

Anti-Racism Resource Packet



**Reflections, Readings, Group Exercises and Resources
for Intentional Communities**

Excerpts from the book project [Recipes for the Beloved Community](#)

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Packet Preface

This packet is a chapter from the forthcoming book project, Recipes for the Beloved Community, spearheaded by Carolyn Griffeth and Jenny Truax. The exercises and resources in this packet were written and compiled by Jenny Truax unless otherwise noted. Many of them are adapted from the excellent “Dismantling Racism” workbook published by the Western States Center to more easily apply to intentional communities.

The aftermath of Mike Brown and Ferguson provides a very teachable moment on the subjects of white privilege and structural racism. Following the shooting of Mike Brown and Ferguson, the St. Louis Catholic Worker hosted three weekly Anti-Racist Workshops for white people utilizing this material, and adding new readings and reflections as they came out. We are now starting to facilitate individual anti-racist discussions among neighbors, friends, and fellow employees, using these resources.

We have been asked by African American-led organizations to talk to other white people about racism (our Catholic Worker community is 100% white.) St. Louis, like most places, is highly segregated, and we hope to help white people to better understand their fear, to grow more aware of their privilege, and to move to action for change. We hope you can use this as a resource to host your own Anti-Racist discussions in your community, whether it is a “Racism 101 for White People,” a “Racism and Structural Injustice,” or an ongoing discussion group focused on race and racism.

Some folks are calling this our “Montgomery Moment”. Let's hope and pray we can live up to the dream this name implies.



Anti-Oppression Work: Introduction

So, you've opened this packet and maybe you're wondering if you should put it back. You have a community that does amazing work. You're busy! Sure, there's places you can improve, but you're certainly don't feel like delving into a lot of navel gazing, self reflecting and guilt-inducing activities. Sound familiar?

Well I hear you. For years, I've been quite aware of the fact that my community is situated in a mostly African American neighborhood, in a city that is 49% African American. Meanwhile my community, for it's 37 years of existence, has been about 98% white. We do great hospitality; we are involved in local and international justice movements. And we are all white. We haven't really had the language, will, or direction to do something about it until recently. If you had asked me about race and our community 5 years ago, I probably would have gotten defensive, changed the subject or lapsed into a lot of guilt and shame. The material in this section aims to provide fodder for your community to develop a shared language and analysis of your situation, so that you can talk about racism and other forms of oppression in a fluent way.

Doing anti-oppression work isn't about inducing guilt, and it's not about giving you beleaguered souls one more thing to your to do list. **It's about integrity.** Can I speak

authentically about racism in the U.S. when I have few to no African American friends and peers? Can I work to end U.S. war-making in the Middle East when I haven't done the work to build mutual relationships with Muslims and Arab Americans? Can I tell people that my community values inclusion when we haven't looked at our community for seeds of sexism and heterosexism? Integrity demands that we seek to be the change in the world we wish to see. **It's about meaningful relationships.** Capitalism encourages us to live disempowered, isolated, homogenous lives. Many of us broke out of that model to join intentional communities. Hopefully, these communities provide a vehicle for meeting a diversity of folks that inspire and challenge us. **It's a way of life and a worldview.** When you analyze power dynamics through an anti-oppression lens, there's no going back. Many of us in the social justice world have done the social analysis that impeaches the rich, the war profiteers at the expense of the poor. The anti-oppression model takes the analysis further. It calls us to accountability. It gives us tools to look at how our personal behaviors and values contribute to the oppression of others. It gives our communities directional signposts as we examine our structures, leadership and culture through new eyes. Rather than guilty navel gazing, the anti-oppression lens gives us a positive, flexible and creative framework for living the revolution.

Here's a metaphor that helped me see the importance of addressing privilege in community. Let's take sexism as an example - the men in the room are the part of the **dominant group** within this oppression; they generally reap the benefits and have the power. In a community meeting, picture the men as elephants. They are big, they can be clumsy and miss many dynamics and details because of the space they take up and privilege they have. Now picture the women, who are in the group **targeted** by sexism, as the mice also sitting around the table. The mice have to be very aware of small movements, moods, and opinions from the elephant in order to avoid harm. Within our community meetings, it's important for the elephants to step back, share power, and listen, and it's important for the mice to step forward, take on leadership, and speak the truth of their experience and analysis.



We each have elements of both the elephant and the mouse that make up our identities. This concept is called **intersectionality** - we have multiple factors that affect our presence in community, and in the world, including class, race, nation of origin, sexual orientation, gender expression, and other factors. I have one community member who is a straight, white, raised working-class woman, and another who is an able-bodied upper class Latino gay male. We're all a mix of elephants and mice, and developing a shared language and analysis to talk about these different identities is important.

The Road to Socialization activity explores the messages we receive about our identity, and others identities, from birth and early childhood into adulthood. It describes the hallmarks of our societal landscapes (scarcity, individualism, hierarchy, dualism, colonialism and domination), and asks what "exit ramp events" broke us out of this mainstream mode of thinking. In this reflection, you can explore your different identity components in the **Identity Profile Graph** and talk about school, media, and community messages that influence your narratives about yourself and other identity groups.

The two ladder exercises can be used for elements of your identity that fall into either the dominant or targeted category. Take your white race, for example, and complete the **Ladder of Empowerment: Dominant Groups** activity. Understanding what stage we're in can help us function more authentically in community and better deal with complex social issues. The lower we are on the ladder, the more dominant groups cooperate and accede to oppression; movement up happens from personal relationships and education. Or, take your gender identity as a woman and explore the **Ladder of Empowerment: Targeted Groups** activity. You (consciously or not) probably spend a lot of energy navigating how this part of your identity interacts with society and community. Ideally, our community supports us in traveling up the ladder toward empowerment and away from internalized oppression.

How Oppression Works in our Communities

We may not recognize "oppression" within our communities, but most of us acknowledge that power dynamics certainly exist. Going deeper, many of these power dynamics are based on **privilege**, the ways that society and community rewards us based on our external identity rather than who we are as people. Complete the **Privilege Awareness Circle**, with your community, or alone - it explores some of the ways that privilege plays out in community. You can probably think of more. Throughout our upbringing were we encouraged, as men, to take leadership and speak publicly? Are we accustomed, because of our race, to being listened to and trusted? Other dynamics are influenced by our **internalized oppression**. People in targeted groups can internalize the negative messages that sexism, transgender oppression, classism, etc. sell. They may have poor self-esteem, defensiveness, or horizontal hostility, where they are hyper-critical of others from their targeted group.

