RESOURCES
for <u>White Allies in Anti-Racism</u>

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Intro

This is a resource zine for white people to live and embody **active anti-racism**. Articles were compiled by Jess Kim and the intro and layout were done by Patrick Gibbs in March 2008.

These are resources to share, to talk about, to bring to life with your actions. Anti-racism means (among many things) that we work to undo racism and all oppressions until they are **gone**. It's going to take a while (decades?), parts of the work will certainly be uncomfortable and worth it, and **together with all people we can undo racism!**

This zine was created and distributed during **Action Awareness Week**. In the words of the SOURCE leaders:
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[Action Awareness Week is] an attempt to raise awareness about the need for serious change in the way that the institution approaches anti-racism. The week will consist of art, activism, and the events listed below.

Members of the SOURCE community are asking the administration, faculty, and student body to support them in making institutional changes. These changes are mandatory in order to increase the retention and success of students from the SOURCE community here.

All we demand is that Hampshire be actively anti-racist.
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Anti-Racism Resources at Hampshire

- **WARF (White Anti-Racism Folks) student group**
    - ... come to WARF **meetings**. Find out when they are by going to http://lists.hampshire.edu and scrolling down to the "Warf" list. Subscribe yourself.
    - ... **page of resources** on http://www.hampedia.org -- click on Student Group Core and you'll find a link to WARF at the end of the first section. Check out the great linked list of resources!
- **Diversity Taskforce Committee** of Hampshire College (http://tinyurl.com/26lzne)
- **online list** of Hampshire offices, **Div IIIs**, books, and quotes (http://tinyurl.com/2m6rm5/Allies/Resources)
- **Disorientation Packet** (http://www.hampshire.edu/cms/index.php?id=11015)
- **Holmquist Report zine**. February 14, 2008, by the Anti-Racism
- **Frequently Avoided Questions zine**. May 2007 by various students.

General Anti-Racism Resources

- **Crossroads Anti-Racism** (http://www.crossroadsantiracism.org)
    - ... Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist, Multicultural Institution
    - ... Anti-Racist Transformation in White Institutions
- **Youth Helping to End Racism** (http://www.anti-racismonline.org)
    - ...lists of dialogue questions
    - ...anti-racists of all colors throughout history (brief list)
    - ...lots of other audio and text resources
- **Students Challenging Racism and (White) Privilege** (http://www.canopyweb.com/racism/)
    - ... an anti-racism group at the Claremont Colleges in California. Some resources for anti-racism at small private colleges.
- **Critical Race Theory books** (http://www.southendpress.org/topics/racetheory)
    - ... the Critical Race Theory books published by South End Press.
- **United to End Racism** (UER) (http://rc.org/uer/)
    - ... heal the emotional damage done by racism to all
- **Western States Center** (http://www.westernstatescenter.org/resources/dr.html)
    - ... Naming and Framing Race and Racism
    - ... Diversity Training vs. Dismantling Racism
    - ... Challenging Oppressive Moments

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White Ally Checklist

This is not meant to overwhelm you, but rather, help you be a better ally.
You can do this!

- I make sure race/(anti)racism is a part of the discussion (in meetings, classrooms, personal conversations etc.)
- I continually educate myself and others about racism.
- I try to learn anti-racist language and keep up with when it is changing.
  - I demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the issues of racism.
- I recognize my own limitations as a white person doing anti-racist work.
- I realize "it's not about me." I can be objective and avoid over-personalizing issues that POC raise.
  - I can identify racism as it is happening.
- I attend to group dynamics and power structures
- I support and validate the comments and actions of people of color and other allies. (But not in a condescending manner!)
- I can accept leadership from people of color.
- I can share power with POC and work side-by-side with them on tasks, projects, and actions.
- I listen carefully so that I am more likely to understand the needs/demands/experiences of POC.
- I can debrief with people of color, am open to being criticized
- I readily understand– with no explanations necessary– a person of color's position or
  - I can be present with people of color when they need to vent feelings about racism
  - I can relax and socialize and be at ease with people of color.
- I can discuss things with POC and take their ideas seriously without making them feel "too angry."

The following are some problematic areas where a number of white people seem to get stuck. Do they apply to you?

- When people of color point out racism as it is happening, I feel personally attacked.
  - I rely on people of color for education about my own (& institutional) racism.
  - I believe in "reverse racism"   • I feel guilty about being white.
- I speak for people of color and attempt to explain their positions.
- I prefer to spend anti-racist time & energy dealing with my personal feelings and issues about race, rather than moving the anti-racist agenda forward.
  - I constantly talk about all the anti-racist work I have done to validate my position.
- I have been told I act in a racist manner without knowing it, but I think I'm being an *ally*.
- I want to use my privilege to "help" people of color

continued ↙   I believe I "understand" the struggle of people of color

From Hampshire College NSO Orientation Packet (2004)

What Does an Ally Do?

BEING ALLIES TO PEOPLE OF COLOR in the struggle to end racism is one of the most important things that white people can do. There is no one correct way to be an ally. Each of us is different. We have different relationships to social organizations, political processes, and economic structures. We are more or less powerful because of such factors as our gender, class, work situation, family, and community participation. Being an ally to people of color is an ongoing strategic process in which we look at our personal and social resources, evaluate the environment we have helped to create, and decide what needs to be done.

This book is filled with things to do and ways to get involved. These suggestions are not prioritized because they cannot be. Times change and circumstances vary. What is a priority today may not be tomorrow. What is effective or strategic right now may not be next year. We need to be thinking with others and noticing what is going on around us so we will know how to put our attention, energy, time, and money toward strategic priorities in the struggle to end racism and other injustices.

This includes listening to people of color so that we can support the actions they take, the risks they bear in defending their lives and challenging white hegemony. It includes watching the struggle of white people to maintain dominance and the struggle of people of color to gain equal opportunity, justice, safety, and respect.

We don't need to believe or accept as true everything people of color say. There is no one voice in any community, much less in the complex and diverse communities of color spanning our country. We do need to listen carefully to the voices of people of color so that we understand and give credence to their experience. We can then evaluate the content of what they are saying by what we know about how racism works and by our own critical thinking and progressive political analysis.

It is important to emphasize this point because often we become paralyzed when people of color talk about racism. We are afraid to challenge what they say. We will be ineffective as allies if we give up our ability to analyze and think critically, if we simply accept everything a person of color states as truth.

Listening to people of color and giving critical credence to their experience is not easy for us because of the training we have received. Nevertheless, it is an important first step. When we hear statements that make us want to react defensively, we can instead keep the following points in mind as we try to understand what is happening and determine how best to be allies.

We have seen how racism is a pervasive part of our culture. Therefore we should always assume that racism is at least part of the picture. In light of this assumption, we should always look for the patterns involved rather than treating most events as isolated occurrences.

