solidarity and partnership with left leadership from communities of color. We see white supremacy as one of the primary organizing principles of this country that shapes the class structure and political system. Strategically, then, white supremacy is a key part of the foundation that we can tear out from under the ruling class to upset this oppressive system and unleash the possibility of collective liberation.

*Lots of love to my comrades who over the years in Catalyst Project developed this strategy and analysis: Alia Trindle, Amie Fishman, Ari Clemenzi, Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward, Clare Bayard, Ingrid Chapman, Josh Warren-White, Kerry Levenberg, Missy Longshore, Molly McCure, and Rebecca Tumposky. Much love to my editorial crew on this essay Chris Dixon, Cindy Breunig, Z! Haukeness, Rahula Janowski, and Molly McClure.*





# ***Recommended Readings***



# **What is white supremacy?**

## **By Elizabeth ‘Betita’ Martinez**

“White Supremacy is an historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege.”

(Definition by the Challenging White Supremacy Workshop, San Francisco, CA)

### **I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAY IT IS A SYSTEM?**

The most common mistake people make when talking about racism (White Supremacy) is to think of it as a problem of personal prejudices and individual acts of discrimination. They do not see that it is a system, a web of interlocking, reinforcing institutions: political, economic, social, cultural, legal, military, educational, all our institutions. As a system, racism affects every aspect of life in a country.

By not understanding that racism is systemic, we guarantee it will continue. For example, racist police behavior is often reduced to “a few bad apples” who need to be removed, instead of seeing that it can be found in police departments everywhere. It reflects and sustains the existing power relations throughout society. This mistake has real consequences: by refusing to see police brutality as part of a system, and that the system must be changed, we guarantee such brutality will continue.

The need to recognize racism as being systemic is one reason the term White Supremacy is more useful than the term racism. They refer to the same problem but:

A. The purpose of racism is much clearer when we call it “white supremacy.” The word “supremacy” means a power relationship exists.

B. Race is an unscientific term for differences between people. Although racism is a social reality, it has no biological or other scientific basis. There is a single human race.

C. The term racism often leads to dead-end debates about whether a particular remark or action by an individual person was really racist or not. We will achieve a clearer understanding of racism if we analyze how a certain action relates to the system of White Supremacy.

### **II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAY WHITE SUPREMACY IS HISTORICALLY BASED?**

Every country has a creation story—it can also be called an origin myth—which is the story people are told of how their country came into being. Ours says the United States began with Columbus’s so-called “discovery” of “America,” continued with settlement by brave Pilgrims, won its independence from England with the American Revolution, survived a civil war, and expanded westward until it became the enormous, rich country you see today.

That is the origin myth we are all taught. It omits three giant facts about the emergence



of the United States as a nation. Those facts demonstrate that White Supremacy is fundamental to its existence:

1. The United States is a nation state created by the conquest of other peoples in several stages. The first stage was the European seizure of territory inhabited by indigenous peoples, who called their homeland Turtle Island. Before the European invasion, between nine and eighteen million indigenous people lived in what became North America. By the end of the so-called Indian Wars, about 250,000 remained in what is now the United States, and about 123,000 in what is now Canada (see *The State of Native America*, ed. by M. Annette Jaimes, South End Press, 1992).

That process created the land base of this country. The seizure of Indian land and elimination of indigenous peoples was the first, essential condition for the existence of what became the United States. The first step, then, was military conquest and what must be called genocide.

2. The United States could not have developed economically as a nation without enslaved African labor. When agriculture and industry began growing in the colonial period, a tremendous labor shortage existed. Not enough white workers came from Europe and the European invaders could not put the remaining indigenous peoples to work in sufficient numbers. Enslaved Africans provided the labor force that made the growth of the United States possible.

That growth peaked from about 1800 to 1860, the period called the Market Revolution. During this time, the United States changed from being an agricultural/commercial economy to an industrial corporate economy. The development of banks, expansion of the credit system, protective tariffs, and new transportation systems all helped make this possible. The key to the Market Revolution was the export of cotton, and this was made possible by slave labor. So the second, vital step in the creation of the United States was slavery.

3. The third major step in the formation of the United States as a nation was the seizure of almost half of Mexico by war--today's Southwest. This expansion enabled the U.S. to reach the Pacific and thus open up valuable trade with Asia that included markets for export and goods to import and sell in the U.S. It also opened to the U.S. vast mineral wealth in Arizona, agricultural wealth in California, and new sources of cheap labor to build railroads and develop the economy.

To do this, the United States first took over by military force the part of Mexico called Texas and made it a state in 1845. The following year it invaded the rest of Mexico and seized its territory under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the 1846-



48 War on Mexico. In 1853 the U.S. acquired a final chunk of Arizona. by threatening to renew the war if not agreed. This completed the territorial boundaries of what is now the United States. Those were the three foundation stones in the creation of the United States as a nation. Then, in 1898, the U.S. takeover of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam and Cuba by means of war against Spain extended the U.S. to become an empire. All but Cuba have remained U.S. colonies or neo-colonies, providing new sources of wealth and military power for the United States. The colonization and incorporation of Hawaii completed the empire.

Many people in the United States hate to recognize the truth of the three steps. They do not like to call the U.S. an empire. They prefer the established origin myth, with its idea of the U.S. as a democracy from its early days.

### III. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAY THAT WHITE SUPREMACY IS A SYSTEM OF EXPLOITATION?

The roots of White Supremacy lie in establishing economic exploitation by the theft of resources and human labor. That exploitation has then been justified by a racist ideology affirming the inferiority of its victims—and this continues today. The first application of White Supremacy or racism by the Euroamericans who control U.S. society was against indigenous peoples, whose land was stolen; then Blacks, originally as slaves and later as exploited waged labor; followed by Mexicans when they lost their land holdings and also became wage-slaves. Chinese, Filipino, Japanese and other Asian/Pacific peoples also became low-wage workers here, subject to racism. Arab workers have also been exploited in this way.

In short, White Supremacy and economic power were born together. The United States is the first nation in the world to be born racist (South Africa came not long after) and also the first to be born capitalist (not just replacing feudalism, for example, with capitalism). That is not a coincidence. In this country, as history shows, capitalism and racism go hand in hand.

### IV. HOW DOES WHITE SUPREMACY MAINTAIN AND DEFEND A SYSTEM OF WEALTH, POWER AND PRIVILEGE?

Racist power relations are sustained by the institutions of this society together with the ideology of Whiteness that developed during western colonization. The first European settlers called themselves English, Irish, German, French, Dutch, etc.--not "white." Over half of those who came in the early colonial period were servants. But by 1760, about 400,000 of the two million non-Indians here were enslaved Africans. The planters who formed an elite class in the southern colonies, were outnumbered by non-whites. In the Carolinas, 25,000 whites faced 40,000 Black slaves and 60,000 indigenous peoples in the area.



Class lines hardened as the distinctions between rich and poor became sharper. The problem of control loomed large and fear of revolt from below grew among the elite. Elite whites feared most of all that discontented whites -- servants, tenant farmers, the urban poor, the property-less, soldiers and sailors -- would join Black slaves to overthrow the existing order. As early as 1663, indentured white servants and Black slaves had formed a conspiracy in Virginia to rebel and gain their freedom.

Then, in 1676, came Bacon's Rebellion by white frontiersmen and servants alongside Black slaves. The rebellion shook Virginia's planter elite. Many other rebellions followed, from South Carolina to New York. The main fear of elite whites everywhere was a class fear. Their solution: divide and control.

On one hand, certain privileges were given to white servants. They were now allowed to acquire land, join militias, carry guns, and other legal rights not allowed to slaves. At the same time, the Slave Codes were enacted that legalized chattel slavery and severely restricted the rights of free Africans. The codes equated the terms "Negro" and "slave."

With their new privileges, those in the servant class were legally declared "white" on the basis of skin color and continental origin. That made them "superior" to Blacks (and Indians). Thus whiteness was born as a racist notion to prevent lower-class whites from joining people of color, especially Blacks, against their common class enemies. The concept of whiteness became a source of unity and strength for the vastly outnumbered Euroamericans -- as in South Africa, another settler nation. It became key to defending White Supremacy against class unity across color lines.

## V. WHITE SUPREMACY AND MANIFEST DESTINY

In the mid-1800s, new historical developments strengthened the concept of whiteness and institutionalize White Supremacy. Since the time of Jefferson, the United States had its eye on expanding to the Pacific Ocean and establishing trade with Asia. Others in the ruling class came to want more slave states, for reasons of political power, and this also required westward expansion. Both goals pointed to taking over Mexico.

The first step was Texas, which was acquired for the United States by filling the territory with Anglo settlers who then declared their independence from Mexico in 1836. After failing to purchase more Mexican territory, President James Polk created a pretext for starting a war with the declared goal of expansion. The notoriously brutal, two-year war on Mexico was justified in the name of Manifest Destiny.

The doctrine of Manifest Destiny, born at a time of aggressive western expansion, said that the United States was destined by God to take over other peoples and lands. The term was first used in 1845 by the editor of a popular journal, who affirmed "the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole continent which





providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government.”

The concepts of Manifest Destiny and institutionalized racism are profoundly linked. Even those who opposed expansion did so for racist reasons, as when some politicians said “the degraded Mexican-Spanish” were unfit to become part of the United States; they were “a wretched people . . . mongrels.”

In a similar way, some influential whites who opposed slavery in those years said Blacks should be removed from U.S. soil, to avoid “contamination” by an inferior people (see Manifest Destiny by Anders Stephanson, Hill & Wang, 1995). Native Americans have been the target of white supremacist beliefs that they were dirty, heathen “savages” and also fundamentally inferior in their values. For example, they did not see land as profitable real estate but as Our Mother. Such people had to be forcefully isolated on reservations. assimilated by being removed from their own culture, and having their own culture either outlawed or ridiculed..

The doctrine of Manifest Destiny established White Supremacy more firmly than ever as central to the U.S. definition of itself. The arrogance of asserting that God gave white people (primarily men) the right to dominate everything around them still haunts our society and sustains its racist oppression. Today we call it the arrogance of power and it can be seen in all U.S. relations with other countries.

One persistent example of that arrogance is the habit of calling this country “America” when that is the official name of almost an entire hemisphere composing over 20 other countries. From left to right, organizations and publications and individual leaders obliterate millions of other human beings, mostly of color, by mindlessly giving the United States the only meaning, importance, and reality worthy of recognition. We can assume it comes from habit, not conscious imperialism at work, but that is no excuse for not recognizing white supremacist thinking among our most progressive forces.

Finally, the material effects of White Supremacy on peoples of color are all too clear in terms of economic, social, political and cultural inequity. Even that ultimate affirmation of dominion, racist murder or lynching, still occurs to remind us that age-old power relations remain unaltered. That is not to deny the positive effects of long years of struggle to change those power relations, but to recognize that White Supremacy remains intact systemically, as seen in the constant harm it does to the daily lives and aspirations of peoples of color.

Less understood than the material are the psychological and spiritual effects of White Supremacy. Few whites understand what internalized racism does to people of color, who do not discuss those effects easily themselves. The self-hatred, desire to be like whites or even to be white, and assumption of inevitable failure are the dreadful legacy of White Supremacy’s teaching those lies by every means at its disposal. Maintaining



control over any community has always required not only physical domination but also the ideological domination that says: things are as they should be. As you inferior creatures deserve them to be.

## VI. WHITE SUPREMACY AND GLOBALIZATION

Racism has never stood still or remained unchanged in history. Today we see new forms emerging from the rapid growth of globalization. We can see that White Supremacy has become more global than ever and millions of people of color have become globalized.

Global economic integration is not new in itself; we have seen the world capitalist economy in operation for centuries. But today it is an extremely powerful set of inter-related policies and practices with a huge field of operations. It includes the “global assembly line” for production, with parts made in different countries; the whole world defined as the potential market for a commodity; and technological advances that facilitate economic integration more than ever in human history. With corporate globalization has come a neo-liberalism that means privatization, deregulation, the decline of social services, and other policies.

The main victims are nations of color (politely called “developing” instead of impoverished) and peoples of color, as shown by the vast increase in migrant labor. The vast majority of immigrants to the U.S. today are the globalized: women and men, mostly of color, driven from home by dire personal poverty to find survival usually in the global capitals. New eruptions of White Supremacy often confront them.

It’s been said that militarism is racism in action. We could also say that globalization is White Supremacy in action, as never before. Manifest Destiny now rages across not only Las Americas but the whole world. Given current ruling-class policy at work in the U.S. today, such as privatization, we see that millions of people in the United States itself are increasingly victimized. Are we becoming a “Third World” country?



# Whiteness and the 99%

By Joel Olson

The key obstacle to building the **99%** is left colorblindness, and the key to overcoming it is to put the struggles of communities of color at the center of this movement. It is the difference between a free world and the continued dominance of the **1%.**

Whiteness  
and the 99%  
by Joel Olson

# WHITENESS AND THE 99%

By JOEL OLSON

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Occupy Wall Street and the hundreds of occupations it has sparked nationwide are among the most inspiring events in the U.S. in the 21st century. The occupations have brought together people to talk, occupy, and organize in new and exciting ways. The convergence of so many people with so many concerns has naturally created tensions within the occupation movement. One of the most significant tensions has been over race. This is not unusual, given the racial history of the United States. But this tension is particularly dangerous, for unless it is confronted, we cannot build the 99%. *The key obstacle to building the 99% is left colorblindness, and the key to overcoming it is to put the struggles of communities of color at the center of this movement.* It is the difference between a free world and the continued dominance of the 1%.

## LEFT COLORBLINDNESS IS THE ENEMY

Left colorblindness is the belief that race is a “divisive” issue among the 99%, so we should instead focus on problems that “everyone” shares. According to this argument, the movement is for everyone, and people of color should join it rather than attack it.

Left colorblindness claims to be inclusive, but it is actually just another way to keep whites’ interests at the forefront. It tells people of color to join “our” struggle (who makes up this “our,” anyway?) but warns them not to bring their “special” concerns



into it. It enables white people to decide which issues are for the 99% and which ones are “too narrow.” It’s another way for whites to expect and insist on favored treatment, even in a democratic movement.

As long as left colorblindness dominates our movement, there will be no 99%. There will instead be a handful of whites claiming to speak for everyone. When people of color have to enter a movement on white people’s terms rather than their own, that’s not the 99%. That’s white democracy.

## THE WHITE DEMOCRACY

Biologically speaking, there’s no such thing as race. As hard as they’ve tried, scientists have never been able to define it. That’s because race is a human creation, not a fact of nature. Like money, it only exists because people accept it as “real.” Races exist because humans invented them.

Why would people invent race? Race was created in America in the late 1600s in order to preserve the land and power of the wealthy. Rich planters in Virginia feared what might happen if indigenous tribes, slaves, and indentured servants united and overthrew them. So, they cut a deal with the poor English colonists. The planters gave the English poor certain rights and privileges denied to all persons of African and Native American descent: the right to never be enslaved, to free speech and assembly, to move about without a pass, to marry without upper-class permission, to change jobs, to acquire property, and to bear arms. In exchange, the English poor agreed

- If speakers urge developing “close working relationships with the police,” do they consider how police terrorize Black, Latino, Native, and undocumented communities? Do they consider how police have attacked occupation encampments?
- If speakers urge us to hold banks accountable, do they encourage us to focus on redlining, predatory lending, and subprime mortgages, which have decimated Black and Latino neighborhoods?
- If speakers urge the cancellation of debts, do they mean for things like electric and heating bills as well as home mortgages and college loans?
- If speakers urge the halting of foreclosures, do they acknowledge that they take place primarily in segregated neighborhoods, and do they propose to start there?
- If speakers urge the creation of more jobs, do they acknowledge that many communities of color have already been in chronic “recessions” for decades, and do they propose to start from there?

**ATTACK CAPITALIST POWER—  
ATTACK THE WHITE DEMOCRACY.  
BUILD THE 99%!  
PEOPLE OF COLOR AT THE CENTER!  
NO MORE LEFT COLORBLINDNESS!**





Our diversity is our strength. But left colorblindness is a rejection of diversity. It is an effort to keep white interests at the center of the movement even as the movement claims to be open to all. Urging us to “get over” so-called “divisive” issues like race sound inclusive, but they are really efforts to maintain the white democracy. It’s like Wall Street executives telling us

**Creating a 99% requires putting the struggles of people of color at the center of our conversations and demands rather than relegating them to the margins.**

issues like their unfair profits because if you work hard enough, you too can get a job on Wall Street someday!

Creating a 99% requires putting the struggles of people of color at the center of our conversations and demands rather than relegating them to the margins. To fight against school segregation, colonization, redlining, and anti-immigrant attacks is to fight against everything Wall Street stands for, everything

the Tea Party stands for, everything this government stands for. It is to fight against the white democracy, which stands at the path to a free society like a troll at the bridge.

### OCCUPY EVERYTHING, ATTACK THE WHITE DEMOCRACY

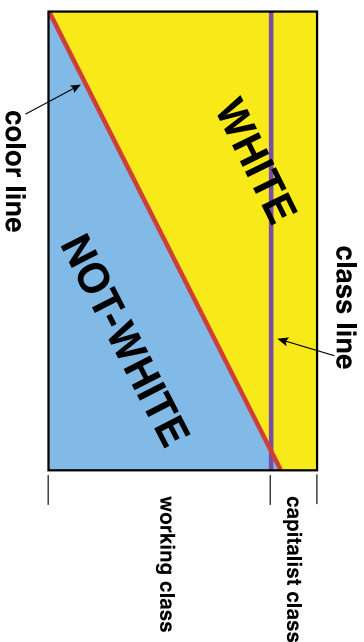
While no pamphlet can capture everything a nationwide movement can or should do to undermine the white democracy and left colorblindness, below is a short list of questions people might consider asking in movement debates. These questions were developed from actual debates in occupations throughout the U.S.

- Do speakers urge us “get beyond” race? Are they defensive and dismissive of demands for racial justice?

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to respect the property of the rich, help them seize indigenous lands, and enforce slavery.

This cross-class alliance between the rich and the English poor came to be known as the “white race.” By accepting preferential treatment in an economic system that exploited their labor, too, the white working class tied their wagon to the elite rather than the rest of humanity. This devil’s bargain has undermined freedom and democracy in the U.S. ever since.



As this white race expanded to include other European ethnicities, the result was a very curious political system: the *white democracy*. The white democracy has two contradictory aspects to it. On the one hand, all whites are considered equal (even as the poor are subordinated to the rich and women are subordinated to men). On the other, every white person is considered superior to every person of color. It’s democracy for white folks, but tyranny for everyone else.

In this system, whites praised freedom, equal opportunity, and hard work, while at the same time insisting on higher wages, access to the best jobs, to be the first hired and the last fired at the workplace, full enjoyment of civil rights, the right to send their kids to the best schools, to live in the nicest neighborhoods, and to enjoy decent treatment by the police. In exchange for these “public and psychological wages,” as W.E.B. Du Bois called them, whites agreed to enforce slavery, segregation, reservation,

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genocide, and other forms of discrimination. The tragedy of the white democracy is that it oppressed working class whites as well as people of color, because with the working class bitterly divided, the elites could rule easily.

The white democracy exists today. Take any social indicator—rates for college graduation, homeownership, median family wealth, incarceration, life expectancy, infant mortality, cancer, unemployment, median family debt, etc.—and you'll find the same thing: whites as a group are significantly better off than any other racial group. Of course there are individual exceptions, but as a group whites enjoy more wealth, less debt, more education, less imprisonment, more health care, less illness, more safety, less crime, better treatment by the police, and less police brutality than any other group. Some whisper that this is because whites have a better work ethic. But history tells us that the white democracy, born in the 1600s, lives on.

### THE DISTORTED WHITE MINDSET

No one is opposed to good schools, safe neighborhoods, healthy communities, and economic security for whites. The problem is that in the white democracy, whites often enjoy these *at the expense of communities of color*. This creates a distorted mindset among many whites: they praise freedom yet support a system that clearly favors the rich, even at the expense of poor whites. (Tea Party, I'm talking to you.)

The roots of left colorblindness lie in the white democracy and the distorted mindset it creates. It encourages whites to think that their issues are “universal” while those of people of color are “specific.” But that is exactly backwards. The struggles of people of color are the problems that everyone shares. Anyone in the occupy movement who has been treated brutally by the police has to know that Black communities are terrorized by cops every day. Anyone who is unemployed has to know that Black unemployment rates are always at least double that of whites, and Native American unemployment rates are far higher. Anyone who is sick and lacks healthcare has to know that people

of color are the least likely to be insured (regardless of their income) and have the highest infant mortality and cancer rates and the lowest life expectancy rates. Anyone who is drowning in debt should know that the median net worth of Black households is twenty times less than that of white households. Only left colorblindness can lead us to ignore these facts.

This is the sinister impact of white democracy on our movements. It encourages a mindset that insists that racial issues are “divisive” *when they are at the absolute center of everything we are fighting for*.

To defeat left colorblindness and the distorted white mindset, we must come to see any form of favoritism toward whites (whether explicit or implicit) as an evil attempt to perpetuate the cross-class alliance rather than build the 99%.

### THE ONLY THING THAT CAN STOP US IS US

Throughout American history, attacking the white democracy has always opened up radical possibilities for *all* people. The abolitionist movement not only overthrew slavery, it kicked off the women's rights and labor movements. The civil rights struggle not only overthrew legal segregation, it kicked off the women's rights, free speech, student, queer, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and American Indian movements. When the pillars of the white democracy tremble, everything is possible.

The only thing that can stop us is us. What prevents the 99% from organizing the world as we see fit is not the 1%. The 1% cannot hold on to power if we decide they shouldn't. What keeps us from building the new world in our hearts are the divisions among us.

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[White democracy] encourages whites to think that their issues are “universal” while those of people of color are “specific.”

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# Reflections on Organizing towards Collective Liberation at Occupy NOLA

by Lydia Pelot-Hobbs

Over the past few weeks, I have been invigorated and moved by the energy surrounding Occupy Wall Street and its offshoots across the nation. Yet, at the same time I've been faced with the tensions being articulated by so many folks on the Left: how can this energy be connected to and further long-standing organizing work for social and economic justice?

Here at Occupy NOLA, I have been excited about the potential of making these bridges through the project of the anti-racism working group. In less than two weeks, this working group has been developing a collective analysis and strategy that I think has the possibility of contributing towards long-term movement building.

## From Difficult Moments to Moments of Promise

This is not to say this work has been easy. Many of these conversations are painful and difficult. At the second General Assembly (GA), a debate emerged regarding the use of the livestream at the GA. Since the initial planning meeting, Occupy NOLA had been posting photos and videos on Facebook without those in attendance's permission. Myself alongside several others from the anti-racism working group raised the concern that having the entire area videotaped led to the space not being safe or secure for a variety of folks: immigrants, trans folks, queer folks, etc. and offered the proposal that 1/3 of the space not be included in the livestream.

In response, several white men got up and declared the purpose of the movement was to be recorded and that having folks on video couldn't possibly have the ramifications that we had explained such as immigration sweeps or people losing employment or housing. Listening to these responses I was frustrated by concrete concerns being seemingly disregarded, but even more so at how privilege operates to convince individuals that their experiences within society are universal -- how security for some makes the lack of safety for others invisible.

Following the GA's inability to reach consensus on this subject, those of us on both sides of the debate were tasked with further discussing the issue. Cynically, I found myself assuming the people we had been debating weren't actually committed enough to the process to enter into further conversation. However, immediately after the meeting, one guy came over to continue the discussion. Within a few moments, a group of a dozen people were talking about how power functions, how Latin@ folks are racially profiled as undocumented immigrants, the policing of trans folks (especially transwomen of color), the precariousness of service industry workers employment, and so much more. Here we were, mostly strangers, spending our Friday night standing in Duncan Plaza engaged in political debate.



Did we end up agreeing on everything? No. Did we make steps together? Yes.

Making these steps together is why I'm involved in the Occupy movement. I recalled that my political analysis was not developed over night; rather it took investment from other activists. I've had years of guidance and mentorship within movements for social justice that has gotten me to the place I am today. Now is the time to offer the constructive encouragement to others that was offered to me when I was first becoming politicized.

But I also know about the rapid politicization folks can go through during moments like this -- moments that radicalize people's understanding of power, systems of oppression, the state, global capitalism, and empire. These moments can literally transform people's understandings of not just what we are struggling against but also what we are dreaming about: what collective liberation can potentially be.

### **Building Strategies for Collective Liberation**

For me, this is why it's so crucial to organize with the anti-racism working group to build a structural analysis within Occupy NOLA of how we got to this period of advanced capitalism. Luckily, I think we have more resources to draw on for this than in previous periods. Even before the first GA to plan Occupy NOLA, white anti-racist folks here were reaching out to one another to discuss how to critically engage this moment. Many of us had been moved by the writing coming out of OWS by activists of color on their struggles to build an anti-racist and anti-oppressive politic in New York. Several of us were also encouraged by the conversations happening within the national US for All of US network of white anti-racists about the potential for catalyzing this moment. Others of us were calling on our knowledge gained from our participation, both as local New Orleanians and outside volunteers, in anti-racist organizing at Common Relief following the storm. Looking around the space of Occupy NOLA, instead of feeling lost and overwhelmed as I have so many times before in these spaces, I felt hopeful and inspired.

By the second day of Occupy NOLA, a multiracial crew of folks had come together for the first meeting of the anti-racism working group. Gathered together was a group of people with a range of backgrounds: long-term organizers, folks new to activism, people who already knew and trusted one another, and individuals who came knowing no one but believing in the purpose of the group.

Over the course of our first meetings, we strategized together what the purpose and goals of our anti-racism working group would be. Drawing on our collective knowledge gain from previous activism as well as our initial involvement with Occupy NOLA, we solidified together that our goals are based in the belief that this is a moment of possibility and potential.



We committed to working towards: Occupy NOLA being accountable to local community organizing and acting in solidarity with their local struggles; fostering an intersectional structural analysis of power through political education projects; encouraging both Occupy NOLA and the broader #Occupy movement to center both the US South and the Global South; deepening our analysis of how US financial power has been built off the ravages of slavery and colonialism; and continuing to build off the momentum of this moment over the next year regardless of the outcome of this occupation.

We have also committed as an anti-racist working group to be actively participating in other working groups and building with other potential allies. Also, by participating in other working groups, we are able to share our skills in areas such as facilitation, media, and direct action. For me, this is us moving beyond a critique from the sidelines to a structure that is focusing our efforts towards the success of other working groups.

Central to our strategy has also been the ongoing dialogue and discussion with long-time New Orleans organizers of color. Folks from a range of organizations affiliated with the Greater New Orleans Organizers' Roundtable have generously entered into conversations with the anti-racism working group about how Occupy NOLA can be pushed in a strategic direction that furthers the aims of local economic and social justice movements. This work has the potential to strengthen both Occupy NOLA and the work of already existing organizing by building a united front on the social justice issues in New Orleans.

It's also been incredible to be organizing collectively with folks who are dealing with the reality that we need to move quickly since we don't know how long this occupation will last while also thinking through how this work can make a long-term impact on movements for justice. Instead of organizing in crisis, we are organizing for the long haul.

## **Moving Forward**

We're still grappling with a lot of questions: How do we actively engage and support other working groups? What are strategies for building an accountable Occupy movement here in New Orleans that supports and strengthens the long-term community organizing in the city around housing, police brutality, the prison industrial complex, and immigration? Is our goal to build Occupy NOLA as a multiracial, multiclass movement or is there a benefit in leveraging the white and class privilege of the current formation in solidarity with community organizations? How do we both embrace the spirit of participatory democracy while also recognizing how these processes can be alienating?

These are complicated questions for a complicated moment. While I am sure that both the anti-racism working group and the broader Occupy NOLA will make mistakes along the way, I am just as sure of the necessity in critically engaging in this movement. We're in the middle of a powerful opening to connect fresh new activists to radical





political analysis, to develop their leadership skills, and to introduce them to the ongoing social and economic struggles here in New Orleans, across the US, and around the globe. Getting down in this messy process is more than just a commitment to the present Occupy moment; it's an investment in our future movements for justice.

*Thanks to Evan Casper-Futterman and DrewChristopher Joy for their feedback and guidance on this piece.*

*Lydia Pelot-Hobbs is a member of and trainer at AORTA (Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance).*



# ***Interviews and Transcripts***



# **“A Struggle for Our Lives”: Anti-Racist Organizing in White Working Class Rural Communities**

## **An interview with the Rural Organizing Project in Oregon**

**By Chris Crass**

*“How can I go back to my white working class community and organize to build anti-racist power to advance racial, economic, and gender justice?” “What would it look like to build the left in white rural communities like the one I grew up in?” “How can we bring together our anti-racist politics, community organizing, and our visions for collective liberation?” These are some of the questions that we get at Catalyst Project and it was with these questions in mind that we reached out to the Rural Organizing Project (ROP) in Oregon to share their history, reflections and lessons. With hundreds of volunteer leaders and sixty-five member groups across Oregon, the ROP is a powerful example of a statewide social justice organization with a statewide strategy. At the center of their work for peace, justice and democracy is an organizing strategy to develop anti-racist politics, leadership, and action in rural white working class communities. Across the country, innovative approaches to anti-racist organizing in white working class communities as part of larger campaigns and efforts to build grassroots multiracial movements for justice are developing. It is in support of these efforts and the many more to come that this interview was conducted.*

### **Chris Crass: What were the conditions that the Rural Organizing Project emerged from and what is the organization’s history?**

Amy Dudley: Rural Organizing Project (ROP) developed as a progressive rural response to homophobic ballot measures initiated by right-wing organizations that considered rural Oregon to be their political base. In the late eighties and early nineties, the Right was on the prowl for issues and locations to wage culture wars. They were seeking out wedge issues that would effectively divide working class people from their own economic self-interest and encourage fear and the worst of human nature to create a vacuum that the Right would then fill with “moral” leadership and “family values.” Sounds familiar, right? By equating being queer with pedophilia and a list of evils, the Right was able to whip up homophobic fears, focus the mainstream on a non-existent threat, scapegoat a vulnerable group of people, then enter the divide that they had created with anti-queer policies that would distract from the real focus of their platform – to create unfair tax structures, subsidize the rich, establish corporate welfare, and destroy the social safety net.

So the Right had their plan, now they needed to find communities to launch this attack. Where better than white rural America? Oregon is an incredibly white state as is much of the Northwest, though that is changing primarily due to a growing Latino immigrant population. The state as a whole is 81% white, 10% Latino, 4% Asian Pacific Islander, 2% African American, and 1% Native American. Most communities of color are concentrated in a few areas of the state, including Oregon’s largest city, Portland. Like in many historically white rural communities across the nation, that demographic is shifting. Latinos comprise only 10% of the population of the state, but that population has increased more than 200% since the 1990 census. That growth has occurred in urban centers like Portland, but also in rural communities, like Umatilla,



Hood River, Morrow, and Jefferson Counties. There is a reason that the Aryan Nation chose to make the Northwest their home. Rural Oregon, like much of rural America, is downwardly mobile, predominantly working class/working poor, with a tendency to more conservative politics and religious fundamentalism, and a long history of openly white supremacist organizing. All of these factors play a role in why the Right focused their organizing in small town and rural communities across the US.

This is where ROP enters onto the scene. While all of the above is true to some extent about rural America, we are not homogenous. We don't fit easily into gross stereotypes of hillbillies or rednecks, terms that are intended to make fun of poor, white, rural people. Rural Americans deal with anti-rural sentiment that is most deeply rooted in classism.

While all poor people are oppressed and treated in classist ways, making fun of poor, white, rural people is one of the few places that it is socially acceptable to be classist. In the same way that working class people are often blamed for perpetuating homophobia or characterized as exceedingly homophobic, poor, white, rural folks are often blamed for perpetuating white supremacy or characterized as exceedingly racist. In both these instances, perhaps it is true that working class people are more likely to verbally express their homophobia or racism, but it is the wealthy, owning class that is exercising the power to keep these systems of oppression in place and ultimately use homophobia and racism to keep working people divided from one another. This is not to ignore or diminish the racism or homophobia of working class people. Those are things that we are working to challenge and change. It has been our experience at ROP that finding solidarity between working class rural folks and the queer community, and between white rural folks and people of color, and between white rural queer people and immigrant farmworkers has been a journey of finding common cause and a shared sense of struggle against the same systems of oppression that are working to keep us all divided and to keep us all down. That is a journey that is much easier to take as a working class person than as a wealthy person who is invested in keeping the system in place.

The reality is that rural communities can hearken back, like all communities, to the radical struggles that we have been a part of – from civil rights to labor struggles to farm worker organizing and indigenous resistance. Our values and our sense of community can be a uniting force against hatred and oppression. This is the hope and belief that ROP is founded on. At its core, ROP is committed to contesting the notion that rural Oregon is a ready-made base for the Right.

When the Right brought the culture wars to Oregon, they utilize their politics of division focused on anti-choice, censorship, and creationism efforts as well as the anti-queer statewide Ballot Measure 9. As petitions started showing up outside post offices and grocery stores, justice minded folk in rural Oregon stepped up. They contacted progressive leadership in urban areas and asked for support. The reality of most



urban based organizing, particularly during campaigns, is that time and resources are focused on where people are most densely concentrated, meaning rural communities are often left out. Undeterred, these same concerned rural folk took what support they could glean from urban supporters and set out on their own traveling the state and holding living room conversations that called on people to recognize the human dignity that is innate in every person, to ask themselves what treatment their neighbors were deserving of, and ultimately to talk about what a real democracy requires of its members. From these living room conversations, local human dignity groups were organized.

The defeat of Measure 9 was a huge victory for Oregon as well as the nation. However, within a year, more than 20 local ordinances using the same language as Measure 9 had been passed in rural communities, underscoring the critical significance of rural organizing for true statewide justice and emphasizing ROP's role resisting the Right's focus on rural Oregon as well as the Left's urban centric tendency to ignore rural Oregon. The greater legacy for rural Oregon was after the campaign, when each of the newly formed human dignity groups got together and made two decisions: The first was to form Rural Organizing Project as a connection and support to these local groups. The second decision was to hold anti-racism trainings with each of these local groups. While we had been focused on resisting attacks on the queer community and understanding them as a wedge strategy to undermine all civil rights, we quickly realized we needed to expand our initial focus to include immigrant rights. Leaders within ROP and the immigrant community recognized that we shared an opponent in the Right and had much to gain and learn by working together.

The beginnings of this relationship between the immigrant community organized by PCUN, Oregon's farm worker union, and rural allies who would soon form ROP began on a march opposing Measure 9 that led through the heart of Oregon's Willamette Valley. Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United), is Oregon's union of farmworkers, nursery, and reforestation workers, and Oregon's largest Latino organization. During the March for Love and Justice, PCUN opened the doors of their union hall to the marchers unlike many local white churches that refused to allow the LGBT community and their allies a place to stay the night. And unlike some of the caretakers of the churches that did allow the marchers to stay the night, rather than quickly turning over the keys and limiting their association with the marchers, the farm worker leaders at PCUN sat down with the marchers and engaged in a deep conversation about alliance building. PCUN leaders questioned why this was the first time that the communities were coming together. They noted that there were struggles in the immigrant community that had been going on for some time. They also shared that they were working to deal with homophobia in their own community as some Latino leaders questioned the validity of building such an alliance. They called on the marchers to remember PCUN's hospitality and support in





their time of need by reciprocating with support of their own when called on by PCUN to stand up as allies to the immigrant community. Both PCUN leaders and the future leaders of ROP affirmed that real solidarity is a two way street.

When ROP was formed, that call from PCUN for solidarity become part of the philosophy and core commitment of the organization. That is why the initial anti-racism trainings were held with each of ROP's local member groups. When PCUN and other immigrant groups organized themselves into an immigrant rights coalition called CAUSA, which translates from Spanish as cause, campaign, or movement, ROP was a founding ally member. Over the last 15 years, ROP has continued to serve on the board of CAUSA and lead immigrant solidarity efforts around the state.