Within our larger society, oppression is enforced in three major ways: through interpersonal interactions, through our institutions, and through our culture. Our communities can reinforce or combat oppression on each of these stages.

Interpersonal Oppression -

How do we handle one-on-one conflicts that involve racism, oppressive gender roles, or male domination? How do we respond to guests and volunteers about homophobic comments? Do we ignore or avoid naming the oppressions, or do we challenge comments made by folks in a loving and direct way?

Structural Oppression - As an organization or community, in our materials (newsletter, website, brochure, etc.) are we explicitly welcoming to LGBTQ people? In our meetings, do straight males dominate conversation? Do we challenge ableism and ageism in societal institutions just as we challenge war making and other injustices? Do we value relationships between LGBTQ people as much as straight ones? In our house chores, do we challenge sexist gender roles? Is the work that women do as recognized and appreciated as the work that the men do?

How do we go about challenging these oppressions and dealing with privilege we might have? Most of us want to do the right thing - to be **good allies**. This involves a lifetime of commitment, action, trying, failing, and trying

again. Some folks mistakenly think of achieving ally-ship like they are checking an “I attended the anti-racist workshop” box, or attaining a merit badge. That way, we can operate in the world in any way we want, and then claim “But I’m an ally! My comment couldn’t have been homophobic!” Think of ally-ship as a verb, rather than a noun, and you’re in better shape. Or, feel free not to use it at all if it has too many pitfalls.

Another trap for allies is the term **diversity**. Diversity training often leads to tokenization, as in, people of color are like the raisins in my (white) oatmeal; it just takes a few to make the dish more rich. Diversity does not mean true anti-oppression analysis and action. When people talk about diversity they usually mean adding a few people from targeted groups to a dominant-controlled organization, not sharing power, changing structures or being accountable.

Acting in solidarity means being accountable to and listening responsively to people in targeted groups. It means educating yourself, and not expecting disabled people, queers and people of color to do the emotional work and educating for you. It means accepting feedback, and avoiding the white-splaining, man-splaining, etc. that often shadows our identities in

dominant groups. Our work as allies should be work that both benefits people and communities that are targeted, and also strengthens our organizing towards justice. The question to ask is “How will our community’s engagement in an anti-oppression work help [insert targeted group here]?” and “How will it strengthen our community to do this work?”



How we handle our privilege in community matters. When we take our identity privileges for granted, we legitimate assumptions about entitlement. For example, when I assume as a heterosexual that I should enjoy the right to marry, it helps entrench a norm that privileges one group at the expense of another. Paying attention to the way that society unjustly rewards us can help keep us grounded. And when we do choose to “compromise” or participate in structures or groups that discriminate against a targeted group, we can do it in a spirit of “**critical acquiescence**.” This idea has us commit to being agents of change within these structures as we participate in them.

As we journey together to better understand and dismantle oppression, let us keep love in front of us - love that is generative, challenging and creative. Only in the spirit of love can we free ourselves to make lasting change in ourselves, our communities, and the world.

Anti-Racism Work: Introduction

Jenny Truax and Carolyn Griffeth

Let's face it, racially integrated intentional communities are the exception rather than the rule. Many, if not most of them are comprised largely of well-meaning white middle class folks. And many feel guilty about this fact. Many of communities are situated in neighborhoods where people of color are a significant portion of the population, yet they have difficulty integrating our communities. Often people of color enter mostly as guests or clients. Most intentional communities would agree that they value diversity (which itself can be a nebulous and sometimes tokenistic concept), however, there is a disproportionate number of white middle class educated people populating intentional communities in the U.S. When the whiteness of these communities is raised, people often deflect with excuses about class. While race and class are certainly connected, white folks need to be brave and also acknowledge the effect racism has.

Racism is present everywhere in the U.S.: in our church groups, parent groups, at work, play and home. Our good intentions, great missions and dedicated community work don't change this fact. With intentional work that directly addresses racism, communities can evolve and grow into groups that actively embody anti-racist commitments. Many of us want to move past the "What should we do?" and "Why aren't there any people of color in our community?" questions, but lack a direction. Or we may lack the will to change; norms and culture do change and evolve when a community diversifies and gains more anti-oppression analysis, and this can be scary. White folks may think to themselves, "Will I lose my community if we go down this path?"

Referring back to the Anti-Oppression Introduction, the point of our anti-racism work is for our community to develop a shared language and analysis of institutional racism, power, and privilege, a shared assessment of the ways racism is affecting our community, and shared priorities for change. The goal is not for our community to check a few "anti-racism boxes", adopt the badge "ally" and go on with business as usual. Being in solidarity with people of color is a continual journey of self-discovery, challenge and support. It's a communal balance between looking at our internal structures, and looking at how we engage with the outside world.

This section is especially aimed at white people and communities that are all-white or mostly white. Whites and white-dominated communities are the benefactors of racism, and have the most learning and growing to do in order to dismantle it. In part, it is our white heritage that led us into these progressive communities. Our unfettered access to resources, the isolation of white middle class life, and the homogenization of our culture leads many folks to seek out counter-cultural communities. That's all well and good, but do we want this experience to be a qualification for membership in our community?

First, let's talk about the concept of **race**. Race is actually a social construct - a way to put people into categories that has no biologic or scientific basis. The concept of race was created to give power and privilege to white people and to legitimize the dominance of white people over non-white people. Look at U.S. history for an example; for the majority of the 19th century, racial categories were limited to Caucasian, Mongoloid, and Negroid. One group maintained property, civil, and voting rights while the other two were strictly limited. Even though race is a concept we invented and periodically alter to fit the current political situation, it has a very real impact on those targeted by it - people who are not white. With that in mind, we'll continue to use the terms 'race' and 'racism,' with that extra bit of context included.

In a nutshell, the **definition of racism** is "racial prejudice + power = racism". But what does that mean? Well, anyone of any race can have "racial prejudice" (positive or negative stereotypes based on racial characteristics,) and commit violent or unjust acts based on this prejudice. To be racist (rather than simply prejudiced) requires having institutional power, and in the U.S., this power is held by white folks. Whites mostly run the banks and corporations, they make up the largest proportion of lawmakers and judges, they have the money and make the decisions; whites control

the systems that matter. Because of this power, when white people act on their racial prejudices, they are being racist. So the uncomfortable punchline here is: Only white people can be racist, because they have institutional power. Asians, Mexicans and African Americans can be prejudiced, but they cannot be racist, because they don't have the institutional power.