Since we know that racism is involved, we know our whiteness is also a factor. We should look for ways we are acting from assumptions of white power or privilege. This will help us acknowledge any fear or confusion we may feel. It will allow us to see our tendencies to defend ourselves or our tendencies to assume we should be in control. Then we may want to talk with other white people both to express our feelings and to get support so our tendencies towards defensiveness or controlling behavior don't get in the way of our being effective allies.

We have many opportunities to practice these critical listening and thinking skills because we are all involved in a complex web of interpersonal and institutional relationships. Every day we are presented with opportunities to analyze what is going on around us and to practice taking direct action as allies to people of color.

People of color will always be on the front lines fighting racism because their lives are at stake. How do we act and support them effectively, both when they are in the room with us and when they are not?

> "Citizens in the United States tend to be cynical - we believe in nothing, have confidence in nothing. In this way we are our own worst victims, bereft even of a belief in the basic goodness of human beings and the just society we are capable of building.
>
> Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz
> Blood on the Border (p. 234)

Being a Strong White Ally

WHAT KIND OF ACTIVE SUPPORT does a strong white ally provide? People of color that I have talked with over the years have been remarkably consistent in describing the kinds of support they need from white allies. The following list is compiled from their statements at workshops I have facilitated. The focus here is on personal qualities and interpersonal relationships. More active interventions are discussed in the next part of the book.

WHAT PEOPLE OF COLOR WANT FROM WHITE ALLIES

"Respect us"

"Find out about us"

"Don't take over"

"Provide information"

"Resources"

"Take risks"

"Don't take it personally"

"Understanding"

"Teach your children about racism"

"Speak up"

"Don't be scared by my anger"

"Listen to us"

"Don't make assumptions"

"Stand by my side"

"Don't assume you know what's best for me"

"Money"

"Make mistakes"

"Honesty"

"Talk to other white people"

"Interrupt jokes and comments"

"Don't ask me to speak for my people"

"Support"

"Your body on the line"
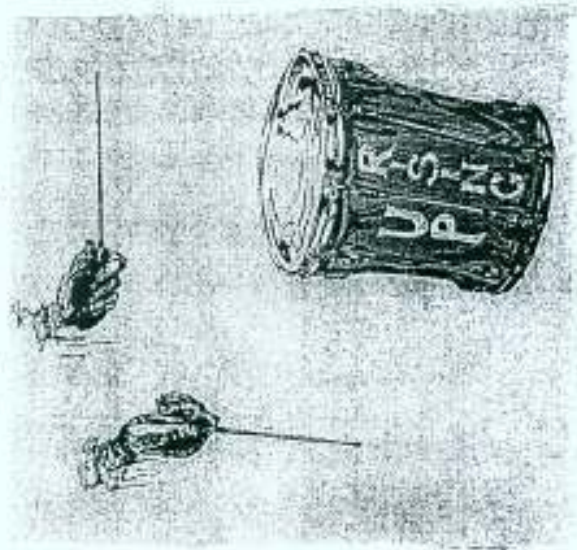
I Would Be a Perfect Ally If ...

WE LEARN MANY EXCUSES AND JUSTIFICATIONS for racism in this society. We also learn many tactics for avoiding responsibility for it. We have developed a coded language to help us avoid even talking about it directly. Our training makes it easy to find reasons not to be allies to people of color. In order to maintain our commitment to being allies, we must reject the constant temptation to find excuses for inaction.

What reasons have you used for not taking a stronger stand against racism, or for backing away from supporting a person of color?

Following are some of the reasons I've recently heard white people use. I call them "if only" statements because that's the phrase they usually begin with. Our real meaning is just the reverse. We are often setting conditions on our commitment to racial justice. We are saying that "only if" people of color do this or that will we do our part. These conditions let us blame people of color for our not being reliable allies.

I would be a committed and effective ally —

* *If only people of color weren't so angry, sensitive, impatient, or demanding.*

* *If only people of color realized that I am different from other white people. I didn't own slaves. I treat everyone the same. I don't see color. I'm not a member of the KKK. I've never been to an unlearning racism workshop.*

* *If only people of color would give white people a chance, hear our side of things, and realize that we have it hard too.*

* *If only people of color didn't use phrases like "all white people."*

* *If only people of color didn't expect the government to do everything for them and wouldn't ask for special treatment.*

Being a white ally to people of color means to be there all the time, for the long term, committed and active. Because this is hard, challenging work, we often look for ways to justify not doing it. Rather than finding ways to avoid being allies, we need to look at what gets in our way. Where does it get hard? Where do we get stuck? We use many of the reasons listed above to justify withdrawal from the struggle against racism.

Another way we justify our withdrawal is to find a person of color who represents, in our minds, the reason why people of color don't really deserve our support. Often these examples have to do with people of color not spending money or time the way we think they should. "I know a person who spends all her money on—

Integration and Tokenism

MANY PEOPLE OF COLOR have expressed concern that multiculturalism will become (or already is) a new form of integration and tokenism. Unless we are vigilant it certainly can become so.

Integration is based on the belief that people of color have been segregated from the mainstream of U.S. society and need to be incorporated into it for full participation. Even before the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954, the discussion about racial equality in the United States revolved around integration. I want to look at these issues more closely because they influence our efforts to build a democratic, anti-racist multiculturalism.

Our belief in the importance of integration is based on the assumption that there is one mainstream, normal set of (white) values, practices, and procedures that other people can learn and adapt to. We assume that people of color want to be included in the mainstream but have previously been excluded because of prejudice and discrimination – racism.

There is real cause for concern about the exclusion of people of color from mainstream institutions in the United States. To a great extent people of color and white people live separately, pray separately, go to different schools, do different jobs, and socialize separately. Insofar as people of color are not only separate but unequal, this is a tragedy of injustice, as the Supreme Court ruled in 1954.

Integration is not necessarily the solution to racism. Integration assumes that people of color will adapt to a white, mainstream way of doing things and that the institutions they integrate into will accept them as equal participants. There is certainly some question whether present U.S. institutions will ever welcome people of color as full and equal participants because of the deep levels of white culture and racism embedded in them. Many people of color also feel that having to give up cultural, traditional, and ethnic ways of thinking, acting, and relating to others in order to "integrate" simply maintains white power. Integration fails to address the problem of white racism. It's a form of tokenism – small or insignificant change in lieu of fundamental transformation.

The question is: "Integration into what, on whose terms?" When we assume that the terms and the institutions are fixed, we are advocating not integration, but assimilation – continued control by those who have traditionally held it. For example, under pressure from African Americans, many traditionally white colleges and universities integrated their classrooms in the 1960s and 1970s. When students of color started to demand participation in decisions about the curriculum and policies, these same institutions reacted by calling the students ungrateful and

7. Talk with your partner, housemates, and friends about these issues. Notice the whiteness of your surroundings out loud to family and friends. This needn't be done aggressively or with great anger. You don't need to attack other people. Ask questions, notice things out loud, express your concerns, and give other people room to think about and respond to what you say.