So from the beginning ROP grew from the base up with two seemingly contradictory realities in mind: the deep moral and philosophical or even spiritual justice-for-justice-sake kind of level that called on rural communities to organize ourselves and resist the Right regardless of whether or not we could win; and the second, which was the strategic necessity to organize white, increasingly impoverished, rural Oregonians as allies for racial, economic, and gender justice given the demographics and power balance in our state. In terms of leadership this has meant that from the beginning ROP was primarily white, led by women, queer folks, and straight allies, many of whom were working class.

My story is also a rural one but it begins a decade earlier in the Blue Ridge Mountains that make up the eastern edge of the Appalachian Mountains. I grew up in the 80s in rural Botetourt County, just outside of Roanoke, VA. Growing up in a close knit Christian family that became Southern Baptist when I was thirteen, the only kind of activism I saw was the kind that condemned choice, evolution, queer and trans people, and stood up "proud to be an American" when the first war on Iraq began. I began to learn how my vision was limited and current and past struggles were hidden from my view. When I looked around my hometown I did see the kind of community that knew and cared for one another. And I began to run into the contradictions that anyone who takes the message of truly loving your neighbor to heart will find when they look around them at the inequities and injustices that surround us. I also wanted to run about as far away as I could from my hometown, which in my case ended up being Cameroon, West Africa. From the time that I got my first yard sale book on Europe, I had always been drawn to cultures that were different than my own. I was probably 10 when I realized that there was more to the world than the US and Europe and I quickly became interested in any place outside the US that I could read about in National Geographic. I went to college an hour and a half away from home and quickly switched my major from international affairs to anthropology. My senior year thesis was on Nigerian Women and International Feminism and Development. I wanted to be in the Peace Corps but without having to be a mini-ambassador for the US government. I found the perfect opportunity when a friend in the Peace Corps hooked me up with an organization in



Cameroon who worked with women farmers.

I was well on the road to the life I had dreamed of: traveling around the world, helping people to improve their lives, changing the world one village at a time. It was an amazing time and I can't express enough gratitude to the Cameroonians who welcomed me into their lives and homes. But what I learned more than anything was that these folks didn't need me – at least not in the way that I thought that they would or the way that most international agencies suppose that they are needed. The local people of Cameroon, just like local people around the world, don't need well meaning Americans or Europeans to help them to organize their own communities. They know how to do that better than we ever will. What they need is our help to organize the communities that we come from. All of the villages and towns that I worked with in Cameroon creating locals plans for sustainable logging, hunting, and non-timber forest product harvesting were left with the stark reality that decisions about what would happen to the forests around them were ultimately being decided in board rooms and intergovernmental meetings in France, Belgium, Malaysia, and the US.

It was this realization that if I truly loved these communities and cultures outside of the US, the best way that I could support them was to work in the US for the cause of global justice starting in my own backyard, my own community, my own culture. As a young, white, American I could do a lot more to dismantle capitalism and white supremacy by accessing other white Americans, my neighbors, friends, and family to change the way that our systems work and thus help change the way that our systems impact the rest of the world. Having this truth hinted at in my heart and mind, the closest I could get to my own backyard while staying in the US was still 3000 miles away in Portland, Oregon

In Portland, I learned what community organizing was. I was given language to name the injustice that I saw around me and developed an analysis to ground my social justice work in. I began to think in terms of power – who's got it, who doesn't, and how you build it in terms of people not profit. I found that the work I most wanted to do and seemed best suited for was – and is – base building and ally development. In Portland this was creating organizational infrastructure, events, and campaigns that would bring together mostly white, middle class, home-owning neighborhood activists with people of color, immigrant communities, homeless people, and low-income tenants. After three years, I had the opportunity to leave Portland and join the Rural Organizing Project. I was truly thrilled to have the chance to do organizing in communities that felt like a return to my rural roots.

**Chris: What is your strategy and how do you see that strategy fitting into a left movement building approach?**

Amy: ROP is working to build a rural movement for justice in Oregon. This is our piece of the larger global justice movement pie. We see this as the simple but difficult work



of base building coupled with analysis building, or political education and action. The structure that we use is local, autonomous human dignity groups who are committed to our shared values of democracy and justice. We generally organize on a county level but also take into account state and federal legislative districts for the purpose of larger campaigns. The work of these local groups is to build the infrastructure and do the ongoing work of growing their base locally that in turn is a part of ROP's statewide base. These local groups are really the face of ROP. Members of a local group will identify primarily with their local group and secondarily as a member group of ROP. The kind of campaigns and issues that these local groups work on is up to them. Sometimes they work collectively with other human dignity groups through ROP; often times they work on their own with a local focus and rely on ROP for back up and support as needed.

ROP has a staff of three white women who are the behind the scenes support for the local leadership of these 60+ groups. We keep a lean budget that allows us to focus on organizing instead of fundraising and rely extensively on volunteer support people for everything from database and webpage support to donated cars and yard work. ROP's office is a small house in rural Scappoose, Oregon that was converted into an office through volunteer labor and is now owned by the organization so we don't have to pay a monthly bill for rent or mortgage. We are funded through member donations and independent foundations. ROP's role is to support local leadership of these groups to develop and maintain the capacity to take action with a goal of establishing rural progressive infrastructure for the long haul and secondly to mobilize our base and bring the collective power of ROP to bear on issues that are important to advancing true democracy. The core capacity areas that ROP supports local human dignity groups in building are: 1. a named leadership team (whether you call it a steering committee, a board, or a spokescouncil, the important thing is that membership is clear); 2. communication systems (database, email, etc.); and 3. an organizing and action plan (goals for taking action and growing your base).

ROP now works with more than 60 local groups in nearly every one of Oregon's 36 counties. While building local progressive infrastructure is our core mission, we have a variety of issues that we focus on - tax fairness, funding for human needs, stopping the war(s), queer rights, protection of civil liberties, and immigrant rights. Of all of these, immigration is the most threatening as a wedge issue not only in the communities that we work in around the state, but within the progressive groups that we work with.

We unite this work under a shared vision of true democracy and human dignity for all. This is the kind of language that we use to mean collective liberation, the notion that we are not free until all of us are free, that all oppression, and therefore liberation, is connected. We put this vision into practice by organizing a base that brings together targets of oppression (queers, immigrants, communities of color) and beneficiaries of privilege (white folks, straight folks, allies) to work on one another's issues by challenging



one another to stand up for the kind of democracy and kind of community that we want to live in.

The current focus of our collective action is united under the framework of “dismantling the war at home and abroad”. When we talk about the war at home in addition to the destruction of public services, unfair taxation, and funding for the war above human needs, we are particularly focused on lifting up and fighting against the targeting of immigrants as scapegoats in the “war on terror”. To this end, we have developed an immigrant rights program that has as its goal mobilizing rural communities to take action for immigrant rights. This work includes responding as allies to action alerts from the immigrant community, whether that is lobbying for or against proposed legislation, writing letters to the editor, monitoring and responding to anti-immigrant activities, or literally standing in solidarity with the immigrant community at rallies and community forums. The internal work of our immigrant rights program is supporting predominately white, rural people in developing and taking action from a progressive understanding of immigrant rights and global justice and their personal role in countering racism and the anti-immigrant movement. We believe that ROP’s membership and geographic base as predominately white, middle and working class, rural people in a predominately white state is a target for the anti-immigrant movement. In this way, we have positioned ourselves as a resistance movement.

Yes, a lot of racism and oppression does go unchecked and unchallenged in rural communities, as in most communities, but this is not natural or necessary. In fact, as in all communities, there are many hidden stories of struggles and resistance in rural communities against racism and oppression. Meanwhile the systems of white supremacy, homophobia, and patriarchy are hard at work here. The Right knows that and is working to use that to its advantage and build its base. As rural social justice organizers, we believe that our communities, and white people broadly, are more firmly rooted in a sense of fairness and justice than in hate, if we can tap into that. And fundamentally, white people have a stake in creating fairness and justice for all people. That is what we are trying to mobilize and build on within our own base.

Our success hinges on our ability to “inoculate” our base against the anti-immigrant movement and create leaders who are able to carry this “inoculation” forward in their local communities. We want to create leaders with the skills, analysis, and relationships to advance immigrant ally work in a significant and meaningful way. But at a minimum, we want to stop rural Oregonians from becoming anti-immigrant activists or supporters. As one of our allies at the Northwest Workers Justice Project says, we are working with folks who are likely to either become minutemen or freedom riders. So this is where the notion of really working with people where they are at hits home. Many of us, myself included, want to be the “perfect” ally, a good white person. What we have to understand is that being the best ally that you can be usually means working with other white folks. And the truth is that just like us, most white folks still have a lot of learning



and growing to do when it comes to their own internalized white supremacy. But if we are going to end white supremacy, I believe that we are going to have to do a lot more work within our white communities to dismantle the systems that have us all by the neck.

As far as how this fits within a “left movement building approach,” ROP is first of all concerned with building up our progressive base in rural and small town Oregon. The assumption that is at work here is that we all need to be organizing and building our movement where we live if we are to build a strong movement for justice in the US and in the world. ROP does this by supporting infrastructure and base building through local human dignity groups in every corner of rural Oregon that we conceptualize as movement centers or hubs. Ideally these local groups are always growing and engaging more people as centers of a growing progressive movement. This is the infrastructure piece that relates to the skill and practice of literally building a movement, growing your local database, using sign-in sheets, creating an active welcome wagon that brings new people into your organization.

The other strategic way that ROP relates to building a movement in the US is by focusing on rural white folks. Again, there are statistical reasons for why we should organize rural white folks. White people comprise 75% of the US population. White folks also overwhelmingly control the wealth and power in the US and the world. The Right has targeted rural white communities as their base and we must counter that. In rural Oregon, the reach of the infrastructure in the immigrant community that primarily exists via CAUSA is limited. CAUSA sees ROP, as do other allied organizations with a more urban focus, like Basic Rights Oregon, the statewide LGBT organization in Oregon, as a vital link in their efforts for statewide legislative and electoral wins.

As a predominately white rural organization building this truly inclusive movement means that we seek out relationships with all kinds of allies in our shared movement building work. We actively support reproductive justice, criminal justice reform through the Partnership for Safety and Justice, economic and racial justice with our urban allies at Oregon Action, Sisters in Action for Power, a youth and women of color led organization in Portland, and UNETE, a farmworker organizing project that we fiscally sponsor. While our membership includes many people who experience privilege as white people, they also experience oppression as poor and working class people, as queer and trans people, as women, as youth, and as people with disabilities. Our solidarity with organizations who prioritize work on issues that affect these groups of people acknowledges the experience of our members as whole people who experience both privilege and oppression and gives us the chance to put into action our belief that all oppression and all liberation is connected. We organize with white people in a way that attempts to model what our movement should look like. One of our board members talks about how at ROP she doesn't have to choose between her identities. She doesn't have to only be a queer woman or a peace activist or an ally to the immigrant





community or a pick-up truck driving Okie transplant to rural Oregon. She can be all of these things. ROP's vision of movement building holds up Martin Luther King Jr.'s notion of "beloved community" as a place where all people are valued and their human dignity is respected and where there is fundamentally just and democratic power sharing.

**Chris: What are the methodologies you use to work with white people? What has been successful and what has not?**

Amy: ROP is above all about organizing and building a movement in small town and rural Oregon. Whatever we are doing we are always asking how can this grow our contacts, engage new people, build for the long haul. We don't go anywhere without passing around a sign in sheet or asking people for their contact information. When it comes to our anti-racism work, the same thing is true. We want to grow a large base of anti-racist allies who will take action when called upon and incorporate this vision and awareness into their own organizing.

Growing our base means that we have to start where people are. Really. Of course you want your leadership to get it at the core – to be committed anti-racists. But if we are truly committed to building a base, we have to make room for the base. And that means making space for learning, having the patience and compassion that it takes to move with people, often move really slowly with people. It is a real balance. On the one hand, you need to take this time with people if they are going to stay with you. And on the other, you want your work to be true to your vision and not always waiting for everyone to get to the point where they agree with every part of your analysis or vision.

I think that ROP has walked that line well, but not without tension at times. We believe that building a democratic rural Oregon is not just about involving white, straight, middle class folks. We have held as one of our core tenets that our struggles and our liberation are connected. We were multi-issue before that was cool. We have always understood that the strength of our democracy rests on the quality of life and respect for the human dignity of the most vulnerable, the most oppressed, the targeted members of our communities: queers, immigrants, poor folks, people of color, youth, elders, disabled people. When we started out fighting Measure 9, we had a strong base of queer folks and allies. Soon after that, when we started working on immigrant rights, we lost some of these folks, and continue to face challenges and resistance from within our base, but we have also gained more members who are allies and members of the farm worker and immigrant rights community. When we took pro-choice and tax fairness positions, the same thing happened. We lost folks who had been with us for more than a decade when we prioritized our organizing on stopping the Iraq war. We also gained more than a dozen new member groups.

So in building our analysis through multi-issue work, we have lost some single-issue folks and we have seen some of these folks stay with us but essentially stand aside





when it is “not their issue,” but what we have seen much more of is that when you can link together one another’s concerns and experiences into a framework that makes sense and rings true for one group of people, they are willing to see those connections and bring them into their work. We seek out ways to connect our communities concerns with an anti-racist analysis and vision. We also try to create community that includes support and a sense of identity with ROP and with anti-racist and anti-oppression action. We take the time to build relationships and trust between ROP and local members. If someone has months, years, or even a decade of history with ROP, it’s a little easier for them to take the next step, to take a risk knowing that you and the rest of the ROP community have got their back. But don’t get the wrong impression. This is difficult and active work. It doesn’t happen without struggle. But it is often in the struggle that we learn and grow the most. It is absolutely worth it.

There is always a tension in community organizing between the organizer, particularly if you are talking about a paid organizer, and the community. This tension often grows the more removed the organizer is from the community. Particularly around election time, urban or out of state organizers will “parachute” in without any real knowledge and often times a lack of respect for the local community. This is why at ROP, when our base becomes involved in electoral organizing, we encourage them to take ownership of whatever campaign work they do and to see this as an opportunity for longer-term base building. ROP’s model relies on local leadership to head up their local human dignity groups. We want all of our members to see themselves as organizers and we offer trainings and support that are intended to encourage local leaders to develop those skills. ROP staff is seen as skilled behind the scenes support for this leadership and as slightly removed friends who can offer statewide or national perspective on issues, advise on campaigns and organizing challenges, and provide skills training and support to local group members. As staff, we don’t see ourselves as the local experts and we have immense respect for the knowledge and experience local communities members have by virtue of living day in and out in a community that we are only guests in. But as staff we also recognize that we do have the privilege and benefit of forty plus hours a week that we are paid to think about organizing, stay updated on current issues, and learn from the experiences of communities around the state. Collectively, the three of us have been organizing for more than forty years. Our members pay us to work for them and they expect us to be excellent organizers. We are accountable to them, but they expect us to also be leaders who have something useful to offer them when they are struggling with a challenge and who will stay firmly rooted in ROP’s organizational values of human dignity and democracy that have always included a commitment to racial justice and anti-oppression. This dynamic means that there can be tension. Staff does challenge our members to be better organizers and to be stronger anti-racist allies and there is resistance at times. There is always resistance to change, fear of change, of appearing inexperienced, of doing something new, of challenging power. ROP staff see our role to encourage members to work through that fear and resistance,



offer an analysis and framework that allows members to see how the struggle for anti-oppression is the same struggle that they are engaged in as rural human dignity activists, and share skills, tools, and opportunities to turn that analysis into action.

Since ROP's beginning we have used "Living Room Conversations" as a tool to bring contentious issues literally into someone's living room with the intent of gathering community input, presenting outside observations and a framework, and then discussing how those observations match up or not with the wisdom of the local community. These conversations have also served to break isolation; being progressive in a rural community in the age of Fox news and online organizing can feel especially lonely. There is no substitute for face-to-face personal contact when you are trying to change culture, not just policy, particularly in rural communities, and these living room conversations are an important first step. When it comes to building our base of anti-racist white folks who are committed to countering the anti-immigrant movement in rural Oregon, we have used living room conversations over the past two years to dialogue with more than 400 people in 20 different communities. We open by sharing our analysis of the anti-immigrant movement in Oregon alongside a framework for talking about immigration that emphasizes human dignity and human rights, democracy, and global justice. Then we use the bulk of the time to talk about what folks are noticing in their own communities and what they think of the information that we have just shared. We believe that this method of popular education allows the wisdom and reflections of the community to lead the group towards action that is grounded in the realities of their community and allows ROP to act more as a facilitator and convener which in turn leaves room for local leadership and direction to emerge. At the close of the conversation we suggest options for ways to keep the conversation going and ask anyone who is interested to sign up to be a member of ROP's Immigration Fairness Network (IFN) and their local Rapid Response Team (RRT).

From an organizing perspective, these living room conversations serve at least two purposes. The first is to inoculate everyone in the room against the anti-immigrant movement. The second is to identify leaders who will be part of the IFN and members of their RRT. While we want everyone to be an active leader in the struggle for racial justice, we know that is not going to happen immediately. Think of our work as concentric circles. The first circle is ROP board members and staff. The second circle is the leadership of local groups. The third circle is the membership of local groups. The final circle is the broader community that our local groups operate in. When we have a living room conversation, we are essentially taking a slice of this pie with representation from each of these circles. While we would love to have everyone join as a member of the IFN, at a minimum we want everyone in the room to not join the Minutemen. By talking through the white supremacist vision that the anti-immigrant attempts to hide and debunking anti-immigrant myths, we hope that most folks in the room won't fall for these arguments. By sharing the impacts of global economic policies



like NAFTA on people in Mexico and the US and affirming that white folks can choose to welcome their immigrant neighbors and appreciate their contributions and suggesting active ways to organize to make that happen, we hope that some of the people in the room will take that work up. Part of what is most effective about Living Room Conversations is that they are conversations. While the leader of the conversation will share information for the group to reflect on, we truly do allow it to be a conversation where people can put their thoughts out there and have time to talk through them. We find this to be more effective than talking “at” someone trying to convince them they should feel a certain way. This style allows people to come to conclusions on their own that are grounded in justice and human dignity and creates more ownership and commitment to a cause.

Through these living room conversation and other activities, anyone who has expressed an interest in fighting the anti-immigrant movement or supporting immigrants is added to the IFN. The IFN is the basic level that allows us to know who to go to when we want to connect with the local community around immigration issues, whether that is to check in about anti-immigrant organizing, alert folks to an anti-immigrant protest that we want to monitor or counter protest or provide solidarity to the immigrant community, encourage local pro-immigrant letters to the editor, collect postcards for legislation, or offer other resources relating to immigrant solidarity. The members of the IFN are also the first group that we will go to when we are encouraging local leadership on immigration issues, whether that is leading Living Room Conversations of their own, becoming part of a speakers network to oppose anti-immigrant ballot measures, building direct relationships with the local immigrant community, or leading local campaigns to advance immigrant solidarity.

Rapid Response Teams are local groups who have pro-actively identified themselves as immigrant allies and are organized and ready to respond when needed. We realized the need for these teams in the wake of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in Portland in June of 2007. ICE is the federal government’s immigration enforcement agency that falls under the Department of Homeland Security. Also known as *la migra*, ICE was formerly called Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). When the Portland raid happened, it wasn’t enough for ROP to have a list of who in the local community was an ally; local communities needed this information themselves so that they could respond immediately to threats, whether that be an ICE raid or a nasty anti-immigrant letter to the editor. Within a week of the Portland ICE raids, ROP had established 8 RRTs in the areas most threatened by ICE activity. Some of these teams are already well organized, trained in Know Your Rights in a Raid and ICE monitoring information thanks to the quick work of American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Jefferson Center, Western States Center, and others, and are in dialogue with the local immigrant community, elected officials, and employers. Other groups are still building their team. In addition to responding to ICE raids, RRT members work to deal with



other immigration crises in their communities. In order to continually build our base and grow our movement, RRTs are also working to educate their communities and bring in more supporters for immigrant rights and fairness. RRTs have organized rallies and letter writing campaigns following a hate crime and are currently leading a campaign to defeat a local anti-immigrant ordinance.

There is a real balance between education and action at ROP. You will rarely see us doing one without the other. There are a couple of reasons for that. One is that we believe that people stay engaged when they are not just doing education, but having the chance to take action. And vice versa, people are more likely to commit to actions when they understand why they are doing something. Secondly, since we are about building a base of people, we believe that action is what allows us to reach and engage new people. Talking without taking action just won't do it. This isn't to say that we don't take time for reflection. We encourage spaces for reflection and strategy, but the conclusion is always planning next steps that include action and base building. The third reason that we combine education and action is that we feel a real urgency about our work. We aren't waiting until we have the "perfect" analysis or until everyone that we are working with is fully on the same page, committed to the "right" anti-racist principles, and fluent in the "correct" anti-racist language. While we take responsibility for supporting people to move in that direction and act in ways that are accountable to immigrant communities and grounded in good anti-racist principles, we don't believe that our communities, including the immigrants and people of color who live in them, have the luxury to wait until all white folks get it. And if we are going to have a base, not just a few people, who are active in the struggle for anti-racism, we need to take action while we are continually creating spaces for reflection and education. We believe and have seen that through action and experience, learning and analysis are developed.

The path for many of our leaders in our immigrant solidarity work begins with an individual interest or expression of support. This might be writing a letter to the editor. It might just be responding with interest to a ROP email that talks about immigration issues. It might even be something that is not a particularly useful or strongly anti-racist action; the point is that this person is willing to take action. From this point, we try and move that person into taking collective action. This could be by joining IFN or their RRT and participating in ROP immigrant solidarity, like writing letters to the editor opposing REAL ID or helping out with security at May Day Immigrant Rights Marches. This is also the time that we are starting to be in relationship with the person and support their learning. Our hope here is that through these experiences and opportunities for trainings and discussions, we are providing tools and a framework that helps the individual to develop an anti-racist identity and a stronger understanding of racism, privilege, and anti-oppression practices.

If you are interested in developing an anti-racist base of white folks, you need to support interest in and inclination towards anti-racist work in your base. Find ways to involve



local leaders in creating political education pieces that will speak to their community. That sounds obvious, but I think it is harder than it sounds. As an organizer, you will have to challenge yourself to stay open and make room for the leadership of new and perhaps less experienced folks, rather than judge and shut the door behind you. We are afraid of being the “bad” anti-racist ally and that can lead us to abandon the people whose leadership we need to support. We are a lot more valuable to communities of color as organizers working with white people than being the “perfect” ally who doesn’t get our hands dirty by working with all the other racist white folks out there. Of course you are going to make mistakes, but that will be how you know that you are taking risks to change the world. Don’t let fear or guilt stop you. Those are tools of white supremacy that want to keep us white folks immobilized.

**Chris: What key challenges have you faced in your organizing and how have you worked to overcome them? What helped you address those challenges and what lessons do you draw from those experiences?**

Amy: ROP has been engaged in immigrant ally work since our beginning in the early 90s. We have had many successes along the way, including defeating a guestworker proposal in the late 90s, participating in the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, organizing the Walk for Truth, Justice, and Community with CAUSA, Oregon’s stateside immigrant rights coalition, in 2005, and stalling REAL ID implementation. And we should celebrate these successes. Meanwhile there are core challenges that continue.

Rural communities hear the rhetoric of the Right and in many cases it goes unchallenged. In May 2007, two Latino men in rural Clackamas County were attacked by a mob of 20 to 30 young white men shouting racist slurs and throwing rocks the size of grapefruits. The men were injured and the car that they were attempting to escape in was damaged, but the grand jury declined to label this as a hate crime. While this incident has not been linked to an organized white supremacist group, this kind of violence indicates the tension and climate of racism in rural Oregon. In June 2007, Oregon was home to a huge ICE raid that has detained 128 people. In October 2007, white supremacists associated with the Hammerskin Nation, a neo-Nazi organization, attempted to hold a national gathering in Oregon; fortunately it was shut down by a local coalition of anti-racist organizers. Meanwhile Congress’s debates of immigration policy seem to get worse and more compromised with each failed attempt.

Anti-immigrant groups in Oregon have emerged and strengthened over the past several years, namely Oregonians for Immigration Reform out of McMinnville and the Coos County Citizens Caucus, a small group from Coos Bay that has been associated with the former Oregon Chapter of the Minutemen, also an apparently small group. More challenging than these overt anti-immigrant efforts is anti-immigrant sentiments from progressives. “Progressive” talk radio hosts like Air America’s Thom Hartmann give permission and support for local leaders to oppose legalization on the flawed





logic that immigrant labor undermines workers rather than seeing the possibility for workers globally to unite against the corporations that conquer and divide. Local peace movement leaders can clearly see the immorality in an unjust war and are willing to engage in civil disobedience, but can get hung up on the idea that undocumented immigrants are bad because they are breaking the law when their families' and communities' survival depend on it.

In 2005, ROP and CAUSA partnered to create the Walk for Truth, Justice, and Community, a weeklong 50-mile march from Salem, the capitol of Oregon, to Portland, Oregon's largest city. The Walk brought together more than 2500 people over the course of the week who took their shift on Oregon's back roads to lift up the message that rural Oregon demands funding for human needs, not war, and respect for civil rights and civil liberties at home and abroad, namely immigrant rights and queer rights. In many ways, the Walk was a beautiful creation of what movement and solidarity can look like in the flesh. Over the week on the road, the partnership between rural white folks and immigrants and farm workers brought these groups into real working relationships with one another in a way that would not have been easy to do elsewhere because so many parts of the state are so white and there are limited opportunities for exposure or relationship building with people of color. But what we also ran into by bringing these two communities together was that some of the white peace folks complained about the immigrant rights focus. "I thought this was a peace march," was the complaint by a small, but vocal minority. That is often what we run into with anti-racist organizing with white folks. There is resistance, a desire to wait to move what is considered a contentious or "complicated" issue, or the claim that this is not my issue. So we are faced with a choice. Do we simply write these folks off? Do we challenge them in a self-righteous way that blames them for not getting it – and then more often than not means that they are going to get defensive and not get it? Or is there a way that we can challenge and support them at the same time to see their issues as connected? At ROP we believe that when white folks can see their liberation and the creation of the just world that they are yearning for as inherently bound up together with the liberation of people of color, immigrants, other poor people, women, queer and trans folks, youth, elders, and other people who are struggling under the same interlocking systems of oppression, this is where the real movement building can start.

In this case, we realized that the peace community could be a good ally in the struggle for immigrant rights and that we were well positioned given our connections and commitment to ending the war in Iraq to be the ones to help develop them as allies. So we started putting things into a "War at Home and Abroad" Framework that linked the common systems and inequalities in power that have created the global war on "terror", the war in Iraq, and subsequent erosion of civil liberties, breakdown of the safety net, and targeting of immigrant communities. We started using this language in our communications with members. We made it the theme of our annual membership gathering and opened the





day with a panel that brought together peace, immigrant rights, and labor leaders to define what connections they see between the war at home and war abroad. We got this analysis up on our website. We framed our legislative platform in this language, including our opposition to REAL ID. We wrote articles for peace publications. We sought out and referenced examples of immigrant rights struggles that would speak to the peace community, such as the overrepresentation of people of color as well as rural youth in the war and among the dead in Iraq, the attempt by the US government to create a backdoor draft that offers citizenship to immigrants in exchange for military service, how it is the same corporations that are profiteering from the war in Iraq and benefiting from the militarization of the border, the rise of “homeland security,” and detention of immigrants, and how scapegoating and targeting immigrants in the name of the “war on terror” through divisive anti-immigrant legislation and ordinances that prey on fear, racism, and scarcity of resource prevents blame from being placed where it belongs – on the corporations and governments that seek to keep workers vulnerable and unorganized.

A more internal challenge has been to keep our work accountable to organizations of color. Both ROP and CAUSA recognize that we need one another to work successfully in Oregon. To stay coordinated and accountable, ROP serves on CAUSA’s board and acts as a lead ally on CAUSA campaigns. We also seek out advice and involve CAUSA leadership on ROP campaigns. Once a year we bring our leadership together for some intentional overlap time. And while we believe that there is a lot of internal work that should be done predominately in a white-to-white way to allow for real honesty and racism to arise, be challenged and discussed, we also highly value opportunities to bring together ROP’s base and immigrant communities for joint collaborations led by people of color and immigrants.

There are still a lot of challenges though. When you are focused on action with less experienced white allies the way that we are, when most of our base does not have ongoing relationships with people of color, when there are few areas in the state that have an organized immigrant presence, and when you are talking about ROP’s more than 60 local autonomous groups, there are plenty of examples of times that we have messed up and things have not gone in a story book kind of way. The important thing, I believe, is that we try and learn from our mistakes and keep on trying to do the work in the best way that we can.

One of our challenges is our choice to remain as we historically have been as a white ally organization given the changing demographics in rural Oregon. Since our allies at CAUSA have limited infrastructure, they are not able to work in every part of the state with a growing Latino population. Oftentimes these are areas that ROP does have a presence, but as a white staff of three, we are trained to organize white allies against the anti-immigrant movement, but we are not very skilled or suited to organize with the Latino community. We are attempting to bridge these gaps and establish relationships



with the local Latino community, but as the demographics of rural Oregon continue to shift, we have to continue to question the logic of our role as a white ally organization and as the only statewide rural progressive organization, especially when the capacity to organize the Latino community in several parts of rural Oregon does not yet exist among Latino organizations.

A second challenge has been to create relationships with the Native communities in rural Oregon. Though the Native community comprises 1% of the state's population, in some rural counties, they make up as much as 30% of the local population. Beyond the demographics, the history of genocide and continued oppression and poverty that Native communities face demand more solidarity on the part of white allies. ROP has made some headway in building relationships with Native community leaders through our youth organizing effort to connect white rural youth with Native youth, but we have a long way to go. There is a wide gulf that we have yet to bridge between most reservations and the surrounding communities resulting from deeply rooted racism.

Given the demographics of rural Oregon, it is challenging, but necessary that we do our anti-racist organizing in a way that is accountable to communities of color. But at the same time, we want to be sensitive to tokenizing individual people of color by asking them to speak on behalf of their entire race or ethnic group. In some rural communities, there may not actually be an established community of color; there may only be individuals of color. If there are organizations of color, they may be religious in nature, like the Catholic Church with a Spanish language service, or they may be more business oriented, like the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and these groups and their members may or may not share our anti-oppression values. Nevertheless we need to seek out relationships with organizations of color and talk about the racial justice work that we are doing and be open and responsive to critiques, suggestions, and requests.

At ROP we encourage people to seek out organizations and individuals who are members of or who work with the Latino community and get to know one another by introducing themselves and finding out what issues and projects are important to the immigrant community. Start by listening and showing up, not only asking people of color to join your group or support your issue. Be sensitive to tokenizing, but don't let that stop you from reaching out. If there are no organizations of color in your community, find organizations of color in your state or region. Somewhere there is a group that can be a resource for you! This may not mean that they have time or interest to sit down and talk with you about your organizing, but it is likely that they will have a website or newsletter or email list where you can learn more about the issues and concerns and history and culture of the community broadly. In addition to educating yourself about the communities of color in or near your own, seek out opportunities to learn what it means to be a white ally. There are also trainings and resources that you can take part in with other white anti-racists to learn more about how to understand white privilege and organize against white supremacy.



This is not a perfect science, even in urban communities or communities that have large communities of color. People of color and the organizations that they create are diverse. There are different politics and different visions of social change. They will have different ideas of what white allies ought to do and how they should support communities of color. So, depending on your perspective, the good news, or bad news, for white folks is that you aren't off the hook; you will have to keep thinking critically no matter where you live and what your community looks like.

Don't let the complexity of white anti-racist organizing stop you. Build intentional relationships with organizations of color and invite dialogue with these groups so that you can be accountable and responsive to the priorities of communities of color. But don't be deterred if these relationships take time or don't manifest as strongly as you would like. Ultimately this organizing with white folks thing is our work as white people. It is our responsibility. Don't wait around wondering when an organization of color is going to decide to prioritize organizing white folks and call you up and tell you what to do. This is not to say that those organizations won't value this work. It is just that they have plenty of work to do themselves, like surviving white supremacy and the systems of oppression working to destroy communities of color. And it is not to say that you won't hear from these groups when you mess up, which you hopefully will. This might even be the opportunity to really deepen a relationship with an organization or individual of color that has not been possible before. But the most important thing that you can do is to do something. Take action. It is better to mess up in the pursuit of justice than to be perfect at doing nothing! This is risky work. Which leads back to the notion of working with folks where they are at. It is good to have spaces where you and your circle who share politics can support and encourage one another, read and discuss, scheme and plot, but if we are truly about building a movement we need to be able to organize outside this comfort zone. For many of us this means doing a little personal work to develop communication skills and confidence, patience and humility. The best advice I can offer about this is to try and cultivate what your love for justice can look like when you apply it to yourself and to the people around you. Even the goofy, awkward white folks that remind you just a little too much of yourself. I believe that this love in action truly can transform the world.

Like many young people who grew up rural, I left as soon as I could and never thought I would look back. What I have come to realize is that for me this "battle for the hearts and minds" of white folks is largely a rural struggle. There are many logical reasons for this, not the least of which is that the Right realizes this, but for me there is also a deeper, more personal logic. Rural folk are my people, my grandparents, the friends and family who made me what I am and whose love inspires and sustains me to believe in transformation and hope for justice. I want to do right by them. And I want them to do right by the world.



# Lessons from Organizing for Abolition with Critical Resistance

A talk by Rachel Herzing

*Rachel Herzing is a long-time organizer with Critical Resistance, a national organization dedicated to abolishing the prison industrial complex. The following is a talk she gave on the Visionary Politics Panel of the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Organizing Training Program at the Women's Building in San Francisco in April of 2011. The Anne Braden Program, led by Catalyst Project, develops white anti-racist leaders and organizers from around the country. One of the goals of the Anne Braden Program is to develop leaders who can both build up anti-racist politics and practice in white communities and help build power in communities of color. Rachel's talk gives concrete examples of ways to build our organizations, campaigns, and movement.*

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I am here today to talk from the perspective of two different organizations I've had the pleasure of working with. One is called Critical Resistance. For those of you who don't know, we're a national grassroots organization that is dedicated to abolishing the prison industrial complex (PIC). By PIC, I mean imprisonment, policing, courts, surveillance, the whole shebang. We talk about this goal of abolition as visionary politics because we understand it to be a long-term goal but we also understand it to have concrete steps that we can take today in that direction.

Critical Resistance has been around for a little over ten years as an organization. I'm one of the co-founders of the organization. I started working with what was then a network in 1999 and it's been my primary political home since then.

I also am going to talk a little bit about an organization called Creative Interventions. It's a smaller, lesser-known organization that serves as a community resource. Creative Interventions was developed to establish and practice means of preventing, interrupting, and eliminating interpersonal harm. And mostly what we're talking about is sexual violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, etc. Our goal is to figure out how to do that from a community-based perspective that does not rely on imprisonment, policing, or traditional social services. So, we aren't trying to start a new kind of shelter system; we aren't trying to start a new hotline. We really believe that people every single day are taking steps that can interrupt, prevent, and eliminate violence without having to call the cops, because we often find that the cops make things worse rather than better.

So, typically I would spend time talking about all the glorious things that these organizations are doing, but one of the things that's been on my mind a lot is how to sustain a visionary politics: What does it take to sustain a politics that has a very, very long view? That's what I'm going to talk about today.

To do that, I'm going to talk about a couple core concepts that are similar in both of these organizations. They're not the only ones, but they stick out to me as a way of helping frame my thinking.



The first one is self-determination. This is the big winner concept for me. The goal of the work that we do, both at Critical Resistance and Creative Interventions, is self-determination for those people who are systematically denied access in society. We know who those people are, right? We're talking about people of color, poor people, queer and gender-nonconforming people, young people, people with disabilities, indigenous people.

The goal for the work of both of these organizations is not necessarily to eliminate violence, or the prison-industrial complex, as much as it is to liberate ourselves. So, in the words of Beth Richie, who's one of the advisors for Creative Interventions: "Our goal is not to eliminate violence, it is liberation."