Racism operates in a variety of venues, but white folks - even those in “radical” intentional communities - only often recognize it in its most extreme form (you know, Ku Klux Klan rallies and the occasional celebrity racist slur). In reality, it's much more pervasive. It occurs in our houses and meetings where “**personal racism**” occurs: volunteers asking questions based on racist stereotypes, community members making off-hand racist characterizations. You can find it in the classroom, where “**cultural racism**” propagates racist values and standards: biased and white-washed history textbooks and the assimilation of students into the dominant white culture. “**Institutional racism**” is the way government, public and private institutions - including intentional communities - systematically afford white people social, political and economic advantages, while marginalizing people of color. (Remember the earlier question about qualifications for entry into our communities? That is a good example of institutional racism that systemically attracts some while discouraging others.)

No one is born a Racist. In fact, racism is contrary to our fundamental human nature. As young children so compellingly demonstrate, we begin life caring deeply about all human beings. Until we ourselves are hurt—put down, ignored, threatened, beaten, isolated, and so on—each of us wants all people to be treated well. No one would ever participate in racism or any other form of mistreatment if they had not first been hurt. However, once we have been made to feel scared or bad about ourselves, that hurt can be manipulated, causing us to take it out on others.

In an oppressive society no one escapes messages aimed at making one feel bad about oneself. For example: A young girl watching TV notices that she doesn't look like the cute-girl image being shown and begins to think she is not attractive, and thus not as valuable as other girls. This is the hurt to which a racist message can easily be linked. Then she is told, implicitly if not explicitly by society or friends/family, that at least she is more attractive/valuable than black girls. In an unconscious attempt to restore her self-worth, the racist message takes hold. Future racist messages are internalized similarly, but even more readily as they connect to the first.

For this reason, no one should be blamed for their racism or other oppressive tendencies. For one thing, blaming doesn't help the recovery process or make any one more receptive to feedback. It is also not useful to blame ourselves for the racism, or sexism, or homophobia, within us. Rather we should treat ourselves and others with compassion. In difficult encounters it is helpful to think, “I'm sorry that happened to you.” In noticing and responding to our own oppressive patterns and ideas, we can say to ourselves, “There is a good reason why I came to believe this (the way I was hurt), but I refuse to believe it any more.” Unlike criticism and blaming which can actually further the hurts that oppressive beliefs are linked to; expressing love through compassion can serve as a healing balm. That said, let us not confuse compassion with tolerance of anyone's oppressive patterns.

This packet will provide some shared language, analysis tools, and action ideas for your community in becoming a more anti-racist community. Peruse it for tools to host your own discussions on white privilege and racism, to develop a common language and analysis, so that you can more effectively talk about racism within your work, and to discern ways to build more meaningful alliances with communities of color to advance racial justice.



The Catholic Worker: Eliminating Racism from Within - James Meinert

RoundTable 2012

Note: Many times I use the term, “we”, referring to white Catholic Workers. This is not to exclude people of color but it is the white Catholic Workers, myself included, that I’m calling out.

This past summer the Midwest Catholic Worker gathering began with a large presentation on eliminating racism. The topic is pertinent to Catholic Workers here in the Midwest and beyond as we struggle to continue our prophetic work in the world. Something we noticed, which has been noticed many times before, is how white the Catholic Worker (CW) is. While many Catholic Workers may struggle for workers’ rights, against poverty, against war and violence, all of which disproportionately affect people of color, those who choose to join the CW are overwhelmingly white.

Looking Back

From its inception, the CW has been involved in the struggle for justice including racial injustice. Dorothy would often report on worker’s conditions, especially those of African Americans, race dynamics, and racism. And there were more than just words. She put her own life on the line to support the work of desegregation at the interracial farm Koinonia and was shot at while vigiling there. Peter also began what would today be called a popular education center in Harlem. Peter’s vision was to have a center with shared leadership in an almost entirely black neighborhood. Later, throughout the struggles for civil rights, many Catholic Workers marched in solidarity in the South.

In addition to solidarity work we also need to recover the stories of black leadership within the movement. There have been several CW houses started by African Americans. These houses in D.C., Memphis, and Chicago were started by people committed to the vision of the CW but also rooted in the needs of their area. Helen Caldwell Day started the Blessed Martin House of Hospitality in Memphis where she ran a daycare for parents in the neighborhood who had to work but couldn’t afford care. Arthur Falls started the first Chicago CW. He didn’t consider the hospitality work very important. He wrote that, “the greater need in Chicago was an opportunity for ‘intellectual exploration and an avenue for bringing together white and colored Catholics for mutual enterprise.’” Pete’s Place, a CW drop-in center currently operating in Chicago was co-founded by an African American and a white. But while it is important to not forget the stories of black leadership, the movement remains predominantly white, and it is time to start taking responsibility for changing that and eliminating whatever racism is operating.

The St. Louis CW has a history similar to many of the other houses in the Midwest of being almost entirely run by white people. This isn’t something that has escaped people’s attention; real efforts have been made to change that. In 2000 a group formed the Dorothy Day Co-Housing community in an effort to create a community of equality that crossed both race and class. This, however, ended; some have said the reasons for that were the difficulties in overcoming the challenges created by racism and class divisions. In 2006 the St. Louis community published a Round Table titled “Privilege – Crossing the Divide,” in which white privilege and racism were analyzed and put out there for all to see. Maybe someday looking back, we will see that these were the first steps in transforming the CW in St. Louis to being recognizably anti-racist.



What is getting in the way?

So what is holding us back? Robert Jensen, author of The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism, and White Privilege, identifies the core fear that holds racism in place to be essentially losing whiteness as the norm. As Catholic Workers we must ask ourselves, then, how have we confused protecting an inner norm of whiteness with protecting the tenets of the Catholic Worker? Are we afraid to have the CW change drastically from what it is into something else? Hopefully thinking about this together can help us move toward making some real changes and uncovering some assumptions that had gone unquestioned.

Several ideas have been tossed around as I've talked to people about this and from reading Tom Cornell's excellent critique of Pax Christi and the racism within. Some questions include:

- Are we more committed to values or tenets than we are to people or communities?
- Do we act in the world in a way that puts CW ideals before "the needs of those who suffer the violence we oppose and without accountability to those for whom we seek to speak and act?"
- To whom are we accountable?
- Does our language perpetuate an internal culture that is attractive only to the more privileged, particularly white and middle class? (For example, having fought one's way out of poverty one may ask whom it benefits to voluntarily accept poverty?)
- Could we emphasize simplicity or solidarity with the earth and oppressed instead?
- Have we valued antiwar work or anti-poverty work more than anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-heterosexism work?
- Do we fail to see how these are interconnected?