8. If you did a room-by-room assessment of your home today, would you find a diversity of images and items?

9. If the answer to Question 8 is no, what do you and other family members lose because of that lack? How might it contribute to racial prejudice and discrimination?

10. Bring up feelings or thoughts about reading this book at dinner or other family time. What is difficult or awkward about doing this? What is the response?

11. Do an assessment of your home including the following items:

   a. Books
   b. Posters
   c. Cookbooks
   d. Calendars
   e. Paintings
   f. Magazines
   g. Newspapers
   h. Videos
   i. Games
   j. Computer games
   k. Toys
   l. Art materials
   m. Religious articles
   n. Sports paraphernalia
   o. Music

12. What would you like to remove?

13. What would you like to add to what you have? Try to go beyond the tokenism of putting up pictures of Martin Luther King Jr. or Michael Jordan, or adding a book or two to your children's collection. Explore the roles and contributions of people of color in areas where you and other family members share an interest, such as sports, science, music, books, or movies.

14. Are women well represented in the items in your home? Are poor and working-class people? Are people with disabilities? Are Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists? Are lesbians and gay men? Are children? Are the creations of children themselves included?

15. Do you employ people of color? How well are they paid? How well are they treated? How do your children respond and relate to them? How will you talk with your children about these relationships? How will you balance these relationships with friends and neighbors from different cultures who are not employees? Are your children exposed to professionals such as teachers, doctors, and dentists who are people of color? How could you increase such exposure?

These are small, personal steps, but they have two important consequences. The more contact we have with people of color and with images and information about them, the more we are motivated and equipped to challenge racism. We are able to see more clearly the tremendous gap between average white perceptions about people of color and the lives and communities of people of color themselves. This awareness can guide our action and enrich our lives.

Second, we prepare our children to notice how racism operates and to become champions for racial justice. There are resources in the bibliography for enhancing your parenting skills and continuing this process.

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irresponsible. When students demanded that the faculty and administration include people of color, with the power to make decisions, school officials dismissed such demands as impossible.

Today, over 30 years after integration of those schools, most public and private school administrators, deans, and professors are white. Obviously most college and university student bodies are integrated to varying degrees. This "you can join us, but we're going to keep control" form of integration does not deal with the fundamental inequalities of racism.

Not everyone wants to be integrated, and few people want to be assimilated. Some people of color are cynical about the ability of white people to fully accept them as equals. Others are skeptical about most white people's willingness to seriously question their own privilege. Many people of color have rich cultures, practices, and identities they don't want to give up. There are some Native Americans and Black Nationalists who want cultural and political sovereignty. Still others are only willing to integrate into democratic, multicultural, and explicitly anti-racist institutions because only these will protect them from further white racism.

We need to develop a much more sophisticated view of racial progress in which we don't make assumptions about what people of color want or don't want. In some cases, for some people, integration is an appropriate strategy. In other cases it may be a step backwards. In still others it may be a way to sidestep demands for justice. Integration can only be a strategy for justice and equality, not a goal. As a goal, it too often leads to various forms of tokenism and isolation.

Tokenism plays out in our society in many ways. When people of color demand greater power and participation, they meet with white resistance at each stage. White people seldom voluntarily give up control or willingly look at our role in resisting change. If people of color push hard enough, we slowly and reluctantly accept their participation. We meet each stage with cries of "We've already done so much, what more do they want?" or "They're so unappreciative of what we've done; they'll never be satisfied until they control everything" or "We're moving as fast as we can." All the tactics of denial, minimization, blame, and counterattack discussed in Part I are marshaled to justify the slow pace toward equal participation.

The first and simplest stage of tokenism occurs when a small and insignificant number of people of color are allowed to integrate a school or workplace. Or we add a few names and pictures of people of color to a textbook or a wall. We treat people of color and their contributions as the exception. People of color are extremely isolated in these situations and acutely vulnerable to personal abuse. They do not have much support and usually succeed only if they assimilate by thoroughly internalizing the values of the institution.

Another early stage of token integration occurs when white people include only those people of color who fit a certain mold or support the traditional values of the institution. Any who might challenge traditional patterns are screened out, isolated, fired, or otherwise neutralized. People of color are accepted for their decorative role and to deflect concerns about discrimination or diversity, not to be full participants.

This is also the stage where we quote or point to particular people of color, such as well-off people in academia or politics like Shelby Steele, Ana Chavez, Clarence Thomas, Elaine Chao, or Thomas Sowell, to give a seal of approval to our policies and statements.

These tactics may not work to derail integration. There may be significant numbers of people of color who are demanding equality. We will then seek input from people of color. We allow them to speak out or testify, we study the situation, we do research, and we remain in control. This process creates the illusion of participation, but there is still no sharing of power.

This stage might be coupled with another form of tokenism that involves paying attention to racism only when people of color are in the room, outside the door, or in the streets. When they are not visibly present, it is business as usual. Racism is viewed as a problem for people of color and only of incidental concern to the main business of the organization.

If these tactics don't succeed in quelling protest, white people will give up some control, but only in special areas that are deemed culturally appropriate to people of color. We may allow them to teach in ethnic studies departments but not in the sciences, or to write about news in their community but not about mainstream events.

These are just some of the ways that white people control the participation of people of color and prevent a democratic multiculturalism from developing. Each involves a token form of integration in which white people retain ultimate power and control.

Many organizations can look multicultural from the outside – they are often intended to. Multiculturalism can become token multicultural, hiding our failure to redistribute power and resources. To break these patterns of white control we must see through these tactics and understand why the democratic and anti-racist components of multiculturalism are crucial. Most importantly, we must be willing to share power.

We should be actively organizing to create a democratic, anti-racist, multicultural process in our workplaces, schools, police and fire departments, religious organizations, athletic clubs, unions, and city, state, and national governments. The assessments we did in the last section can be guidelines for proceeding. The four key questions are:

1. Is this organization multicultural?
2. Is it democratic?
3. Is it anti-racist (and anti-sexist, etc.)?
4. What are you going to do about it?

Up to this point we have been talking about institutions that may have more effect on us than we have on them. There is much that we can do to change them, particularly if we work in concert with others. But they can present formidable challenges to our ability to organize and sustain social action.

There is one institution over which we have a lot of control. It is a place where we can work to make changes with the people who are closest to us. This is a place where we can practice the skills we want to develop and model the kind of society we want to build. This is a place that can nurture and sustain our struggles against social injustice "out there." This place is at home with our family.

Active racism vs Passive racism

of racial bigotry and to describe similar acts committed by Whites as racist will make no sense to some people, including some people of color. To those, I will respectfully say, "We can agree to disagree." At moments like these, it is not agreement that is essential, but clarity. Even if you don't like the definition of racism I am using, hopefully you are now clear about what it is. If I also understand how you are using the term, our conversation can continue—despite our disagreement.