So, it is true: we want to eliminate violence, we want to eliminate the prison industrial complex. But it is as important for us to be operating from the position that allows us to move toward what we want to build, what we want to live in, as much as what we want to tear down.

Working toward self-determination also gives us the ability to honor our identities and our communities without getting hamstrung by the limitations of identity politics. For me, it also implies a commitment to struggling against all of the barriers that limit our ability to be self-determined, like capitalism, heteropatriarchy, xenophobia, etc.

The rejection of the idea that cops, courts, or prisons—the very systems that are employed to repress and kill us—can be employed in our liberation, is central to sustaining this idea that our goal is to resist that, even as we're moving in the short-term to undermine its ability to have a hold on us. So, it's a toggling back and forth constantly between what's right in front of us and what we're trying to build.

The second concept is praxis. I'm going to talk about praxis in super-simplistic terms. There are lots and lots of complicated ways of talking about it and lots of people who have opinions about what it means. When I'm talking about it, what I'm talking about is a practice that's formed by both reflection and action.

My work with Critical Resistance and Creative Interventions is rooted in the idea that reflection and action must be in a dialectical relationship with each other. So, in Creative Interventions, for instance, our work gathers examples of what people are trying every single day to intervene in situations of interpersonal harm, so that we can not only reflect on the quantity and variety of things that people have tried, but also we can apply those lessons when harm is right in front of us. In this way, we have more skill, we have more confidence, we have more ability to intervene.

Reflection allows us to assess what contexts and situations may be impacted by which approaches. We value an informed practice that's constantly adjusting and adapting to what we're learning through testing things out. In CR, similarly, study has been really a



cornerstone, and it continues to be a cornerstone, of our work.

We reject anti-intellectualism. We recognize how important clarity of thought, really firm understanding of historical context, and strong theoretical grounding make our work stronger—not instead of doing the work, but amplifying the work, making the work stronger.

A visionary politics cannot be sustained only by dreaming wildly, although dreaming is essential to staying focused on a vision, nor can it be sustained only by acting. What sustains the ability to strive for visionary politics is to maintain a practice that understands the relational nature of thought and action. Both of those things are necessary to keep visionary politics moving.

Next up is discipline and accountability. And I also want to say that it's the hardest one, for me. So even as we acknowledge that our work and our practice is happening within the very systems and dynamics that we're opposing, the challenge is to be disciplined in our politics and accountable to our principles. And it's because we're enmeshed in what we're fighting that discipline and accountability are so crucial to the long-term sustainability of our political visions.

Don't get me wrong here. By discipline, I'm not talking about inflexibility or rigidity, I'm not talking about political purity, I'm not talking about sectarianism. What I mean is that our politics must lead us, and they must provide the frame around our work.

Prison industrial-complex abolition is, for me, that frame. I imagine the vision to be kind of like a horizon—it's a fixed point ahead, which concrete steps can be taken towards. But in my version of a horizon, you can actually reach it, so it's not kind of the never-ending story. But just like the horizon, it's fixed but it's also expansive enough to allow lots of different kinds of approaches and many, many points of access and entry.

To keep a focus on that visionary horizon requires a fearless discipline to understand the difference between compromises that expand our ability to fight in broader alliances, versus those that create obstacles that we'll only have to tear down later. Some of the examples that we use in terms of thinking about PIC organizing are gender-responsive imprisonment, community policing, and hate-crimes prosecution.

We also have to be accountable in the exercise of our political practice. We need to act in ways that are consistent with our vision—in our organizations, in our coalitions, our movements, and our personal lives. This is the absolute hardest one for me. Being politically consistent in my personal life is incredibly difficult and incredibly important.

I want to stress we try to do this without getting caught up in perfectionism. Living your politics as completely as possible—not relegating it to a job, a campaign, or a specific set of work that you do with an organization—is really crucial. It's okay to try and to fail,





but you have to try.

It is essential to sustaining us in the long-term. As much as that practice is important to my vision, the vision also inspires me to want to live in that way.

Finally, I want to talk about organization. I've come to believe that strong organizations are really, really essential to sustaining visionary politics. And by this, I don't mean that there's some perfect organizational form or that some organizations should last forever. I think that organizations have life cycles and that they respond to the conditions in which they exist.

Organizations also respond to who is in them at any given point and what is being required of them at any given point. For Critical Resistance, I've found that we're the strongest when our organizational form is strong. We have a chapter model that operates across the country. And with weak chapters, or with individuals scattered across the country but without local chapters through which to exercise discipline and accountability to our praxis, we're less effective. So you can think about the herding cats allusion there. It's much harder when you don't have a little crew of people to be accountable.

Alternately, Creative Interventions is an example of an organization that followed a model of planned obsolescence. One of our core principles is that we don't want to create a reliance on social services, we don't want our organization to become another social service that people go to in order to figure out how to intervene in situations of violence. So, we created the organization in such a way that the work became tools that could bolster other organizations' work, rather than something that had to be sustained in and of itself to be effective.

Organizational formations, whatever shape they take, can provide homes, containers, and catalysts for visionary politics. Their strength, their ability, and their vitality, allow visionary politics to thrive.

Clearly, these concepts are just the tip of the iceberg of what sustains political movements with goals that sometimes seem unachievable. In my case, that's a world without violence, that's a world without cops, prisons, courts, surveillance cameras, or people punishing one another. Our ability to continue to think expansively about what we want, our liberation, instead of what we think we can get, these small-term victories, or what the state tells us we're entitled to, allows us to both reflect and act, to exercise consistency and rigor in our praxis, to build strong organizations, and set the stage for what I think is necessary to sustain us for what proves to be an incredibly long and hard fight.

*This talk was transcribed by Catalyst Project intern Anna Stitt and edited by Chris Crass and Chris Dixon.*



# Lessons from Southern Queer Anti-Racist Organizing

A talk by Carla Wallace of the Fairness Campaign

*Carla F. Wallace grew up on a farm in Oldham County, Kentucky and in Amsterdam, Netherlands, where her grandmother had hidden people fleeing the Nazis under her floorboards during World War II. Campus activism in the Anti-Apartheid campaign, and as a affordable housing as an organizer with ACORN, lead her back to Louisville anti-KKK work and environmental justice work under the mentorship of Anne Braden, and other southern justice leaders. Voting rights advocacy, fighting police abuse, and organizing solidarity delegations to Nicaragua, Palestine, Colombia and Cuba, convinced her of the urgency of winning more white people to anti racism.*

*In 1991 she helped found Louisville's Fairness Campaign, which has been honored locally and nationally for its work on behalf of LGBT rights and justice for all. In 1999, with an inclusive community based strategy that has anti racism at its core, the FC passed one of the most inclusive pieces of LGBT legislation in the country, and the only gender identity inclusive law in the South. Current work includes broadening an anti-racist base in the LGBT community, and lifting up the interconnections between all the issues before us, including immigrant rights, war, economic, environmental and reproductive justice. She is a member of the leadership team of the national white anti-racist network SURJ: Showing Up for Racial Justice.*

*Carla gave this talk on the Visionary Politics Panel the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Organizing Training Program at the Women's Building in San Francisco in April of 2011. The Anne Braden Program, led by Catalyst Project, develops white anti-racist leaders and organizers from around the country. One of the goals of the Anne Braden Program is to develop leaders who can both build up anti-racist politics and practice in white communities and help build power in communities of color. Carla's talk gives concrete examples of ways to do both. A longer biography of Carla is below.*

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I really appreciate being asked by Catalyst to speak to all of you today. It's just exciting to be in a room full of folks who want to do the hard work of creating a better world. So, I'm honored to be here with you.

I wanted to bring Anne Braden into the room a little bit, and honor her. I first met this white Southern anti-racist activist when I was in grade school, and was lucky to get to work with her over the period of several decades.

She worked with us in a loving way and in a challenging way, and both have been very important. She would always say that, as a white Southern woman, it was critical to discover that her country was wrong, and that the first piece she discovered her country was wrong on was race. For her, that created the opportunity to look at everything else that was wrong in the U.S.

She also talked about having to turn herself inside out. She would say, it's a painful process, but it's not destructive, because you get to join "the other America," the world



of folks who are resisting.

The final thing that she would say was, “I was born privileged in a class society.” And for her, that was a prison. She was born white in a racist society, and that was a prison. And one of the most important things she taught those of us who are white is that we have to do this for ourselves, we have to free ourselves.

I was born into a family of class and race privilege. With a Dutch oma who hid anti-Nazi resistance members under her floorboards, and parents who were active in the civil rights and anti-war movements, I discovered early on that my family had much more than we needed and far too many people didn’t have enough.

I’d been active for over a decade and a half—in the Free the Wilmington Ten campaign, anti-apartheid student organizing, affordable housing organizing, international solidarity work, and voting rights organizing—when I first carried a bull-horn chanting, “racism, sexism, we say no, homophobia has got to go,” in Louisville’s first gay and lesbian march in the mid-’80s.

I wasn’t out to my family, and I was still coming out to myself. I was a board member of the Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, and we were working to get the Klan members off of the police force.

In those conversations twenty-five years ago with Anne Braden and civil rights leader Bob Cunningham and others in Louisville, we talked a lot about how we could engage more white people in the struggle against racism.

Historically and in our organizing, we saw that over and over again, it was racism that divided people who should be standing together, and that white people were providing both the silence and the support for the oppressive structures to stay in place, despite our work to try and change them.

Whether it was police abuse, voting rights, or economic justice, we came to believe that building an anti-racist majority was going to be key to making progress on any issue that any of us cared about. That meant we had to get more white people to understand our stake in fighting white supremacy too.

I want to tell a story about how a long-term campaign for something can be built in a way that keeps large numbers of people engaged over time, gets white people to identify our self-interest in fighting racism, brings more white people into anti-racist work, and allows us to build political power in support of an anti-racist economic justice agenda.

In 1991, we launched the Fairness Campaign for LGBT equality in Louisville, Kentucky. The overall goal was to win a piece of legislation: basic jobs, affordable housing, and open accommodations protections for LGBT people. There was not a shred of legal



protection for folks in Louisville at that point.

But when we looked at a lot of the gay organizing around the country, we saw that it was dominated by race and class privilege. And we knew that we wanted and needed our efforts in Louisville to be and look different from that. At that time, leading up to the Fairness Campaign in the early '90s, with rare exceptions, no one was winning anything anywhere.

Like today, the politics were framed by the war on Iraq, welfare reform, gays in the military, and The Defense of Marriage Act. Around the country, the radical right's numbers were growing. They were exploiting homophobia within marginalized communities and racism within gay organizing to advance an agenda that was about racism, war, and cutting taxes for the rich.

And in our region, LGBT rights were considered an impossible struggle, even among many of us. But after fifteen years of struggle, in a Southern town, like too many that are often written off by our brothers and sisters on the East and West coasts, thousands of folks mobilized, lobbied, protested, went door-to-door, and got arrested in civil disobedience actions. In 1999, we finally won one of the most progressive laws of its kind in the country, covering both sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Fairness win was a very necessary advance of human rights, but I think there's another part of the story that matters for movement building more generally, and especially for places like Louisville around this country. That part is that the Fairness Campaign would not have been successful, we would not have won this legislation, if it wasn't for a commitment to an inclusive, intersectional vision, and a strategy with anti-racism at its core.

White people coming into the Fairness work learn that our own self-interest in being treated decently is connected to supporting efforts led by people of color, and to building relationships across lines of difference.

In almost thirty years of peace and justice work, I have come to believe that where we put our bodies, is one of the most powerful experiences to change our world personally and politically. In the Fairness work, we make space for this to happen and white people change because of it.

We change standing on a picket line at 7am, day after day next to someone who does not look like us, demanding minority contracts and hiring. We change when, in all our queerness, we join striking UFCW members outside the Fischer Packing Company, flyer a gay bar that's hosting a white comedian in blackface, or struggle with LGBT people about opposing the death penalty or militarization. We change when we keep showing up for someone who may not trust us yet, and who later testifies on behalf of LGBT equality at city hall. And we change when Black, Brown, and white lesbians get



arrested protesting police abuse together with a Black minister and a mother whose son was stomped to death by the city jailers.

In the years of struggle to pass anti-discrimination legislation—and to do it in a way that grew the base for anti-racism and economic justice—Fairness volunteers knocked on hundreds and hundreds of doors throughout Louisville. We talked to people not just about LGBT fairness, but about a living wage and an end to police abuse.

This not only grew our power politically—as we proved to resistant elected officials that we had support among the voters—but it proved transformational on other levels as well. When someone opens their door and on their doorstep is a team that might look like Darnell and Larry—a six-foot-three Black gay Fairness leader and a five-foot-by-three-foot white straight carpenter union guy—talking about queer rights, decent wages, and stopping the killings of young Black men by cops, that person at the door has an experience. Those two volunteers have an experience too—an experience in having each other's back in that moment.

Recently, in an effort to build solidarity with migrant people under attack in Arizona, Fairness leaders helped launch People Not Profiles, a multiracial coalition. In one action, the public education piece included those of us who are white taking the lead and telling other whites on busy Louisville streets that they had to show us their papers. We used this as an entrée to address the injustice of the Arizona law in terms of who is being targeted.

Fairness organized a community dialogue to help LGBT people understand why we were standing in solidarity with migrant people, and created a front-page newsletter article making the connections between migrant rights and LGBT rights.

Based on the groundwork laid, when Kentucky, shortly thereafter, faced our own version of SB 1070, Fairness members joined people of color-led mobilizations. Together, the activists defeated the hate legislation that had been sailing through the legislature.

What we see happen in Fairness is relationships develop across lines of difference, relationships that were previously rare or considered impossible. We begin to build power for an inclusive justice agenda and create opportunities to leverage this political clout for, among other things, passage of a living wage, police reform, and, in a state where the Democratic Party is dominated by Blue Dog Democrats, the election of progressives, including working-class progressives and progressives of color.

Our efforts to do LGBT work with a broad justice vision, with anti-racism as its core, has come under attack from white gay men in particular. When we joined a boycott of Kentucky Fried Chicken for its abysmal Black hiring and franchising policies, we were criticized by national gay groups who said, “Wait a minute, KFC has sexual orientation in its policies, so you shouldn’t be targeting them.” KFC itself tried to negotiate



separately with Fairness to fix our grievances with them, only to find out that not only would we refuse to go around the Black leadership by talking to them directly, but that our grievances included racism as well.

There were times we lost funding or received hate mail from gay supporters for challenging white supremacy, but each of these challenges became an opportunity to broaden the conversation. Some white men and women in Fairness will tell you that doing the work in this way, or the visibility of lesbian and transgender leadership in Fairness, does not seem gay enough, or made them uncomfortable. But LGBT people and allies with privilege also support the Fairness Campaign with its anti-racist agenda because we've been able to build a broad-based effort that wields political power to make concrete changes that impact their lives, and because our work has helped shift the anti-gay atmosphere in Louisville.

And perhaps of more long-lasting importance in our struggle to build an anti-racist majority, is that in the long march to transform our society in deeper ways, there are many that say that being part of Fairness has changed their worldview, and who they see as family, forever.

*This talk was transcribed by Catalyst Project intern Anna Stitt and edited by Chris Crass and Chris Dixon.*





# Indigenous Resistance and Suggestions for Allies

A talk by Rob Chanate

*Robert Chanate is a member of the Kiowa Nation and currently lives in Denver Colorado. He is a Non-Violent Direct Action Trainer with the Ruckus Society and the Indigenous Peoples Power Project (IP3) and strives to be a dependable ally as well as a good relative. The Indigenous Peoples' Power Project is committed to the new generation of young leaders emerging across the continent, who are bringing innovation, creativity and inspiration to struggles to keep their homelands from becoming wastelands. These struggles are simultaneously fighting against exploitation and promoting viable and visionary solutions.*

*Robert gave this talk on the Indigenous Resistance Panel of the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Organizing Training Program in San Francisco in March of 2011. The Anne Braden Program, led by Catalyst Project, develops white anti-racist leaders and organizers from around the country. One of the goals of the Anne Braden Program is to develop leaders who can both build up anti-racist politics and practice in white communities and help build power in communities of color. Robert's talk gives concrete examples of ways to support indigenous resistance struggles.*

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I was asked to speak today about current trends in Indian country, some of the direct action organizing taking place, and what you can do as allies to Native peoples.

Is everybody familiar with the term “colonization”? Colonization means “forming or establishing a colony.” Now, that’s a wide definition. But think about what that entails. When you colonize a place, which is what happened here, that means you go to somebody else’s land and you establish a colony, and in the process of doing that, you destroy a culture, an economic system, values, a political structure, and the people of that land, and you impose your version of that in there place. Since 1492, there has been a process of colonization here.

The struggles of Native peoples haven’t necessarily been about anti-racism. Before colonization, we saw ourselves as a nation of peoples and we still do. Let me say more about this. You can’t confuse a nation with a nation-state. A nation-state is Canada, United State, Peru, Brazil, and so forth. A nation is a group of people who are bound by a land, a common history, a common language, and an aspiration for the future. If you look around the United States, there are over 500 indigenous nations that exist right now—again, don’t confuse that with a nation-state. A lot of times when people think about struggles, they often do not think about nations in those terms. They think about them in terms of ethnicities or races of people. But that that determines your goal, what you’re striving for. And that might not necessarily be inclusion, may not be wage equality, may not be better housing—those kind of terms that we’re more familiar with in urban areas. There may be issues of land, of mining—protecting your land from what they call resource extraction. They may be the protection of treaty rights. So, I encourage you to think about some of the terminology, do some studying, read about some of the political philosophies that exist in Native peoples. The more you familiarize yourself with that, the better you’re going to be prepared to go into these communities



and do that basic kind of groundwork and alliance building.

When we talk about colonization and Native peoples, often I ask myself: “Why would anybody even get involved with that? Why would you choose to align with the people who, really, are a very small blip, a very percentage of the population of the United States?” The way I think about it, though, is like I look at it historically. So, we’re all familiar with the story of cowboys and Indians, right? Everybody’s familiar with that conflict of settlers facing off against Indians who are the bad guys in this narrative—this historical myth actually.

What we often don’t hear about is that historically, there were allies too. For the most part, Native people always had allies, especially out West. Two areas where it was really true were in legal defense and political defense. Often times when Native people needed to bring an issue to Supreme Court or argue in the State system government that existed out West, they’d employ non-Native allies to come forward and make their arguments for them. That’s just one example. Another was in the area of policy. There were people back East who were called “Indian Lovers” —people thought they were interfering with the process of manifest destiny. What they would do is they would put political pressure on people to stop wagging massacres or invading other people’s lands. They were seen as a nuisance, but they existed. And that was very important in halting the expansion in some areas.

Another thing is that people had media allies even back then. Editorials were written, and opinion pieces were put out. Native people had allies in that sense in that people were able to shift public opinion in some cases, shape public opinion around Native issues, and air their side of the story. Of course, in 1870 Native people didn’t have our own presses, so we needed somebody else to advocate on our behalf. Looking at that tradition and why those people intervened—why some people risked their livelihood to align themselves with Native peoples and their struggle for land—gives you a foundation, as allies, to guide you.

So, I’m not going to go down the litany of ongoing struggles, but I want to talk about one in particular that has to do with what people call resource extraction. It’s a struggle raging right now in Northern British Columbia but it’s going to be coming down into the United States as well. This is the extraction of oil from what’s called the Alberta Oil Sands. Basically, this is companies extracting oil out of the sands of Alberta and shipping it in pipelines as crude oil to other places in Canada and into the United States. The struggle there is over Native people protecting their homelands – and I want to make it very clear, I’m not a spokes person for that, but I do support work for that.

We go into communities and help them get politically organized. We do political organizing 101 to get them going to offer resistance to that process. We are working a lot with Northern BC First Nations because the Enbridge-Northgate pipeline is supposed



to travel over 51 nations out into the Bay Area where they're going to ship the crude to different parts of the world. But the Enbridge pipeline runs across unceded Native territory; there have never been treaties up there—they never signed their land away. So, the pipeline will be cutting across hunting grounds, fishing grounds, and sacred sites, across very important areas up there that have never been surrendered. And so the idea is to begin an opposition to that now. So far, this has been very effective because there is a lot of media around that that resistance and it's really become a story into itself.

In addition to direct action, there are some transitions in Indian country that people might want to familiarize themselves with.

Another thing that I've seen happening is this idea of the end of civilization. There are a lot of Native people who are doing groundwork in their communities to begin preparing for that. That theory is that with peak oil, exponential human growth, and the disappearance of coal, there's going to be an economic collapse. Many Native people believe that they're going to be in position to prepare themselves for that kind of event because we have a land base, we have a common community, we have rural areas that we live in.

Another kind of trend right now is building a culture of resistance. We have been affected by the forces of assimilation and socialization. So, in a lot of Native communities, you'll have one or two families who are willing to make a stand, but then in those communities there are also people who want to leave things as they are. And so there's an effort in Native countries to start building that culture of resistance by going back to their traditions, reviving warrior societies, re-instituting values that have always existed amongst those communities. It's a long process of education, work, and sharing..

One thing about aligning with indigenous people is realizing the disaster of colonization on our communities. Think about the toll that colonization has taken on us. There are all these social and human failures that exist in our community that a lot of people are grappling with right now. Alcoholism, sexual abuse—those things are present in our community as well and I think a lot of people who devote time towards doing direct actions and building this culture of resistance are looking at that now saying, "Have we given enough attention to this? Have we focused on these things enough?" By the time you get somebody in their late teens, they've been through this process of colonization and destruction in their families and they don't have the confidence or even the wherewithal as a person to make a stand. So, when we look at that, a lot of people are now shifting their attention back and saying, "Let's do more support work for younger people. Let's do more leadership development. Let's try to build networks in our communities that help those people when they're very young." And that means like not just young people, but also including their families. That's another trend in Indian



Country.

As an ally, what can you do? Again, learn the political culture of that community you might be working with. There are institutions, there are ways of doing things, there are protocols in those communities that you should know about before you go there. And I don't mean a cursory, like Wikipedia—don't just read something real quick. Sit down and do some real research about who the players are, what institutions exist, what's the spirituality of that place. Are you going to be doing something that offends somebody? Was somebody recently imprisoned? Is there a lot of chaos in that community or is there something that you should not do as an ally? Come correct.

If you're going to share a skill, if you're asked to come to a community and do like a skill-set-share, go ahead and do the skill-set-share, but don't assume that you're a leader. A lot of times people will come into a community and share something, and then they'll take a leadership position just because they share a particular skill. As an ally, know your place when you do that: share what you're going to share, share your information, share the history of whatever it is you have to do because you were invited, but don't assume that because you are in that role that you are in a position of superiority there.

Another thing: check your prism at the door. When you come into a community, you may be operating from a certain ideological perspective, which is necessary to deconstruct capitalism or challenge a state. But that may not necessarily jive with what you see in that community. So, give it time. Do not jump to conclusions because of certain inner-relations that exist in those communities, certain dynamics that exist in those communities. Accept them for what they are and examine them for a while before you make a judgment. So many times I've heard people come into communities and they automatically say, "Well, there's a hierarchy here, and there's a hierarchy there" or something like that. That hierarchy may exist because it's necessary for a moment in history. You may need, for example, to elevate certain people, certain actions, certain risks to make sure people actually follow through. So, don't go forming permanent judgments about those communities based on your prism. Be accountable to the people in that community. Don't go come in, start a bunch of stuff and split, and expect people to pick up afterwards. Make sure that you stay there and suffer the consequences if there are consequences to be suffered in that community.

Finally, I'll say look at your backyard. Sometimes we have gatherings like this—about justice, about organizing, about action—and the places that we're talking about are somewhere overseas, in a different state, or in a different country. Look in your backyard, take care of that, and you'll be a good ally.

Thank you.

*Transcribed by Catalyst intern Safiya Bird-Whitten and edited by Chris Crass and Chris Dixon.*



# Indigenous Resistance Struggles to Protect Sacred Sites

A talk by Corrina Gould

*Corrina Gould is a Chochenyo Ohlone woman, born and raised in Oakland, CA. She is the mother of three children and currently works as the Title VII Coordinator, Office of Indian Education at the American Indian Child Resource Center, where she assists in directing an after school program that includes wrap around services for native students in Oakland. She is also the Co-Organizer for Indian People Organizing for Change, a small non-profit that works on Indigenous people issues as well as sponsoring an annual Shellmound Peace Walk to bring about education and awareness of the desecration of the sacred sites in the greater Bay Area. Corrina also sits on the California Indigenous Environmental Association Board, the Board of Directors for the Oakland Street Academy Foundation and is the treasurer for the Edes HOA.*

*Corrina gave this talk on the Indigenous Resistance Panel of the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Organizing Training Program in San Francisco in March of 2011. The Anne Braden Program, led by Catalyst Project, develops white anti-racist leaders and organizers from around the country. One of the goals of the Anne Braden Program is to develop leaders who can both build up anti-racist politics and practice in white communities and help build power in communities of color. Corrina's talk highlights critical indigenous resistance struggles today.*

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I'm gonna talk about my issue, which is sacred sites, but I think we gotta go back a little bit. In California, kids learn about the missions in third and fourth grade. They make mission models out of sugar cubes? When my kids went to school and were supposed to make those missions, I flat-out refused to allow them to do that and I wrote letters to their teachers. I explained that my ancestors died because of those missions, that my ancestors' blood was in those missions.

So sometimes we forget when we talk to people that folks don't have that history behind them, they don't remember. A lot of teachers still think that the missions was a cool thing, that the Indians didn't have nothing here, and they got taught a whole bunch of stuff when these missionaries got here. Well, let me tell ya something: the missions system is the first prison system in California. And so when we talk about colonization, we talk about that. My ancestors were in those first missions, and they actually were pulled from Vallejo down to Mission Delores in San Francisco, and they were enslaved in Mission San Jose and Fremont.

When you begin to think about your work in prison systems, if that's the kind of work you're doing as organizers, there was a prison system that was set up here way before they put this other stuff here. And they learned from that – they learned from those experiences of imprisoning my ancestors and how it would work. And they continue to learn. What I like to say is that we've had this history for a short amount of time – 500 plus years. After the Spaniards screwed with us and left, these fools came from the other side of the country to California for the gold rush. By that time, they had already figured out how to eliminate us, and how to continue doing it. They had become pros at





doing that.

They continue to do it. How? Well, Ohlone people are not recognized as human beings in this country. We are not federally recognized. As Native people, we are the only people who have to prove who the hell they are in this country. Ya'll don't have to prove if your Irish or Scottish or Italian or French. But Indian people have to prove who we say we are, and we have to jump through their hoops in order to do that, and we have to sue the United States government. We have to do all of that kind of stuff in order to prove who we say we are. That's crazy. I know who I am, and I know where I came from, and I know all of those kind of things, and I'm blessed that I am able to do that.

California spent 1 million dollars killing Indians. Why? Because there wasn't that much gold here, not enough for everybody. Those fools came here, they couldn't find gold, they went on the weekends and killed Indians—they made their living that way. With all that stuff going on, there were Indians that were hiding out.

There was this drunk in the Bureau of Indian Affairs who kept being asked by the U.S. government, "How much land is needed for the homeless Indians in the Bay Area?" He wouldn't return their letters and telegrams. And so finally they said, "If you do not answer, we're gonna make you come to Washington, DC and answer us." So this fool wrote a letter, basically one or two sentences, that said "For all intents and purposes, these people no longer exist." So, there's no land.

Up until 1926, the Ohlone people had a government to government relationship with United States. Because this alcoholic said we didn't exist anymore, the government to government relationship stopped. Now there's 7 different Ohlone tribes in the Bay Area, they like to shove us all together. We spoke different languages as different as French and Chinese. Fifty miles from here, you couldn't speak to another person in your own language. But we had a way of talking to each other. We came from different places, and we had different creation stories.

My ancestors, the last group of them that lived together, lived in a ranch in Pleasonton. Today, near that ranch that they lived on, Safeway is digging up their burial site. Ten years ago, they pulled out 490 of my ancestors from across the street from there. Yesterday, I went and checked out the site, and already they pulled 29 bodies out. They're claiming that they're gonna pull this out so everybody can have the convenient Safeway. I say screw that – not one more of my ancestors has to be pulled out of the ground in order for things to move on.

How does sacred sites relate to the work that you guys do as organizers? We talk about organizing unions. We talk about collective bargaining. Well, guess who is working on those sites, putting up those buildings, digging up those pipes, doing those kind of things? Those are union workers. I got union people that call me up and say "Hey, I'm on this site, and guess what? They're pulling up one of your ancestors." That's how I've learned out a whole bunch of information, because I got those people that are saying,





“Oh my god. That this isn’t OK.”

So when you start working with Indian people, you learn a bunch of different kind of stuff. We still fight these myths that all Indians get a check from the government every month, that we all get free education, that we can fish and hunt whenever we want to. Those are all lies and myths. It depends on the people you come from and the treaties that you have. And because we don’t exist— because I’m still trying to fight the government to tell them who we are, because I’m a figment of your imagination up here talking—then we don’t get none of that stuff.

When people first started coming to the land now called the “United States,” there were a lot of Native people that were here in the Bay Area. Second only to Arizona, the Bay Area still has some of the largest Native populations. There’s 9,650 Native Americans just in Alameda County. There’s a lot of Native people here, but we’re still invisible to everybody because we don’t get to be on the radio, we don’t get to be on TV like everybody else does. Our issues aren’t as important.

During the ‘50s, ‘60s, and ‘70s, people were bused in here, trained in here all over the place through something called the Relocation Act. It was another form of genocide. The United States government said, “Well, if boarding schools aren’t gonna beat the shit out of them, if the missions didn’t do it, if all this other stuff didn’t happen, we’re gonna relocate them to the cities. We’re gonna give them jobs, we’re gonna give them education, we’re gonna wipe out the Indians in a different kind of way and then we can go on their land, we can get those minerals that we want, and we can get that land that we want to use.” So Native people went to LA, Detroit, and a couple of other places, but the Bay Area was one of the biggest places folks came to.

When they got here, those folks didn’t know that Indians already existed here. And there was all kinds of stuff that happened. They weren’t given the jobs that they were told they were going to get, they weren’t given the education they were told they were going to get. These were poor Indian kids that came off the reservation looking for hope and they ended up at the Y in downtown crying and screaming, not having a place to be, not having a community anymore.

Because of that, there were a lot of organizations that were set up in the cities. And so we have the Friendship House in Oakland, which is one of the oldest, urban Indian centers in the whole country. And out of that, we had the AIM movement start. People started saying “We need stuff for our families.” They set up a clinic, they set up a job training program, and they set up all of these other things. So, there are places in the community that Native people can still go and get services. But that’s social work, that’s not organizing. So in the 1990s, there was a group that came together and said, “You know what? They’re closing up the bases in the Bay Area.” They were closing the Oakland army base and the navel station in Alameda. And according to one of the treaties, it says that government property that is no longer used by the government goes back to the Native people from that land. We’re not recognized as Native people,



but folks in the community said, "We're gonna work with some people, and you're gonna give us a part of that land." And so they did—they opened up a residential treatment facility out there in Alameda. I worked as a case manager for women and children that were coming out of domestic violence situations or were in early recovery.

Also during that time, we started this other thing called Indian People Organizing for Change. This was a piece of work that was started because Native people didn't really care about a job training program at the Oakland Army base; they were more worried about not having a voice in their own community. So, we began to talk about what those issues were. They wanted to talk about being homeless on the streets of Oakland and being invisible. They wanted to talk about having schools and education. So, we created a place for them to do that.

We also began to get phone calls about hundreds of bodies being pulled out of a place in Emeryville, and that shell mound, and Ohlone way. There was a place there that was thousands of years old that was my ancestors' burial site—a cemetery. It was in an 1857 coast survey map, so people coming into the Bay Area could use that as a point of reference—that's how huge it was. It was 60 feet wide and 350 feet in diameter, and today we have a horrible little metal basket there? We have nothing that talks about the people, my ancestors, who were originally here.

So the work that I do now is around protecting those sacred sites. I say that not one more of my ancestors needs to be pulled out of the ground. Not one more piece of development needs to happen in order for that stuff to go on. There are other cultures in this world that believe that their ancestors mean something, and they figure out how build around them. But the country that we live in today doesn't honor the people that were first here. They give us laws that don't have any teeth, that don't allow us to have a say in what we do. And so we need to change those laws.

So, we created this walk to bring education to people who didn't know who Ohlone people were. And we got people from all over the world—from the Cape Verde Islands, from Japan, from Nova Scotia, from Australia—and they walked with me for days and days. We walked 280 miles from Vallejo down to San Jose and up the other side. It took us three weeks to do that. And it was people from all over the world, all walks of life. It wasn't just Ohlone people, it just wasn't Indian people, but everybody that made it possible for my ancestors to have a voice, my ancestors to tell us a story. When I do organizing, it's with all of that stuff in mind – that it takes everybody because this is all of our community. But not one of those sites needs to be disturbed again. We don't go into other people's communities and disturb their sites, and we shouldn't do that to my ancestors either.

I give thanks and praise to those people who came before me, that were able to hide out and pretend they were somebody else so that I could stand before you today.

*Transcribed by Catalyst intern Safiya Bird-Whitten and edited by Chris Crass and Chris Dixon.*



# ***Exercises and Curriculum***



# Tools for White Anti-racist Organizing

Developed by Catalyst Project

This is a list of ideas for white people who want to put their commitment to anti-racism into practice.

## Deepening Our Understanding and Connecting To History

1. Learn about the struggles of people of color where you live.
2. Deepen understanding of how white supremacy impacts the issues you work on. Seek out analysis by radical people of color through books and relationships.
3. Study social movements led by people of color past and present.
4. Study white anti-racist history, find other white anti-racist people to talk with and get support.
5. Study feminist work by women of color, and deepen your understanding of intersections of oppression, privilege and liberation.
6. Study the historical development of white supremacy and how white supremacy connects with capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexism, the gender binary system and the state.
7. Form study groups and do political education in your organization, group, or community.

## Building Organization and Developing Your Anti-Racist Practice

8. Join existing organizations working from an anti-racist foundation and/or support the process of moving your existing organization towards anti-racist politics and practice.
9. Find other people to work and talk with to support one another in your development as anti-racists and as social justice change agents.
10. Find ways to support people of color led organizations that you share political affinity with.

This could include you and your friends volunteering to do childcare, to getting your organization to participate in campaigns led by people of color, to developing longer term political alliances.

11. Challenge privileged/oppressive behavior in yourself and in others. Struggle to do this from a place of love.

Remember that in doing anti-racist work, you will make mistakes and so will other people. Mistakes are inevitable; the process of learning from those mistakes requires humble and honest reflection.



12. Struggle against individualism and competition that distort the goals of this work to becoming “the perfect anti-racist”. Remember that we are engaged in a struggle to make history, not escape it.

13. Find a mentor, someone who has more experience than you, who will not only share lessons from their history, but also help you learn from your own experiences and who encourages you to think through the challenges you face.

14. Develop your skills, analysis and confidence to struggle for social justice. Become as effective, dynamic, strategic and healthy as you can be in our work for a just society.

### **Developing Leadership and Building Movement**

15. Strengthen relationships with the people you are working directly with, and build relationships with people in the broader community you work in.

16. If you are in a multiracial organization, find ways to openly and honestly talk with people of color you work with about white supremacy and race with a focus on how to work together to build power for justice.

17. In majority/all white organizations, work to build relationships of trust and accountability with organizations and communities in struggles for racial justice. Find how your organization’s work can integrate goals of challenging white supremacy in society and building anti-racist principles and practice in white communities. Develop anti-racist leadership with the goal of strengthening all of our work for justice, democracy and equality.

18. Commit to developing a practice of solidarity with people of color for collective liberation, and a practice of accountability to the people you work with in your organization and in particular accountability to people of color you work with and have relationships with. These practices are nuanced, complex and develop over time through practice; be patient.

19. Know that your liberation is tied to the liberation of all. While people with white privilege do not experience racial oppression, we all have a stake in ending white supremacy and the systems of divide and control that distort and damage our society. Find your self-interest in the struggle to end racism and build a society based on liberatory values and practices.