For those raised in communities targeted by state violence, "nonviolence" seems to communicate passive acceptance of oppression. Instead could we emphasize direct confrontation with oppressive forces? Have we created white middle class cultures in our houses that we presume to be normative? Many houses have had people of color join the core community, but rarely have they stayed long. In St. Louis this is the case. Sometimes this is a sign of a culture that is not willing to examine its own presumptions or back the leadership and ideas of people coming from different perspectives.

The culture of volunteerism/self-sacrifice in the CW needs to be looked at hard. For those who come from groups who have been used by capitalism as servants and slaves, not getting paid for work done might not hold the same level of attractiveness as it does for the more privileged who have been given so much without working for it and want to reject this injustice. One story of St. Elizabeth's house in Chicago relates that the Workers there began to think that what their neighbors needed most were jobs. The house transitioned to hiring some of the people from their neighborhood to run the shelter. Some have claimed that it lost its "Catholic Worker identity" but does that simply mean it put the needs of people above the abstract tenets of the CW?



Looking Forward

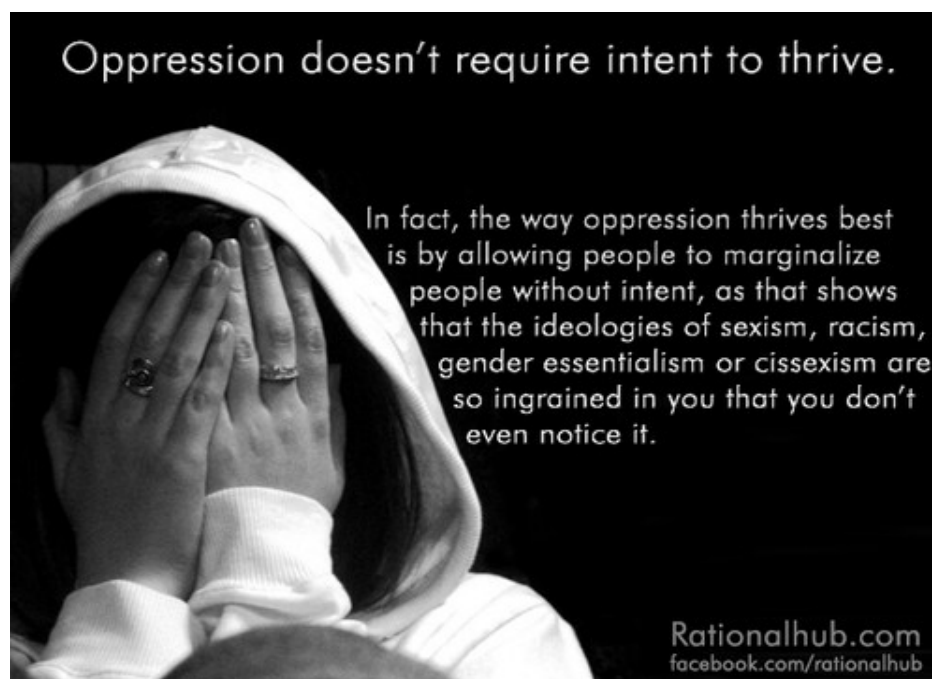
Many in the St. Louis community have decided that it's time for a change. But sometimes this is where it gets tricky. Many predominantly white groups have made a mistake at this point that perpetuates racism by simply asking

“how do we get more people of color in our group?” This question assumes that your group looks attractive to people of color. But if a group is already all white, there is probably some unaware racism going on that white people have trouble seeing, but may be obvious to people of color. Instead of asking how to get them to join you, how do you get yourself to join them? So what to do? Here in St. Louis we have had some retreats discussing our unaware racism and the following ideas are ways we are moving forward. One basic one is building friendships with people of color—we do this realizing that as white people our lives have been limited, being cut off from people of color, and having these connections will enrich our lives. This often brings up embarrassment for white people (isn’t it racist to want to be someone’s friend just because she is Latina?) But are we white people more welcoming of other whites just because they are white? This embarrassment has been keeping us segregated too long and we haven’t yet unintentionally desegregated our world so it’s time to do it intentionally. While you still get to choose who you are connected to, don’t ignore that we white people keep “choosing” mostly other white people.

Another step is backing and supporting organizations that are led by people of color, even if an organization doesn’t line up exactly with CW values. Make their struggle your struggle. This is where the values of rootedness and connection in an actual community that we are accountable to become more important than other abstract values.

An important move is also forming a white-allies support group—a group that meets regularly to help hold each other accountable to taking steps towards ending racism. Choosing to be a white ally in the fight against racism means pushing against a lot of enculturation that discourages that very thing and a support group can often be helpful so that we don’t give up no matter how difficult it feels.

This is work that we must do as Catholic Workers if we want to eliminate oppression and injustice. All oppression is linked and we will never end war or poverty with racism in place. Though it may feel like adding another responsibility to an already overwhelming life, the work of eliminating racism is not burdensome with a good support group. Rather, it is liberating; it frees us from the chains that have held us in a place of isolation, disconnection, fear, shame, guilt, and embarrassment. If our goal is to integrate the Catholic Worker, we will probably fail, but if our goal is to end racism by taking whatever steps necessary, then the Catholic Worker, in whatever form it may exist come fifty years from now, will no longer be the white middle class group it is today.



Witnessing Whiteness for White People*

by Carolyn Griffeth

** Note: This article is of course for everyone but was particularly written so that people of color can take a break from trying to helping whites to see the stuff they need to work on.*

Whiteness is something real. It is a set of patterns (limited ways of relating), as well as the values and beliefs that mark white culture. Sometimes we call these values American, but don't let that fool you, they are white values, which were historically promoted to support capitalism and the myth of white superiority.

There was a time in US history when both African and European bond laborers were treated somewhat similarly and few Europeans would have identified as white. This changed in the late 1600's after Bacon's rebellion in which laboring class workers free and bonded, both African and European, joined together to fight for greater rights. Realizing the threat this solidarity posed to the owning class, new legal protections and rights were created for all "whites" - both free and bonded. Other laws followed that continued to eliminate the rights of non-whites, such as the 1691 law forbidding owners from setting African slaves free.