Another provocative question I'm often asked is "Are you saying all Whites are racist?" When asked this question, I again remember that White teacher's response, and I am conscious that perhaps the question I am really being asked is: "Are you saying all Whites are bad people?" The answer to that question is of course not. However, all White people, intentionally or unintentionally, do benefit from racism. A more relevant question is what are White people as individuals doing to interrupt racism? For many White people, the image of a racist is a hood-wearing Klan member or a name-calling Archie Bunker figure. These images represent what might be called active racism, blatant, intentional acts of racial bigotry and discrimination. Passive racism is more subtle and can be seen in the collusion of laughing when a racist joke is told, of letting exclusionary hiring practices go unchallenged, of accepting as appropriate the omissions of people of color from the curriculum, and of avoiding difficult race-related issues. Because racism is so ingrained in the fabric of American institutions, it is easily self-perpetuating." All that is required to maintain it is business as usual.

I sometimes visualize the ongoing cycle of racism as a moving walkway at the airport. Active racist behavior is equivalent to walking fast on the conveyor belt. The person engaged in active racist behavior has identified with the ideology of White supremacy and is moving with it. Passive racist behavior is equivalent to standing still on the walkway. No overt effort is being made, but the conveyor belt moves the bystanders along to the same destination as those who are actively walking. Some of the bystanders may feel the motion of the

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10 A Definition of Terms

Racism: For Whites Only?

Frequently someone will say, "You keep talking about White people. People of color can be racist, too." I once asked a White teacher what it would mean to her if a student or parent of color accused her of being racist. She said she would feel as though she had been punched in the stomach or called a "low-life scum." "She is not alone in this feeling. The word racist holds a lot of emotional power. For many White people, to be called racist is the ultimate insult. The idea that this term might only be applied to Whites becomes highly problematic for after all, can't people of color be "low-life scum" too?

Of course, people of any racial group can hold hateful attitudes and behave in racially discriminatory and bigoted ways. We can all cite examples of horrible hate crimes which have been perpetrated by people of color as well as Whites. Hateful behavior is hateful behavior no matter who does it. But when I am asked, "Can people of color be racist?" I reply, "The answer depends on your definition of racism." If one defines racism as racial prejudice, the answer is yes. People of color can and do have racial prejudices. However, if one defines racism as a system of advantage based on race, the answer is no. People of color are not racist because they do not systematically benefit from racism. And equally important, there is no systematic cultural and institutional support or sanction for the racial bigotry of people of color. In my view, reserving the term racist only for behaviors committed by Whites in the context of a White-dominated society is a way of acknowledging the ever-present power differential afforded Whites by the culture and institutions that make up the system of advantage and continue to reinforce notions of White superiority. (Using the same logic, I reserve the word sexist for men. Though women can and do have gender-based prejudices, only men systematically benefit from sexism.)

Despite my best efforts to explain my thinking on this point, there are some who will be troubled, perhaps even incensed, by my response. To call the racially motivated acts of a person of color acts

conveyor belt, see the active racists ahead of them, and choose to turn around, unwilling to go to the same destination as the White supremacists. But unless they are walking actively in the opposite direction—unless they are walking actively in the opposite direction at a speed faster than the conveyor belt—unless they are actively antiracist—they will find themselves carried along with the others.

So, not all Whites are actively racist. Many are passively racist. Some, though not enough, are actively antiracist. The relevant question is not whether all Whites are racist, but how we can move more White people from a position of active or passive racism to one of active antiracism? The task of interrupting racism is obviously not the task of Whites alone. But the fact of White privilege means that Whites have greater access to the societal institutions in need of transformation. To whom much is given, much is required.

It is important to acknowledge that while all Whites benefit from racism, they do not all benefit equally. Other factors, such as socioeconomic status, gender, age, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, also play a role in our access to social influence and power. A White woman on welfare is not privileged to the same extent as a wealthy White heterosexual man. In her case, the systematic disadvantages of sexism and classism intersect with her White privilege, but the privilege is still there. This point was brought home to me in a 1994 study conducted by a Mount Holyoke graduate student, Phyllis Wentworth. Wentworth interviewed a group of female college students, who were both older than their peers and were the first members of their families to attend college, about the pathways that lead them to college. All of the women interviewed were White, from working-class backgrounds, from families where women were expected to graduate from high school and get married or get a job. Several had experienced abusive relationships and other personal difficulties prior to coming to college. Yet their experiences were punctuated by "good luck" stories of apartments obtained without a deposit, good jobs offered without experience or extensive reference checks, and encouragement provided by willing mentors.

While the women acknowledged their good fortune, none of them discussed their Whiteness. They had not considered the possibility that being White had worked in their favor and helped give them the benefit of the doubt at critical junctures. This study clearly showed that even under difficult circumstances, White privilege was still operating.

It is also true that not all people of color are equally targeted by racism. We all have multiple identities that shape our experience. I can describe myself as a light-skinned, well-educated, heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian African American woman raised in a middle-class suburb. As an African American woman, I am systematically disadvantaged by race and by gender, but I systematically receive benefits in the other categories, which then mediate my experience of racism and sexism. When one is targeted by multiple isms—racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, anti-Semitism, ageism—in whatever combination, the effect is intensified. The particular combination of racism and classism in many communities of color is life-threatening. Nonetheless, when I, the middle-class Black mother of two sons, read another story about a Black man's unlucky encounter with a White police officer's deadly force, I am reminded that racism by itself can

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

The Costs of Racism to People of Color

THE OPPOSITE OF A BENEFIT is a disadvantage. People of color face distinct disadvantages, many of which have to do with discrimination and violence. If we were to talk about running a race for achievement and success in this country, and white people and people of color lined up side by side as a group, then every white benefit would be steps ahead of the starting line and every disadvantage would be steps backwards from the starting line before the race even began.

The disadvantages of being a person of color in the United States today include personal insults, harassment, discrimination, economic and cultural exploitation, stereotypes, and invisibility, as well as threats, intimidation, and violence. Not every person of color has experienced all the disadvantages, but they each have experienced some of them, and they each experience the vulnerability to violence that being a person of color in this country entails.

Institutional racism is discussed in detail in Parts IV, V, and VI, but the personal acts of harassment and discrimination committed directly by individual white people can also take a devastating toll.¹ People of color never know when they will be called names, be ridiculed, or have jokes and comments made to them or about them by white people they don't know. They don't know when they might hear that they should leave the country, go home, or go back to where they came from. Often these comments are made in situations where it isn't safe to confront the person who made the remark.

People of color also have to be ready to respond to teachers, employers, or supervisors who have stereotypes, prejudices, or lowered expectations about them. Many have been discouraged or prevented from pursuing academic or work goals or have been placed in lower vocational levels because of their racial identity. They have to be prepared to receive less respect, attention, or response from a doctor, police officer, court official, city official, or other professional. They are likely to be mistrusted, accused of stealing, cheating, or lying, or stopped by the police because of their racial identity. They may also experience employment or housing discrimination or know someone who has.