20. Remember that we are in this together and you are not alone.

*We thank our mentors and allies for help developing this list.*



# Drawing Your Path

Developed by Catalyst Project

## GOALS

To reflect on our journeys of becoming anti-racist activists and organizers. This exercise can be used as a get-to-know you but also helps participants engage others with more humility and a developmental approach.

## TIME NEEDED

95 minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Pens

Paper

Newsprint of flip chart paper with questions written up

Tape

## QUESTIONS FOR FLIP CHART

How did you get politicized around race?

How did you get to a place of wanting to take this anti-racist training program?

What have been highlights and important moments of your anti-racist journey?

What social justice work are you currently involved in?



## NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY:

This is a group drawing activity that invites participants to tell their stories about how they came to be anti-racist activists/organizers. One of the biggest values of this exercise is that it can help build humility as people reflect on their own growth, and all the people/experiences that helped them develop their politics. This helps participants engage more compassionately and developmentally with other people around dynamics of privilege and oppression. We use it at the beginning of a long program, so that participants can share what brought them to the room, who are some people/organizations/movements who have really influenced, taught and inspired them-- and then use those drawings as a way to get to know each other. We do this after we have shared a little bit with the group about our own paths. We like to take a break after this exercise and invite people to look around the room at the gallery of paths, talk to each other about their paths, etc.

We also like to use a different version of this exercise at the end of a long program, as a way for participants to reflect on their experiences through the program, evaluate the program, see where they've come and how they've changed.

*Catalyst Project originated some, but mostly adapted these activities from other training tools. With much respect (and credit where possible), we are sharing this curricula in the spirit of advancing liberation work.*



**FACILITATOR:**

Break the group into RANDOMIZED small groups of 5-6 using a game or counting off

Tell the group: We are all on a life-long anti-racist journey. We want you to have a chance to think about what's happened on that path for you thus far, and to get to share that with some other people. How did you come to the place you are now in your beliefs and work around racism? You heard a little bit about me from before..." (share some of the key points from facilitator's introduction)

Introduce the questions on the flip chart paper to get people started and give people about 10 minutes to draw.

Tell the group: Now spend a few more minutes writing about your goals for participating in this (program/workshop/activity), thinking about what brought you here and your path.

Ask participants to share highlights from their drawing/writing with their small group. Each person gets around 3 minutes to share. (35 minutes)

Ask groups to go up one whole group at a time, put up papers and share one goal with the whole group. (45 minutes)



# White Privilege in Social Justice Movements

Developed by Catalyst Project

## GOALS

To deepen our understanding of how pervasive and destructive white supremacy can be in social justice movements in order to be able to address these dynamics in our organizing

## TIME NEEDED

45 minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Pens

Paper

## HANDOUTS NEEDED

“White Privilege in Social Justice Movements” Handout

## FLIP CHART PAPER NEEDED

A few Pieces for Group Brainstorms (Optional)



## FRAMING:

As participants in the Occupy/Decolonize movement, we know systems of oppression exist. We know what we are fighting against and what we are trying to change. But even in those efforts, these same dynamics, beliefs, and structures show up and create barriers to liberation. We are focusing on racism in this discussion. Racism is not the only system of divide-and-control that we're socialized into and therefore bring into our social justice work. And racism is shaped by and shapes how those other systems, including sexism and classism work. In order to break down all of these systems on an institutional level, we must take the time to work on understanding how they show up in our own actions. Privilege works by invisibilizing itself to people who experience it. As white people, we have been asked by people of color in our lives, and with whom we organize, to work together on recognizing and countering the ways we act out internalized white privilege. We do this to counter oppression at every level, and examining and challenging how white privilege plays out in our organizing work can only make it stronger and more powerful.



## FACILITATOR:

Ask: What's been the impact of racism on social justice movements historically (for instance, in the women's movements, labor movements, or environmental movements)?

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- Take a few historical examples from the group.

Share: Even in social justice work, not addressing issues of white supremacy has been destructive to our movements.

Offer definition for white privilege: White privilege is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of 1) Preferential prejudice for and treatment of white people based solely on their skin color and/or ancestral origin from Europe; and (2) Exemption from racial and/or national oppression based on skin color and/or ancestral origin from Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Arab world.

- Take a few minutes to discuss and answer questions about what white privilege means.

Ask: How does white privilege show up in social justice movements? What are ways white privilege has shown up in your work with the Occupy/Decolonize movement?

- Take a few current examples from the group.

Remind the group that this is not intended to be a confessional, but is instead about supporting our shared growth.

Share: Let's go over some examples of how white supremacy often shows up in social justice movements. This is a handout that breaks down some ways of understanding how white privilege functions in activism.

- Pass out “White Privilege in Social Justice Movements” handout, if you haven’t already. Have a participant read each one.



### **Universalizing White Experience**

Take a few examples or reflections on this from the group. Encourage examples from Occupy/Decolonize.

An example if people are having trouble naming examples:



- Operating from the belief that your own preferred tactics are the “right/best/most radical way to organize” – doesn’t take into account the differential risks that different tactics may pose for people who are undocumented, targeted by police due to racial profiling, etc.



### **Deracialization**

A few key points to lift up:

- People of color have been organizing around these issues (economic justice, etc) for decades. They are also the folks most impacted, so it is important to look to their leadership and experience. Connect to the 99%- the importance of centering the wisdom and leadership of communities that have understood for many generations that they are the 99%, rather than those who have more recently begun to see/understand this gap.
- Media tends to pay more attention to white folks. Given this, predominantly white groups need to take care not to undermine the leadership from people of color already working on an issue. It would be good, for example, to ask folks who have been leading these struggles what kind of collaboration or solidarity might be most useful.



### **Contradictory Resistance**

Take a few examples or reflections on this from the group.

An example if people are having trouble naming examples:

- There were dual movements in the mid-late 1800s to abolish slavery and grant women the right to vote. Within the women’s suffrage movement there were many who pushed for both women’s right to vote and full citizenship for blacks. But some in leadership refused to support rights for blacks unless women were first guaranteed the right to vote.



### **Centered On the White**

A few key points to lift up:

- Coupled with deracialized politics, this dynamic results in an inability to recognize and understand resistance and organizing in communities of color
- One example is a white student coalition looking to recruit people of color into its group, instead of seeking out issues that people of color are already organizing around, building relationships, and seeing where a partnership might make sense
- We see this in the roles people of color are often “assigned” in majority white organizations (i.e. enemy, educator, ambassador)
- Countering white privilege in social justice movements is not about recruiting people of color into majority white groups; it is about participating in anti-racist struggle



### **FACILITATOR:**

Share: Racism has historically undermined social justice movements, but anti-racism has historically catalyzed movements, we can learn the lessons.



- Give a personal, organizational and movement examples of anti-racism as a catalyst.

Ask: How does white supremacy manifest in your work? What are the costs to your work? Note: Facilitator can encourage people to take an honest, hard look.

Options:

1. Journaling (5)
2. Small Groups of 2-3 People (10)
3. Open Discussion (25)

Ask: How could your work be strengthened by more effectively challenging white privilege and racism? What would that look like? What would you need to do that? What changes would need to take place?

Note: Facilitator can emphasize framing on positive vision for more powerful work.

Options:

1. Journaling (5)
2. Small Groups of 2-3 People (10)
3. Open Discussion (25)



# White Privilege in Social Justice Movements Handout

Developed by Catalyst Project

## Universalizing White Experience

When “white” is presented as standard/normal/good, people with white privilege internalize this superiority and sense of being “normal,” viewing the world through that lens. Images of leadership, beauty, “average Americans” in institutions like schools, the media and popular culture; presentations of history that foreground white figures and their influence; and other ways in which whiteness is made central lead to an institutionalized standard of experience. This phenomenon is often invisible to those who experience and benefit from it, just as the internalizing of superiority is often unconscious. For white activists, this demands fighting against the indoctrination that “my ways of organizing and protesting are the right/best/only ways.”

## Deracialization

Deracialization is to remove an issue from its context, treating it in a way that does not recognize the impact of racism or that reduces the priority of directly challenging those impacts. Deracializing an issue restricts the self-determination of the people who are most impacted by that issue to be defining their own struggle. In a white supremacist society, all issues intersect with racism; the privilege to reframe an issue without understanding the impact of race is not available to those directly affected. This term was developed by Critical Resistance, a prison abolition organization.

## Contradictory Resistance

Non-ruling class white people are caught in the intersection of experiencing privilege and also oppression, and so their resistance often expresses this contradiction: protesting that which oppresses while fighting to maintain privilege. Along racial lines, this often has manifested as white activists sacrificing long-term strength and the goals of activists of color, in order to win short-term gains for their own agenda. The resulting dynamic has historically shattered the potential of various multiracial movements which were making real progress toward radical social change.

## Centered On the White

Reinforced by deracialized politics, this is a dynamic of white activists ignoring or misunderstanding resistance coming from communities of color. 500+ years of liberation struggles on this continent have been led by people of color, from colonization on through today. The idea of “recruiting” people of color into “the” movement, defined as white radical struggle, ignores this historical and contemporary reality. Instead of “recruiting” people of color into majority white organizations in an attempt to “diversify”, white social justice activists can focus on participating in anti-racist struggle.

*We thank our mentors and allies for help developing this list. For more resources go to our website [www.collectiveliberation.org](http://www.collectiveliberation.org)*





# Hassle Line

Version developed by Catalyst Project

## GOALS

To practice being on both sides of a challenging situation and articulating your position. To practice making arguments and expressing ideas under pressure. To experience and then develop a collective list of helpful tactics when challenging oppressive behavior. Sometimes this tool is also used to practice de-escalation (verbal and body language) in heated situations- our focus here is mostly on how to talk about anti-racism with someone who is not initially receptive to your ideas.

## TIME NEEDED

15-30 minutes, depending on goals

## MATERIALS NEEDED

None



## NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY:

The Hassle Line exercise has been used in non-violent direct action trainings for many years to give people a chance practicing how to respond nonviolently under police pressure. It has been used by Training for Change and other training organizations as a “parallel line” activity which gives participants practice having challenging conversations about tactics, strategies, racism, and resistance. People also get to practice both “sides” of an argument.

If possible, use real examples from issues that have come up in the Occupy/Decolonize movement, at General Assemblies or in planning actions. Some possible examples include:

- White guy proposing at GA that we all march to “occupy” mostly people-of-color, mostly low-income neighborhood.
- “We don’t have time to talk about white privilege and racism in the Occupy movement – our fight is out there, against the 1%.”



## FACILITATOR:

Have participants form two rows of an equal number of people facing one another. You can also add a third row, where people observe the interactions and can debrief about what they noticed during the exercise.

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Once people are lined up, ask each person to reach out to the person across from them to make sure they know who they will be talking to. Explain that this is a simultaneous roleplay, everyone is going to be talking to their partners at once. Each person talks only to the person across from them.

Then explain the roles for each side, describing the conflict and who will start it. Give them a few seconds of silence to get in the role and then tell them to begin. Give the group 3-4 minutes to have the conversation.

When the time is up, call “stop” and debrief. Ask both sides of the line questions like:

- How did it feel to do this role play? Hard, easy? Why? Any surprises?
- What did you or your partner do that you felt worked?
- What ways did you find to solve or deal with the conflict?
- What did you notice about your or your partners’ body language?
- Any reflections on what do you wish you had done?

Now replay the exercise but switch roles. If there is a 3rd line, they can stay in the same place.

If there is time you can do a re-cap at the end after everyone sits down. Write up on newsprint skills people saw in the role play that they might want to use in the future in these kind of conversations. Facilitator can start by saying what you noticed (“I noticed people trying to find common ground to work from”, etc) or revisiting things people said that worked. Encourage people to bring into the conversation their own experiences outside of the role play, when someone engaged them effectively.



# Institutional Racism-- Then Through Now

Developed by Catalyst Project

## GOALS

To understand how racism and white supremacy have operated historically and currently in institutional, structural ways. To understand racism and white supremacy as structural systems used to divide and control.

## TIME NEEDED

60 minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Pens

Paper

Flip chart paper

## HANDOUTS NEEDED

Definitions of racism and white supremacy

## FLIP CHART PAPER TO BE PREPARED

3 pieces, each with one of these titles:

Genocide

Stolen/enslaved labor

Theft of land and resources

## FRAMING:

We know that racism lies at the root of many of the things we are fighting against in the Occupy/Decolonize movement – use definitions below to define racism and white supremacy, and to talk about the difference between prejudice (interpersonal interactions, stereotypes, etc) and structural racism. Whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy has been codified through laws, and enforced through violence and imprisonment. We want to take some time to reflect on the historical context that shapes how racism operates today.

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## **DEFINITIONS:**

### **Racism**

Race prejudice plus power. Synonymous with the term White Supremacy (Source: adapted from the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond)

### **Structural Racism**

A structural racism framework identifies aspects of our history and culture that have allowed the privilege associated with 'whiteness' and the disadvantage of 'color' to endure and adapt over time. It points out the ways in which public policies and institutional practices contribute to inequitable racial outcomes. It lays out assumptions and stereotypes that are embedded in our culture that, in effect, legitimize racial disparities, and it illuminates the ways in which progress toward racial equity is undermined. (Source: Karen Fulbright-Anderson, Keith Lawrence, Stacey Sutton, Gretchen Susi, and Anne Kubisch, Structural Racism and Youth Development Issues, Challenges, and Implications. New York: The Aspen Institute.)

### **White Supremacy**

White supremacy is an historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white people and nations of the European continent and/or of European descent; for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege. (Source: Sharon Martinas, Challenging White Supremacy Workshop)



### **Small Groups (15 mins):**

Break into 3 groups, each group taking one of the flip chart papers.

## **FACILITATOR:**

Tell the group: as a small group, generate historical and current examples for your category. Also generate examples of resistance.

Note: many of us feel self-conscious about the amount of history we know or don't know. There is a reason that many of us don't know these things – we are not taught the truth about what whiteness costs. In your small groups, take this opportunity to ask questions if you don't know about something someone mentions. Don't get hung up on the exact dates or details of things. Share what you know and be curious about what you don't know.

When there are 5 minutes left, tell the groups to decide on a person to report back to the group.



### **Report Back(15 mins)**

Report Back to the group

- Each group shares 3-4 examples from their conversation



### **Discussion (30 mins) Questions for the discussion:**

- What examples did people come up with?
- Was it hard to come up with examples of these histories and resistance to it?
- Why is that?
- In whose interest is it for us to not learn these histories?

Make sure these points are covered in the discussion

- Creation of “white”/ white supremacy & capitalism in development of U.S. Examples of early laws (marriage law 1691, privileges granted: voting, citizenship, guns, land)
- Creation of white privilege to separate joint rebellion; instituted to divide & conquer, is still in effect today looking at histories of racial oppression as well as construction of white/racial privilege. Poor whites as footsoldiers for ruling powers
- How does it stay that way? Hegemony
- In whose interest was it to create whiteness, make us “white,” Bacon’s rebellion, protecting ruling class
- White supremacy and capitalism as basis for establishing US. Connect to manifest destiny – core values, ideology justifying imperialism, racial superiority, entitlement
- There has always been resistance!



# Institutional Racism in Society

Developed by Catalyst Project

## GOALS

- To understand institutional racism and the differences between interpersonal prejudice and systemic racism.
- To ground discussions of racism in the reality of how deeply systemic racism shapes the lives of people who experience racial oppression.
- To identify ways that institutional racism negatively affects and impacts the lives of people of color across broad sectors of society and major institutions.

## TIME NEEDED

30 minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Markers

## FLIP CHART PAPER NEEDED

5 pieces, each one labeled at the top with one of these categories:

- media
- criminal justice system
- education
- health/housing/social services
- military industrial complex/tech industry

Optional: write up a definition of institutional racism



## FACILITATOR:

“When we talk about institutional racism, we are talking about more than personal prejudices.”

Offer the group a definition. We often use one of these two:

Racism = race prejudice + institutional power(source: Peoples' Institute for Survival and Beyond, an anti-racist organization founded in New Orleans)

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Point out that the ‘institutional power’ element of the equation is purposefully obscured in order to portray racism as nothing more than bias, or people being mean to each other)

2.) Definition of institutional racism: The network of institutional structures, policies and practices that create advantages and benefits for whites, and discrimination, oppression, and disadvantages for people from targeted racial groups. The advantages created for whites are often invisible to them, or are considered “rights” available to everyone as opposed to “privileges” awarded to only some individuals and groups. Examples of institutional racism include policies and practices that: arbitrarily govern a person’s credit-worthiness; determine what information, positive or negative, is presented in the media about individuals involved in newsworthy events; or place undue value on selective educational experiences or qualifications in establishing promotion criteria in jobs and schools. (Source: Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, editors. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*. New York: Routledge) Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A CommunityBuilder’s Tool Kit. Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate University, 2001.

Explain to the group that we are going to break up into smaller groups to generate specific examples of institutional racism negatively impacting people of color in the following sectors: Media; criminal justice system; education; health and housing and social services; military-industrial complex / high tech.

If the room is majority white, ask white people not to try to represent the experiences of people of color or “speak for someone else’s experience,” but do try to name specific differential impacts in each category where people of color experience oppression and obstacles, while white people experience privilege and access.



### **SMALL GROUPS (10 mins):**

Give each small group one sheet/one category. Have each group brainstorm in their categories specific examples of how institutional racism operates within that sector of society. If people are having a hard time getting started, you could give an example or two:

- Media: shows like America’s Most Wanted that show disproportionate number of arrests of men of color – shape public perceptions about safety/danger
- Military industrial complex: high recruitment at low-income schools, promises of



free education targeted at poor youth and youth of color

If the group is large, make duplicate sheets and double up- have 2 or 3 small groups each make their own list for a few of/each one of the categories, so you will have a couple different lists for each area.



### **REPORT BACK (10 mins):**

Have each group put up their lists and share a couple of examples (not reading back the whole list) with the group.

If time, ask group what this experience was like for them, and what they noticed.



### **CLOSING (5-10 mins):**

Facilitator should point out some of the themes and overlap between the different sectors. Other key points to make:

- How short a list these are compared to the realities of institutional racism
- Recognize that these lists do not take other systems of oppression including class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, or citizenship/documentation status into account. Acknowledge that this is a simplification and that institutional racism affects people differently depending on many other factors and that many of these examples intersect with heterosexism, patriarchy, class oppression, and more.
- This is the tip of the iceberg. Especially if the room is majority white, and most people do not experience racial oppression, these lists which are generated in just a few minutes are intended to be just a glimpse at how deep and broad racism goes in our society.
- It's important to understand how racism operates structurally so that we can keep our work focused on challenging and changing oppressive systems. **The goal is to understand it in order to dismantle it.**



# Fruit Pickers Exercise

Developed by Catalyst Project

## GOALS

Explore 'divide and control' as an underlying strategy of white supremacy that serves a ruling elite agenda at the cost of the rest of us, especially at the cost of working class and poor people.

Explore 'why is it so easy to put ourselves into a 'divide and control mindset' when it can be so hard to vision freely about the type of world we want to create.

Get real about how the ruling class control the vast majority of wealth in the US and globally and what this means for class divisions and the myth of meritocracy.

Identify how oppression in the workplace reinforces root causes of oppression: male-supremacy, heteropatriarchy, xenophobia/oppression of immigrants/undocumented people.

## TIME NEEDED

30-40 minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Markers

## FLIP CHART PAPER NEEDED

Fruit warehouse picture (see description below)

Pyramid of wealth distribution in the US & globally



## NOTE FOR FACILITATOR:

We usually follow this exercise with the Economic Pyramid exercise (also in this packet). If you have time, we recommend that you do these two exercises together to deepen the discussion and help participants make the connection between racism, white supremacy, divide and control tactics, and wealth inequity and capitalism.

Definition of racism/white supremacy: we use the definition "institutional power + race prejudice". We use white supremacy and racism interchangeably. Let people know that this comes from the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond.

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### **FACILITATOR (5 mins):**

As the facilitator explains the exercise, refer to the drawing of the fruit warehouse, which includes:

- fruit pickers: who are mostly undocumented Latino men
- fruit sorters: who are white and Latina women
- forklift drivers: who are white working class men

Scenario: All of these workers work at the fruit company warehouse. The workers have all come together and put forward demand to management and owners that they would like a living wage and health care or they are going on strike. The owners don't want to give a living wage or health care, and think people should be happy they have jobs.



### **SMALL GROUPS (15 mins):**

Facilitator breaks people into small groups. Tell them: "You are the owners and the management. Your job is to figure out how to not give a wage increase. You don't want people to strike because that will cost you because of work stoppage and a negative public image. What strategies and tactics can you use to make sure the workers don't go on strike and that you don't have to meet their demands?"



### **REPORT BACK/DISCUSSION (10 mins):**

Facilitator ask people to call out the strategies and tactics they would use to keep workers from striking without meeting their demands. As people are reporting back, have someone write these tactics and strategies up on the flip chart paper.

Some of the ideas may include:

- divide and control tactics
- giving privileges to some to align with management
- invoking fear
- making women feel less valuable and strong
- prejudices
- surveillance
- physical violence
- giving some small benefits so people are afraid to lose those
- inflict fear amongst women from men



After listing some of the tactics and strategies, facilitator lead a discussion about them.

- Talk about how each tactic and how it benefits the owners and management.
- Name different root causes of oppression and the systems that hold them in place-- male supremacy, white supremacy, ICE, mass media, police, etc.

Ask the group: “Where do you see these kinds of tactics and strategies playing out in the Occupy movement?”



### **ECONOMIC PYRAMIDS (20-30 mins):**

We usually do the Economic Pyramid Exercise here (see curriculum on Economic Pyramids). If you don't have time to do these two exercises together, try to hit these key points to connect the Fruit Pickers exercise to divide and control tactics:

- The extreme wealth inequality in the US is perpetuated by these same tactics and strategies: patriarchy, heterosexism, xenophobia, racism all are used to divide and control and keep everyone down.
- We need to be challenging systems that divide us and keep us separated from one another in order to fight for collective liberation – for all people.
- Ultimately this is about how to totally change up this system that keeps us fighting for crumbs and exploiting the earth
- There are also real implications and major differences within the 99%-- we need to not try to lump it all together, need to recognize that within the 99% there is a broad spectrum of experience, access, privilege and oppression. We must acknowledge these differences while also understanding that no one in the bottom or the 99% has real institutional power.
- But the power we have is when we come together, think bigger, and don't just demand rights but organize to change systems and institutions.



# Economic Pyramid

Developed by Catalyst Project

## GOALS

To better understand wealth inequity in the US and how racism and wealth inequity work together to maintain exploitation and keep people divided.

## TIME NEEDED

20-30 mins

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Markers

## FLIP CHART PAPER NEEDED

Economic pyramids from Paul Kivel's book: *So You Call This a Democracy* (in this resource packet)



## NOTES ABOUT THIS EXERCISE:

We usually do this exercise after the Fruit Pickers exercise, and refer back to what came up during the Fruit Pickers. The framing below assumes that this exercise is coming after the Fruit Pickers. The facilitator should review the pyramids before leading the exercise.

Definition of white supremacy: we use the definition “institutional power + race prejudice” is racism. It may be helpful to build a group understanding of ‘institutional power’ by asking people to share examples of what we mean by ‘institutions’: banks, school systems, the military, the police force, hospitals, the US government, international decision-making bodies like the World Trade Organization/the World Bank/the International Monetary Fund etc. We use white supremacy and racism interchangeably. Let people know this definition comes from the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond.



## FACILITATOR (5 mins):

Introduce the economic pyramids from Paul Kivel's book to talk about the division of wealth and percentage of population. Show what is being talked about, frame in terms of patriarchy, heterosexism, racism -- all used as divide and control tactics. Point out that the differences within bottom layer have real impacts-- we are not trying to lump it all together—but acknowledge that no one below ruling class has institutional power.

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Acknowledge that there is a dominant idea that wealthy people got their wealth through hard work, but it's important to talk about how the wealth that the 1% has was created through exploitation. Much of this wealth was created by the theft of land, labor and resources from communities of color around the world and within the US. This theft of land, labor and resources has happened over generations to communities of color and is current and ongoing. While a small group of mostly white people have accumulated massive amounts of wealth, the communities of color that have been exploited in this process have accumulated generations of debt and trauma. Talk about the need for us to be challenging systems that divide us in order to be able to fight for collective liberation. Leave room for questions as people look at the pyramids.



### **PAIRS (5 mins):**

Have people turn to a neighbor and talk for a few minutes about:

- What comes up for you in seeing this?
- How did it get like this?
- How does it stay like this?



### **DISCUSSION (10 mins):**

Lead the group in a discussion about the pyramids. Questions to ask include:

- What does this economic disparity have to do with racism?
- How does white supremacy keep people divided?
- How does white supremacy keep people of color down?
- How does white supremacy keep white people bought into this structure?



### **CLOSING (5 mins):**

If it hasn't come out in the discussion, explain that the economic pyramid shows how this economic system keeps people fighting each other for the crumbs without challenging the system that creates this inequity.

Other points to make:

- There is a need for us to be challenging systems that divide us in order to be able to fight for collective liberation.



- We need to understand and fight racism and white supremacy- these also divide us and keep us separate, ultimately about how to totally change up this system that keeps us fighting for crumbs.
- This system isn't "natural" - it was created and is carefully maintained, it can also be dismantled through collective action.
- Refer back to fruit pickers—the power we have is when we come together. It is bigger than just fighting for individual worker rights, this is about building power. It is bigger than fighting for the crumbs.
- Share an example of how people have won collective power, and not just rights (such as the Argentinian factory take overs and transferring the means of production to the hands of the workers)
- Anti-racist leadership, can help to ensure that visions for liberation are not compromised by divide and control and can help us to stay focused on long-term social and institutional transformation instead of short term gains that oftentimes come at the expense of communities of color.



# Commitments

Developed by Catalyst Project

## GOALS

To make commitments to ourselves and each other about ways we will continue deepening our learning. Introduce idea of accountability (doing what you say you're going to do) as critical to white anti-racist organizing. To improve our ability to name and reach short term goals that are connected to longer-term goals. To understand that the work continues long beyond the workshops.

## TIME NEEDED

30-40 minutes, depending on size of group

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Pens

Post-it notes

Hat or box

## FLIP CHART PAPER NEEDED

Write up on flip chart paper these terms:

- 1) SHORT-TERM ---> LONG-TERM,
- 2) ACCOUNTABILITY (measurable, relates to long term, collective),
- 3) MOVEMENT-BUILDING



## NOTES ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY:

This activity often happens at the end of a workshop, and provides a space for people to reflect on what they want to learn more about and make a commitment to themselves and each other to continue learning. The option at the end to pair people with someone who they will check in with a couple months later is suitable for some groups and unrealistic for others.



## FACILITATOR: (5 mins)

Instructions to participants:

- This is an opportunity to practice creating short term goals that are in relationship to long-term goals. Our goals about transforming society are ambitious! So we need to identify smaller steps along the way towards those goals.
- Ask them to think about this organizationally: a key to our development as white

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anti-racist movement leaders is to continue to shift our thinking from the individual (like imperialism teaches us to) towards the collective.

- We encourage you to think about how you will bring back tools, lessons, analysis, etc from this session into ORGANIZATIONS, Occupy/Decolonize movement spaces, and other groupings of people to build collective power.



### **JOURNAL: (5 mins)**

Have people take 5 minutes to journal on their next steps coming out of the session.



### **FACILITATOR: (5 mins)**

Hand out two post-its to each person.

Ask people to clarify their own commitments. These should:

- Have a specific time frame (we like to suggest 3-6 months)
- Be measurable – this is what makes accountability possible – how will you know if you've done it?
- Support both your own development and contribute to movement building
- Include thinking about who you want to talk to to help shape your commitment.

Have people write down one commitment on two post-its. They do not need to put their name on it. When they are done, have them put one copy of the commitment in a hat or box.



### **SHARING COMMITMENTS (20 mins)**

- Ask people to pair up and share their commitment with each other. Tell participants that this is their “accountabili-buddy” – they should check in with each other in a few days, a week, etc, to see how each person is doing with their commitment.
- Encourage them to ask each other questions, like how are you going to do that? What kind of support do you need to get that done?, etc.
- Get back into a circle and have people go around reading their commitments out loud.



### **FACILITATOR: (5 mins)**

Debrief the exercise – how was it to write these commitments? Encourage people to take the post-it they kept and put it somewhere where they can see it (on the mirror, in their space somewhere) so they can look at it.

Encourage people to share their commitment with someone who wasn't here today and ask that person to help remind them of their commitment.



# Voicing Commitments, Taking a Stand

Developed by Catalyst Project

## GOALS

To help participants identify and practice articulating why they are invested in challenging racism and injustice, and fighting for collective liberation. To make connections between the visions of the Occupy/Decolonize movement and their personal connections and reasons for fighting for justice. To help people connect to a sense of their own power and passion about fighting for justice.

## TIME NEEDED

30-60 minutes depending on size of group

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Definition of Collective Liberation

Paper

Pens

## HANDOUTS NEEDED

None

## FLIP CHART PAPER NEEDED

None



## FACILITATOR:

One of the powerful things about the frame “We are the 99%” is that it reminds us that we are connected, that our struggles and fights are linked, and that true liberation, collective liberation, means that we must work for justice for everyone.

Offer definition of collective liberation: The framework from which Catalyst Project operates, in which we understand that each person’s liberation is tied up in the liberation of all people, and that racism and white supremacy, along with all other forms of oppression, dehumanize both those they oppress and those who (at least in the short term) profit or are privileged by them. (Source: Catalyst Project)

### Introduce the context for the exercise: why everyone’s leadership is needed.

Note: The following is an example of a way to frame this exercise, taken from a version of this exercise used at the end of a 4.5 month organizer training program. You might adapt it differently for the group you are facilitating. The key points are in bold.

*Catalyst Project originated some, but mostly adapted these activities from other training tools. With much respect (and credit where possible), we are sharing this curricula in the spirit of advancing liberation work.*



1. There is a very serious context to the anti-racist work we do in this world, the lives, the health and joy and wholeness of women, queers, trans people, children, people of color, disabled people, poor people, homeless people, Iraqis and Afghans and brown people around the world we are taught that it's ok to exploit and literally use those people to prop up the system. We're taught that even the health of the planet doesn't matter the alternative to not standing up is to this is that the violence and poverty of imperialism continuing. This is the context of our work.

2. There is a survival need to ending racism -- white supremacy is killing us. Note: Give an example of racism's impact on the planet's chances for survival through role of white supremacy in environmental destruction-- if some peoples' lives aren't valued we're all going to suffer eventually. This is not about falsely equating all suffering -- there is a different impact depending on how far downstream from the poisoning you are-- but it gets to all of us eventually. Beyond physical survival is spiritual survival. What kind of humans does it make us if we dismiss the value of some peoples' lives? If we allow ourselves to be torn apart from one another?

3. In our vision of becoming whole and healed, we want that not just as individuals but for our communities and for the world. Part of ending racism is about ending the role of contradictory resistance in our communities, how privilege lures us into fighting against the ways we are oppressed while also fighting to maintain where we're privileged at other peoples' expense. We don't want our healing being put in opposition to others' healing. Capitalism indoctrinates us into scarcity mentality and racism tells us that white lives are more valuable. As Mab Segrest (working class white queer Southern organizer) says, we want to be a bridge and not a wedge.



### **JOURNAL/REFLECTION (10 mins):**

Have participants reflect and write about these questions:

Why are you committed to the struggle against white supremacy and towards collective liberation?

What brings you to the work, keeps you in the work, continues to motivate and inspire you?



### **FACILITATOR (5 min):**

Provide framing and context for Voicing Our Commitments, using these points:

- We know that part of our work as white anti-racists is being able to speak from that place of commitment, to share with others why we are committed to this work, how important we believe it to be, what drives us.





- It can also be scary to be vulnerable and honest talking about things that are hard to talk about, and that we were probably taught as kids not to talk about, but part of how we counter that is by practicing speaking our truths.
- Right here we have a great opportunity to practice - this is a room full of people who support each other, care about each other, and are committed to our growth and development
- We want to invite you to come up and share with each other what's your stake - why do you care about this work, why do you commit yourself to it and continue to show up, what motivates you?
- Have participants speak in front of the group (estimate a minute or two per person)



## **CLOSING:**

After people have spoken, honor what people have said and connect it to the goals shared at the beginning of workshop. You may also want to share a personal story.



# Visioning and Opportunities

Developed by Catalyst Project

## GOALS

To help workshop participants connect to their visions of a just world and practice thinking about what we are fighting for and building towards, not just what we are fighting against. To connect to the important role that vision has in driving our organizing for social justice.

## TIME NEEDED

60 minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Bring a poem or inspiring reading. We use Imagine the Angels of Bread by Martín Espada  
Pens

## HANDOUTS NEEDED

None

## FLIP CHART PAPER NEEDED

1 piece for drawing people's visions



## FRAMING:

Many of us spend so much time resisting and fighting back that we don't engage our creative and critical thinking about what it is we want to build in place of what needs to go. With the Occupy/Decolonize movement, we have clearly identified the problems – huge wealth inequity, racism, etc. It's critical that we know what we are fighting against, what we are up against. And we also want our work to be grounded in the visions of the future we want to be creating, what we are fighting for. This exercise provides us an opportunity to connect to our visions.



## FACILITATOR:

**1. Settle people in:** Ask participants to close their eyes, slowly ask them to: take a few deep breaths,... notice the sounds around you,...feel the floor under your feet,... feel the back of your seat, ...feel the fabric on your legs, ....temperature of room...

*Catalyst Project originated some, but mostly adapted these activities from other training tools. With much respect (and credit where possible), we are sharing this curricula in the spirit of advancing liberation work.*



**2. An example of vision:** Read aloud “Imagine the Angels of Bread” by Martín Espada or something similar\*

**3. Lead people through their own visioning:** Go through the following questions slowly, allowing people time to think about them:

- What is the vision of the world you are working toward?
- What is your vision of social justice?
- We all see a lot of violence and harm institutionally and interpersonally. If we could re-imagine all of that shifting, what would it look like in your home or family... your neighborhood, your town?
- How would people relate to each other?
- How would people relate to the work they're doing?
- How would people relate to resources, the planet?
- What is valued, who is valued and how?
- What kind of institutions would or wouldn't be in your neighborhood?
- What kind of services and what would they look like?
- What would the values of the economy be based on?
- How would decisions get made about things affecting your neighborhood or town?
- How would conflict be dealt with?
- What kind of activities might be going on?

Think about other communities or other places... Are there ways people are organized and the values they share that inspire you? Are there things that you draw from your community or family that inspire parts of your vision?

“When you are ready, open your eyes.”



### **Journaling(5 mins)**

Have people journal about their visions



### **Small Groups (30 mins)**

- Have participants get into groups of three to share visions 20min
- Start with sharing visions (10min)
- now pick one piece of your vision and talk about what opportunities do you see to help organize toward that vision/what will it take to get there?(10 min)

Write your vision in the middle of paper and draw spokes coming out that describe things that would bring us closer to that vision



### **Large Group (15 mins)**

Have participants share what they imagined. As they share, have one person draw what people are saying, creating a drawing of people's visions.

Ask participants about opportunities they see right now to help organize towards that vision, including examples from other countries of visionary reshaping of society



# The Benefit of Being White

Exercise by Paul Kivel

I FIND IT A CONSTANT EFFORT TO NOTICE that people of color don't share many of the economic and other benefits I enjoy from being white. This exercise helps white people understand how racism works in our favor, and on many different levels. The exercise is for all white participants, or for mixed groups in which the white people participate and the people of color observe. Since white privilege—the specific kinds of economic, social, and political advantages that white people gain at the expense of people of color—is generally invisible, this exercise helps those of us who are white see and acknowledge just how extensive and pervasive those benefits are.

## Guidelines for Getting Ready

Tell the group that you are going to read a series of statements and that each white person to whom a statement applies should stand up after that statement is read.