Through minstrel shows and many other means, there also began a white superiority campaign (which arguably continues today) denigrating black and Native American culture as dirty, lazy, communal, superstitious, and sexually immoral; and uplifting white culture as hardworking, ambitious, driven by reason, virtuous, and blessed. Immigrants were given a stark choice: to be recognized as white and gain privileged status, or to be considered "other" or black and lose rights and status. Not surprising, Irish and Italians alike chose the path of whiteness, but at great cost: cultural practices and beliefs that conflicted with whiteness were gradually lost, particularly the communal spirit.

Today, whether your family lineage is French or Swedish, if you've been raised in the US, your culture is whiteness. This is even more so for those who were raised middle class. But what is whiteness? For those of us that have grown up in the Midwest, noticing whiteness can be much like hearing a Midwest accent. Hard isn't it? Similarly, **whiteness has been normalized within our culture. Those that have been raised within it can't see it.**

Recently the St. Louis Catholic Worker community began a study group using the book Witnessing Whiteness by Shelly Tochluk, which helps white folks look at whiteness. This process has been like a long, hard look in the mirror. The white patterns highlighted in the book, such as emotional superficiality and avoidance of conflict are alive among us, preventing us from going deeper in our relationships. How can we be real, when we fear isolation and loss of connection? It was an epiphany to realize that the desire to recover from the blandness, isolation, and meaninglessness of white culture is often what drew us to community. We also noticed how specific white patterns lived on in community and continued to drive us apart: perfectionism, criticism, the need to be exceptional/superior, and playing the savior. No wonder we often have a hard time attracting people of color to join us!

It is helpful to notice that none of us chose these ways of relating; the patterns are something that happened to us. Whiteness is perpetuated through white conditioning: certain values and behaviors are taught and rewarded while others are denigrated and discouraged. You might be thinking: "So what? This kind of conditioning happens in all cultures. Why is it so important to notice whiteness?"



The reason is simple: Because just acting like a normal white person can play out as racism in our relationships with people of color. This is due to the all pervasive reality of racism in our society: people of color have witnessed so many acts of racism, that racism necessarily frames the way "patterned" behavior on the part of whites is interpreted.

Let me share an example: I was speedily walking from my house to Karen house one day with my mind on my to-do list, and I raced right by an African American neighbor and her friend, who I hardly noticed. My neighbor's friend did notice me though, and practically snorted in the air at my rude behavior. This stopped me in my tracks and caused me to turn towards the women I had passed. The look on their faces made it clear that they experienced my behavior as aloof, superior and, simply put, racist. Greatly embarrassed, I stopped and apologized. I was grateful to see how my pattern of being preoccupied was playing out as racism.

A similar thing has sometimes happened when I have to wait in a long line at the grocery store. I feel so entitled to quick service, that if I don't catch myself I am likely to be cold and impatient with those at the register, who are often African American. By not keeping my white conditioning in check, I act like an entitled, racist white woman. The fact that I would have acted just the same with a white worker does not matter.

I wish I could say that these are the only times I acted in unconsciously racist ways. Unfortunately, they are not. Since reading *Witnessing Whiteness* I have looked back on many moments in my life and noticed how acting out white patterns led me to either fail to build deep relationships with people of color, or act as an ally when participating in groups led by African Americans in particular.

This is not what I want for my life and I imagine it is not what you want for yours either. To foster self-awareness amongst white people, I've put together a list of white patterns. (see "Patterns of White Culture" later in this packet) For each, I could come up with an embarrassing example from my own life, but I thought it would be more useful for you to try to come up with an example from your own!

When you look at this list you are likely to chuckle. Much of it should seem familiar: these values and behaviors are not just what alienates whites from people of color; they are also that which separates us from one another, and which makes white-dominant groups often not all that supportive and fun. Understanding whiteness is not only essential to the work of eliminating racism, but also to forming close relationships with other white people, and to recovering the fullness of our humanity. We need not settle for the roles and values handed to us as white people, or for the disconnected lives that come with. Instead, we can challenge these unproductive patterns of behavior beginning with ourselves, and draw near to other white people as they do the same. When we drop the patterns of blaming ourselves and criticizing others, it can even be fun. Trust me!



Being White in a Police State - Jenny Truax

RoundTable, 2013

You don't want to read this article. Hell, I don't even want to write it. It's bad enough to read about the police state - and we're adding racism and white privilege to the mix? No way!

So, listen, I'm a suburbs girl; I was raised there in four different states. I was raised white, with all of the privileges, safety nets and blind spots that go along with it. During my plaid-skirted Catholic school years, I was taught that the police help us when we're lost, and that they protect us from baddies. If you have a similar experience, this article, while maybe uncomfortable for you to read, is written with you in mind (plaid skirt notwithstanding). It is those of us who benefit from white privilege who need to learn the most about the interplay of race with by the police state. We've some inner work to do too - unfortunately, many of our actions and inactions inadvertently reinforce racism. With work, white folks can become allies to people of color.

I know the phrases "white privilege," "only whites can be racist," and "police state" make your skin crawl. You associate them with deodorant-shunning paranoid radicals who are completely out of touch with regular people. Let's look at these terms a little more closely; these phrases might make us uncomfortable because they challenge our framework of understanding. (Again, deodorant notwithstanding.)

Racism- Just the White Hoods?

In a nutshell, the definition of racism is "racial prejudice + power = racism". But what does that mean? So, anyone of any race can have "racial prejudice" (positive or negative stereotypes based on racial characteristics,) and commit violent or unjust acts based on this prejudice. To be racist (rather than simply prejudiced) requires having institutional power, and in the U.S., this power is held by white folks. We mostly run the banks and corporations, we make up the largest proportion of lawmakers and judges, we have the money, and we make the decisions; whites control the systems that matter. Because of this power, when we act on our racial prejudices, we are being racist. So, our uncomfortable punchline for today: Only white people can be racist, because it is we who have institutional power. People of color can be prejudiced, but they cannot be racist, because they don't have the institutional power. 1

Racism operates in a variety of venues, but we white folks only often recognize it in it's most extreme form (you know, Ku Klux Klan rallies and the occasional celebrity racist slur). In reality, it's much more pervasive. It occurs at the office and the ballpark where "personal racism" occurs: individuals making racial slurs, jokes or characterizations. You can find it in the classroom, where "cultural racism" propagates racist values and standards: biased and white-washed history textbooks, assimilation of students into the dominant white culture, etc. It's in the corporate boardroom and government hall, where "institutional racism" occurs:- people of color are considered collateral damage to the idea of "progress" and profit.