There are cultural costs as well. People of color see themselves portrayed in degrading, stereotypical, and fear-inducing ways on television and in the movies. They may have important religious or cultural holidays that are not recognized where they work or go to school. They have seen their religious practices, music, art, mannerisms, dress, and other customs distorted, "borrowed," ridiculed, exploited, used as mascots, or otherwise degraded by white people.

If they protest they may be verbally attacked by whites for being too sensitive, too emotional, or too angry. Or they may be told they are different from other people of their racial group. Much of what people of color do or say, or how they act in racially mixed company, is judged as representative of their race.

On top of all this they have to live with the threat of physical violence. Some are the survivors of racial violence or have close friends or family who are. People of color experience the daily toll of having to plan out how they are going to respond to racial discrimination and racist comments whenever they might occur.

In the foot race referred to above for jobs, educational opportunities, or housing, each of these disadvantages would represent a step backward from the starting line before the race even started.

Although all people of color have experienced some of the disadvantages mentioned above, other factors make a difference in how vulnerable a person of color is to the effects of racism. Economic resources help buffer some of the more egregious effects of racism. Depending upon where one lives, women and men with different racial identities are treated differently. Discrimination varies in form and ranges from mild to severe depending on one's skin color, ethnicity, level of education, location, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, age, and how white people and white-run institutions respond to these factors.

Is it hard for you to accept that this kind of pervasive discrimination still occurs in this country? Which of the above statements is particularly hard to accept?

There is ample documentation of the frequency and the effects on people of color of each form of racism listed above. In many workshops I lead an exercise using a list of disadvantages for people of color to respond to. Those of us who are white are often surprised and disturbed by how many people of color stand when asked if they have experienced these things.

Most of us would like to think that today we have turned the tide and people of color have caught up with white people. We would like to believe (and are often told by other white people) that they enjoy the same opportunities as the rest of us. If we honestly add up the benefits of whiteness and the disadvantages of being a person of color, we can see that existing affirmative action programs don't go very far toward leveling the playing field.

The Costs of Racism to White People

We tend to think of racism as a problem for people of color and something we should be concerned about for their sake. It is true that racism is devastating to them, and if we believe in justice, equality, and equal opportunity for all, then we should be trying to end it. As we saw in the last sections, racism does produce material benefits for white people. However, the costs of racism to white people are devastating, especially to those of us without the money and power to buffer their effects. They are not the same costs as the day-to-day violence, discrimination, and harassment that people of color have to deal with.

Nevertheless, they are significant costs that we have been trained to ignore, deny, or rationalize away. They are costs that other white people, particularly those with wealth, make us pay in our daily lives. It is sobering for us as white people to talk together about what it really costs to maintain such a system of division and exploitation in our society. We may even find it difficult to recognize some of the core costs of being white in our society.

For example, one of the costs of assimilating into white mainstream culture is that we are asked to leave behind the languages, foods, music, games, rituals, and expressions that our parents and our grandparents used. We lose our own "white" cultures and histories. Sometimes this loss leads us to romanticize the richness of other cultures.

We have been given a distorted and inaccurate picture of history and politics because the truth about racism has been excluded, the contributions of people of color left out, and the role of white people cleaned up and modified. We also lose the presence and contributions of people of color to our neighborhoods, schools, and relationships. We are given a false sense of superiority, a belief that we should be in control and in authority, and that people of color should be maids, servants, gardeners, and do the less valued work of our society. Our experiences are distorted, limited, and less rich the more they are exclusively or predominantly white.

There are many ways that racism affects our interpersonal relationships. We may have lost relationships with friends, family members, and coworkers to disagreements, fights, and tension over racism. At the same time we may have lost relationships with people of color because the tensions of racism make those relationships difficult to sustain.

Racism distorts our sense of danger and safety. We are taught to live in fear of people of color. We are exploited economically by the upper class and unable to fight or even see this exploitation because we are taught to scapegoat people of color. On a more personal level, many of us are brutalized by family violence and sexual assault, unable to resist it effectively because we have been taught that people of color are the real danger, never the white men we live with.

There are also spiritual costs. Many of us have lost a connection to our own spiritual traditions, and consequently have come to romanticize those of other cultures, such as Buddhism or Native American beliefs. Our moral integrity is damaged as we witness situations of discrimination and harassment and do not intervene.

Our feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, or inadequacy about racism and about our responses to it lower our self-esteem. Because racism makes a mockery of our ideals of democracy, justice, and equality, it leads us to be cynical and pessimistic about our integrity and about our future, producing apathy, blame, despair, self-destructive behavior, and acts of violence, especially among our young people.

COSTS OF RACISM TO WHITE PEOPLE CHECKLIST[1]

It can be hard for us to be honest with ourselves about the costs of racism in our own lives. The following is a checklist you can use to evaluate the costs of racism to white people. Check each of the items that apply to you.

☐ I don't know exactly what my European American heritage is, what my great-grandparents' names were, or what regions or cities my ancestors are from.

☐ I grew up, lived, or live in a neighborhood, or went to school or a camp, which as far as I knew, was exclusively white.

☐ I grew up with people of color who were servants, maids, gardeners, or babysitters in my house.

☐ I did not meet people of color in person, or socially, before I was well into my teens.

☐ I grew up in a household where I heard derogatory racial terms or racial jokes.

☐ I grew up in a family or heard as a child that people of color were to blame for violence, lack of jobs, or other problems.

☐ I have seen or heard images, in magazines, on TV or radio, on cassettes and CDs, or in movies of (check all that apply):

- Mexicans depicted as drunk, lazy, or illiterate
- Asians depicted as exotic, cruel, or mysterious
- Asian Indians depicted as excitable or "silly"
- Arabs depicted as swarthy, ravishing, or "crazed"
- African Americans depicted as violent or criminal
- Pacific Islanders depicted as fun-loving or lazy
- American Indians depicted as drunk, savage, or "noble"
- Any character roles from non-white cultures depicted by white actors

12

"Thank You for Being Angry"

A PERSON OF COLOR WHO IS ANGRY about discrimination or harassment is doing us a service. That person is pointing out something wrong, something that contradicts the ideals of equality set forth in our Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights. He or she is bringing our attention to a problem that needs solving, a wrong that needs righting. We could convey our appreciation by saying, "Thank you, your anger has helped me see what's not right here." What keeps us from responding in this way?

Anger is a scary emotion in our society. In mainstream white culture we are taught to be polite, never to raise our voices, to be reasonable, and to keep calm. People who are demonstrative of their feelings are discounted and ridiculed. We are told by parents to obey "because I said so." We are told by bosses, religious leaders, and authorities not to challenge what they say, "or else" (or else you'll be fired, go to hell, be treated as "crazy"). When we do get angry we learn to hold it in, mutter under our breath, and go away. We are taught to turn our anger inward in self-destructive behaviors. If we are men we are taught to take out our frustrations on someone weaker and smaller than we are.