Tell the group that all white people are being asked to participate, and people of color are being asked to observe.

Those who are physically unable to stand may raise their hand to indicate that they are part of the group standing.

The participants should decide for themselves whether the statement applies to them or not.

If they are unwilling to stand for a particular statement that applies to them, they may pass, but at the same time encourage them to notice any feelings they have about not standing.

The exercise will be done in silence to allow participants to notice the feelings that come up during the exercise and to make it safer for all participants.

After each statement is read and people have stood for a few moments to reflect, ask the participants to sit down again, then move on to read the next statement.

Begin the Exercise: a White Benefits Checklist

## Please stand if:

1. Your ancestors were legal immigrants to this country during a period when immigrants from Asia, South and Central America
2. or Africa were restricted. You live on land that formerly belonged to Native Americans.
3. Your family received homesteading or landstaking claims from the federal government, or if you or your family or relatives receive or received federal farm subsidies, farm price supports, agricultural extension assistance or other federal benefits.



4. You lived or live in a neighborhood that people of color were discriminated from living in or you lived or live in a city where red-lining discriminates against people of color getting housing or other loans.
5. You or your parents went to racially segregated schools.
6. You live in a school district or metropolitan area where more money is spent on the schools that white children go to than on those that children of color attend.
7. You live in or went to a school district where the textbooks and other classroom materials reflected your race as normal, heroes and builders of the United States, and there was little mention of the contributions of people of color to our society.
8. You attended a publicly funded university, or a heavily endowed private university or college, and/or received student loans.
9. Your ancestors were immigrants who took jobs in railroads, streetcars, construction, shipbuilding, wagon and coach driving, house painting, tailoring, longshore work, brick laying, table waiting, working in the mills, working as a furrier, dressmaking or any other trade or occupation where people of color were driven out or excluded.
10. You have received a job, job interview, job training or internship through personal connections of family or friends.
11. You worked or work in a job where people of color made less for doing comparable work or did more menial jobs.
12. Your parents were able to vote in any election they wanted without worrying about poll taxes, literacy requirements or other forms of discrimination.
13. You live in a neighborhood that has better police protection, municipal services and is safer than that where people of color live.
14. You have never had to worry that clearly labeled public facilities, such as swimming pools, restrooms, restaurants and nightspots were in fact not open to you because of your skin color.
15. You see white people in a wide variety of roles on television and in movies.
16. A substantial percentage of the clothes you wear are made by women and children of color in this country and abroad.
17. Most of the food you eat is grown, processed and/or cooked by people of color in this country and abroad.
18. The house, office building, school, or other buildings and grounds you use are cleaned or maintained by people of color.





19. Most of the electronics goods that you use such as TVs, VCRs, microwave ovens, computers, and cameras are made by people of color in this country and abroad.

20. You, other family members, friends or colleagues were ever cared for by people of color either at home or at a medical or convalescent facility.

21. You don't need to think about race and racism everyday. You can choose when and where you want to respond to racism.

### **Group Discussion**

After the exercise ask white people to pair with other white people to talk about what feelings and thoughts came up for them participating in the exercise.

Ask people of color to pair with other people of color to share what came up for them and what it was like to observe white people doing the exercise.

Reassemble the group and facilitate an open discussion of the feelings, thoughts, reflections, and insights that people want to share.

To conclude the discussion tell the group that the purpose of this exercise is not to discount what white people have achieved but to question prevalent assumptions that everyone started out with equal opportunity or that white achievement occurs on a level playing field.

Also remind them that although some of the benefits listed above are money in the bank for each and every white person some white people have bigger bank accounts—much bigger—than the rest.

According to 1998 figures, 1 percent of the population controls about 47 percent of the net financial wealth of this country. In 1996, women generally made about 74 cents for every dollar that men made. People with disabilities, people with less formal education, and people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual face substantial discrimination.

Benefits from racism are amplified or diminished by our relative privilege. All white people benefit in some ways from whiteness, but some have cornered the market on significant benefits from being white to the exclusion of the rest.

Finally, point out that individual white people are not responsible for the circumstances under which they stood for particular questions in the exercise. They were born into and inherited a system that exploits people of color and provides benefits to white people whether they want them or not. Individual white people are not responsible for racism—but they are responsible for how they respond to it.

For further information see *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice* by Paul Kivel, (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society, 1996 rev. 2002).

Please send comments, feedback, resources, and suggestions for distribution to paul@



# Benefits of Being Male

Exercise by Paul Kivel

AS A PERSON WHO IDENTIFIES AS “MALE,” was socialized as a male, and is assumed by others to be male, I don’t often realize the benefits or privileges I enjoy that women, transgender, and transsexual people don’t share with me. These benefits are economic, social, political, cultural, and physical. This exercise helps men understand how sexism works in our favor on many different levels.

The exercise is designed for all-male or mixed-gender groups in which the males participate and others, if there are any, actively observe. This exercise helps males see and acknowledge just how extensive and pervasive sexist benefits truly are.

## Guidelines for Getting Ready

Tell the group that you are going to read a series of statements and that each male to whom a statement applies should stand up after that statement is read. Tell the group that all the males are being asked to participate, and others are being asked to observe. Those who are physically unable to stand may raise their hand to indicate that they are part of the group standing. Each participant should decide for himself whether the statement applies to him or not.

If they are unwilling to stand for a particular statement that applies to them, they may pass for that statement, but should notice any feelings they have about not standing. The exercise should be done in silence to help participants notice feelings that come up during the exercise and to make it safer for all participants. After a statement is read and people have stood for a few moments, ask participants to sit down and read the next statement.

## Begin the Exercise: a Male Benefits Checklist

Please stand up (or if you’re unable to stand, raise your hand to indicate agreement) if the following statement applies to you:

1. Your forefathers, including your father, had more opportunities to advance themselves economically than your foremothers.
2. Your father had more educational opportunities than your mother.
3. The boys in your extended family, including yourself, had more financial resources, emotional support or encouragement for pursuing academic, work or career goals than the girls.
4. You lived in or attended a school district where the textbooks and other classroom materials reflected men as the normal heroes and builders of the United States, and there was little mention of the contributions of women to our society.
5. You attend or attended a school where boys were encouraged to take math and



science, called on more in class, and given more attention and funding for athletic programs than girls.

6. You received job training, educational or travel opportunities from serving in the military.

7. You received job training in a program where there were few or no women, or where women were sexually harassed.

8. You have received a job, job interview, job training or internship through personal connections with other men.

9. You worked or work in a job where women made less for doing comparable work or did more menial jobs.

10. You work in a job, career or profession, or in an agency or organization in which there are few women in leadership positions, or the work has less status because women are in leadership positions.

11. You live in a city or region in which domestic violence, sexual assault are serious problems for women.

12. You generally feel safe when hiking in the woods, in the mountains, on the beach or in other rural settings. (Note to facilitator: this statement may exclude most men of color.)

13. When you turn on the TV, you routinely see men in positions of leadership, male sports, men portrayed as heroes, and in a wide variety of other roles.

14. When you have medical procedures done to you, or take prescribed medicines and other health treatments you can assume they were tested and proven safe on men.

15. You have seen or heard men in positions of authority belittle women's contributions, women's writing or music, women's intelligence, or physical strength, or make other comments about women being inferior to men.

16. You know where you can have access to sex from women for money in the city or region where you live.

17. You can have access to sexually revealing images of women whenever you want them, from magazines, the Internet, bookstores, video stores or pornography outlets.

18. You have employed women earning much less than you do for childcare, cooking, cleaning, clerical services, nursing, or other services.

19. In your family women do more of the housecleaning, cooking, childcare, washing



or other caretaking than you or other men do.

20. Most of the clothes you wear have been made by women of color in this country and abroad who are paid little for their work.

21. The computers and other electronic products you use such as TVs, VCRs, microwave ovens, phones, and computers are made by underpaid women in this and other countries.

22. In your community it is harder for women to get housing loans, small business loans, agricultural loans or car loans than it is for men of similar qualifications.

23. In your community women are routinely charged more for haircutting, cleaning, cars, or other services or products.

24. You don't need to think about sexism every day. You can decide when and where you deal with it.

### **Group discussion**

After the exercise ask people to pair up (with someone of the same gender if it is a mixed-gender group) to talk about what feelings and thoughts came up for them participating in (or observing) the exercise. Reassemble the group and facilitate a group discussion of the feelings, thoughts, reflections, and insights that people want to share. This is not a stand-alone exercise. It should only be conducted in the context of a workshop or talk on sexism, power, violence, and safety that allows the group to process the feelings, thoughts, and issues which arise from participating in the exercise.

For further information on these issues see *Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence that Tears Our Lives Apart* by Paul Kivel. (Hazelden 1998), and *Helping Teens Stop Violence: A Practical Guide for Parents, Counselors and Educators* by Allan Creighton with Paul Kivel (Hunter House Publishers 1992).

Please send comments, feedback, resources, and suggestions for distribution to paul@paulkivel.com



# To equalize power among us

Handout from Tools for Change



## TO EQUALIZE POWER AMONG US

*Tools for Change*



We can make active choices to create the space for transformation. For those of us who bring the pattern of privilege, here are some guidelines to help us equalize relations. Privilege is invisible to those who have it. To create a context which embraces diversity, in which no one is marginalized, a conscious and ongoing effort is required. Noticing and changing what we take for granted, we make room for everyone's contribution. From a place of Fair Witness, with a desire to examine our sensitivity to respecting boundaries in the presence of power imbalances, **Consider the following questions**

### In The Ways We've Been Oppressed

Chaos theory and study of complex adaptive systems teaches that the richest innovations and learning happen at the margin. Yet, we tend to ignore the margins, those with privilege have never needed to understand the experience of others. Offending behaviors may not be calculated to protect power but simply a reflection of ignorance reinforced by complacency.

For all to survive, we can't afford to collude with our own marginalization or oppression by being silent. It is precisely our experience at the margins that is needed to inform and shape decisions. So, in addition to keeping ourselves in check regarding whatever ways we possess privilege, it is vital that we stop constraining ourselves—despite the fierceness of the force and fear that push on us in the particular ways that relate to how we have experienced being an “outsider.” We have to take the risk of putting our experience into the center.

Do I tend to always speak first, interrupt or take more than my share of space?

Do I unilaterally set the agenda?

Do I assume I'm more capable?

Do I trivialize the experience of others?

Do I challenge or question the tone, attitude or manner of others?

Do I make assumptions about what someone is more “suited” for?

Do I take responsibility for, think for, or speak for others?

Do I assume an individual speaks for others from their group?

Do I control the organization's resources?

Do I reduce difficulties to personality conflicts, ignoring history or power factors?

Do I assume the root of a problem is misunderstanding or lack of information?

Do I ask others to explain, prove, or justify themselves?

Do I mimic other cultural traditions or religious practices?

Do I expect to be treated as an individual outside of my group's history?

Do I ignore or minimize differences by emphasizing similarities?

Do I equate all oppressions as equal?

Do I expect others to be grateful?

Do I defend mistakes by focusing on good intentions?

Do I take things personally and miss the systemic aspects?

Do I assume everyone has the same options I do?

Do I assume that the visible reality is the only one operating?

Do I expect “others” to educate me about their group's history, or sensibilities?

Do I assume someone is exceptional compared to the “average” person of their group?

Do I always expect to be trusted?

### Am I willing to do the following?

Remember that others speak about more than the conditions of their own group.

Take responsibility to learn about the history, culture and struggles of other groups as told by them.

Notice what I expect from and assume about others, and note what experiences formed my ideas.

Address accessibility, include such things as money, space, transportation, child-care and language.

Make sure the context welcomes everyone's voice and listen.

Regard people as whole human beings with families, interests and ideas.

Name unacknowledged realities to include everyone's experience.

Expect discomfort when relating to people different from myself.

Take responsibility for equalizing power.

Name dominating behavior when I see it.

Encourage pride in my own and other's ancestry and history.

Understand individuals in the context of their social history.

Ask questions and respect disagreements.

Struggle over matters of principle and politics.

Make all information accessible so others can decide if they are interested.

Appreciate efforts that point out my mistakes or lack of awareness

Appreciate the risk a person takes in sharing their experience with me.

Take risks, trust others.

Adapted from:

*Breaking Old Patterns Weaving New Ties: Alliance Building*

By Margo Adair & Sharon Howell

with input from Bill Aal and Susan Partnow

*Tools for Change* offers

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# Common behavioral patterns that perpetuate relations of domination

Handout from Tools for Change



## Common Behavioral Patterns that Perpetuate Relations of Domination

by Margo Adair & Sharon Howell of Tools for Change



Power is the ability to act—the more access to resources one has, the more options one has. Power differences are expressed in institutional and cultural contexts. These power differences continually inform our interpersonal relationships. The following patterns are common ways people learn to interact in a hierarchical society. To not conform to expected behavior risks social ostracism, privilege and/or one's survival. These are *relational* patterns taking place in correspondence to each other, they are tendencies not personality characteristics. They are to be read horizontally. If these patterns are present, people find themselves duplicating the dominant culture's injustice, even when they aspire to egalitarian relationships. When the patterns are broken, space is made for justice.

<i>an individual from the—</i> <b>DOMINANT GROUP</b>	<i>an individual from the—</i> <b>OPPRESSED GROUP</b>
Defines rules, judges what is appropriate, patronizes.	Feels inappropriate, awkward, doesn't trust own perception, looks to expert for definition.
Is seen as, and feels, capable of making constructive changes.	Is seen as, and feels, disruptive.
Assumes responsibility for keeping system on course. Acts without checking in with others.	Blames self for not having capacity to change situation.
Self-image of superiority, competence, in control, entitled, correct.	Self-image of inferiority, incompetent, being controlled, not entitled, low self-esteem.
Presumptuous, does not listen, interrupts, raises voice, bullies, threatens violence, becomes violent.	Finds it difficult to speak up, timid, tries to please. Holds back anger, resentment, and rage.
Seeks to stand out as special.	Feels secure in background, feels vulnerable when singled out.
Assumes anything is possible, can do whatever one wants, assumes everyone else can too.	Feels confined by circumstances, limits aspirations. Sees current situations in terms of past limits.
Initiates, manages, plans, projects.	Lacks initiative, responds, deals, copes, survives.
Sees problems and situations in personal terms.	Sees problems in social context, results of system, "them."
Sees experiences and feelings as unique, feels disconnected, often needs to verbalize feelings.	Sees experiences and feelings as collectively understood and shared. No point in talking about them.
Sees solutions to problems as promoting better feelings.	Sees solutions to problems in actions that change conditions.
Thinks own view of reality is only one, obvious to all, assumes everyone agrees with their view. Disagreements are result of lack of information, misunderstandings, and/or personalities.	Always aware of at least two views of reality, their own and that of the dominant group.
Views self as logical, rational. Sees others as too emotional, out of control.	Often thinks own feelings are inappropriate, a sign of inadequacy.
Believes certain kinds of work below their dignity.	Believes certain kinds of work beyond their ability.
Does not believe or trust ability of others to provide leadership.	Does not believe has capacity for leading.
Unaware of hypocrisy, contradictions.	Sees contradictions, irony, hypocrisy.
Fears losing control, public embarrassment.	Laughs at self and others. Sees humor as way of dealing with hypocrisy.
Regards own culture as civilized, regards other's as underdeveloped, disadvantaged. Turns to other's culture to enrich humanity while invalidating it by calling it exotic.	Feels own culture devalued. Uses cultural forms to influence situation. Humor, music, poetry, etc. to celebrate collective experience and community. Sees these forms as being stolen.

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# Creating an atmosphere where everyone participates

## Exercise by Tools for Change



### CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE WHERE EVERYONE PARTICIPATES

Margo Adair & Sharon Howell of *Tools for Change*



Organizations striving to create democratic relations usually function with the notion that everyone can and should participate equally. If s/he doesn't, it is viewed as a personal choice or limitation. All behaviors are seen as stemming from individual personality.

Yet patterns of social interaction form currents below the surface, directing how we view ourselves and each other. These dictate behavior, expectations, and to a large degree, who people take seriously.

Social power is accorded to individuals based on their membership in groups which have had more or less power in the larger society. Social power is not a direct result of an individual's personality, skill, talent or achievements. Rather, it is at all times embedded in a larger context, and reflects the social, economic and historical status of the group(s) to which a person belongs.

More often than not, social power is invisible, unacknowledged and unexamined. While formal roles and responsibilities are frequently clear, inequities based on gender, class, ethnicity, age, appearance and education are rarely addressed openly. For example, in most cultures, people are conditioned to give more weight to the words of men. As women enter organizational settings, they notice a distinct lack of attention given to their comments. Many studies have documented the tendency to rearrange papers, walk around the room, or begin side conversations while women are speaking. Efforts to explore this behavior as a socially conditioned phenomenon are blunted when incidents are explained away by particular circumstances. ("No one intended to show a lack of respect, merely to get coffee-it just happened to occur when a

woman started to speak.") Such patterns are deeply ingrained. They unconsciously dictate behavior forming a web of daily interactions that tell people from groups with less social power that their contributions are not as valued or welcomed as those from the majority culture.

Compounding the problem, those with social power take it for granted that they are the ones with the answers. They expect to be agreed with. After all, people have always sought out their opinions and given great weight to them. Yet it is exactly because of these dynamics that those with social power are the very ones least likely to have new information. Their presence in a group tends to provoke both compliance and silence. Those with social power usually have no idea that multiple realities have been relegated to the world of silence.

Creating a democratic atmosphere in which everyone participates means both putting ourselves forward and including others. To do this we must understand the dynamics rooted in issues of power, and do things which counter them. In the dominant culture, the degree to which one can operate purely as an individual without taking into account issues of social power is directly proportional to the degree of privilege one has inherited within that culture, i.e. how much social power one has.

A dominant/compliant dynamic is set when people simply jump in to express their opinions. The usual way that order is maintained is by having people raise their hands. This method does little to overcome social inequities. Generally, those with more social power still take up the majority of the time available for discussion, believing they



have the more important points. Those with less social power find themselves as listeners.

### Shifting the Dynamic

To shift these dynamics, the same voices should not be allowed to dominate, even if the people who are quiet say they are in agreement with what is being said. Room is needed for the initiative and participation of everyone. The less people contribute, the less ownership they feel of the group's process. The structures and processes of meetings need to incorporate new ways of working together that encourage everyone's contributions. Skillful facilitation can shift the way in which social power is exercised in meetings, challenging long-standing patterns of interaction which filter out the rich pool of experience rooted in our differences.

Some people need support in reigning themselves in, while others need encouragement to express themselves. Facilitators can take specific steps to open up more room in the discussion. For instance, if it is always the same people speaking, switching to a go-around format in which people are free to pass will draw out other voices. The facilitator can simply ask those who tend to be quiet what they are thinking, or ask them to speak first on an issue. The latter is particularly helpful because it is the first couple of comments that tend to establish the parameters of the discussion.

The facilitator can make room for the "unspoken" or "invisible" by conveying that there are always numerous viewpoints on any issue. When only one perspective has been voiced, it is good to summarize it and then ask for different perspectives. This creates a more balanced framework for discussion, opening it up for a variety of viewpoints and

breaking the mind-set that there is only one answer for any problem.

Generally, where each of us has social power, we need to step back and make room for other voices and experience to come forth. Where we lack social power, we need to put ourselves forward. Drawing on the experiences that have been locked out is the key to creating new ways of doing things which do not reproduce the dominant/compliant dynamic-the very antithesis of democracy.

Bringing in those perspectives we have previously felt compelled to leave at the door is the indispensable piece needed to expand the context for everyone. These taboo aspects expose inequity, and are critical to inform decision making that will establish an inclusive context.

#### Ideas for Equalizing Time

Encourage those who usually speak first to wait and those who usually don't to put forth their perspectives.

Use a round format.

Alternate between men and women.

Ask those from marginalized groups to speak first.

Everyone speaks once before anyone speaks again on an issue.

Ten seconds of silence between each speaker.

Give everyone a certain number of chips. Each time a person speaks they must give up a chip; when their chips are used up, they can not speak again until a new set are distributed.

Start with five minutes of silence in which people write down their main ideas and concerns on the topic. Writing each idea on a separate card can do this--three apiece is a good start. Put them in a basket, then have people draw out the cards and read them aloud.

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# Examining Class and Race

Exercise by Paul Kivel



## Examining Class and Race: An Exercise

by Paul Kivel

**I GREW UP BELIEVING THAT ALL AMERICANS** have equal opportunity to succeed because there is a level playing field and affirmative action was no longer necessary. Since then, I have found this exercise useful to challenge our common assumptions of equal access.

Everyone starts out standing on a line in the middle of the room facing one wall. Participants are told that the line is the starting line for a race to get some well-paying jobs, which they need to take care of their families. But before the race begins the starting positions will be adjusted via the following exercise. Participants are asked to silently take a step forward or backward, depending upon given instructions and if a statement of social status applies to them. They may decide for themselves whether the statement applies, and, as much as possible, keep their steps the same size throughout the exercise.

Explain that the exercise will be done in silence to allow participants to notice the feelings that come up during the exercise and to make it safer for all participants.

### Begin the Exercise

1. If your ancestors were forced to come to this country or forced to relocate from where they were living, either temporarily or permanently, or restricted from living in certain areas, take one step backward.
2. If you feel that your primary ethnic identity is “American,” take one step forward.
3. If you were ever called names or ridiculed because of your race, ethnicity or class background, take one step backward.
4. If you grew up with people of color or working class people who were servants, maids, gardeners or babysitters in your house, take one step forward.



5. If you were ever embarrassed or ashamed of your clothes, your house, or your family car when growing up, take one step backward.
6. If you have immediate family members who are doctors, lawyers, or other professionals, take one step forward.
7. If pimping and prostitution, drugs, or other illegal activities were a major occupational alternative in the community where you were raised, take one step backward.
8. If you ever tried to change your physical appearance, mannerisms, language or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed, take one step backward.
9. If any women in your family, including yourself if you are female, were ever physically or sexually assaulted in any way by men in your family, take one step backward.
10. If you studied the history and culture of your ethnic ancestors in elementary and secondary school, take one step forward.
11. If you started school speaking a language other than English, take one step backward.
12. If your family had more than fifty books in the house when you were growing up, take one step forward.
13. If you ever skipped a meal or went away from a meal hungry because there wasn't enough money to buy food in your family, take one step backward.
14. If you were taken to art galleries, museums or plays by your parents, take one step forward.
15. If one of your parents was ever laid off, unemployed or underemployed not by choice, take one step backward.
16. If you ever attended a private school or summer camp, take one step forward.
17. If you received less encouragement in academics or sports from your family or from teachers because of your gender, take one step backward.
18. If you or your family ever had to move because there wasn't enough money to pay the rent, take one step backward.
19. If you were told by your parents that you were beautiful, smart, and capable of achieving your dreams, take two steps forward.



20. If you were told by your parents that you were beautiful, pretty or good looking and therefore what you thought or did wasn't important, take one step backward.
21. If you were ever discouraged or prevented from pursuing academic or work goals, or tracked into a lower level because of your race, class or ethnicity, take one step backward.
22. If your parents encouraged you to go to college, take one step forward.
23. If you were ever given less support than the boys in your family for going to college or pursuing work goals because of your gender, take one step backward.
24. If you grew up in a single parent household, take one step backward.
25. If, prior to your 18th birthday, you took a vacation outside of your home state, take one step forward.
26. If you have a parent who did not complete high school, take one step backward.
27. If your parents owned their own house, take one step forward.
28. If you commonly see people of your race or ethnicity on television or in the movies in roles that you consider to be degrading, take one step backward.
29. If you ever got a good paying job or a promotion because of a friend or family member, take one step forward.
30. If you were ever denied a job because of your race or ethnicity, take one step backward.
31. If you were ever denied a job, paid less for comparable work or had less qualified men promoted over you because of your gender, take one step backward.
32. If, as a white person, you ever worked in a job where people of color held more menial jobs, were paid less or otherwise harassed or discriminated against, take one step forward.
33. If you were ever paid less, treated less fairly, or given harder work than a white person in a similar position because of your race or ethnicity, take one step backward.



34. If you were ever mistrusted or accused of stealing, cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity or class, take one step backward.
35. If you ever inherited money or property, take one step forward.
36. If you primarily use public transportation to get where you need to go, take one step backward.
37. If you generally think of the police as people that you can call on for help in times of emergency, take one step forward.
38. If you have ever been stopped by police because of your race, ethnicity or class, take one step backward.
39. If you ever felt afraid of violence directed toward you because of your race, take one step backward.
40. If, in general, you can avoid those communities or places that you consider dangerous, take one step forward.
41. If you ever felt uncomfortable or angry about a remark or joke made about your race or ethnicity but it wasn't safe to confront it, take one step backward.
42. If you or close friends or family were ever a victim of violence because of your race or ethnicity, take one step backward.
43. If your parents did not grow up in the United States, take one step backward.

After the last statement everyone is asked to freeze in place, without looking around, and to notice briefly where they are, who is in front of them and who they can and cannot see.

Then they are asked to look around and notice briefly where they and everyone else is. What feelings do they have and what patterns do they notice?

Then people are told that they are in a race to the front wall for some well paying, good jobs. They should imagine that they need one of those jobs to support themselves and their families.

When told to, they are to run towards the wall as fast as they can. The first few to the front wall will get those jobs. Quickly say, "Ready, set, go," to start the race—and get out of the way!





### Group discussion

Have participants pair up and talk for a few minutes about whatever feelings came up during the exercise.

This exercise works well as a follow-up to the power chart to make concrete what differences exist in power means. It introduces class and race and the intertwining of both. And it can raise issues of individual achievement, "level-playing field," affirmative action, and the different reactions people have to an unequal system. (For example, given where they ended up in the room, how did that affect how hard they ran towards the front wall? Did they run at all?) The exercise is also a good setup for the economic pyramid exercise and a discussion of the economic system.

After the exercise it is important to point out that the race actually takes place in a stadium. The winners of the race were declared before the race started. The ruling class is sitting in the stands watching the whole event with amusement. They don't have to race because they've been awarded the very best, most high paying jobs before the race even began. In fact, they've been betting on who would run for those jobs the fastest. How does this added information affect people's commitment to the race? To how hard they might run? To their sense of justice?

### Related Exercises

*Helping Teens Stop Violence* Allan Creighton with Paul Kivel  
Hunter House, 1992.

*Making the Peace* Paul Kivel and Allan Creighton Hunter House,  
1997.

*Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial  
Justice* Paul Kivel New Society, 1996 rev. 2002.

*Men's Work: How To Stop the Violence that Tears Our Lives  
Apart* Paul Kivel, Hazelden, 1992/98.

Please send comments, feedback, resources, and suggestions for distribution to [paul@paulkivel.com](mailto:paul@paulkivel.com). Further resources are available at [www.paulkivel.com](http://www.paulkivel.com).



# OccupyDC Training Outline

By Max Toth

*Max Toth is a tech/data manager in the labor movement by day, and organizer engaged in economic, global, LGBTQ and anti imperialist struggles by night. Early into its formation, the GA for Occupy K St/OccupyDC agreed to a proposal for anti oppression training to be established at the space. Max got the call to design the first workshop, and turned to Vasudha Desikan (<http://washingtonpeacecenter.net/node/6286>), who graciously agreed to collaborate with him on this brief! condensed! anti-racism training -- and was a fabulous co-trainer. He can be reached at [meestertoth@gmail.com](mailto:meestertoth@gmail.com)*

## **Introductions (Go around: What are you looking to learn here?)**

- How I/we got involved
- An hour is not enough time to dismantle the system; it requires a lifelong commitment to challenging interpersonal behavior and institutional oppression

## **Ground Rules: MAKE NOTE These Should Apply all the time**

- Step up/Step back
- Active facilitation to prioritize the voices of People of Color
- R-E-S-P-E-C-T the person, challenge the behavior

## **Definitions (hand out – have people read in a round)**

- You don't have to agree, but when I say these things, you now know what I'm talking about
- Key concepts: Accountability, Contradictory Resistance, Self-Determination; Internalized racism/white supremacy

## **Accountability**

Means doing what you say you're going to do; something white allies need to pay attention to

- Are we in it to win it? Then we MUST build a multiracial movement for justice

## **Shinin' the Light on White**

- US as white supremacist colonial project: DC was Occupied long before this protest movement; but as Arab Spring, this is a different kind of occupation;
- Whiteness as a power construction: It doesn't matter whether you think you're white to get the privileges; we're all taught to be racist, it takes work to not be
- Hand out "To Equalize Power", etc.



- Long history of white social justice movements selling out communities of color (refer to Reluctant Reformers)
- It's both institutional and interpersonal: can't just focus on one. If you're a great person, but the org still has all white leadership, contributes to white supremacy
- Hand out Oppressed/Privileged piece
- What conditions require this movement exist? What would have to change in order for this movement to no longer be necessary? Who are your allies in struggle? Think in terms of strategy, as those who would tear this movement apart are already doing that
- This is just a brief overview. There's much more out there.

#### **Anacostia Example: Pair n Share 5 mins.**

- White guy proposing at GA that we all march to Anacostia (Black, mostly low-income neighborhood in SE DC). How to unite with his intention if not tactics?
- Debrief and share with group (short)

#### **Contradictory resistance**

**What does it mean that we are simultaneously oppressed and privileged, while being trained to be racist and support racist institutions?**

- Hand out Patterns of Power
- Respect the person, challenge the behavior
- Constructive criticism is an act of love
- Our liberation is completely dependent upon the liberation of all people. Short-term gains keep us in a tenuous position.
- What kind of justice do we seek? Example: DC Trans Coalition choosing third campaign only after community forum engaging folks in issue most pressing in the lives of low-income trans women of color, then that changes group participation and makeup as the campaign is relevant, people participating in self-determined liberation struggle, but all trans people benefit from that struggle, etc.)

#### **Divide and Conquer**

Divide and conquer has often put white people in confusing roles – deliberately pressured to keep the current power structure in place

- We did not create this system, neither are we free to avoid it.
- We make choices to uphold the current system, often unconsciously, or to consciously resist it. This takes consistent work and a focus on the outcome of our work, not just the intentions



### **Practicing interrupting white supremacist conditioning: Hassle Line**

- Comes from Civil Rights Movement
- Line up on either side, for 2 min: One side argues
- Anacostia Example
- “Mic Check” white guy urgency example

### **Debrief the Hassle Line**

#### **Recommendations:**

- Safe spaces committee work (specific to OccupyDC)
- Permanent ally/anti-racism working group structure (starting to take hold)

#### **Parting thoughts for white folks:**

- See contributions of People of Color
- Check yourself before dehumanizing people
- Do your homework about histories of Communities of Color
- Understand self-determination



# Collective Liberation Workshop

By Leah jo Carnine and Caroline Picker of Occupy Phoenix

*with notes from Catalyst Project in italics*

## (10 minutes) Intro

### Opening—

- who's land we're on—moment of silence
- Pump up about 99% resistance
- Let's talk about a "Complex unity"
- Go over agenda

"How we want to be together" – Group agreements

- oops/ouch (*"oops" if you've said something inappropriate or offensive, "ouch" if you're hurt by a comment someone made*)
- move up move up (*to equalize participation in discussion: if you tend to talk a lot, "move up" your practice of listening-- if you tend to listen more, "move up" how much you speak*)

## (10 minutes) Go-around with names

Break into pairs- "why are you involved in this movement"

## (15 minutes) Step up/ Step back activity (activity statements below)

Talk to neighbor about how this was for you

## (5 minutes) Statistics (statistics below)

## (40 minutes) Definitions:

- facilitator take 1-2 responses
- participant reads definition
- questions?

**Power:** The capacity to control circumstances

Institutional power- the control that institutions have over the way society is constructed and maintained

**Power of the people:** power that all of us have as every day people to collectively make change in the world

**Oppression:** The act of heavily weighing down by unjust use of force or authority  
(examples of systems of oppression: male supremacy, white supremacy, etc.)

**Privilege:** a right, advantage, or favor specially granted and held by a certain individual, group or class, and withheld from certain or all others. *Privilege is the flipside of oppression- they are tied together.*

**Ally-** people who recognize the unearned privilege they receive from society's patterns of injustice and take responsibility for changing these patterns



**Collective liberation:** a politics committed to the long-term goal of liberation of all people from all forms of oppression. *Includes an understanding that no one is free while others are oppressed, and that while privilege shelters from the violence of oppression, it has negative impacts on the lives, communities, and movements of people who are privileged by systems of divide and control.*

---Discussion about terms and how we can work towards collective liberation

## **(25 minutes) Scenarios- (scenarios below)**

break into 4 groups to discuss scenarios. *Try to think deeply about the circumstances faced by these people, while also being aware of what assumptions you make, and where your assumptions about other peoples' lives might come from.*

- Discuss what oppressions happening
- Discuss how to interrupt scenario
- Report back

## **(10 minutes) River activity-**

One way that we have participated in oppression, one way we commit to intercepting oppression in the world

## **(10 min) Eval**

### **Statistics**

The median wealth of a white family is now at least 20 times higher than that of a black family and 18 times that of a Latino family

Only 56% of Black men over 20 are employed, compared with 68% of white men

About 8% of Black and Latino families have lost their homes to foreclosures, compared to 4.5% of White families

- In Arizona, AZs 6 coal plants-- all on native reservations-- accounts for 40% of carbon emissions in the US

-4 corner/Navajo generating stations are 2nd and 3rd largest emitters in the country

-the worlds highest rate of adult onset diabetes is found in O'odham people. More than 80% of Gila River Res members have diabetes by 55 yrs old

### **Scenarios**

#### **Scenario #1**

Mariana is a 27-year old single mother. She is from Mexico and has been living in Phoenix for 8 years. She is scared about how she will provide a good life for herself and her daughter. It's hard living in Phoenix because she doesn't speak much English. She hears about Occupy Phoenix and is interested in checking it out

- What kinds of institutional oppression does Mariana deal with?
- What kinds of obstacles might Mariana have to participating in Occupy Phoenix?





- What kind of steps could Occupy Phoenix organizers take to ensure that Mariana could participate?

### Scenario #2

Mike is an Indigenous O’odhamh youth from what is now called South Phoenix. He has been participating in Occupy Phoenix reluctantly for several weeks. One day, he voices at a General Assembly concerns with using the word ‘Occupy’. Several white people jump in immediately in defense of the term Occupy, saying that using the term is what unifies the movement.

- What are some of concerns that Mike might have with the term Occupy?
- What are some of the barriers to Mike being able to participate safely in this movement?
- How could this turn out differently?

### Scenario #3

Jenny is a white woman that has been involved in Occupy organizing.

After a while, she notices that women are primarily doing logistics around food, water and general support, while she sees men doing most media, interviews, and more visible work.

She voices her concerns with the gendered division of labor at a GA. Some men respond that they’re all just doing what they’re good at.

- What kinds of institutional oppression is Jenny facing?
- What are some of the effects of this form of oppression on Occupy organizing?
- What are other examples like this that you have seen or experienced?
- How could we disrupt what’s going on?

### Scenario #4

Anthony is a formerly incarcerated man who is on parole for drug possession charges.

He is walking down the street and sees Occupy organizing. Then he sees the police presence and feels intimidated, but decides to go check it out anyways. After he’s been there for a few minutes, he hears one of the protesters say to the cops “Why don’t you go down the street and bust the real criminals!”. Anthony immediately feels embarrassed and unwelcome, and turns to leave

- What kinds of institutional oppression is Anthony facing?
- What effect does all of this have on how Anthony might feel part of this movement?
- How could this go differently?