Quick Definitions: Target Groups, Dominant Groups, and Allies

For the purposes of this article, let me be clear about some terms I'll be using. If you'll call to mind some different "-isms": racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc, **targeted groups** are those groups of people "targeted" by the oppression. People in the **dominant group** reap the benefits of the "-ism" and have the power (aka, women are the target group in sexism, while men are the dominant group.) We are each a mix of different identities - I am mostly defined by my membership in the dominant group of being raised white and upper class, and at the same time, as a lesbian, I also identify with the target group of LGBT people. **Allies** are people within the dominant group who seek to acknowledge their privilege, challenge injustice, and work with members of the targeted group to create just structures.

The Police State and Racism

The common definition of the police state involves the government exercising repressive controls over the social, economic, and political life of the population through the arbitrary use of police power. As you've already read in Daniel's

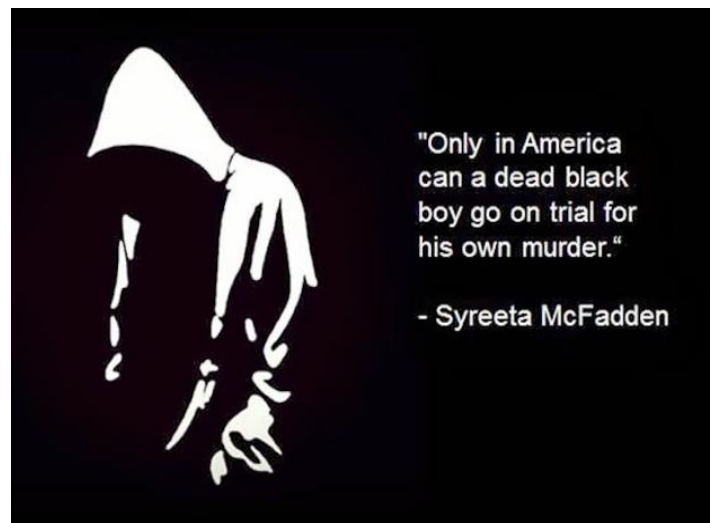
article, the U.S. is accumulating lots of characteristics associated with a police state: massive surveillance of the public, increased militarization of the police, and the curtailing of civil liberties. While white folks are just starting to notice this, people of color have experienced the wrath of the police state throughout U.S. history. Just ask the Native Americans who were and are the target of genocide or a Japanese American about the internment camps during World War II. You've seen the photos of police water hoses and dogs pointed at African-American Civil Rights marchers, but also check out the deaths of Fred Hampton and other Black Panther leaders (targeted assassinations organized by the FBI and Chicago police). The operations of Cointelpro, a secret FBI project that infiltrated "subversive" organizations (often movements for self-determination by people of color,) provides another example, as does the routine, widely-embraced racial profiling that currently happens in Arizona, New York, and yes, even St. Louis.²

We like to gloss over this, but throughout U.S. history and still today, race has been a convenient category for the powers-that-be to control and profit from people who are not white. Historically, and today, we criminalize behavior in people of color that in whites, we ignore or excuse. Tim Wise notes, "the development of modern white supremacy was very much connected to the way in which the class system developed... planter elites during the colonial period used the notion of whiteness as a way to split class-based coalitions between enslaved Africans and indentured Europeans."³

If you take a quick look at our prisons, you will summarize that either African Americans and Latinos use drugs and break laws more than us whites, or that our system somehow targets them. Looking back to the history of prisons in the U.S. unearths some interesting facts that support the latter supposition. For our purposes, we'll just look at Alabama. Before the slaves were set free, 99% of people in Alabama's penitentiaries were white. Soon, states including Alabama revised Slave Codes into new "Black Codes," criminalizing acts such as missing work, handling money carelessly, and performing "insulting gestures". (Obviously whites were free to do any of these things.) Within a short period of time, the overwhelming majority of convicts were black. The newly created convict lease system, and the county chain gain then used these black convicts to create a new unpaid workforce. The parallels to today's privatized jail system are significant.⁴

I know what you're hoping now - all this happened before the 2000s, before Obama, so it's all good now, right? Sorry. Unfortunately, these practices are not all ancient history. In report after report, it has been extensively documented that people of color are watched and arrested at a vastly higher rate than whites. Furthermore, they imprisoned and sentenced more often and for longer times than whites. To use one example, Caucasian and African American men speed, steal, deal and use drugs in proportionally equal numbers, but Black men are five times as likely to be arrested for a drug offense. The evidence that the "criminal justice system" continues to target people of color over whites is compelling. **5**

Tragically, the racism of our criminal justice system pervades into both the everyday experiences and the psyches of target groups. Internalized racist oppression looks different for different people, but common elements include lowered self esteem, a sense of inferiority, low expectations and imaginations of possibility. I often wonder what it is like for the African American mothers of young boys at Karen House. Many of these mothers' experiences show them that their son is more likely to be in jail or dead than in college.



How Whites are Affected by the Police State

People who are considered white benefit - historically, and today - from racism enforced by the police state. Accumulated wealth is an easy marker to look at; whites benefited from land stolen from Native Americans and granted to white settlers, whites benefited from the free labor of enslaved people for 200 years. The state has consistently limited the rights (the right to vote, own property, etc.) of targeted groups, which has bolstered the power of white,

wealthy men in the realms of government and business.

But let's go to utopia for a minute and pretend that everyone is born on a level playing field. Right now, how do whites benefit from a racist police state? Broadly speaking, we are not targeted and policed in the way other groups are. Ask any African American about their experience of the phrase "Driving While Black". Ask any Muslim about their experience of racial profiling. While the police are busy policing communities of color, white kids' drug use goes unnoticed, and certainly unpunished in terms of jail time if it is caught. The heat laid on other communities gives whites a free pass that is unacknowledged and even denied.

How might the racist police state hurt us white people? I've never considered that racism might hurt me too. As it turns out, racism scars the oppressor group as well. In his book Uprooting Racism, Paul Kivel lists some of the many ways whites are hurt by racism. He observes that white people tend to:

- Feel 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, and gardeners and do the less valued work of our society
- Live, work, and play in "distorted, limited, and less rich" settings that are largely white, and thus lose the presence and contributions of people of color to our neighborhoods, schools, and relationships
- Fail to see that we're being economically exploited by those who divert our aggrieved attention into mistrust of race-based scapegoats
- Suffer spiritually, to the extent that we've lost touch with our people's original spiritual traditions toward the goal of assimilating into being white
- Become cynical, despairing, apathetic, and pessimistic when we do acknowledge the ongoing existence of white racism

How Whites Respond to Racism

No one wants to be the bad guy! We white folks don't really want to talk about racism - it's icky and uncomfortable! When we hear about police brutality against African Americans or the continued oppression of Native Americans, we do all kinds of things to get around it - we minimize it, blame the victim, and deny it (see "Distancing Behaviors" graph). We can either show a lack of sensitivity (when we see racism existing only outside of ourselves), or an awkward oversensitivity (paralyzing guilt, fear of saying the wrong thing); both can damage our ability to form relationships and grow. Where are you on this spectrum? I myself tend towards the latter.