When we have seen someone expressing anger, it has often been a person with power who was abusing us or someone else physically, verbally, or emotionally. We were hurt, scared, or possibly confused. Most of us can remember a time from our youth when a parent, teacher, coach, boss, or other adult was yelling at us abusively. It may have made us afraid when those around us became angry. It may have made us afraid of our own anger.

A similar response is triggered when a person of color gets angry at us about racism. Many of us become scared, guilty, embarrassed, confused; we fear everything is falling apart and we might get hurt. If the angry person would just calm down or go away, we could get back to being happy, friendly, and relaxed.

Relationships between people of color and whites often begin as friendly and polite. We may be pleased that we know and like a person from another cultural group. We may be pleased that they like us. We are encouraged because, despite our fears, it seems that it may be possible for people from different cultures to get along together. The friendships may confirm our feelings that we are different from other white people.

But then the person of color becomes angry. Perhaps he or she is angry about something we did or said, or about a comment or action by someone else, or about racism in general. We may back off in response, fearing that the relationship is falling apart. We aren't liked anymore. We've been found out to be racist.

For a person of color, this may be a time of hope that the relationship can become more intimate and honest. The anger may be an attempt to test the depths and possibilities of the friendship. The person may be open about his or her feelings to see how safe we are, hoping that we will not desert them. Or the anger may be a more assertive attempt to break through our complacency to address some core assumptions, beliefs, or actions.

Many white people have been taught to see anger and conflict as a sign of failure. They may instead be signs that we're becoming more honest, dealing with the real differences and problems in our lives. If it is not safe enough to argue, disagree, express anger, and struggle with each other, what kind of relationship can it be?

We could say, "Thank you for pointing out the racism because I want to know whenever it is occurring," or "I appreciate your honesty. Let's see what we can do about this situation." More likely we get scared and disappear, or become defensive and counterattack. In any case, we don't focus on the root of the problem, and the racism goes unattended.

When people of color are angry about racism, it is legitimate anger. It is not their oversensitivity but our lack of sensitivity that causes this communication gap. They are vulnerable to the abuse of racism every day. They are experts on it. White society, and most of us individually, rarely notice racism.

It is the anger and actions of people of color that call our attention to the injustice of racism. Sometimes that anger comes from an individual person of color who is talking to us. At other times it is the rage of an entire community protesting, bringing legal action, or burning down buildings. Such anger and action is almost always a last resort, a desperate attempt to get our attention when all else fails.

It is tremendously draining, costly, and personally devastating for people of color to have to rage about racism. They often end up losing their friends, their livelihoods, even their lives. Rather than attacking them for their anger, we need to ask ourselves how many layers of complacency, ignorance, collusion, privilege, and misinformation have we put into place for it to take so much outrage to get our attention?

The 1965 riots in Watts, as never before, brought our attention to the ravages of racism on the African-American population living there. In 1968 a national report by the Kerner Commission warned us of the dangers of not addressing racial problems. Yet in 1992, when there were new uprisings in Los Angeles, we focused again on the anger of African Americans, on containing that anger, protecting property, and controlling the community, rather than on solving the problems that cause poverty, unemployment, crime, and high drop-out rates. As soon as the anger was contained, we turned our attention elsewhere and left the underlying problems unaddressed. The only way to break this cycle of rage is for us to seriously address the sources of the anger, the causes of the problems. And in order to do that, we need to talk about racism directly with each other.

Manifestations of Internalized Racial Superiority (IRS)

Please note that this is intended to show and give examples of some manifestations of IRS. There are countless other manifestations. Please use this as a guide to provide examples and encourage deeper thinking and personal reflection. Specifically don't forget to think about Cultural Misappropriation, either/ or mentality, placing value on quantity over quality, perfectionism, and individualism. Please reference "White Supremacy Culture" by Tema Okun for more in-depth descriptions of other manifestations.

1) **Denial**- not accepting the existence of racism to avoid responsibility or pain in addressing it.
   - "there is no such thing as racism"
   - "racism was dealt with during the civil rights movement"
   - "oh, well, yes, racism exists, but it's a problem with those other white people, I'm different."
   - "I don't see color, I just see people"
   - historical amnesia; forgetting or disregarding the past

2) **Distancing**- distancing can happen in 2 ways for white folks, either staying away from own people (white people) in an effort to avoid being associated with the stereotypes, or staying away from People and Communities of Color, largely due to fear, discomfort, and/ or personal racism. For more info/examples of distancing from white people please reference Internalized Anti-Racist Superiority. The following examples refer to distancing from POC.
   - building community in places with no or very few people of color. This is very easy for white people to do, and often happens from a lack of effort to be in intentionally multi-racial and multi-cultural community.
   - involvement in overtly or more subtly blatantly racist institutions (this can include orgs which exclude POC through testing requirements, membership/ income requirements, legacy, or simply not making an effort to be inclusive). gated/ "exclusive" communities, private schools

3) **Guilt**- learning about systems of racism which white people benefit from leads many people to feel guilty about the history of white supremacy, and our personal and ancestral involvement in this history. Guilt is a natural phase to go through for white people learning about racism, but can be dangerous when one gets stuck there, and makes it difficult to be authentically connected to self, white collective, or struggles of resistance.
   - apologizing to POC for stuff you're learning/ realizing about racism. hint: this is not new info to POC, nor do realities of racism need to be reinforced by white ppl.
   - doing activism because one feels bad, rather than is committed to collective liberation

4) **Paternalism**- an attitude of looking down upon others, almost in a fathering sense.
   - Sense that one knows best, and can solve problems/ provide solutions for things one really has no direct experience with or knows anything about.

- Assuming one's own experience to be more valid or legit than other people.
  - "I went to New Orleans to help the victims of Katrina and provide what they need to restart their lives."
  - decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it

5) **Intellectualism**- thinking about racism and oppression on an intellectual level, without truly internalizing it or attaching emotions to it. Staying focused on institutional analysis, rather than thinking about how one personally plays into and maintains the system.
   - referring to readings, books, classes as only source of understanding racism.
   - always talking about what one "thinks" rather than what one "feels"
   - dismissing showing emotion as being dramatic, thinking the way one processes is the right or the only legit way to do so

6) **Normalizing Whiteness**- assumption that white is what is normal and right, white cultural standards become normal in institutional/ business settings, and whiteness is assumed unless otherwise noted.
   - When talking about people: mentioning race when referring to self or other white people.
   - Using Roberts Rules or consensus (both white decision making processes), top down leadership structure, the way meetings/ businesses are set up, the way time is viewed, expectations of professional dress.
   - image of white or European beauty as the normal "standard of beauty"- Straight hair, slim figure, small lips, narrow nose, light skin are "normal" and "beautiful". Images of beauty for POC are viewed as "exotic".