## Step-up step back statements

**FACILITATOR:** I’m going to read a variety of I statements that may apply to some of us in this room. Take a step into the circle if you identify with them. Then I will ask you to look at who is with you, look at who’s not and step back. This is a silent activity—we will have time to talk about and ask questions at the end. *You may pass-- If you do not feel comfortable stepping into the circle for a question you identify with, think about what would make it feel more possible for you to stand with your experiences.*



- I grew up in Phoenix.
- I grew up in a single-parent household.
- I or my parents own a house.
- My house or my family's house has been foreclosed on.
- I have a parent who did not finish high school.
- My family has been on Government assistance at some point in my life.
- I or a member of my family has ever been incarcerated or put into the juvenile justice system for reasons other than participating in political actions or protests.
- My native language is discriminated against in AZ with English only laws.
- I worry about family members of mine being deported.
- My ancestors lost land due to conquest by European colonizers or the U.S. government.
- My ancestors likely got land under one of the Homestead Acts.
- I or my ancestors were forced to live on Indian reservations.
- My ancestors were slaves.
- My ancestors owned slaves.
- I have ancestors who lived in the US but weren't allowed to own land because of their race.
- My ancestors were voluntary Protestant immigrants from Europe to the American colonies or the U.S.
- My ancestors immigrated to the United States to flee religious or political persecution and violence.
- I or my ancestors arrived as immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, or Latin America.
- My ancestors were forced to come to this country against their will.
- I or my ancestors belong to an ethnic group that was excluded from, turned back at the border of, or deported from this country.
- I attended an underfunded urban or rural public high school.
- I attended a well-funded suburban public high school or a private high school.
- It was expected that I would go to college.
- I graduated from college.
- I graduated from college debt-free.
- I have tried to change my physical appearance, mannerisms, language, or behavior to blend in and avoid being ridiculed or judged.
- I have felt afraid of violence directed towards me because of my race or gender expression.
- I generally think that the police have my best interests in mind.
- I worry about being pulled over by the police because of the color of my skin.
- I identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, or Questioning.
- I grew up with health insurance.
- I have regular check-ups with my own doctor or dentist.
- I have health insurance.



# Discussion on Facilitation, Consensus and Anti-Op-pression: Outline and Reflections

By Leah Jo Carnine

## Background:

A few days after Occupy Phoenix took off, there was a request from the organizers for a facilitation training. A small group of us—coupla white folks and a coupla folks of color—volunteered to lead the training and got together to plan how we could use it as an opportunity to teach facilitation and consensus skills, while also bringing an anti-oppression analysis and dialogue into Occupy Phoenix. The call for a facilitation workshop got lots of people interested in coming, and the flow and frame seemed to work well to create the space to dialogue about power and privilege.

## Basic Agenda:

- Intro- why consensus, overview framing of world we want to live in and participatory decision-making, etc.
- Make group agreements together- explain role of facilitator in upholding those agreements
- Roles of facilitator (time keeping, tenor and energy of group checking, maintaining agreements, checking and recognizing power dynamics, etc)
- Definitions and overview of consensus, hand signals, etc.
- Facilitated dialogue- presented is a chance to model facilitation skills and practices.  
\*Used this as a space to also address issues of power and privilege in meetings and discussions\*

o Discussion questions: What have you noticed here and else where about who tends to talk more/less in meetings and discussions, and how is that tied to people's identity and experiences of power and privilege in the world? What is your experience sharing/not sharing in meetings/discussions, and why? (30 minute discussion)

- Reflections: What have you seen facilitators do/not do that was helpful/not helpful, pull out lessons
- Closing and encouragement

## Reflections and Next Steps:

The discussion was really charged and challenging at times, as well as powerful and transformative. It seemed like a number of people had some ah-ha moments and powerful learning, and the format seemed to work well for really 'getting into it'.

Afterwards, a couple of us who facilitated the workshop stayed around and had 1:1 convos



with some of the participants who had had big times with the discussion. We got contact info, and started the process of connecting with some of the white folks more involved in occupy organizing that might be newer to these ideas, and also open and moving in exciting ways.

## 2. Truly Building the 99%: Workshop and discussion on “colorblindness” in Occupy Phoenix

A few days after the facilitation training, we set up another workshop/discussion space to build on the conversations about privilege and power that had opened in the facilitation workshop. Joel Olsens’s article on [whiteness and the 99%](#) had been circulating on facebook, and it felt like a good time to make space for that conversation at occupy phoenix.

Basic agenda: (inspired in part by the Occupy Boston workshop description that Cathy Rion sent out, and Joel’s questions in the above article):

- Step up/ step back activity- a combo of United for a fair economy questions on historical privilege/oppression and locally relevant q’s about identity, background, etc.
- Reflections in buddies on the activity and vastly diverse experiences in the group.
- Then we moved into a ridiculously short break-down of the creation of whiteness and white supremacy in this country, focusing on how its been used to divide “the 99%” along lines of race to keep the “1%” in power. Then we broke into discussion using these questions to guide us:
  - “How could addressing colorblindness strengthen instead of harm our ability to build across lines of difference?”
  - “What would it mean to center the vision and needs of people most impacted by corporate greed and the interlocking systems of oppression upon which it is built?”
  - “How have we all been hurt by systems that have divided the 99%?” “What do we all have to gain from addressing these divisions and building an increasingly powerful movement strengthened by diversity?”

It was harder than hoped to get white occupy participants there, and the new folks that showed up to the workshop & discussion were majority folks of color. We ended up having a good conversation, and more visioning of creating a truly multi-racial movement in Phoenix, outreach to communities of color, how to make occupy Phoenix more welcoming and safer if more folks of color do come, etc. A good conversation, but



with the exception of a couple folks, it didn't accomplish our primary goal of engaging more white folks in discussion around unchecked privilege and colorblindness as a step to building a more powerful movement. The facilitation workshop, I believe, was more effective at bringing dialogue around privilege with folks who have privilege and aren't necessarily interested in addressing it.

#### Overall reflections:

I think all of the anti-racism working groups, educational events folks are organizing, and loving, critical writings around race and privilege are a huge piece of how we can do this work in this gorgeous, complex, and potential filled moment. Some strategies that stand out to me are where folks are not only investing energy in very important anti-racism working groups/spaces, but actually getting involved in the local occupy organizing, working groups, etc. Carl Patrick's stories from Sonoma County where the crew organizing and holding down a lot of pieces of the occupy work are also anti-racist organizers, bringing that with them into the big picture organizing are deeply invigorating. Here in Phoenix, we're juggling our limited capacity to be around Occupy Phoenix consistently, with caution of the dynamic of descending in to do workshops. We've been trying to spend more time at General Assemblies, and just around having small conversations with folks. I'm also personally trying to figure out how to best participate in the working groups and central organizing at Occupy, in addition to the anti-racist organizing and education there.

# Barriers to Inclusivity In the Occupy Movement

## (Part One)

Workshop developed by ROAR! Collective



This workshop was designed after studying a long series of articles coming from communities of color regarding the occupy movement, as well as from our own frustrations about lack of safe spaces for ourselves, our friends, and people we care about in occupy pittsburgh.

The workshop was designed by Nai, Ursula, Rachel, Danny, Eric, and Joyce with input from various others.

Approximately 30-40 people attended and the workshop time allotted was approximately 2 hours (with about 15 minutes of flex time that we used for prep and wait time for stragglers).

Suggested Ingredients:

- A comfortable space
- Butcher Paper
- Markers
- Handouts (articles being mentioned)
- 20-50 occupiers
- 2-5 facilitators

Intros

Quick go around, everyone shared their name and their reason for attending the workshop

Communications Groundrules

Acknowledged that we could be having a discussion with some tension and had everyone contribute some discussion norms that would ease communication. It can be helpful for facilitators to make a suggestion or two to get things started.

The ones suggested and practiced in this particular workshop were:

- Speak from your own experience
- Respect for self and others
- Don't deny the experience of others
- Don't interrupt
- Step Up, Step Back
- Don't make assumptions about anyone's identity
- Understand that this work is everyone's job
- Discuss ideas, not people



## Background Information

Discussion of how the workshop came to be, excerpts from articles read in order to frame dialogue. Excerpt from blog about signs reading “Debt Slavery.”

note: The facilitators read the excerpts but in retrospect I think it would have been better to hand out copies of articles and ask for volunteers to read.

## Activity One: Occupy Language

After reading the excerpt from the debt slavery blog, we asked participants to list/shout out language from signs, chants, and conversation while we wrote everything on butcher paper. The goal is to identify the common vocabulary of the occupy movement both in person and as represented in media.

note: depending on who attends the workshop it might be more productive to either specify that folks should identify mainstream materials, focus specifically on signs or chants, or have them identify things that they specifically find problematic. Our group had various levels of experience with organization and issues of oppression but most had some experience so we made our prompt fairly generic.

This was the list:

Corporate Rape  
Ownership  
Pulling your own weight  
Speaking on behalf of others  
Why are you here?  
Solidarity  
What demands/leaders  
leaderless  
fixing a broken system  
nonviolence  
banks got bailed out, we got sold out  
mic check  
binary language  
bitch  
debt slavery  
come talk to us  
99%  
occupy  
occupy to liberate  
this is what democracy looks like





police are the 99%  
fuck the police  
consensus  
general assembly  
need to focus  
divisiveness  
brothers/sisters  
“over sensitive”  
safe space  
how can i help?  
deal with people as issues  
reinforcing stigma  
mislabeling  
wage slave

Next, take one example from the list. We chose debt slavery in part because we read about it and in part because it lends itself well to this exercise. We wrote the word SLAVERY at the top of a sheet of butcher paper and had everyone name the words that they associate with the word slavery. This was our list:

property  
chains  
racism  
dehumanizing  
colonialism  
slave trade  
ancestors  
south  
rape  
prison  
systemic annihilation of people  
underground railroad  
united states  
de-culturing  
genocide  
n-word  
lunching  
nazis  
rebellion  
dividing families  
capitalism  
jim crow  
kkk



forced migration  
3/5 of a person  
reparations  
power/force/profit  
civil war  
death of untold millions  
sharks following ships  
disposability  
masters  
emancipation proclamation  
haitian revolution  
eugenics  
forced sterilization  
coerced labor  
farm/domestic labor  
total reproductive control  
cash crop

Conclude activity by pairing some words on the list with the original sign wording. In this case, discussion of how someone who is a white college student may have tens of thousands of dollars of debt but has never been legally 3/5 of a person, never suffered lynching, etc.

It is highly likely that the intentions of such signs and statements will be brought up. This is an excellent chance to discuss INTENT vs. IMPACT in order to reorient people's focus from the first to the latter. In our group, someone also added the idea of individual vs. group and historical context, which was very helpful.

#### Activity Two: What Can We Do? – Creative Visioning

Engage participants in a discussion regarding what is needed at the camp and how we get there. The purpose of this is/was to get people to start thinking about removing barriers, but further discussions are necessary to grow these ideas.

note: it would be helpful to send around a sign up list for people interested in future meetings and/or a listserv of somekind.

Most needs were either subheadings of or related to SAFE SPACES. Safe spaces is an over arching need that many marginalized communities lack in a number of settings, so it's important to encourage people to expand on what safe space means and looks like.

Some thoughts on that from our workshop were:

\_note: these still required continued discussion and explanation



actively anti-racist and anti-sexist  
deliberate dialogue  
public affirmations  
gender inclusivity  
no sexual advances (disagreement was raised and a significant discussion took place.)  
diversity training (it was suggested that this be mandatory, there was disagreement and discussion.)  
visibility  
it's ok to make mistakes: oops/ouch tactic (love this!)  
inclusive language (i.e. language that allows people w/o experience in movements and/or organizing and activism to feel that they are a part of this movement aka cut it out with the jargon already!)  
recognizing harm and disempowerment are different than offense/hurt feelings  
intentional language and communities  
access to resources  
encouraging a thought of the day, somewhere visible  
model language  
appropriate space for regular workshops and activities and actively enforce and reinforce that space as "safe", expand that culture outward from that center  
create identity/affinity groups at camp  
draw a line regarding acceptable behavior norms  
reclaim individual spaces  
orientation process that stresses these values

note: during our workshop we had pressure to close prior to a subsequent activity and had limited time. This would be a good moment to collect people's information for continued discussion, etc.

*For more information about ROAR! Collective go to <https://we.riseup.net/roar>*



# ***Curriculum Resources***

# Where Are You in the Class System?

By Paul Kivel



## Where Are You in the Class System?

by Paul Kivel

**OUR DISCUSSIONS OF WEALTH AND POWER** are always more useful when they are grounded in an acknowledgement of our own class position and class history. Our class position influences how we understand the economic system. Our understanding will remain abstract and inaccurate if we don't talk about how class works in our own lives. Without such a grounding, class will continue to be a barrier to our living or working together to change the economic system.

Take some time to locate yourself in the wealth pyramid both in terms of your family of origin (when you were growing up) and at the present time. Use the following questions to help you think about the impact of class on your life and life opportunities. (The questions ask about the family you grew up in. Go through them a second time and ask them about your current situation).

These questions are just prompts to help you think about the impact of different economic, class, racial, and gender factors that affected where you and your parents are in the economic pyramid.

When you have thought through your answers to these questions (and any others that occur to you), talk about your responses with your family, friends, and co-workers. One way the ruling class keeps us divided and fearful is by the social silence over class differences and the illusion that we are all just middle class.

1. Did/do you have enough food to eat? Were there times when you or other family members were hungry? Where did your family shop? What was the basic diet? Did you eat out a lot? At what kind of places? Who cooked your meals? Was there an abundance of foods? Lots of fancy foods? How did other people in the urban/suburban/rural area you lived in eat?
2. What kind of housing did you live in? Did you have a stable home? Were you homeless? Who lived with you--other relatives/another family? Did you rent your home? Did you ever have to move because your family couldn't pay the rent? Did your family own their own home? Did



you have your own bedroom? Did your family have a vacation place or second house? Did you feel comfortable in your house, proud of it, embarrassed by it? How much of the family's budget went towards housing expenses? Where in your area did people live with fancier homes? Where with poorer homes? Was your neighborhood racially diverse or was it segregated? How did that affect the status of the neighborhood?

3. What kind of job(s) did your parent(s) or guardians have? How steady was the work? How safe? How many hours did they work? Were there periods of involuntary unemployment? Was one income adequate for the family? Were two?

What kind of status was attached to their work? What kind of benefits? What level of income did they bring home? Did the children of the family have to contribute financially to help make ends meet? What could your family not afford on that income? Did your family go on vacations? Where did they go? Did you go to summer camps or special programs? Did your family travel out-of-state? Out of the country?

4. Did your family have any accumulated wealth like stocks and bonds, property, a business, a farm? If so, what opportunities did it provide for the family? How much wealth did the family possess? Did that increase or decrease over your lifetime? Was your family in debt, or constantly worried about paying the bills? Were there educational, employment, or housing opportunities that were not available because your family did not have enough money to take advantage of them?
5. What kind of education or educational opportunities did your parent(s) or other guardians have? How did gender or race affect that? What kinds of jobs did their education (or lack of education) make available to them or exclude them from? How did their race and gender affect that? Were they unable to pursue further education because of financial circumstances? Where did you go to school? What was the class make-up of the school? Of the surrounding schools? How were students tracked by class, race, and/or gender within your school? Where were you tracked? What were the expectations of those around you about what you would do in your life? What were the most visible career paths on those in your immediate family/extended



family/neighborhood? Was any higher education paid for by your parents or grandparents? Did you have to work to get through high school and/or college? How much education were you able to get? Did you rely on scholarships? Did you take out student loans to get through school?

6. What were activities and behaviors that were signs of different classes in your neighborhood? How were class differences in dress, language, values, background, appearance or behavior manifested in your school? How did they play out in interactions between adults? Between young people? Were you ever embarrassed by your class background? Have you ever embarrassed others, or felt the embarrassment of others because of their class background?
7. How was your class represented on TV and in the movies? How were other classes? Who were “representative” families or characters from different classes in the media?
8. Where did your family shop for food, clothes, and household goods? Did they buy “on-time” or on lay-away? Did they postpone purchases until they could afford them? Did they have to pay attention to budgeting? How was your family treated in stores based on how their class position was perceived? How did their race, gender, and/or immigrant status affect how they were treated? Were they charged more because of their race, gender, or immigrant status? Were there places they were not welcomed or mistreated? Were there places they could not afford?
9. Were your parent(s) or guardian(s) able to vote for candidates that represented their class interests? Did the local, state, and federal policies that were passed generally support the prosperity and security of your family? Were tax policies, transportation, environmental, educational, and health care policies generally to the advantage or to the disadvantage of your family?
10. Did your family have health care coverage? Was it adequate? Was your family able to have regular medical, dental, and eye checkups? Could your family afford glasses or orthodontic work/braces when needed? Did your family forego or postpone needed medical treatment because they could not afford it? Was your family ever disrespected or treated less well, or treated specially or given special





attention because of their class, race, gender, or immigrant status?

11. How did the police treat members of your family based on your family's economic standing? How was that influenced by race, gender, or immigrant status? Did your family look on the police as protecting them? As working in their interests in the community? How was the treatment of your family by other professionals affected by your family's class standing? How did race, gender, or immigrant status affect their treatment?
12. How did you and your family spend your leisure time? Did your parent(s) or guardian(s) have leisure time? How was their leisure time affected by their gender? Could they afford to buy you toys and games? What kinds of electronic items did you have in your house? What kind did you want but could not afford? Was there money to go out to eat, go to the movies, or to pay for other activities? Did your family go to fancy restaurants or eat out frequently? Did they go to expensive entertainment such as concerts or plays? Did you family go on outings or trips? Did they travel by public transportation, car, or plane? Did they stay overnight? Where did they stay? Did you have to work when going to school? Did you get paid for doing chores or jobs for your parents? Did you receive an allowance? How much was it? What did you spend it on? Were you given money on birthdays or other special occasions?

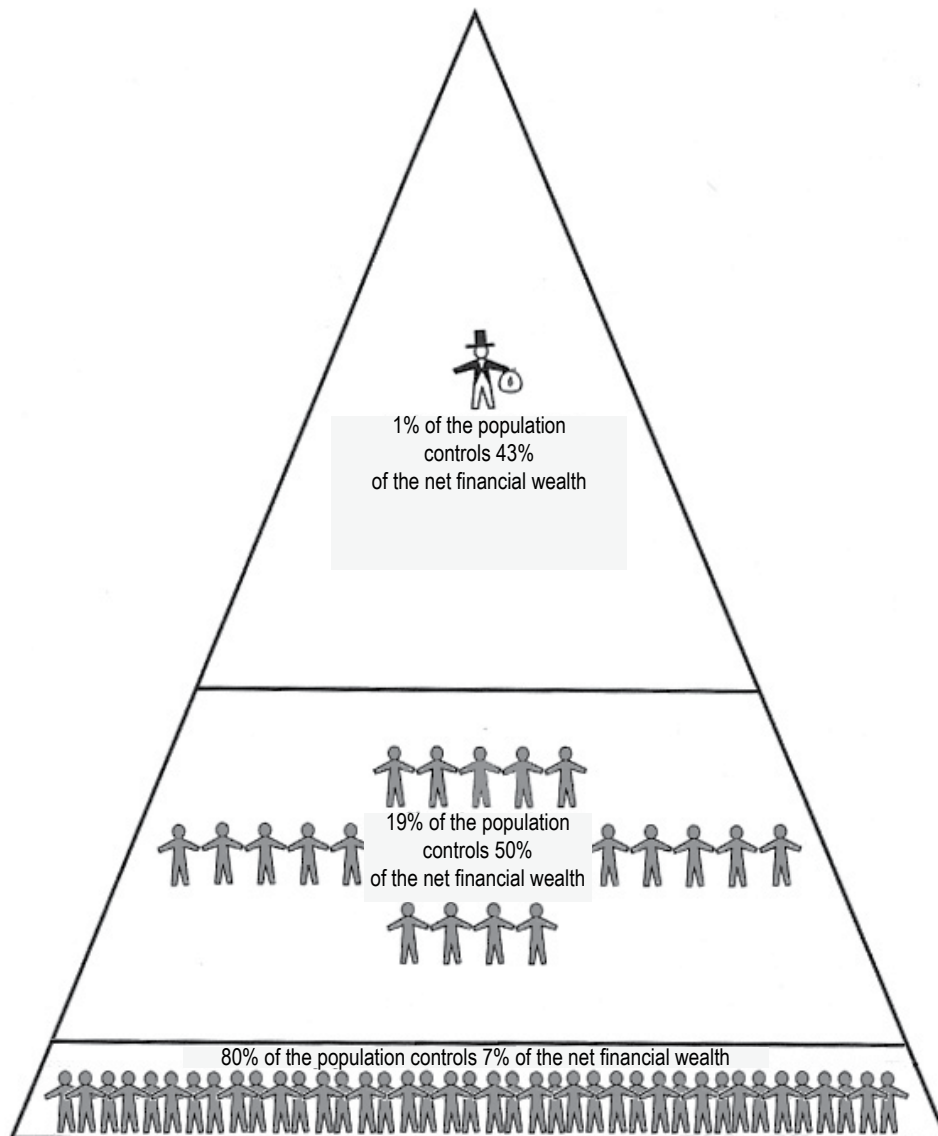
Please send comments, feedback, resources, and suggestions for distribution to [paul@paulkivel.com](mailto:paul@paulkivel.com). Further resources are available at [www.paulkivel.com](http://www.paulkivel.com).



# The Economic Pyramid

Developed by Paul Kivel

## THE ECONOMIC PYRAMID



Numbers are from 2007 from "Recent Trends in Household Wealth in the United States: Rising Debt and Middle-Class Squeeze, an update to 2007" by Edward N. Wolff, Jerome Levy Economics Institute, Working Paper #589, March, 2010 available at [http://www.levy.org/pubs/wp\\_589.pdf](http://www.levy.org/pubs/wp_589.pdf).

# Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies

By Paul Kivel



## Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies

Adapted from *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Social Justice*

by Paul Kivel

**WHAT KIND OF ACTIVE SUPPORT** does a strong white ally provide to a person of color? Over the years, people of color that I have talked with have been remarkably consistent in describing the kinds of support they need from white allies.

### What People of Color Want from White Allies

"Respect us"	"Listen to us"
"Find out about us"	"Don't make assumptions"
"Don't take over"	"Stand by my side"
"Provide information"	"Don't assume you know what's best for me"
"Resources"	"Money"
"Take risks"	"Make mistakes"
"Don't take it personally"	"Honesty"
"Understanding"	"Talk to other white people"
"Teach your children about racism"	"Interrupt jokes and comments"
"Speak up"	"Don't ask me to speak for my people"
"Your body on the line"	"Persevere daily"

### Basic Tactics

Every situation is different and calls for critical thinking about how to make a difference. Taking the statements above into account, I have compiled some general guidelines.

1. **Assume racism is everywhere, every day.** Just as economics influences everything we do, just as gender and gender politics influence everything we do, assume that racism is affecting



your daily life. We assume this because it's true, and because a privilege of being white is the freedom to not deal with racism all the time. We have to learn to see the effect that racism has. Notice who speaks, what is said, how things are done and described. Notice who isn't present when racist talk occurs. Notice code words for race, and the implications of the policies, patterns, and comments that are being expressed. You already notice the skin color of everyone you meet—now notice what difference it makes.

2. **Notice who is the center of attention and who is the center of power.** Racism works by directing violence and blame toward people of color and consolidating power and privilege for white people.
3. **Notice how racism is denied, minimized, and justified.**
4. **Understand and learn from the history of whiteness and racism.** Notice how racism has changed over time and how it has subverted or resisted challenges. Study the tactics that have worked effectively against it.
5. **Understand the connections between racism, economic issues, sexism, and other forms of injustice.**
6. **Take a stand against injustice.** Take risks. It is scary, difficult, and may bring up feelings of inadequacy, lack of self-confidence, indecision, or fear of making mistakes, but ultimately it is the only healthy and moral human thing to do. Intervene in situations where racism is being passed on.
7. **Be strategic.** Decide what is important to challenge and what's not. Think about strategy in particular situations. Attack the source of power.
8. **Don't confuse a battle with the war.** Behind particular incidents and interactions are larger patterns. Racism is flexible and adaptable. There will be gains and losses in the struggle for justice and equality.
9. **Don't call names or be personally abusive.** Since power is often defined as power over others—the ability to abuse or control people—it is easy to become abusive ourselves. However, we usually end up abusing people who have less power than we do because it is less dangerous. Attacking people doesn't address the systemic nature of racism and inequality.
10. **Support the leadership of people of color.** Do this consistently, but not uncritically.
11. **Learn something about the history of white people who have worked for racial justice.** There is a long history of



white people who have fought for racial justice. Their stories can inspire and sustain you.

12. **Don't do it alone.** You will not end racism by yourself. We can do it if we work together. Build support, establish networks, and work with already established groups.
13. **Talk with your children and other young people about racism.**

Please send comments, feedback, resources, and suggestions for distribution to [paul@paulkivel.com](mailto:paul@paulkivel.com). Further resources are available at [www.paulkivel.com](http://www.paulkivel.com).



# Guidelines for Challenging Sexism and Male Supremacy

By Paul Kivel

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## Guidelines for Challenging Sexism and Male Supremacy

by Paul Kivel

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**IT IS POLITICAL THAT THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN** are not widely acknowledged and talked about. It is political that when issues of sexism and male supremacy are raised they are usually denied or minimized. It is political that women are commonly thought to have achieved great success in our society and many people think that we have eliminated most barriers to gender equity. And it is political that we (particularly men) don't use a gender lens all day, everyday, to see and understand the world.

I want to offer some simple suggestions for putting these issues on a social justice agenda.

**Use a gender lens**—as well as economic, racial and other lens—all of the time. Constantly ask yourself, “What is the difference that gender makes in this situation?”

Always ask, “**Where are the women**—why aren't they in leadership?” “**Where are the other women**—which groups of women are not at the table?”

**Women constitute over half the population.** Notice and respond when they do not have representation, leadership, and power.

**Interpersonal violence is a social justice issue.** Unless each of us and our communities address and heal from the interpersonal violence that tears our lives apart, we will not be able to work together and foster the full, creative participation of vast numbers of people, nor will we be able to meet women's needs for safety, healing, community and justice.

**Make sure that women's contributions are recognized and honored.** Notice and draw attention to the unpaid and unrecognized work that women do to support our daily lives, to sustain those in need, and to make things happen.

**Interrupt male cultures of power** that operate to exclude, marginalize, or disempower women. Notice how men resist



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accepting responsibility for male privilege and male supremacy and speak out.

**Become more knowledgeable** about women's cultures, women histories, women's contributions, and women's lives.

**Look to progressive women and women's organizations for leadership.**

**Strategize** about who you can organize with to address issues of sexism and male supremacy.

Identify where you have work to do to **build and sustain intimate, family, and community relationships built on complete respect, consent, and mutuality.**

**Identify your next steps in challenging sexism and male supremacy.**

Please send comments, feedback, resources, and suggestions for distribution to [paul@paulkivel.com](mailto:paul@paulkivel.com). Further resources are available at [www.paulkivel.com](http://www.paulkivel.com).





# **Shinin' The Lite on White**

By Sharon Martinas

## **SHININ'**

## **THE LITE**

## **ON**

## **WHITE:**

## **AN**

## **HISTORICAL**

## **OVERVIEW**

## **OF**

## **WHITE**

## **PRIVILEGE**

*SHARON MARTINAS co-founded “The Challenging White Supremacy Workshop” in 1993, for which she wrote The CWS Workshop Exercise Manual, of which the following exercises are a part. She writes: “My focus is now on anti-prison activism for the human rights of prisoners. I’m a member of the Prisoners Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition that formed last June 2011 to support the Pelican Bay hunger strikers. My joy is to build supportive one-on-one relationships with emerging anti-racist organizers. My honor is to be a Catalyst Project ‘advisor,’ and long time comrade. I have learned so much from Catalyst about the deep meanings of collective liberation.”*



## **SHININ' THE LITE ON WHITE: WHITE PRIVILEGE**

by Sharon Martinas

### Introduction

The "Shinin' the Lite on White" series includes this essay on white privilege, several exercises on identifying and challenging white privilege behavior of social justice activists, and the essay, "The Culture of White Supremacy."

The purpose of this series is threefold:

- (1) To develop a definition of *white*, so that we can deal with the problem more effectively;
- (2) To strengthen our insights about *white privilege* in a white supremacy system;
- (3) To develop an effective analysis and strategy for challenging white privilege as well as racial oppression.

### Defining the Problem:

#### Why Can't We Just Get it Together?

In 1996, progressive activists in California waged a massive, multi-racial and militant struggle to save affirmative action. Though we raised the consciousness of millions of people, voters and non-voters, we lost at the ballot box. 56% of California's electorate voted "Yes" on Proposition 209. The voters wiped out affirmative action in the public sector: in education, employment and contracting.

What happened? There were many analyses among activists, all of which held important kernels of truth:

•• The electoral arena in California is a stacked deck when the Right uses racist initiatives. Though 47% of the population is people of color, 83% of the voters are white.

•• The left was out spent by the right, and the Clinton campaign failed to keep its commitment to provide millions of dollars to wage an effective media campaign against the initiative.

•• The wording of the initiative, billed as a "civil rights" policy, deliberately confused many well meaning voters who would be expected to support equality in government programs.

•• To wage a comprehensive grass roots organizing electoral campaign, in a state the size of California, activists should have started in 1995 and coordinated their efforts much more effectively.

These are important points. But something is missing. The organizers in communities of color reached their electoral objectives: hundreds of thousands of new voters went to the polls, and the NO on 209 votes looked like this:

Asian Americans 61%; African Americans 74% and Latinos 76%! But the groups organizing among white feminists did not reach their goals. To defeat 209, fifty-five percent of white women needed to vote NO. *Instead, 57% of white women voted YES!*

What happened? Most feminists know that white women have been the major beneficiaries of affirmative action in all its spheres. So why did we white women vote overwhelmingly *against our own self-interest as well as against social justice for people of color?*

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To begin to analyze this problem, I believe we have to understand the history and role of white privilege in this country.

#### Brainstorm: "White" is not... "White" is....

"What does *white* mean to you, as it refers to people?" Here are some guiding questions to address in your response:

- \*\*\* Is *white* a skin color?
- \*\*\* What does your dictionary and thesaurus say about *white* as referring to people?
  - \*\*\* Are *white people* a race?"
  - \*\*\* Is *white* an ethnicity (like Norwegian, Irish, Jewish, Russian)?
  - \*\*\* Are white people who live in the U.S.A. *Americans*?
  - \*\*\* Is there such a thing as *the white community* in the U.S.?
- \*\*\* If you are a person of color, what do you call people whose ancestors came from Europe?
- \*\*\* If your ancestors came from Europe, what do you call yourself?

#### White is — White Privilege

Webster's New World (sic) Dictionary defines *privilege* as "a right, advantage, favor, or immunity specially granted to one; esp., a right held by a certain individual, group, or class, *and withheld from certain others or all others.*" (Emphasis added. Third College Edition of Webster's, 1988).

The CWS Workshop defines white privilege this way:

"U.S. institutions and culture give *preferential treatment* to people whose ancestors came from Europe over peoples whose ancestors are from the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Arab world; and *exempt* European Americans — white people — from the forms of racial and national oppression inflicted upon peoples from the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Arab world.

This *web of institutional and cultural preferential treatment* is called **white privilege**. In a white supremacy system, white privilege and racial oppression are two sides of the same coin."

Non-ruling class white people are both oppressed and privileged. They are **oppressed** most significantly on the basis of class, gender and sexuality, and also on the basis of religion, culture, ethnicity, age, physical abilities and politics. At the same time, they are **privileged** in relation to peoples of color.

#### Historical Origins of White Privilege

In the early 1600's, 50 wealthy Englishmen bought stock in the Virginia Company of London. Their stock options included large parcels of (Indian) land in the new colony of Virginia, as well as the right to govern the colony.

These English gentlemen did not intend to work their lands in Virginia. To get workers, they contracted with English merchants who delivered impoverished English teen-agers and kidnaped Africans. By the second decade of colonization, working servants, both English and African, outnumbered English gentlemen by perhaps 100 to 1.



Living and working conditions for African and English laborers were horrendous. Workers were regularly whipped, nearly starved to death, denied days of rest, and refused permission to marry. English servants, who were supposedly protected under English poor laws, had limited times of servitude, but owners disregarded the laws. Those servants who were freed as required, usually died within a few years.

Under these conditions, African and English servants struggled to survive and resist their common oppression. They traded together; they made love together, and they made war together against their masters. Most servants were armed, since the wealthy used their servants to protect the frontiers against "hostile Indians."

Virginia records document ten servant revolts in the mid 1600's, culminating in the famous Bacon's Rebellion of 1676. African and English servants, free workers and farmers, demanded land and pay for their labor. They burned down Jamestown, the colony's capital. Colonial rulers had to call in the British army to subdue the rebellion.

Colonial land-owning legislators responded with a series of Slave Codes enacted from 1680 through 1705. These codes legalized chattel slavery (the child of an enslaved woman would be enslaved for a lifetime) and severely restricted the rights of free Africans. The codes equated the terms "slave" and "Negro," thus institutionalizing the world's first system of racialized slavery.

The codes also set out the "rights" of and restrictions for "servants." At first, "servants" referred ambiguously to both Africans and English. But as "slave" became synonymous with "Negro," (the Spanish word for "Black,") "servant" came to mean "white," the term which replaced "English," "Christian" or "wench" to refer to poor or indentured Europeans.

As the codes tightened the legal noose around enslaved Africans, they simultaneously loosened the legal bonds on English indentured servants. English or "white" servants were granted specific forms of *privilege* or *preferential treatment* which was specifically denied to slaves, or "Negroes."

For example, the codes stipulated that servants could challenge unjust behavior of their masters in court; servants, both men and women, were entitled to specific "freedom dues," paid in tobacco (the legal tender of the colony) when their term of servitude was over. Servants could get a small plot of land, provided they promised to guard the frontiers. Poor white males were offered the first paid jobs in the colony-- on the slave patrols. They got bounties for every slave they caught. (I think the slave patrol is the institutional ancestor of the police department.)

All these "privileges" were specified as being available only to "white" people. However, if any poor whites acted in solidarity with any Africans, they would be physically branded, and their privileges removed. Thus the term *white* became synonymous with *privilege* in colonial law.

In conclusion, a study of the historical origin of the term *white* suggests that:

- \*\*\* *"White" is a political term.* It was specifically created by colonial rulers to prevent oppressed people from different continents from uniting to confront their common oppressors.

- \*\*\* *"White privilege" is a relational term.* It is the other side of the coin of *racial oppression*. In the U.S. white supremacy system, they go together.

- \*\*\* *White* was originally a class term. The privileges of whiteness were first granted by the colonial ruling class only to the poor and servant class of Europeans.



Colonial rulers did not need privilege. They had power.

\*\*\* In a few generations, the institutional privileges for the white poor would wipe out the material basis for unity with oppressed Africans, as their daily lives grew further apart. (Bacon's Rebellion was the last multi-racial revolt of the oppressed during the colonial era.)

\*\*\* Colonial rulers used the existence of these privileges to convince poor white people that the little they had was due to their racial superiority, rather than to preferential treatment combined with hard work. *The impact of white privilege on white people's daily lives reinforced the ideology of white arrogance and "legitimized" their dehumanization of people of color.*

\*\*\* In summary, the system of white privilege for non-ruling class whites reinforces the system of racial oppression against people of color. And the *complementary systems* of white privilege and racial oppression maintain the system of white power for ruling class whites.

#### How White Privilege has been Perpetuated in the U.S.

I believe that there are five major ways by which the system of white privilege has been perpetuated:

- (1) The political economy of internal colonialism which laid the basis for the U.S. capitalist system;
- (2) Three hundred years of affirmative action programs for white people, created by federal and state laws;
- (3) Political demands of most white progressive movements (I call this *The Strategy of the Slave Owners*);
- (4) Reproduction of white privilege in daily life: the treatment of white people because they are white, and the behavioral response of white people to this treatment.
- (5) The culture of white supremacy.

Although this analysis of white privilege may seem a bit complex, spotting manifestations of white privilege is relatively easy. Just look for an instance of racial oppression, and ask yourself "Who benefits from this oppression?" You'll probably see that a few white guys at the top get the lion's share -- because they have the *power*; -- and a whole lot of white men *and women* in the middle get a little piece of the action.