So *why* do we use these distancing behaviors? A few reasons come to mind. 1) Many of us feel paralyzed with guilt about racism. We know it's there, we know we think racist things and we see it in the media. Without any positive, safe space to talk about it, we get bound up and defensive. 2) We are afraid of what our family, friends and co-workers will think of us if we start to be honest about where we see racism. We feel uncomfortable, we know they will feel uncomfortable, so it's easier to dismiss and avoid racism than to name it. 3) We feel entitled to what we've earned, and threatened when our myths about the level playing field begin to tumble. 4) As members of the "haves" in terms of race, we have to de-humanize and minimize the have-nots as a coping mechanism for the suffering we are causing them. This is a difficult one, but I think deep down a lot of us white folks don't really believe that the Chinese sweatshop worker, the mother in Africa, or the Mexican immigrant living in South City has the same sorrows, struggles, pain and joy that we do.⁶ If the dominant group really embraced the personhood of people in these targeted groups, revolution would occur tomorrow!

It's no wonder that whites like to proclaim that we are colorblind, focus on our ethnic heritage when race is brought up, and claim we live in post-racial society - things get more complicated when we step away from these beliefs. When we are engaged in communities of color - whether it's volunteering at the International Institute with immigrants or living at a Catholic Worker house in an African American neighborhood, it's easy to fall into some traps - destructive mindsets that prevent our growth. One trap is the idea of "diversity training". Diversity training often leads to tokenization (aka, people of color are like the raisins in my (white) oatmeal; it just takes a few to make the dish more rich) rather than true anti-racist analysis and action.⁷ A few additional traps are described by Shelly Tochluk in

Witnessing Whiteness. The first is the **Savior Complex**.

I'll use a *not at all* (!) personal experience to describe this trap. In this scenario, we graduate from college, and we want to change the world - end racism, end poverty! Maybe we join Teach for America, the Catholic Worker, or Jesuit Volunteer Corps. We often start out inexperienced, fairly skill-less, and soon, we don the mindset: 'I can't leave- then, who would they have? They need me.' We see ourselves as necessary and indispensable, even though we've been there a short time, and will probably be gone within three years. For our own sense of identity and worth, we need our client/patient/student to succeed, to break from poverty, to score well. This is a paternalistic objectification, if a well intentioned one.

Within this trap we also tend to ignore the privilege that enabled us to join these volunteer-type groups, and believe that our good intentions will make up for our lack of skills and cultural knowledge. They do not; it is racism that allows the unqualified and uneducated white do-gooder to teach a roomful of inner city students. The Savior Complex - which can also rear its ugly head in cross-racial justice work, and in any stage of our lives - undermines awareness of the larger context and inhibits our growth as allies.

We especially don't like to think about the **Superiority Complex**. For us white folks, it's easy to unconsciously engage communities of color with an attitude of internalized superiority. We believe that our unique skills and good heart make it ok for us to take leadership positions, to direct conversations, and to steer meetings and work. This often happens too quickly, before we know the community and its people or have the appropriate experience or skill set. If we enter a new job, volunteer in a campaign, or start a new community to help save people, with an unconscious attitude of "I know best" rather than one of humility and openness, we might be perpetuating the racism we claim to decry.

You'll probably recognize the **Sympathy Trap**. Sometimes our outrage over the effects of oppression - poverty, hunger, etc - turns into pity, leading us to act in disempowering ways. Our narrative of pity leads us to neglect some resources that are available in the community, or to have low expectations of people of color that serve to unconsciously limit their growth and progress. Or conversely, we may undermine the others self worth by equating it with success or authority - things that may be unattainable.

Towards Liberation!

I told you that you didn't want to read this article. So, rather than gnash our teeth and flounder in the oceans of racism, oppression and dysfunction around us, let's look for some life rafts towards liberation and wholeness!

Shelly Tochluk gives us some direction as she describes her own process in becoming a white ally to people of color: "I needed to look closely at myself. First, I had to stop seeing the racist as some evil bad person out there, disconnected from me. Second, I needed to find supportive people to help me discover the subtle ways that racism continues to live deep in my

psyche. Third, I had to admit that my work was as much about myself, and my need to heal, as it was about those with whom I worked... Recognizing the way guilt and unresolved anxiety concerning my whiteness sabotaged my work actually released me to become a more appropriately confident person engaged in more effective work, and able to be more intimate and honest in cross-race relationships."

Racism occurs at the personal, group, and institutional level; we can't fix it all at once, but we can engage it in many places. Personal work is the most essential thing - we can't create dismantle racism in our groups, in the



government and society if we aren't doing the work within ourselves. As our understanding grows and expands, guilt, shame, and defensiveness often arise. It's helpful for whites to have other white people with which to process their own racism (remember, it's not the job of people of color to help white people unlearn racism). The following list describes some helpful guidelines for whites seeking to be anti-racist allies.⁸

- Acknowledge and learn more about how you benefit from racism
- Do the inner work, being gentle with yourself and know you'll make mistakes. Reflect the role of race in your upbringing and education, honestly name your own racist thoughts and behaviors (if only to yourself at first).
- Talk about race at the dinner table, in the office, and with friends. When you do, acknowledge that people of color have been talking about these subjects for a long time, and have been routinely ignored in the process.
- With your time, talent and treasure, support groups that challenge racism.
- Expect to be uncomfortable, and know this can lead to deeper reflection, understanding and growth.
- Learn about the connections between racism, sexism, and other oppressions.
- Listen **responsively** to people of color.
- Know that you are part of an anti-racist freedom struggle with a long history and a strong future.
- Commit to challenging racist jokes, references and policies.
- Seek out others who seek to challenge racism.
- Remember, white privilege is not having to deal with racism all of the time. Assume racism is everywhere; just as gender, age economics influence everything, so does race.
- Consider how your favorite organization can become a better ally to targeted groups
- Be an agent for change: defend civil liberties and civil rights for all people, especially those from targeted groups

So, is it a stretch to believe that my efforts to become an anti-racist ally will end police brutality or democratize our laws in regards to people of color? Maybe. But it's not a stretch to believe that when we do this anti-racism work, our eyes are opened further, bringing new energy and awareness to the people and groups we touch. When we bring an anti-racist presence to our neighborhood associations, play dates, and work interactions, we are building alternatives to the racism, fear and greed that under gird the police state. Maybe you too will end up writing an article about white privilege that seems too depressing to write, and then maybe someone else will pass on this idea. After all, how else is the world changed, but through personal relationships?