7) **Sense of Urgency**- sense that things need to happen right now, because now is the time, and "we just need to go ahead and make this decision." Continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive.
   - handling decision making over e-mail
   - the notion that Anti-Racism work is any more urgent now than it was 20 years ago or 2 months ago or will be 20 years from now or 2 months from now.
   - not waiting or soliciting feedback from whole group, or those people most affected.
   - reaction to racist incidents rather than ongoing work to change racist systems.

8) **Internalized Anti-Racist Superiority**- distancing oneself from other white people, not viewing one self as part of larger white collective, exceptionalizing oneself
   - "down whitey syndrome"
   - happens frequently when white people feel they really get or understand an analysis of racism
   - thinking of oneself as better or different than other white people.
   - avoiding/not talking about racism with ones family or white friends because they "won't get it". keeping anti-racist and family community separate OR completely distancing oneself from family/ friends who aren't actively anti-racist.
   - hanging out with/ dating exclusively or mostly people of color.

R ACISM IS NOT GOING TO END tomorrow or next year. Every delay and setback saps our strength and strains our hope. It is easy to despair, easy to give up. How do we nurture and sustain ourselves for what may well be a lifetime struggle? How do we keep alive the vision of racial justice and multicultural democracy that guides our action?

The first step is to stop and think about how we are taking care of ourselves for the long term. Our guilt, desperation, anger, fear, the immediate pressure of events, or even our enthusiasm may make it difficult for us to think about how to keep going after this next action, campaign, or crisis.

If we are not thinking about how to nurture ourselves in the coming years, we are probably also not thinking strategically about the future. We may have become bogged down reacting to everyday events. We may have lost sight of our goals, not noticed how the world is changing, and forgotten that we are going to have to renew ourselves to remain effective.

We need to create time in our overworked, overcommitted lives to reflect on the future. Some of us do this best alone, others with friends and family. In either case, we must start with time for reflection.

Take a moment to think about how you center your energy or calm yourself amidst the pressures and stress of your daily routines? How could you strengthen this part of your life?

Reflection is a spiritual practice for some of us. Any spiritual practice that connects us to a reality greater than our individual lives — that connects us to other people, to animal and plant life, and/or to a larger energy in the world — can increase our respect for life and our valuing of difference. It can renew and guide our pursuit for a better world. We each have, or can find, our own unique way to reflect and connect.

What activities help you connect to a greater reality?

How could these activities support your work for social justice?

How might you create more time for reflection in your life?

We also need to take care of ourselves physically and emotionally. We need to live as if we wanted to be alive when our visions are realized. It goes without saying that we need to eat, exercise, relax, have fun, play, enjoy, and smile. Yet how many of us don't take these parts of our lives seriously until we can't continue our work because of exhaustion or poor health? How do we expect to continue in the struggle? What are we modeling for the young people around us?

For people from a white Christian background there may be a big divide between work and leisure. Taking care of oneself, goofing off, and having fun may seem self-indulgent, even sinful. Some people can turn exercise and other forms of recreation into work, cancelling out some of their value to us. These attitudes can also make it difficult to exult in the singing, dance, drama, and other celebratory rituals that can be so renewing to our lives.

Reclaiming or developing cultural rituals can heal and reinvigorate us. Rituals build community, connect people, and inspire new visions and strategies. Singing or going to hear music, writing, reading or listening to a poem; participating in a holiday ritual, sharing a meal with friends — we need to allow ourselves the cultural activities that nurture our souls.

salvation and that people shouldn't make mistakes or ask for help. We become isolated, scared, confused, and lost. We don't know where to turn for support. Many of us find it easier to support others than to ask for help. We have to overcome our pride and fear to admit that we can't do it all by ourselves.

We can't fight racism alone. We can't create social justice by ourselves. Cultural activities and broad-based community support and action networks are essential to sustain us in this work. Friends, family members, and community networks keep us connected, supported, and inspired. They help us maintain perspective on who we are and what we can do. Working with others aids us in evaluating what we can or cannot take on, what our share is. Taking care of ourselves through healthy lifestyles, rituals, cultural activities, and support networks builds and sustains a community of people dedicated to the struggle for social justice.

Finally, we need to celebrate our successes, no matter how small; our victories, no matter how tenuous. We need to see how far we've come as well as how far there is to go. Although racism is still a central constituent of our society, we have made progress, things have changed. They have changed because multitudes of courageous people of color and white people have fought, resisted, and refused to be overwhelmed by racism. They have changed because the human spirit is indomitable and we each share that spirit. We can only sustain our efforts by building on and celebrating the achievements of the people who have contributed to getting us as far as we are today.

ASSESSMENT:
FOR THE LONG HAUL

1. Who are family and friends you could talk with about doing racial justice work? Who will you talk with first?

2. Who are co-workers who might help you form a racial justice action/support network? Who will you talk with first?

3. Do you know or know of people of color who you want to talk with about fighting racism? List the one you will talk with first. Ask if he or she has time and is willing to do this with you.

4. Name one network, action committee, or support group that you are going to join.

5. What kind of cultural events, rituals, or celebrations have inspired you to fight racism? What kind of cultural activity brings you together with others? Which ones renew your spirit?

6. How can you make your work to end racism an honoring and a celebration of the efforts of those who have preceded you?

Entitlement

HAVING BENEFITS AND BEING PART OF THE CULTURE OF POWER very often encourages a person to develop a sense of entitlement to special treatment.

A sense of entitlement is the sense that you are owed certain rights, privileges, services, or material goods because of who you are. In Western countries a person's race, class, and gender strongly influence what that person feels entitled to.

Of course, there are some entitlements that we might all agree are legally or morally good. A right to a decent job, to food and housing, to free speech, to be able to vote — we might call these basic rights or entitlements.

But I use entitlement here in a different way, as the feeling that one is entitled to certain goods or services more than others are, or that is one is entitled to be served by others because of one's class, race, and/or gender. When people grow up in a society where, despite rhetoric about equal opportunity, they are given more access to power, status, goods, and services, they will come to think that they or their group is superior and that they deserve more than others. And they may become upset, bitter, and resentful if they don't receive what they see as their due. In fact, when they are treated the same as everyone else, because of their expectations they will perceive themselves to be victimized or to be at a disadvantage, simply because they have lost the unacknowledged advantage they had. When you don't expect to have to wait your turn or wait in line or take a number, when you do have to do these things and you see other people being served ahead of you, you may feel angry at these people for being given preference. In fact, it is simply your sense of entitlement that is being challenged.

A sense of entitlement is also visible when people don't acknowledge the humanity and worth of the people who serve them. Class, race, and gender hierarchies lead us to dehumanize others who are "beneath" us, which in turn dehumanizes us and isolates us from others.