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#### The Political Economy of Internal Colonialism

As Elizabeth Martínez discussed in her essay on What is White Supremacy? the United States as a nation-state was created out of stolen land, enslaved labor and war. The wealth created from the theft of indigenous land, the labor of African captives, and the war on Mexico made the European-American colonial owners a very wealthy class of people, and provided the capital that created capitalism in the U.S.

It also benefited the European-American working and middle classes, both immigrant and U.S. born. To understand the economic relationship between the white working and middle classes of the U.S. and all the peoples of color whose oppression created the wealth of capitalism, it is helpful to look at African colonialism. There you have a system where all classes of European settlers make their money off the backs of the indigenous colonized. So even when a Black and white worker work in the same industry, their relationship within that industry is one of colonized and colonizer.



An example from my own family history might help make the point. My paternal grandparents migrated from Russia in the early 20th century. My grandfather worked in a New York sweat shop, a miserable job by any standards. *But the economic reason why he and millions of his peers were able to get these jobs was because of the semi-slave labor of people of African descent in Southern plantations after the defeat of Reconstruction.* Cotton was cheap because of the conditions under which African Americans labored, so there was a huge market for cotton goods, which created thousands of jobs for European immigrants, including my grandfather.

My mother's father worked in a shoe factory. He worked under unsafe conditions, and eventually suffocated from asthma caused by leather dust. But at the turn of the century, the Massachusetts shoe industry was booming. The leather came from the South West on railroads built by Chinese and Mexican laborers. The cows were herded by Mexicano vaqueros who had been robbed of their historical lands after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo transformed half of Mexico into "Occupied America." And so my maternal grand parents became the direct beneficiaries of the U.S. colonial war against Mexico, and the national oppression of Chicano people.

White mob violence guaranteed the white privileges from the economy of internal colonialism. In the 1840's and 1850's, Irish working class immigrants pushed African Americans out of the skilled trades in New York City by burning down parts of the Black community while Irish police and fire fighters looked on. White homesteaders murdered indigenous warriors trying to protect their historical homelands, and slaughtered millions of their buffalo. Unemployed white workers burned down parts of San Francisco Chinatown in the 1880's to drive Chinese workers out of the cigar-making and shoe industries. White squatters lynched Chicanos fighting to keep their ancestral lands in Occupied America.

I inherited this legacy. I am a white middle class woman, with enough educational and material resources to put on a free anti-racist training workshop. I am in this position because I am the beneficiary of the system of white privilege embedded in internal colonialism backed up by violence. I can run from it, but I can't hide. It's my history, a tiny part of the history of affirmative action for white people.

### **300 Years of Affirmative Action for White People**

Some examples:

- 1663: In Virginia, English female indentured servants are no longer allowed to work in the fields; they can only work in their masters' house. African women still work in the fields.
- 1680 – 1705: Virginia "servant" codes specify that white servants can testify in court, get "freedom dues," a plot of land, and the right to marry someone else who comes from Europe. (Racial intermarriage is banned.)
- 1790: The Naturalization Act, the first act of the first U.S. Congress, guarantees that white immigrants can become citizens, which leads the way for them to become owners of land. "Non-white" immigrants are denied the right to be citizens. (This provision was not changed until 1952.)



- 1830: The Indian Removal Act, initiated by President Andrew Jackson, removes the Choctaw, Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw and Seminole Indians from the most fertile land in the South. White slave owners take over the land, use enslaved Africans to grow the cotton that creates the wealth for both Southern and Northern ruling and middle class whites. Cotton becomes the major export of the new nation.
- 1848: In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico cedes half its national territory to the United States. Mexicans living north of the Rio Grande become U.S. citizens, but they no longer automatically own the land their families have tilled for centuries. Under U.S. law, the land goes to those with papers. Mexicans do not have papers. White lawyers "representing" Mexican land owners swindle millions of acres by taking land as their legal fees. Mexican-Americans become the first farm workers on lands their families once owned.
- 1862: During the height of the Civil War, U.S. soldiers are also waging war on indigenous nations in the West. Millions of acres of Native land are taken by bloodshed. This land is distributed to white people only. The Homestead Act makes 50 million acres available, at low cost, to white working class homesteaders. The Morrill Act creates land grant colleges to build a new white middle class. And 100 million acres of Indian land are given free to the railroads.
- 1880's -1914: Millions of Southern and Eastern European immigrants come to the U.S. They can bring their families, marry, travel to find work and eventually get citizenship. But during the same period, Chinese immigrants, except for merchants, are excluded from immigrating. Chinese workers are not allowed to bring their wives, nor to marry non-Chinese Americans, so they cannot create families.
- 1887: The Dawes Land Allotment Act forbids communal land ownership by indigenous people, and encourages Indians to sell their lands to whites. As a result, millions of acres go to white squatters.
- 1947 on: Under the G.I. Bill, the federal government authorizes the largest affirmative action program for white people in the nation's history. Millions of returning veterans get preferential treatment in jobs, suburban home loans, and college education. But these federal programs do not challenge institutional racism in employment, housing or education, so almost all the benefits go to white men and their families.
- 1954ff: One of the most significant effects of Brown v. Board of Education is the firing of thousands of Black teachers and principals in southern Black schools, after these schools are integrated with white ones. School Boards say that white parents will not let their kids be taught by Black teachers. So the major beneficiaries of Brown v. Board of Education are the thousands of white (mostly female) teachers and white (mostly male) principals who get the jobs in these newly integrated schools.
- 1994:: The passage of "Three Strikes You're Out" in California leads to imprisonment for thousands of Black and Brown men while providing a major source of well paid jobs for mostly white working class men -- as prison guards.





1996: The passage of Proposition 209 ends a brief interlude of 30 years of affirmative action for people of color. And California, which will be the first state in the nation to have a majority population of people of color, leads the way in returning to a 300 year tradition of affirmative action for white people.

### The Strategy of the Slave Owners

The construction of institutional white privilege, which I call "The Strategy of the Slave Owners," was a brilliant piece of politics. Created over 300 years ago, it still works beautifully today. It divides the oppressed, whether the oppression is based on class, gender or sexuality, so we can't get it together. Virtually all politically progressive movements led by white activists after 1676 have recreated, consciously or unconsciously, the structures of white privilege.

In social movements led by people of color, white allies have historically supported demands of people of color for a short while, then gone back to their own issues. When whites break the coalitional power of the people, the *only* guarantor that racial reforms will be implemented and maintained, all progressive movements end up suffering the backlash. Here are a few examples:

\*\*\* From 1789 to 1791, non-ruling class whites organized to include the Bill of Rights as the first Ten Amendments to the Constitution. But these amendments did nothing to protect the rights of African or indigenous peoples in the new nation-state. Nor has the Bill of Rights protected white activists who defy the state or corporate power. And only the rich have *effective* freedom of the press.

\*\*\* In 1920, white women got the vote after a 100 years of struggle. But they got it by promising Southern segregationists that they would use the vote to support white supremacy. Today, a divided women's movement still lacks the power to enact mandatory maternity leave for all working parents, despite the fact that women are more than 50% of all voters.

\*\*\* In 1935, militant workers won the legal right to be represented by unions. But, in order to get the National Labor Relations Act passed by Congress, they agreed to a compromise. The Act would exclude agricultural and domestic workers from its protections. Since these workers were mostly African American, Chicano, and Chinese, the new labor law essentially legalized unions for white male workers only. Today, an historically divided work force has not even been able to obtain a minimum wage above the poverty level.

\*\*\* In 1973, abortion finally became legal in the U.S. But white middle class women, the main beneficiaries of *Roe v. Wade*, did not wield their organizing power to oppose the Hyde Amendment (which restricted abortions for women on welfare) or the sterilization of Puerto Rican and other poor women of color. So when the Right rolled back abortion rights in the 1980's, there was no powerful multi-racial feminist movement to stop it. Today, 80% of U.S. counties are without abortion services.

\*\*\* White environmentalists seldom challenge environmental pollution of communities of color or Indian reservations, even though most toxic dumping is done in these communities. Since toxics and cancer go hand in glove, is it any wonder that cancer is still a leading killer -- of white people as well as people of color?



The legacy of "The Strategy of the Slave Owners" demonstrates what *when oppressed whites protest militantly against their own oppression, while refusing to simultaneously challenge racial oppression and white privilege, they can win short term victories (a union, legislative reform, a constitutional amendment, etc.) But when they organize in this way, they themselves become oppressors of people of color. Their silence is consent to racial oppression and white privilege. And they sacrifice the possibilities for building coalitions with activists of color which could challenge the power of the descendants of the slave owners -- the power which oppresses all of us today.*

Some materials that have helped me understand white privilege

1. Robert Allen,
  - a. Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1983.
  - b. Black Awakening in Capitalist America. New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1989.
2. Theodore Allen,
  - a. "Class Struggle and the Origin of Racial Slavery: The Invention of the White Race," Radical America, May-June, 1975, Vol. 9, Number 3.
  - b. The Invention of the White Race. Vol. 1 (1994) and Vol. 2. (1997). New York: Verso Press.
3. Tomás Almaguer, Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
4. Derrick Bell, Race, Racism and American Law. Second Edition. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1980.
5. Robert Blauner, Racial Oppression in America. NY: Harper & Row, 1972.
6. Ward Churchill, Struggle for the Land: Indigenous Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide and Expropriation in Contemporary North America. Maine: Common Courage Press, 1993.
7. European Dissent, The Journey of European Dissent, the newsletter of European Dissent, a white anti-racist organization affiliated with The People's Institute.
8. Paula Giddings, When and Where I enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America. NY: Random House, 1984.
9. A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. In the Matter of Color: Race & The American Legal Process: The Colonial Period. NY: Oxford University Press, 1980.
10. Elizabeth Martínez, 500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures. Albuquerque: South West Organizing Project, 1991.
11. Alfredo Mirandé, Gringo Justice. Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1987.
12. Victor G. & Brett de Bary Nee, Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.



13. People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, Undoing Racism Workshop and especially the work of white core trainers Diana Dunn and David Billings.  
(The People's Institute is located at 1444 North Johnson Street, New Orleans, LA. 70116. Phone is 504-944-2354.)

14. Mab Segrest, Memoir of a Race Traitor. Boston: South End Press, 1994.

15. Herbert Shapiro, White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

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#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In the "Brainstorm: 'White' is not... 'White' is" section of the essay, Sharon asks you to brainstorm, *"What does 'white' mean to you, as it refers to people?"*

If you are white, please begin your statements with "I." This pronoun is a simple way for those of us of European origin to take personal responsibility, at least verbally, for the system of privilege that benefits us.

2. Please give examples of how you have personally experienced (if you are white) or observed (if you are a person of color) instances of individual, cultural and institutional preferential treatment, or white privilege. What did you do?

3. To clarify how white privilege actually operates, think of a particular example of individual, cultural and institutional racial oppression and ask yourself, "Who benefits from this oppression?" Then try asking a white friend this question. Share her/his responses with the workshop.

4. How would you *distinguish* preferential treatment based on "race," -- being white-- from preferential treatment based on class, gender or sexuality? Please give specific examples from your own experience (if you are white), or your own observations (if you are a person of color).

5. Have you heard a white person say any of the following:

*"How can you say I'm privileged" because...*

*...As a woman, I'm oppressed by sexism...*

*...I'm poor. I can't even pay my rent...*

*...I'm a victim of homophobia and hate crimes against queers...*

*...I'm a target of anti-semitism..."*

What do you say in response? Please share examples from your experiences.

6. From your experience, in what ways, if any, can the use of an institutional and historical analysis of white privilege help white people get over their common emotional responses to dealing with their racism?

Some examples are: 'color-blindness,' guilt, denial of personal and familial responsibility, distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' white folks, focus on 'me me' -- individualism?  
Please share stories.



7. In what ways, in general, have you used or can you use an institutional and historical analysis of white privilege to strengthen your anti-racist work in your community? Please give examples both of success stories and barriers you have encountered.

8. At the conclusion of the section on 'Historical Origins of White Privilege,' Sharon makes a (potentially) controversial theoretical statement:

"In summary, the system of white privilege for non-ruling class whites reinforces the system of racial oppression against people of color. And the *complementary* systems of white privilege and racial oppression maintain the system of white power for ruling class whites."

What is your perspective on this statement? What are the implications of this analysis for your social justice work?

9. Begin to research your own family her/history. How have your ancestors been oppressed and/or privileged by the political economy of internal colonialism?

Note what happens when you ask this question of family members.

10. From your research into the history of the U.S. white supremacy system, please share more examples with the workshop of "300 years of affirmative action for white people."

Try a bit of field research: ask someone you know who objects to affirmative action, if she/he also objects to affirmative action for white people, and give some examples. Observe her/his response and share it with the workshop.

11. Have you been involved in organizing experiences in which potential coalitions between activists of color and white activists have been undermined or destroyed because of the white privilege politics of the white activists? What did you do? Please share your experiences and the lessons you learned with the workshop.

12. The Political Perspectives of the CWS Workshop asserts that racism is the *major barrier* to creating the mass-based, multi-racial social movements, led by progressive people of color, that could bring fundamental change in the United States.

What is your perspective on this statement? In what ways, if any, has this essay on white privilege affected your perspective? What would this mean for your present and future social justice work in your community?

Written for The Challenging White Supremacy Workshop\*

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\*The Challenging White Supremacy Workshop is a project of The Tides Center.



Credit: Bennett



# Understanding Racism: An Historical Introduction

By Sharon Martinas

## UNDERSTANDING RACISM: AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

(This presentation and exercise is inspired by the UNDOING RACISM WORKSHOP of The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond.)

### Introductions

- (1) Please say your name and something about yourself you want to share.
- (2) In what ways do you believe that understanding racism can help make you a more effective grassroots social justice activist?

### Agenda Review

- (1) What is Racism? focuses primarily on racism's effect on people of color.
- (2) Shinin' the Lite on White focuses primarily on racism's effect on white people.
- (3) Both pieces form part of an analysis of the U.S. white supremacy system.
- (4) The analysis is specific to the U.S.A.
- (5) I call this session "an historical introduction" because I believe that we cannot understand how racism operates today, if we do not know its history. And if we don't know how it works today, we can't work effectively to challenge it tomorrow.

### What is Racism?

#### A Group Brainstorm

- \* Ask each person to give a brief definition or description. Scribe it on the newsprint. Fill up no more than one page of print.

- \*\* After the brainstorm, ask "What do you notice about this list of definitions?"
  - There are many different definitions. -- Few or none mention the word 'race.'Imagine if we had 3 hours to decide on one effective action to challenge racism. If we have 15 different definitions, how could we agree on a common action?

I believe that the inability to decide on a common action is the result of a consciously constructed campaign of confusion implemented over the last 30 years. I'm not a conspiracy theorist. I'm talking about people in power making plans over coffee, in board rooms, on golf courses. All legal and above board. A bit of history will help make my point.

### A Campaign of Confusion on "Racism"

During the height of the Southern Black Freedom struggle, in the 1950's and 1960's, people were clear on what racism was. Racism was visible, legal and institutionalized. They called it "segregation." Across the ocean folks called the same system "apartheid." Every institution was separate, unequal, maintained for the clear purpose of subordinating people of African descent and benefiting all classes of people of European descent.

The movement, led by African Americans, was massive and multi-racial. And that movement inspired many other movements: liberation struggles of Chicanos/Latinos, Native Americans and Asian Americans; movements for education reform and against the U.S. war in Vietnam; the women's movement, and the movements for gay and lesbian liberation.

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But the price activists paid was high. In the South, for example, when Black people challenged racism, they were often fired, evicted, imprisoned, raped or murdered. When white people challenged racism, they were called "race traitors," ostracized by their friends and neighbors, denied opportunities to earn a living, and occasionally had crosses burned in front of their houses.

In spite of the overwhelming odds, the power of organized, committed people won some significant gains, the most prominent of which was the end to legal apartheid. Perhaps even more important, people who organized got a real sense of their own *power*.

When the Black Liberation Movement moved north, activists targeted institutions—schools, housing, social services—that practiced segregation in fact, though not by law. Furthermore, African Americans called for self-determination in their own communities, and challenged the white domination of institutions within their communities. Many liberal whites worked as professionals within these institutions and felt their privilege personally threatened. Using their discomfort with the term "Black Power" as an excuse, they abandoned their solidarity with the Black liberation struggle.

Progressive whites abandoned their solidarity for different reasons. As they began to "organize in their own communities," against the war in Vietnam, for educational transformation, for women's and gay liberation, and for an end to environmental degradation, they found that it was very difficult to mobilize large numbers of white activists if the organizers demanded that these activists start from a firm anti-racist perspective, a lens through which to view their own issues.

SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, a leading group in the southern Black Freedom Movement) had suggested that radical whites organize *against racism* in their own communities in order to build genuine coalitions between activists of color and white activists. But white activists simply *organized in their own communities* and said less and less about racism. (There were many exceptions to this racist organizing: for example, the Students for a Democratic Society — SDS — was the largest anti-racist organization made up of mostly white students that the country had ever seen.)

Meanwhile, the government was exercising its own form of virulent and violent racism. Under the leadership of J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI, with the complicity of police departments all over the country, the government waged a war against revolutionaries of color: African American, indigenous, Chicano, Puerto Rican and Asian American. Hundreds were imprisoned, exiled or murdered. The FBI planted agents within revolutionary organizations, who spread distrust and often incited incendiary actions as a way to entrap activists, and ensure them long prison terms. The FBI called this campaign COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program), and many activists believe it is still in effect today.

With liberation movements in disarray, white-controlled institutions began to redefine the meaning of the term "racism" in order *both to undercut white support for liberation struggles, and to aggravate divisions among activists of color*.





### An Historical Analysis of the Campaign of Confusion on "Racism"

#### **#1: Reverse racism is a form of racism.**

Reverse racism is supposedly something nasty that people of color do to white people. The term was first coined during the 1968 presidential campaign of arch-segregationist George Wallace. In order to win white working class support in the South, Wallace asserted that government programs that supported Black people were deliberately victimizing white people. He called this governmental action *reverse racism*.

In my 35 years of doing anti-racist organizing, I have actually witnessed only one example of "reverse racism." That was when the lawyers defending the white cops who beat Rodney King played the tape of that beating backwards during the trial!

But in spite of the bogus nature of "reverse racism," it was brilliant as a campaign strategy. Dubbed the "Southern Strategy" by electoral analysts, its aim was to win white working and middle class voters away from the Democratic Party by consciously catering to their racism. The strategy bore bitter fruit. Wallace's American Independent Party garnered 10 million white voters, who became the foundation for the New Right organizations of the Republican Party which now control Congress and the "bi-partisan" national dialogue on virtually all social and economic issues.

#### **#2. Racism is personified by the TV character Archie Bunker.**

Pop culture did its bit to confuse the white populace. TV created the image of Archie Bunker, the loud mouth, verbally racist, white working class man who was funny (to some viewers) as well as obnoxious. The image of Archie the racist promoted several false concepts of racism: it's the result of individual, not institutional, behavior; it's carried out only by white working class men, not white working class women or white middle class men and women; and it is overt language that may be sickening and offensive, but is really just "harmless talk."

#### **#3. "Racism" is the same as "prejudice" or "discrimination."**

This definition of "racism" has been widely disseminated in public schools and universities, so that many people use these terms as synonyms. But they are not.

*Prejudice* is a prejudgment, which can be either positive or negative, about a person, group, event or thing, for or against. *Discrimination* is action based on that prejudice. A negative prejudice about a group of people is often called a *stereotype*. An action based on a stereotype is usually called *bigotry*.

What distinguishes all these terms from *racism* is that none of them necessarily involve a power relationship as a condition of their existence. For example, a person of color can be prejudiced against another person of color or a white person, but that doesn't make her a racist because she has little or no access to the institutional power that could back up her actions.

Why has the misconception of "racism" as "prejudice" or "discrimination" been so widely used in educational settings? Educational institutions have been a major political battleground against racism and for community of color self-determination since the mid 1960's. Activists have challenged racist school curricula, teaching staff, disciplinary procedures against children of color, tracking systems, limitations of access to higher education, and lack of accountability of schools to the community.



My belief is that popularizing "racism" as "prejudice" is consciously used to take all white professionals working in any capacity in any school systems off the hook. They are not implementing institutional racism, because there is no such thing! A six year old child who acts out can be blamed for "racism" just as much as the principal responsible for the school that has failed to educate him. It's not an issue of *power* but merely of *prejudice*.

#### #4. Racism is the same as "race relations."

This definition is, I think, a creation of sociologists. Racism isn't just about the Archie Bunkers. It's about how groups of different "races" treat each other. What's left out of this "group dynamics" explanation of racism is any analysis of the differential power of the participating groups. Perhaps this is because the (mostly) white sociologists using this analysis do not choose to recognize how mainstream white institutions demonstrate preferential treatment to *all white groups as compared to all groups of people of color*.

#### #5. Anti-racism is the same as diversity or multi-culturalism.

Progressives have added to the campaign of confusion. This particular mis-definition of "racism" has been perpetuated by social justice educators and trainers. *Diversity* refers to different kinds of people: gay, straight, old, young, white, different communities of color, able, physically challenged, etc. When white folks use the term *diversity*, they usually mean a few folks who are not white in a predominantly white group. The term *diversity* achieved popularity among anti-racist trainers when many Fortune 500 companies hired these trainers to run 'diversity' workshops for their multi-racial work forces. Corporate CEO's knew that they needed to ensure good relations among their workers to keep out unions, maintain production, and increase profits.

*Multi-cultural* at its best celebrates different forms of culture; it has nothing necessarily to do with "races" of people, nor with "diversity" of people. A group or institution that endorses multi-culturalism can support racism or anti-racism. The issue is not one/two/many cultures but who has the power?

As People's Institute trainers ask in their Undoing Racism Workshop,  
"If you want to have a 'multi-cultural table,' what does white culture bring to that table?" *The table.*

#### #6. Racism is an oppression like other isms: sexism, classism, or heterosexism.

In the mid 1980's, many white progressives began organizing themselves through consciousness of their own oppression as individuals and as part of a group, instead of around "issues." This method of organizing became known as *identity-based politics*. It was a very powerful form of consciousness-raising for thousands of people, and became the basis for many of the social justice movements against sexism and homophobia and anti-semitism.

But identity-based politics also has had some negative effects, such as:

(a) *Oppression olympics* (a term coined by Elizabeth Martínez): endless arguments that begin with "my pain is worse than your pain;"

(b) Fruitless debates about the "hierarchies" or "equalities" of oppression, all of which ignore the *historical and institutional interrelationships among oppressions*;



(c) False analogies between racism (usually referring to the experience of African Americans) and other "isms," especially sexism, heterosexism and anti-semitism. Although all these are forms of oppression, there is no historical similarity between the slavery experienced by people of African descent, the genocide experienced by Native Americans, the colonial wars of conquest experienced by Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Filipinos — and any forms of discrimination faced by European immigrants *once they came to the United States*.

These false analogies also paper over the distinct history of racism that has pervaded white progressive movements of electoral reformers, women, workers, farmers, environmentalists, anti-war and queer activists for the last 250 years.

Finally, false analogies marginalize the issues of activists of color within these social justice movements, and prevent these activists from exercising their leadership potential in building bridges among different identity-based social movements.

#### A Working Definition of Racism

If you take apart the term *racism*, you get an "ism" — an oppression — based on *race*. The People's Institute uses this working definition:

***Racism equals race prejudice plus power.***

We've already defined *prejudice*. Let's examine *race* and *power*.

#### RACE

##### The Human Race: Born and Bred in Africa

Have you ever heard a well-meaning white person say, "I'm not a member of any race except the human race?" What she usually means by this statement is that she doesn't want to perpetuate racial categories by acknowledging that she is white. This is an evasion of responsibility for her participation in a system based on supremacy for white people.

But anthropologically speaking, her point is well taken. Taking the term "race" to mean "species," there is only one species of human. All of us belong to the human race. And the human race was born, raised and bred in Africa. Africa is the motherland of human civilization: religion, philosophy, art, language, architecture, science, medicine, agriculture and urban planning.

People indigenous to Africa and the Americas have always celebrated the diversity of the human species. You can see that celebration in paintings of peoples on the tomb of Ramses III (1200 BC) of Kemet (Egypt) and the four directions of the world celebrated by Native Americans. What makes these representations so different from those introduced by Europeans is that the former bear no witness to any hierarchy of value of humans based on ethnicity or skin color.



### Europeans: Seeing the Human Race through 'Race-colored' glasses

Beginning in the fifteenth century, Europeans began to *see the world through race-colored glasses*. At first, their priests and Popes justified the new worldview as God's law revealed to Christians. By the 18th century their scientists used their racial lenses to construct racial categories for human beings, with distinct hierarchies based on religion, ethnicity and skin color. European slave-owners in the colonies created a whole legal system based on race. And by the 19th century, politicians asserted that 'race' was the reason Europeans and European-Americans deserved to run the world.

To understand why and how this happened, we need to examine elements of the history of Europe and the United States. But first, let's start with a working definition of race, created by The People's Institute:

***Race is "a specious classification of human beings created by Europeans (whites) which assigns human worth and social status using "white" as the model of humanity and the height of human achievement for the purpose of establishing and maintaining privilege and power."*** (Ronald Chisom and Michael Washington, *Undoing Racism: A Philosophy of International Social Change*. People's Institute Press: The People's Institute, 1444 North Johnson St., New Orleans, LA. 70116. Second Edition, 1997. pp. 30-31.)

### European Race-Colored Glasses

#### *Biology: the blood lens*

Race as a biological concept was created in 15th century Spain by the Spanish Inquisition. In 1492, just as Columbus was sailing the ocean blue -- and getting lost -- the Christian kingdom of Ferdinand and Isabella succeeded in driving out the Moors (African and Arab Muslims) who had ruled the Iberian Peninsula since 721 A.D.

Under Moorish rule, Spain had been the center of European culture. The Moors built 11 universities, thousands of book stores, hot and cold running water perfumed with roses, and a system of public baths for poor as well as rich. Moorish cities were centers of trade with Africa and Asia. Jewish people flourished during the Moorish empire; they had major roles in education and commerce, and were treated more justly than at any other time in European history.

But the Christian conquest changed all that. The Inquisition demanded that all Muslims and Jews convert to Christianity or face expulsion from Spain. Many converted but practiced their religions in secret. So the Inquisition established the infamous practice of *limpieza de sangre*: testing the blood as well as the family tree of Moors and Jews to ferret out non-Christians. One drop of "dark" blood and you were out!

The tradition of one drop of dark blood lived on in the apartheid South. Until very recently, if you lived in South Carolina and had 1/16 Black ancestry, you were legally classified as Black. If you lived in Louisiana, the percentage was 1/32. So crossing state lines could change your ancestry!

Is it a coincidence that Inquisitors did their "racial blood tests" wearing long white robes and pointed white hoods?



#### *"Infidels and Savages:" the Christianity lens*

In the 16th and 17th centuries, European conquistadors needed to create a theological justification for their conquest of the Americas and Africa. How could they steal the land inhabited and cherished by millions of indigenous people and not be considered thieves? How could they kidnap and enslave and murder millions of African peoples and still be good Christians? How could they annihilate whole nations of indigenous people and not go to hell?

Spain and Portugal, good Catholic countries, sought out the wisdom of the Pope who clarified their Christian duty for them. It's OK to take the land of an "infidel" (one who does not practice Christianity) because an "infidel," by definition has violated Christian law. If the 'Infidel' protests, it's appropriate to kill him. It's important to enslave someone who is a "savage" (one who does not practice European culture) to teach the enslaved person the virtues of "civilization." As a matter of fact, you're doing him or her a Christian favor, by removing his/her sinful ways.

African slavery could also be justified by Christian symbolism that pre-dated any European contact with African peoples. In Christianity, the color black is associated with death or evil; the color white with life, goodness and purity. So when the light skin Englishmen met dark skin Africans, the Englishmen justified their brutal treatment of Africans by the notion that *white* 'good' was conquering *black* 'evil.' Check out the terms "black" and "white" in the dictionary; these absurd connotations still exist.

#### *The "Scientific" lens*

The 18th and 19th centuries were the height of European colonialism of Africa. By this period, Christianity's hegemony over European values and ideology was being seriously challenged by the scientific revolution. European intellectuals had to come up with a new world view to justify their nations' conquest of Africa. So, 'scientists' created the racial categories of *Mongoloid*, *Negroid* and *Caucasoid* and assigned them to a hierarchy in the human family: (1) Caucasoid (2) Mongoloid (3) Negroid. These categories are still taught in some U.S. schools today.

Mongolia was presumably the historical home of "mongoloids" or people of Asian descent. If you check the dictionary you'll find that an "obsolete" meaning of "mongoloid" is an idiot. (A far cry from today's stereotype of "the model minority.")

The Caucasus, the steppes of Russia, was the ostensible homeland of Caucasoids or Caucasians. Conveniently, a skull was found there with a larger cranium than others discovered, indicating to the scientific racists that people of European descent had more brain power than darker folks did!

But what about Negroids? Where is Negro land? And if "negroids" came from Africa, how come they weren't called "africoids?" The answer, I think, lies in the ideological justification for slavery. White people had to dehumanize people of African descent in order to convince themselves that Africans could do nothing useful except perform enslaved labor.

If a people has no homeland, they have no history, no culture, no civilization. They are not really "a people." Hence, their "racial category" is not named after their continent, but after their 'race,' -- "Negro." ('Negro' is the English term for the Spanish word "negro," which means "black." Spain was the first European country to institute the trans-Atlantic slave trade.)



### U.S. Race-colored glasses

The worldview based on 'race' was created by Europeans in the 15th century to justify and legitimize European conquest of Africa and the Americas, and the genocide and system of slavery which resulted from this conquest. European Americans added some key aspects to the 'race' lens as they colonized and conquered the lands that were once called "Turtle Island."

*A human being is renamed a 'slave:'  
the economic lens of race*

As Elizabeth Martínez pointed out in her essay, "What is White Supremacy?," the wealth that initially made the United States possible as an independent nation-state was created when European colonialists stole the land of Native Americans, kidnaped people from Africa and forced both Africans and Native Americans into a system of enslaved labor. Stolen land, genocide and enslaved labor provided the initial *capital* of *capitalism*.

Few U.S. history textbooks describe the origins of the U.S. economic system in this way. Nor do they describe in great detail how Europeans created the world's first system of racially-based slavery. The Africans who were brought to Virginia in 1619 were 'captives' but they were not yet 'slaves.' Their economic status was ambiguous: some remained in bondage to an English colonialist for a lifetime, while others were freed.

Yet by 1662, the colonists passed a law stating that the status of a child born to an African woman, but fathered by an Englishman, would be 'bond or free' depending on the status of the mother. This was the beginning of racialized slavery. In another few generations, colonizers used the terms 'Negro' and 'slave' interchangeably. If an African was not enslaved, she or he would be specifically identified as "a free Negro." The implication of this usage was clear: the colonizers assumed that all enslaved people were of African descent, and that the only status appropriate to people of African descent was that of a slave.

### *Race: the lens of 'subhumanity'*

A corollary of viewing race through an economic lens is viewing 'racialized' people as subhumans. If the only possible status for a person of African descent is as a slave, how do you account for the thousands of free Africans in the colonial and post independence period? Reduce their humanity, culturally and legally, until it is as close as possible to the status of "slave."

In colonial South Carolina, an enslaved African who was manumitted (freed from slavery) by a white owner had to leave the colony within a few months, or else be liable to legal re-enslavement. During the era of Jacksonian "democracy," the right to vote was taken away from Pennsylvania free people of African descent at the same time as voting restrictions were lifted on all new Irish immigrants. Visual images of African Americans often resembled animals more than humans (see Marvin Riggs' superb film, Ethnic Notions).

The notion of indigenous people as more akin to animals than human beings is at the basis of U.S. policy toward Native Americans. In 1784 George Washington, famous Indian fighter, large landholder and slave owner, advised the Continental Congress that it would be cheaper for the new nation to buy up Indian land than to make war on Indian people for the land.





If you make war, Washington cautioned, "the savage as the wolf" -- both wild beasts of the forest -- will retreat for awhile and then come back to attack you. Washington's metaphor stuck. The young U.S. nation-state, and all sectors of European-Americans, began to view the Native American as a wild animal.

(For more on this analysis, see Robert Williams, "Sovereignty, Racism and Human Rights: the case for Indian self-determination." From a speech given at the University of Montana, in April, 1994. Robert Williams is a professor of Law and American Studies at the University of Arizona. Speech on tape is distributed by Alternative Radio Project. 2129 Mapleton. Boulder, Colorado, 80304.)

#### *Race through the legal lens*

Race was created as the law of the land in the late 1600's. The governing class of the colonies developed an intricate legal system to institutionalize the means by which they had created their own wealth from stolen land and enslaved labor. The Virginia "Slaves Codes," written from 1680 to 1705, defined a slave as either an African or an Indian, a servant as a "white" person; banned racial intermarriage, stipulated specific forms of punishment for Blacks or whites who defied the system of racialized slavery, and even curtailed non-brutal behavior of owners toward their "property."

(For a detailed study of racial laws in the colonial period, see A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., In the Matter of Color: Race & The American Legal Process: The Colonial Period. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. pp. 19-60.)

(For an analysis of how European colonialists justified theft of indigenous land and extermination of indigenous people, see Francis Jennings, The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest. NY: Norton & Company, 1975.)

#### *The Invention of the 'White Race'*

In the colonial period, colonial rulers referred to Europeans who came to the colonies as indentured servants in a variety of ways which differentiated them from African or indigenous people. They were called "Christians" to distinguish them from indigenous and African "heathens" or "savages." They were called "servants" to distinguish them from "slaves." They were also referred to by their country of origin (English, Scottish, etc.) to distinguish them from Africans. In early 17th century Virginia, legal codes relating to the regulation of the working poor of all nationalities, an African was usually called "a Negro," followed by a name, while Europeans were simply called by their first and last names.

Note that these distinctions were made by the rich about the poor. The land owning law makers, who got their 'right' to own land and make laws for the Virginia colony by buying stock in the Virginia Company, had no need to describe themselves. These stockholders knew who they were.

But in 1691, the colonial legislators created a new legal category: "whatsoever English or other white man or woman, bond or free, shall intermarry with a Negro, mulatto, or Indian man or woman, bond or free, he shall within three months be banished from this dominion forever." (Higginbotham, op. cit., p. 44 *italics added*.)

Up until this point, the term "white" may have been used in dialogue, but never in law. And when it was used, it referred only to indentured servants. The 1691 law set





several legal precedents that have profoundly effected the concept of race to this day:

- The first legal use of "white" was used to ban racial intermarriage;
- The law focused the punishment on the "white" lover;
- The law created a racial category, in that it covered all white people, men and women, bond or free;
- The law distinguished "white" from all other inhabitants of the colonies: "Negro," "mulatto," and "Indian;"
- The law created a new synonym: English equals white. By implication, when other European immigrants came to the colonies, they could be included in the new legal category of "white."

Thus, a small group of colonial slave owners invented the "white race."

(For more info, see Theodore Allen, The Invention of the White Race, Racial Oppression and Social Control. Vol. I and II. New York: Verso Books, 1994 and 1997.)

#### *The creation of a 'white' nation*

The U.S. Constitution established the new nation as a white republic. Indigenous and African peoples were excluded from participation in the republic. The first law of the first (white) congress in 1790 banned all non-white immigrants from becoming citizens of this white republic. This law meant that first generation immigrants from any continent except Europe could not own land -- the main means of earning a living in the new republic -- because state and territorial constitutions prohibited non-citizens from owning land.

In the 19th century, European Americans ran over the remaining lands of indigenous nations in the West, made war on Mexico and took half her land as war booty -- now called the Southwest or "Occupied America," depending on your viewpoint of these historical events. These acts of expansion of the white republic were called "Manifest Destiny," the god-given right of the white U.S. to conquer nations of color and establish them as colonial territories.

Today we still call the U.S. "America," a linguistic expression of white nationalism (a term coined by the famous African American scholar John Henrik Clarke). Using the term "America" to refer to the U.S. ignores the existence of both Canada and all the nations south of the Rio Grande which are also part of the American continent.

Under the banner of white nationalism, "America" has brought "democracy" -- under the barrel of a gun -- to nations of color around the world.

#### *Sexual violence through the lens of 'race'*

One of the most pervasive, destructive and hypocritical myths to come from the concept of "race" has been the belief that Indigenous and African-American men are sexual predators on white women; and that all women of color are sexual vampires luring white men.

This mythology comes, I believe, from a white psychological projection which legitimates as well as covers up the socially sanctioned sexual violence by white men against men and women of color. White men have raped African American women as a matter of racial prerogative; then fantasized that Black men are raping white women. The punishment meted out to Black men, in particular, for this crime committed by white men has been barbaric: lynching, burning and castration. And white women have



bought this barbarity as the price they pay for "safety."

(For more on this complex topic, see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Mind that Burns in Each Body," in Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology. Edited by Margaret L. Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins. Belmont, Ca: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1992. pp. 397-412.)

Another interpretation of the barbarity and pervasiveness of racially motivated sexual violence by whites against people of color, and especially against peoples of African descent, is the theory of the pre-eminent African American psychiatrist, lecturer and anti-racist activist, Dr. Frances Cress Welsing. In her "Cress Theory of Color-Confrontation and Racism/White Supremacy," Dr. Welsing analyzes the root causes of white supremacy. She demonstrates that the genes of white people are recessive as compared to those of people of African descent. Thus, if whites and African-descended people mate and create children, the family tree will have more darker skin offspring.

Dr. Welsing concludes the virulence of white supremacy stems from white fear of genetic annihilation. In other words, if white/African sexual interrelationships become the norm rather than the statistical exception, in a few generations there will be no more white people. An historical analysis of the pervasiveness of white fear of intermarriage, from 1691 to the present, lends much credence to this perspective.

Dr. Cress Welsing further asserts that white people keep this fear in their white closets. I agree. For over two decades, Dr. Cress Welsing has been a featured speaker at African American gatherings, and her book, The Isis Papers, is a best seller in Black book stores. But I have yet to see her name mentioned by any white writers on race, or any reference, supportive or critical, to her theories. It is as if white writers want to white her out of the discussion on race!

(For more info, see Dr. Frances Cress Welsing, "The Cress Theory of Color-Confrontation and Racism (White Supremacy)" in The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors. Chicago: Third World Press, 1991.)

*"Race" is just like ethnicity:  
the sociologist's lens*

In the aftermath of the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960's, liberal racists had to develop subtler race lenses in order to gain white mainstream credibility. Chief among them was Nathan Glazer, the well known sociologist of patterns of European immigration. After studying the experiences of European immigrants who "pulled themselves up by their bootstraps," Glazer then compared them with the experiences of African Americans in the same time period who did not climb the ladder of success. Instead of analyzing who gave the Europeans their boots, and kept the people of African descent without shoes, Glazer concluded that Europeans were enterprising, while Blacks were lazy.

Glazer confounded the terms "race" and "ethnicity." *Ethnicity* comes from the Greek word 'ethnikos' meaning "a people, with a common language, culture, historical and geographical land base." But more important, Glazer's theory laid the foundation for the "Blame the Victim" racist ideology, as well as the white backlash against affirmative action programs. In Glazer's view, people of African descent were responsible for their own poverty and oppression. White America was off the hook.

!!



*Talking about 'race' perpetuates racism:  
the liberal lens*

Our historical analysis has brought us full circle back to the well-meaning white person who says, "I'm not a member of any race except the human race." All this talk about race is painful to her. Talking about race just perpetuates racial categories, she asserts. If we all forget about 'race,' it will go away. Returning to the original metaphor of this essay, I'd suggest that the young woman remove her race-colored glasses.

Anti-Racist Concepts of Race

Up to this point we have been talking about racist concepts of race, concepts created and perpetuated by Europeans and European-Americans. But there are also anti-racist concepts of race, most of which have been created by people of color in resistance to this racism. Most of these anti-racist concepts of race employ what I call "creating a culture of resistance," that is, taking the oppressor's language (*their power to define reality and to convince other people that it is their definition*) and redefining it so that the language becomes an expression of self-determination. A few examples:

°° Since the 19th century, African American people have used the term "a race man" or "a race woman" to describe any African American who has devoted her/his life to the self-determination of her/his people.

°° In the early 19th century, Richard Allen and other founders formed the first all Black church. They proudly called it "The African Methodist Episcopal Church" at a time when the white U.S. population equated "Africa" with "barbarism."

°° Indigenous leaders refer to their people as "nations" instead of "tribes" with whom the U.S. government negotiated treaties as it would England or France.

°° Indigenous scholars and activists remind U.S. "historians" that the first great democratic document in what is now the U.S. of A. was the "Great Law of Peace" of the Iroquois Confederacy, not the Declaration of Independence. So much for "Indians" being "savages."

°° In the 1960's and early 70's, revolutionary movements within communities of color used terms like "Black is Beautiful," "Black Pride," "Black Power," "Red Power," "Brown Power" and "Yellow Power." The color-coded language of degradation was turned into a language of pride and community affirmation.

°° In response to the white nationalism of "Manifest Destiny," and its current derivative, "illegal alien," contemporary Chicano/a activists proudly wear T-shirts with a map of "Occupied America," over the motto, "We didn't cross the border. The border crossed us."

These are but a tiny sampling. I'm sure you can think of many many more.



### POWER

Race may be a specious category, but racism is very real. And it is deadly, because it is "race" backed up by *power*. The People's Institute defines power as "having legitimate access to systems sanctioned by the authority of the state." (Chisom and Washington, op. cit., p. 36.) Other definitions which you might find useful are:

\*\*\* *Power is the ability to define reality and to convince other people that it is their definition.* (Definition by Dr. Wade Nobles)

\*\*\* *Power is ownership and control of the major resources of a state, and the capacity to make and enforce decisions based on this ownership and control.*

When these forms of power are exercised against people based solely on the specious and arbitrary concept called "race," the result is a system of *racial oppression*. In the United States, the most significant manifestations of racial oppression are:

Individual racism	Institutional racism
Cultural and linguistic racism	Environmental racism
Militarism as applied racism	Economic racism
Health system of racism	

(Thanks to The People's Institute for this material.)

While our actions to challenge racism will always focus on some aspect of the manifestations of racism, we should not forget that these manifestations are the visible indications of an entire *system* that is built on the oppression of some peoples, based on the concept of "race," for the benefit of other people, also based on the concept of "race."

### Racism and White Supremacy

Let's go back to The People's Institute's definition of racism: **racism equals race prejudice plus power**. Next, let's take a look at the "manifestations of racial oppression," mentioned above. Pick your favorite mainstream institution, and do a little power structure research. (See exercise on *Manifestations of Racism*.) In a race-constructed system, who owns or controls the institution? Who are the most privileged workers within it? *Whom do the policies and practices of that institution primarily benefit?*

Now, let's review the CWS Workshop definition of *white supremacy*:

White supremacy is an historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples of European origin; for the purpose of establishing and maintaining wealth, power and privilege.

I think it will be obvious that, if you're talking about the United States, *racism* and *white supremacy* are synonyms.

**'Understanding Racism: An Historical Introduction'**  
**by Sharon Martinas**



#### FOR MORE READING

Here's an incomplete list of books I've found useful in developing these thoughts:

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Michael Omi and Howard Winant, Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960's to the 1980's. New York: Routledge, 1986.

People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, Undoing Racism Workshop. (For information, contact 1444 North Johnson Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70116. Phone: 504-944-2354.)

Audrey Smedley, Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview. Boulder: Westview Press, 1993.

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Professor Robert Williams, "Sovereignty, Racism and Human Rights: the case for Indian Self-determination." Tape from a speech at University of Montana, April, 1994. Distributed by Alternate Radio Project. 2129 Mapleton. Boulder, Colorado, 80304.

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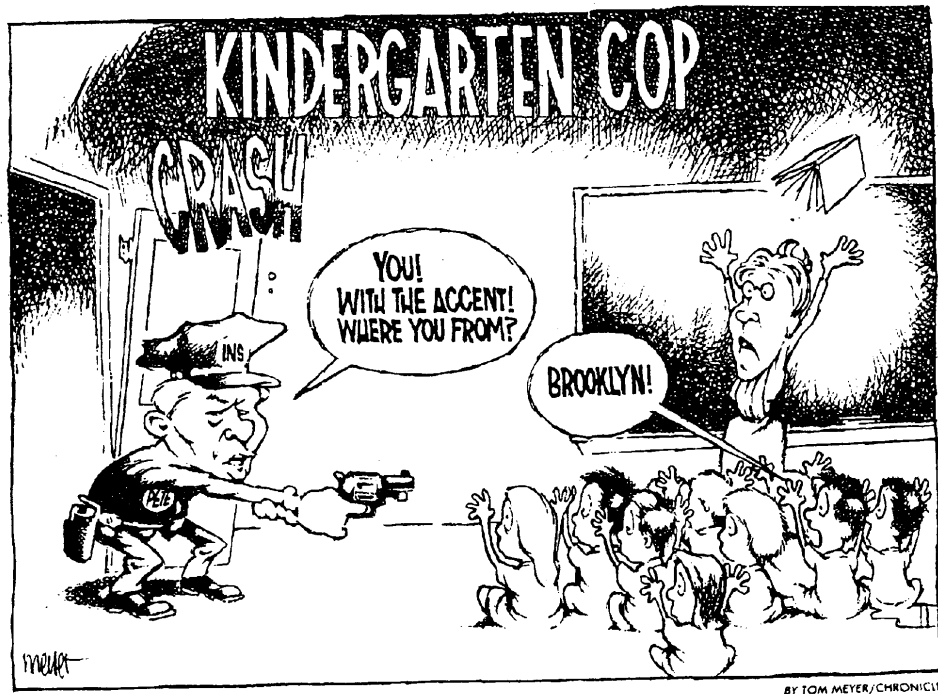
*Thanks to Bakhari, Noquisi, Amy and Carrie for critiques of earlier drafts of this essay. Your criticisms are welcome. This is a work in progress.*



# Selected Landmarks in the History of White Supremacy

Developed by Sharon Martinas

## *Selected Landmarks in the*



## *history of U.S. White Supremacy*





**'Selected Landmarks in the History of U.S. White Supremacy'  
by Sharon Martinas**

(Second Draft July 1992)

This listing mentions actions specifically designed to exclude, oppress or subordinate peoples of color. It is a list of commissions. Not included are all the activities and policies of omissions, actions which ignore the already existing structures of supremacy and subordination; and which assume that the U.S. is a democratic nation, where all people are equal.)

1513 Juan Ponce de Leon lands on the Florida peninsula.

1519 Hernan Cortez arrives in land now known as Mexico.

1565 Spaniards establish St. Augustine colony in Florida, first in present U.S.

1607 First English speaking whites arrive in Virginia.

1619 20 Africans brought to Jamestown colony. Beginning of slave trade which brings millions of Africans to America. Legal trade ends in 1808, but illegal trade continues until 1860.

1625 Samoset of the Pemaquid Indians in Massachusetts, signs first treaty deeding Indian lands to the English colonists.

1630 First law specifically mentioning race. In Re Davis, a white man is whipped for sleeping with a "negro" woman.

1637 New England colonists massacre 500 Native Americans in Pequot war. This is the first massacre of indigenous people by English colonists in the future U.S. territory.

1662 Virginia enacts law stating that if an "Englishman" begets a child of a "Negro woman," the child will take on the woman's status, ie., that of a slave. This law made slavery hereditary.

1681 Maria, an African slave, is burnt at the stake in Massachusetts. Her crime is attempting to burn down the house of her master. Her male compatriots are hanged, and banished, respectively.

1691 Virginia enacts a law stating that if a white (bond or free) marries a person of color (Negro, mulatto or Indian), the couple will be banished from the colony. Banishment means almost certain death in the woods.

1754-63 The Iroquois nation allies with the French against the British in a war, and are betrayed by their allies.

1755 Massachusetts offers a bounty of twenty pounds for the scalp of a male Indian, and ten pounds for the scalp of a female Indian or an Indian child under 12.



1769 Padre Junipero Serra establishes first Spanish missions in California. Indians enslaved and forced to live on Mission. Beginning of genocide of California Indians.

1776 The Declaration of Independence is proclaimed. It states that "all men are created equal...with certain inalienable rights...Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." This declaration, which becomes the basis for the ideology of U.S. "democracy," excludes Africans, Native Americans and European women.

1789 The Constitution of the United States protects slavery and the slave trade in 12 different places, without ever mentioning the word. Slaves are called "other persons." All rights and privileges of life under the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, exclude slaves and Indians. Specific civil and political liberties of free Africans are left up to each state.

1790 Congress, in its first session, enacts the Naturalization Law of 1790. The law specifies that only free white immigrants would be eligible for naturalized citizenship. Under this law, first generation immigrants from Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South America and Africa are expressly denied civil rights, the right to vote, and, therefore, the right to own land. Also excluded from these rights are Native Americans and, by states rights, most free Africans.

The 1790 Naturalization Law is not completely wiped off the books until the McCarran Walter Act of 1952!

1816 Northern whites organize American Colonization Society to ship free Blacks back to Africa.

1818 First war of U.S. against Seminole Indians and once-enslaved Africans in Florida. Known in history books as the "Florida purchase."

1820's U.S. had bought Louisiana Territory from France in 1803. (France is bankrupt after being defeated in a ten year war with Haitian slaves, resulting in the independence of Haiti.) President Jefferson advocates removal of all Indians from Southeastern states because "Indians and whites cannot live side by side."

1830 Indian Removal Act, the first act initiated by President Andrew Jackson. Calls for the voluntary or forcible removal of the Choctaw, Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw and Seminole nations from Southeastern states. Territory of Oklahoma set aside as "Indian Territory."

1830 David Walker, militant anti-slavery and anti-racist African American author of the Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World, mysteriously drops dead in front of his Boston storefront. Friends and associates suspect poison, but no investigation is done.

1835 U.S. slave holding colonists in Northern Mexican territory of Texas declare war on Mexico.



1836 Victorious U.S. colonists in Texas establish Texas as an independent nation.

1838 The Cherokee Nation's Trail of Tears in which 25% of their population dies in the forced march to Indian Territory.

1845 U.S. government annexes Texas. John O'Sullivan, editor of the Democratic Review, says of the forthcoming war with Mexico, it was the "manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." (emphasis added)

1846 U.S. government declares war on Mexico.

1848 U.S. defeats Mexico and "purchases" for \$15 million over one third of the Mexican nation. The land includes the future states of California, Texas, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, parts of Colorado and Wyoming.

The war demonstrates the gruesome bloodiness of the U.S. army. Outstanding in their butchery are the Texas Rangers who become institutionalized as the occupying army over conquered Mexicans in the state of Texas.

1848 U.S. and Mexico sign the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Treaty promises to protect the lands, language and culture of the Mexicans living in the ceded territory. Mexicans are given the right to become U.S. citizens if they choose to remain in their homes.

Congress refuses to pass Article X of the treaty which would protect the ancestral land titles of the Mexican peoples. Instead, Congress substitutes a "Statement of Protocol" which protects these lands according to the "laws of the United States." Under the implementation of this "Protocol," Mexicans have to prove, in U.S. courts, speaking English, with U.S. lawyers, that they have legitimate title to their own lands.

The Statement of Protocol thus becomes the legal basis for the massive U.S. land theft from Mexicans in the conquered territories.

1849 The Hounds, a European vigilante group in San Francisco, attacks a Chilean miner community, raping women, burning houses and lynching two men.

1850 The California legislature passes the Foreign Miners Tax, which requires Chinese and Latin American gold miners to pay a special tax on their holdings, a tax not required of European American miners.

1850 California legislature passes an act legalizing indentured servitude of children, under guise of apprenticeship. Children can be taken from parents, given food, clothing and shelter in exchanged for "learning work at a trade" with no pay.

1850 Supreme Court declares Missouri Compromise (which had set boundaries on the extension of slavery into the Louisiana Purchase territories) unconstitutional. Political struggle emerges around status of the new lands from Mexico. In the Compromise of 1850, the "Free Soilers" got California as a free



state; the "Popular Sovereignty" supporters got New Mexico and Utah as lands in which white voters can decide if they want slavery or not; and Southern slave holders get the Fugitive Slave Act.

1850 Congress passes the Fugitive Slave Law which provides that: 1) only a sworn affidavit from a white would be needed to claim that a Black person is an escaped slave; 2) the Black person has no rights to challenge that claim in court; 3) federal marshals are empowered to capture the runaways, and to deputize assistance from other whites; 4) commissioners who hear testimony about the status of an alleged runaway would be paid \$10 for each person sent into slavery, but only \$5 for each person set free.

1851 After 2000 people gather to watch a Chicana lynched in Downieville, California, a mining town, the Mexican miners dub U.S. democracy, "linchocracia."

1851 The California Land Act requires Mexican landowners (Californios) to prove title to their land in courts using English, according to U.S. law. The Act also encourages European American settlers to squat on Mexican lands.

The effects of both the California Act and a Federal Land Act of 1851 were to remove most Californios from their land and to give Southern Pacific Railroad ownership of 11,588,000 acres of California.

1857 300-400 California Indians massacred in Petaluma under the excuse that someone took a cow. In 1860, after a massacre of 200 Indians in Eureka, one white man boasts of killing 60 Indian infants with his hatchet.

1857 US Supreme Court decides the Dred Scott case. Dred Scott was a slave who followed his owner to a free state and then sued for his freedom. The Court said that Scott was still a slave; that the Constitution specifically excluded Blacks from its rights of citizenship; and that no African had rights that a white man was bound to respect.

1862 During the height of the Civil War, Congress passes the Homestead Act allotting 160 acres of Western (i.e. Indian) land to "anyone" who could pay \$1.25 an acre and cultivate it for five years. European immigrants (who could scrape together \$200) and land speculators bought these 50 million acres.

During the Civil War, Congress gave 100 million acres of Indian land free to the railroads. Since the Homestead Act applied only to U.S. citizens, Indians, Blacks and non-European immigrants were excluded from the law's provision.

Within 10 years, 85,000,000 acres of Indian lands had been sold to European homesteaders.

1862 Congress also passes the Morrill Act, creating land grant colleges in each state; and the Railroad Act, assuring a coast-to-coast railway. These two acts, in conjunction with the Homestead Act, spell the death of the Plains Indians, whose lands are the subject of all these measures.

Within 10 years, 71,000,000 acres of Indian lands had been



given to land grant colleges and 155,000,000 acres to the railroad companies.

1862 California legislature, under strong pressure from white miners, passes law to "protect Free White Labor against competition with Chinese Coolie Labor, and to discourage the Immigration of the Chinese into the State of California."

1863 The famous Emancipation Proclamation declared by President Lincoln provides that slaves from the Confederate States are legally free, but slaves from the Union States (Missouri, Kentucky, Delaware and Maryland) are specifically exempted from the Act. In other words, slaves were freed in the new Confederate Nation over which the Proclamation had no legal power whatsoever; but slavery would continue in the Union.

1863 White workers in New York City riot against the Black community, killing hundreds, wounding thousands, and forcing most of the community to escape the city. The workers, mostly recent Irish immigrants, say that Blacks have been brought in as strike breakers, and that the whites resent being sent to fight in a war to free other potential strike breakers,

1864 The U.S. army massacres 300 Cheyenne Indians in the infamous Sand Creek Massacre. U.S. Army General Chivington explains his actions: "I have come to kill Indians and I believe it is right and honorable to use any means under God's heaven to kill Indians."

1865 The famous 13th Amendment abolishing slavery is passed, but it contains a little known provision: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States..." (emphasis added) In other words, the 13th Amendment lays the basis for slavery of imprisoned people, the disproportionate number of whom would be peoples of color.

1865 President Andrew Johnson overturns General Sherman's Field Order #15 which had granted thousands of acres of confiscated plantation land to freed people in South Carolina and Georgia. Under pressure from enraged white southerners, Johnson begins to dismantle Black army units that are protecting the freed people's new lands and communities. General Howard tells Black landholders on the Sea Islands that they must return their lands to the plantation owners, and go to work for them!

1865 "Defeated" Southern states pass Black Codes, newer versions of the old Slave codes.

1865 Legislation establishing Freedmen's Bureau specifically refuses to confiscate land from political and military planter leadership of the Confederacy, and give the land to the freed people. Instead, a limited amount of already abandoned land is made available. Freed people are allowed to "lease" up to 40 acres for three years at 1860 prices, when land value was highest. Most land goes to speculators. Freed peoples establish some cooperatives to buy and work the land, but these cooperative are focus targets of white vigilantes, including KKK.



1865 Thomas Catron, leader of the Santa Fe Ring, arrives in New Mexico. The Ring, composed of Anglo merchants, politicians, bankers, land speculators, ranchers, lawyers and judges rules New Mexico for two decades. The Ring uses U.S. law and vigilante terror to take away most of the lands of native Mexicans.

1866 Ku Klux Klan is organized. Thousands of Blacks are massacred in this period. No accurate records are available.

1868 The Treaty of Fort Laramie, signed between the US Army and the Oglala Sioux under Red Cloud, stipulates that no whites will travel through or live in the Black Hills areas without Indian permission. When gold is discovered in the hills, Congress changes the terms of the treaty, but "neglects" to tell the Sioux.

1871 A white mob in Los Angeles attacks a Chinese community, killing 19 and destroying the community.

1871 US Army massacres Apache Indians at Camp Grant.

1872-74. U.S. government permits white traders to slaughter buffalo in order to rid Plains of Indians. In this three year period, 3,700,000 buffalo are killed. By 1874, power of Plains Indians: Cheyenne, Kiowa and Comanche are destroyed.

1877 Crazy Horse of Sioux Nation killed. Sioux driven out of Nebraska to barren reservation on Missouri River.

1877 Hayes Tilden Compromise removes federal troops from the South, leaving Blacks totally unprotected from white violence. Reconstruction officially ends. The Southern economy is still based on Black labor, now called "sharecropping," a form of agricultural semi-slavery. Northern industries, banks, and merchants are the main economic beneficiaries of the sharecropping system.

Beginning of 50 years of intense repression, denial of all political, civil, educational rights that African Americans had struggled for, and won to some extent, during Reconstruction.

1877. White mob ransacks Chinatown, burning homes and shops, killing and maiming unknown numbers of Chinese people.

1882 Congress enacts the Chinese Exclusion Act preventing Chinese immigrant workers from coming to the U.S. In this act, the Chinese become the first nationality to be barred expressly by name.

1882-1900 3011 recorded lynchings of African Americans, primarily, but not exclusively, in the South. (In reality, there were many more, but they are not recorded.)

1885 Whites riot against Chinese in Rock Springs, Wyoming and kill 28, wound more, drive others from their homes.

1886 Apache warrior Geronimo surrenders to the U.S. army. His surrender marks the defeat of Southwest Indian nations.



1887 Congress passes the Daves Land Allotment Act which divides reservations into individual plots of land, and expressly forbids communal land ownership. Men get 160 acres; women and children less. Unused land could be sold to whites.

As a result, Indians lose 100 million acres, nearly 2/3 of their holdings at the time. The greatest beneficiaries are the railroads. Money from land sales goes to set up boarding schools, in which Indian children are forced to give up their culture and religion, and to adopt the white man's ways.

1887 The Supreme Court decides in favor of the Maxwell Company, a division of the Santa Fe Ring (see entry for 1865), in allotting 1,714,765 acres of Mexican and Indian land in New Mexico to the Anglo corporation.

1888 The Scott act prohibits the immigration of Chinese laborers. Only merchants, professionals and travelers are permitted to come from China.

1890 Three hundred Sioux Indians are massacred by the U.S. Army at Wounded Knee. The massacre marks the end of the 19th century struggle of the Plains Indians to keep their lands safe from white invaders, their people and their way of life alive.

1892 A lynch mob in Santa Ana, California hangs Mexican worker, Francisco Torres, after taking him from the Santa Ana jail. They hang a sign around the dead man's neck which says, "Change of Venue."

1893 In Paris, Texas, an African American named Henry Smith, accused of raping a five year old white girl (the standard myth used to justify lynching), is tortured with red hot irons and burned alive. School children are given the day off as a holiday so they can witness the event. Railroads run special excursions to the lynch site. The lynch mob fights over Henry Smith's bones, teeth and buttons for souvenirs.

1893 Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii is overthrown by U.S. planter colonists in a bloodless revolution. The Republic of Hawaii is established, with Stanford Dole (Dole Pineapples) as president.

1896 In Plessy v. Ferguson, the Supreme Courts declares separate but "equal" facilities to be constitutional.

1898 Hawaii is annexed by the United States.

1898 The U.S. defeats Spain, and acquires Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Cuba, which had already declared her independence from Spain, becomes a virtual colony of the U.S.

1900 Congress passes the Foraker Act. The U.S. establishes a colonial government in Puerto Rico, in which the U.S. appoints the governor and executive council.

1905 San Francisco School Board segregates Chinese, Korean and Japanese students.





1908 The U.S. and Japan made a Gentleman's Agreement which limits the number of Japanese immigrants to the U.S. The San Francisco School Board then agrees to rescind its segregation of Japanese students. (Were Chinese and Koreans still segregated?)

1913 The California legislature passes a law making it very difficult for Japanese immigrants to lease land.

1917 White mobs massacre 39 African Americans in a riot in East St. Louis, Missouri.

1917 The Jones Act makes Puerto Ricans U.S. citizens and subject to the draft...just in time to fight in World War I.

1917 Congress enacts another immigration act which creates an Asiatic Barred Zone, a "line in the sand" in Asia from which immigration was banned. The line cut off all migrants from India.

1919 During "Red Summer" (so named because of all the blood that flowed), white mobs attacked Black communities in Omaha, Washington, Knoxville and Chicago. Black people, especially returning veterans, fought back. In Chicago, police participated in the riot against the Black community, and white labor leaders helped to organize the white mobs.

1922 Citing the 1790 Naturalization Act, the Supreme Court held that Japanese immigrants were not eligible for citizenship.

1923 Federal officials, under leadership of newly appointed federal investigator J. Edgar Hoover, arrest and imprison Marcus Garvey for mail fraud. Four years later, when Garvey is released from prison, the U.S. deports him, thus seriously undermining that largest African organization the world had seen to that day.

1924 The Johnson Reed Immigration Act sets restrictive quotas on immigrants from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The Oriental Exclusion Act virtually bars all Asian immigration, stating that those who are "ineligible for citizenship" according to the 1922 Supreme Court decision, are therefore ineligible for immigration. Filipinos were the only Asian grouping exempt from the Act.

1929 White mobs attack Filipinos in Exeter, California and injure 200.

1934 The Tydings-McDuffie Act grants independence to the Philippines and limits immigration to fifty persons per year. The Act specifies that in 1946, when the independence process will be complete, all Filipinos will be excluded from the U.S. under the terms of the Oriental Exclusion Act.

1935 President Roosevelt signs the Repatriation Act which offers free transportation to Filipinos who would return to their homeland.

1935 The National Labor Relations Act, known as the Wagner Act, legalizes the right to organize and form unions, but specifically excludes farm workers and domestic workers, most of whom are Chicano, Asian and African American.



1930's U.S. deports 600,000 Mexicans, many of whom are U.S. citizens.

1942 Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, authorizing internment of 110,000 Japanese Americans living in California, including those who are American citizens.

1942 U.S. and Mexico agree to a bracero program which authorizes Mexicans to work temporarily in the U.S., and limits protection for these workers. Mexico refuses to allow workers to go to Texas because conditions are so bad for Mexicans in that state.

1943 White mobs in Detroit murder 34 African Americans.

1943 White mobs in Los Angeles, led by sailors and soldiers, attack young Mexicans in Los Angeles in the infamous "zoot suit" riots. Police arrest only Mexican youth, no anglos.

1947 The Taft Hartley Act seriously restricts the rights to organize of all working people, and especially targets workers of color by forcing unions to take an anti-communist loyalty oath. Since leftists and communists had been instrumental in organizing the Congress of Industrial Organization which had organized large numbers of workers of color; the loyalty oath in effect, seriously hampered future efforts to organize workers of color. Since the 1960's, most organizing of workers of color has been done in service sector industries and in agriculture, where these workers are concentrated. Mainstream AFL-CIO support for these new efforts has been too little and too late.

1952 The McCarran Walter Immigration Act repeals the exclusion from citizenship provisions of the 1790 Naturalization Act, but keeps the quota system based on national origins; bars from entry any travelers or immigrants the U.S. considers politically subversive; and provides for deportation of any immigrants who challenge U.S. political or economic policies.

The Act gives extensive police interrogation powers to the INS, and few protections to the interrogated. The INS powers are used extensively to prevent organization of Chicano and Asian workers, in both fields and factories. Employers frequently call the INS to raid a work place and deport workers just before payday.

1954 U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service sets up Operation Wetback to round up and deport "illegal" Mexicans living in the United States.

Mid 1960's FBI under J. Edgar Hoover sets up the COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program) to destroy the Black liberation movement. The Program, although "officially" ended in the mid 70's, continues to this day under different names.

1964 The Democratic Party refuses to seat the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in place of the segregationist Mississippi Democrats at the Party's convention in Atlanta.

1965 Malcolm X assassinated after FBI infiltrates the Nation of Islam to promote opposition to Malcolm.



1965 The Immigration Act of 1965 liberalized immigration for peoples of Asia, Latin America and Africa, but subsequent implementation of the law tied immigration procedures directly to foreign policy.

If a nation has a progressive or leftist government, nationals from that country are welcomed to the U.S. as political refugees (i.e., Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua before 1989). If the nation is a reactionary or military dictatorship supported by the U.S., people fleeing political repression are denied refugee status and deported (Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Haitians).

This discriminatory policy has aggravated political tensions within the affected immigrant communities, and weakened their capacity to fight racist practices against all immigrants of color in the United States.

1965 The Moynihan Report blames the problems of the Black community on strong Black women!

1968 Martin Luther King is assassinated.

1968-69 Mayor Alioto of San Francisco creates the infamous Tactical Squad to launch military attacks against the Third World Liberation Front strikers at San Francisco State.

1969 Reies Tijerina, leader of a militant Chicano movement to retake indigenous Mexican lands in New Mexico, is imprisoned for three years in a federal penitentiary. The Supreme Court upholds the conviction.

1971 State of New York launches a military assault on striking prisoners at Attica state prison. The attacks kills 28 prisoners and 8 hostages. When the prison is retaken by guards, hundreds more prisoners are beaten and tortured.

1969-1972 Raids on Black Panther Party offices, assassination of leading Panthers, imprisonment of hundreds of others, FBI agents incitement of internal fratricidal struggle, resulting in destruction of the Black Panther Party. (Many prisoners from that time, such as Geronimo Pratt, are still in prison.)

1970 At a march of 30,000 Chicanos in Los Angeles, police kill famous Chicano journalist Ruben Salazar.

1973 Federal and State police and FBI launch a military assault on American Indian Movement activists and traditional Indians of the Lakota Nation at Wounded Knee. Leonard Peltier, AIM leader, is convicted on false charges of murdering an FBI agent and sentenced to two consecutive life sentences.

1976 Congress passes Hyde Amendment denying federal funds for abortions to poor women. Effect is that women of color denied right to control when they will have children.

Mid 1970's Right wing groups in California begin to use the initiative process effectively to get racist legislation approved. Most important is Proposition 13 which lowers tax rate on homes, thereby robbing cities of funding for schools, social services and infrastructure. People of color are

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disproportionately effected.

The same forces get the California Death Penalty reinstated as effective law by recalling three liberal California Supreme Court judges. They also get the English Only initiative passed.

1978 In the famous Bakke case, the Supreme Court upholds the idea of affirmative action but rejects Univ. of California at Davis's program of racial quotas to implement affirmative action, thus effectively gutting affirmative action in higher education.

1980 Ronald Reagan elected to office on a clear ideological program appealing to white supremacist traditional values. Reagan popularizes racist code words (terms which do not mention color specifically but are designed to elicit negative images of different peoples of color) such as: "crime," "welfare," "drugs," "get government off our backs," and "stop unfairly taxing the 'little man.'" The ideological attack of the Reagan administration is backed up by a massive cutback in social services for poor people, and a government-sponsored redistribution of wealth to the rich.

1982 Unemployed auto workers in Detroit murder Vincent Chin, mistaking the young Chinese man for Japanese, and blaming Japanese for the loss of their jobs. Some unions which initiate the "Buy America" campaign target workers of color in other countries as the responsible for their economic plight, rather than U.S. multi-nationals who have taken their factories to Mexico, Taiwan and Korea.

Mid 1980's The Heritage Foundation organizes the National Association of Scholars and finances college campus right wing groups to wage an ideological attack on students and faculty struggling for curriculum more reflective of the histories and cultures of people of color; and of the hidden history of the United States. The right wing groups label such educational equality efforts as "Political Correctness." Noted historian Arthur Schlesinger and other "liberals" attack multi-culturalism and Afrocentrism as "divisive" perspectives in the American "melting pot" culture.

1990 Congress passes a comprehensive new immigration law which includes "employer sanctions" for knowingly hiring a worker without papers; and stepped up military patrol of the Rio Grande border. The law's effect is to discourage employers from accepting job applications from Asian Americans or Latinos, for fear they may have no papers. At the border, brutality against Latino border crossers becomes commonplace. Vigilante groups support INS patrols.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), based in California, uses the new law to expand its anti-immigrant campaign. A common theme is that immigrant labor takes away jobs from needy American workers. The campaign aggravates existing tensions among different communities of color, as well as increasing racist behavior by white workers.

1990 Bush initiates a war against Iraq which destroys the country's electricity, food and water supply, leaving over



100,000 civilians dead or dying in its wake. The war is accompanied by a massive anti-Arab propaganda campaign. In the U.S., supporters of Bush's policies murder one Arab American in California, vandalize hundreds of Arab American businesses, and send death threats to Arab American organizations. The FBI terrorizes Arab American citizens by targetting them for surveillance and questioning.

1991 As the U.S. economy worsens due to 50 years of government supported massive military budget, and the flight of U.S. corporations overseas to find cheaper labor; the government, corporations and labor unions blame Japan. By 1992, after Bush's famous dinner with Japanese corporate leadership, and his subsequent indigestion; the U.S. media begins the theme of the "Japanese invasion." Japanese-American communities and businesses are targetted as supporters of the "invasion."

1991 KKK leader David Duke wins 55% of the white vote in Louisiana (though massive Black turnout prevents his being elected governor) on a platform of turning in his white sheet for a blue suit, and utilizing racist code words. His supporters tell as CBC reporter that they are voting for Duke not because they believe he has changed, but because they know he hasn't!

1992 California's Governor Wilson initiates welfare "reform" legislation which would reduce poor families to homelessness and starvation. He calls the program a "budget balancing measure."

1992 In the wake of the Simi Valley verdict exonerating police violence against an African American man (Rodney King), people in Los Angeles take to the streets in rage. While the TV cameras focus on one incident in which young African American men beat up a young white man (without showing the other African American men who took the white man to the hospital); the police use the excuse of "mob looting" to murder 50 African American and Latino men (Of the 60+ deaths during the uprising, only about 10 are accounted for. The rest are called "death by unknown assailants.") These incidents of police violence are not on TV.

In the aftermath of military occupation of South Central, over 18,000 people are imprisoned; approximately 600 Latinos are deported without due process; the FBI goes house to house convincing neighbors to turn in neighbors; and poor mothers who can't produce a receipt for their Pampers are jailed as "looters."

Amidst all the proposals to rebuild LA, the media refuses to cover the proposal presented by the Crips and the Bloods: Give us the hammer and nails. We will rebuild the city. While the two once-rival gangs work to implement their truce, the LAPD concentrates on breaking up every meeting between the gangs, in an effort to rekindle gang violence.

1992 The Democratic Party restructures itself as the party of the white middle class (women and men), after clearly absorbing the lesson that since 1964, it has not won a majority of the white vote in any presidential election.

(to be continued)



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