When I was younger there were times when I would walk past a receptionist and into my office without saying anything to her. There were times when I did not acknowledge or talk with the people maintaining the building in which I went to school, or the people who cleaned my dorm room in college or my motel room when I traveled. When this behavior was pointed out to me and I began to notice it in myself, I realized that I felt entitled to other people's services and assumed that they were there to take care of my needs. At first I thought that to correct this I had to become friends with people who provided services for me. However, I soon saw that what was required for the people who were contributing to my well-being and the well-being of the community I needed to see them differently, as full human beings, rather than as support staff for my life and activities.

As I noticed my sense of entitlement, I began to see other ways that it played out. I expected people in "lower" status roles to take care of my needs without my having to take responsibility for the mess I made in a room, in a building, in a park, etc. I expected that people would clean up after me, and I was upset when it wasn't done.

Anyone with wealth and status in society can develop a sense of entitlement, but I think it is particularly common in white people because of our cultural history of having Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/as working for us as slaves or as extremely low-paid workers. We generally expect people of color to take care of our physical and emotional needs. To rationalize this exploitation we also have a history of telling ourselves that we are a superior culture, far more morally and technologically advanced than any other. Because white men have been seen as the leaders of that culture, this sense of entitlement is highly developed in white men, who therefore expect to be treated better than people of color, better than white people of a "lower" class, and better than women.

How does this sense of entitlement show itself? I have noticed it in the following ways. (I have put the word white in parentheses because although I think that it is usually white people exhibiting these behaviors, with people of color or people of a lower class on the receiving end, this is not always the case. There are certainly people of color, especially those with economic means, who do these things as well.)

- (White) People cutting in line in front of others because they think their needs have a priority

- (White) Drivers cutting in front of other cars because they are in a hurry

- (White) People saying to a receptionist "Don't put me on hold"

- (White) People walking by or ignoring people like receptionists, maintenance staff, or cleaning staff

- (White) People not noticing and appreciating the large numbers of people who spend time taking care of their needs.

- (White) People feeling okay about paying childcare workers, au pairs, gardeners, in-home attendants, and other workers less than a living wage

- (White) People feeling justified paying organizational staff much less than they themselves make

- (White) People who become impatient when they don't receive the prompt service or the attention they feel entitled to and direct abusive comments at the staff who are dealing with them

- (White) People who leave a paltry tip when they can well afford to tip generously

- (White) People quickly judging the motives and behavior of people they don't know, and holding their own group up for comparison

- (White) People expecting that their need for acknowledgment and service is more important than that of others in the room/office/classroom, etc.

- (White) People taking up more time and attention than their fair share in conversations, in meetings, and in public events

Besides lessening our own sense of entitlement, we can also challenge the behavior of those around us. In a public place we can ask people to wait their turn. In a meeting we can ask those who have spoken not to speak again until everyone has had a turn. We can ask co-workers what impact they think it has on a receptionist when they walk past without acknowledging his or her existence. We can ask people to use "I" statements and not make generalizations about, or speak for, others. And we can challenge people's rationalizations for unequal and inadequate wages, benefits, tips, and other forms of monetary compensation.

When we challenge behavior based on a sense of entitlement in white people we counter the negative impact such behavior has on people of color. We also counter one of the costs to white people of racism, a mistaken belief that white people and their culture are superior to all others. This is only one of many costs that white people pay for the racial benefits we receive.

> "Because ultimately this work is not
> about you, or me, or any one of us.
> Its about building a world where all
> of the structures that keep people
> down don't exist anymore, and
> where any human being among us
> has the power to decide, for real,
> how they will live their own life"
>
> —Catherine Jones
> Love Letter to the Common Ground Clinic"

- (White) People speaking for others, about others, or using phrases like "we," "they," or "that group" rather than "I think," "I feel," "In my opinion"

These behaviors can all be signs of entitlement. They are the direct result of an internalized sense of the superiority of white people and white culture, which leads to racism and other forms of exploitation and discrimination. I know that I have done many of these things, but because I grew up believing in equal opportunity and equal rights, I had to develop a rationale for my behavior. I had to explain to myself why I deserved better treatment, quicker access, prompter service, and more airtime in meetings. As a result I have consciously or unconsciously told myself that I deserve this preference because:

- I am better educated
- I have more experience
- I am more rational
- My time is more valuable
- I earn more money
- Everyone will get served so I might as well be in front
- I worked hard to get to where I am
- I work harder than others
- They probably don't need as much to live on
- They are used to getting by with less
- They probably get loss of tips from other people
- I don't actually have direct contact with them so I am not responsible
- I need to get there on time.

I have only just begun to see the sense of entitlement that these excuses mask and the degree to which they are rationalizations for inequality.

ASSESSMENT:
ENTITLEMENT

1. Look over the list of entitlements above and note the ones that you have felt at times.
2. Which others would you add to the list?
3. Which of the rationalizations have you used to explain the preference you felt you deserved?
4. Has your sense of entitlement ever led you to ignore the needs or rights of others?
5. What impact does it have on others and on the community when you act out of a sense of personal entitlement?
6. How can you better notice the impact of entitlement on your family, work, and school environments?

Racism

- racism: persynal prejudice plus the (mis)use of institutional power to privilege white folx at the expense of people of color.

- What are a few examples of systemic racism from your home?
- What are a few examples of systemic classism from your home?
- What are a few examples of systemic racism in the larger world?
- What are a few examples of systemic classism in the larger world?

Solidarity

- How does a persyn acting in solidarity view themself?

- How do they view the people they work with?

- How do they view their work?

Charity

- How does the persyn providing charity view themself?

- How do they view the people they work with?

- How do they view their work?

SOLIDARITY, NOT CHARITY

VALORES COLECTIVOS PARA DIÁLOGO Y ACCIÓN
COLLECTIVE PRINCIPLES FOR DIALOGUE AND ACTION

1 **SERVIR Y NO SERVIRSE - SERVE AND NOT SERVE ONE'S SELF**

To serve as a bridge for the "palabra", the word, of the group and not serve one's own self interest, or use responsibility to promote one's self. This is a space for collective dialogoue and action, do not enter with your own political and personal agenda.

2 **CONSTRUIR Y NO DESTRUIR - CONSTRUCT AND NOT DESTROY**

Construct a space for dialogue and not destroy other existing organizations that work for the good of the community. Make this a postitive space to speak our minds freely.

3 **PROPONER Y NO IMPONER- PROPOSE AND NOT IMPOSE**

Propose that words and thoughts, different to ours, be heard both in heart and mind. Don't impose thoughts, opinions, and work, instead explain. Value one another's experiences and opinions, and think about how they have contributed to your thinking.

4 **CONVENCER Y NO VENCER - CONVINCE AND NOT CONQUER**

Inform and convince of the necessity to unite our thoughts and struggles in order that all our thoughts and struggles can continue to exist and live. All of our experiences and thoughts are valuable in working toward a collective struggle.

5 **BAJAR Y NO SUBIR - DOWN AND NOT UP**

Communities must be built from the bottom up and not top down. Empowerment happens when we have the knowledge to take control over our own lives and communities.

*Some of these principles are adopted from EZLN Principles for Collective Process.

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