Sources, Resources, and Further Reading

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 2. Racial profiling info: racialprofilinganalysis.neu.edu/ and aclu.org/blog/tag/racial-profiling
 3. timwise.org/f-a-q-s/
 4. Are Prisons Obsolete? by Angela Davis
 5. For more on racial disparities related to the "criminal" justice system, visit colorlines.org, Bill Quigley's "Fourteen Examples of Racism in Criminal Justice System," and The Sentencing Project
 6. "Hey, White Liberals: A Word On The Boston Bombings, The Suffering Of White Children, And The Erosion of Empathy" - blackgirldangerous.org/new-blog/2013/4/22/hey-white-liberals
 7. "Diversity Training: Good For Business but Insufficient for Social Change" by David Rogers
 8. Sources for Action: jlove.mvmt.com/2013/04/25/code-of-ethics-for-white-anti-racist-allies/
- Occupying Privilege by JLove Calderón

Karen House Statement following the Killing of Michael Brown

8/13/14

To our fellow white friends and supporters and to our fellow Catholic Workers,

It is time. 18 year-old Michael Brown is dead (as is Eric Garner, John Crawford, Trayvon Martin, and too many others...), another victim of an out-of control system that systematically targets people of color. At Karen House, we don't have a guest or neighbor who doesn't have their own story of police humiliation, harassment or violence – including Anna Brown, a former guest who died in a St. Louis jail in 2012.

We realize that as an all-white community, it is our responsibility to speak to other white folks about race, racism, and what is happening in Ferguson. Our community has been learning more and more about how racism operates to separate and limit all of us. We are encouraging ourselves, and other white folks we love, to look at our fear and conditioning about race, to listen better, and to act as allies to people of color. It is time for us white people to step back, and to step forward.

First, it is time for us white people to step back and listen.

Listen to the African American mothers who rightfully fear sending their sons to the store, to school, and to grandma's house. (Don't walk too fast. Don't walk too slow. Keep your hands out. Pull your pants up. Don't look guilty.)

Listen to the rage of the black man, who has been vilified, stereotyped, targeted and jailed by a white-controlled establishment since before America was even a country. (Slavery, Jim Crow, and now Mass Incarceration are a litany of terror and control, leaving deep and open wounds. Listen.)

Listen to more than the riot porn on the network news. Connect with those most affected by violence, and learn about their stories. (Check out ColorLines, St. Louis-based Organization for Black Struggle, and Black Girl Dangerous; each has insightful analysis on the Mike Brown and Ferguson)

It's time for us to get better educated: "We white people don't understand the anger re: Ferguson because our kids aren't murdered with impunity by the state." (@Auragasmic) It is time to step forward, to learn about and take responsibility for our white privilege.

It is time for us to talk with other white people who also feel fear and confusion: "Why can't they be peaceful? Why are they so angry? Why so conspiratorial?" A few responses from some people of color to start us off.

- "What is an appropriate expression of anger when the cops keep on killing our kids?!" (@ProfessorCrunk)
- "We can't deride the actions of those who are expected to respect property when their very lives are devalued. We can't expect them to maintain civility when their very existence has been the target of incivility from others." (Christi Griffin)
- "If Black folks are 'civil' & polite in petitioning authorities, THEY ARE IGNORED. If they lash out, they are demonized. Typical." (@lkscollective)

It is time for us to talk to other white people about race, and about our experience of being white: what it has cost us, what it has excused us from, and where it can lead us. It is time to temporarily set aside our defensiveness and guilt ("I didn't own slaves! I have a black friend! I'm colorblind!"). It is time to share our shame, regret, and sorrow that whiteness, in this country, has meant slave-ownership, exploitation, genocide and oppression; it is time to move forward, committed to ending this reality.

It is time for all of us white folks to step forward. It is time for us to start showing up, following the lead of people of color – beyond the safety of Facebook. To challenge the violent systems that create the conditions of poverty, police brutality and oppression.

It is time for us white folks to acknowledge the hypocrisy of opposing war abroad while we've shrugged off the war on people of color in our own cities and neighborhoods; right now, the U.S. incarcerates a larger percentage of its black population than South Africa did at the height of Apartheid. (The New Jim Crow, 6)

Fellow white folks, it is time to step back, and to step forward. All we can do is our best: learning, leaving our comfort zones, acting, asking forgiveness from each other, failing, and starting again. "Indeed, a 'riot is the language of the unheard,' (MLK) but we collectively must work to provide microphones for the dispossessed." (@Negrointellect)

Please join us! It's time. It's about time.

In hope and solidarity, The Karen House Community

Sample Agendas:

Racism and White Privilege 101

Introduction and Welcome (10 min)

Privilege Awareness Circle (15 min)

- In groups of two, reflect on your feelings from the Privilege Awareness Circle (10 min)

Language Matters: Reviewing Definitions of oppression race, racism prejudice, “reverse racism”, internalized racism, individual racism, structural racism (10 min)

- Time for questions (10 min)

Role-playing Demonstration and Exercise: How to Respond to Racism

- Groups of 5-15, share some of the difficult racist things you've encountered, the group brainstorms actual responses

Closing Reflections from Group (ask people to share what they are taking from the workshop, what actions they hope to take, etc), Announcements (10 min)

Final Reading: I am Racist, and So Are You

Racism and White Privilege 202

Welcome and Introductions (15 min)

Patterns of White Culture (10 min)

Small group discussion - Break into groups of 6 to discuss Patterns of White Culture (20 min)

Break Out Sessions: Please choose one to attend. (30 min)

- Anti Racist Organizing
- Distancing Behaviors of White People
- 10 Anti-racist Attitudes - General attitudes to lead us to be better anti-racists

Closing Reflections from Group (ask people to share what they are taking from the workshop, what actions they hope to take, etc)

Announcements (10 min)

Final Reading

Group Reflection: The Road to Socialization

Material is based on "The Cycle of Socialization" by Bobbie Harro in Readings for Diversity and Social Justice

None of us are born racist or homophobic. Early on, we are taught some basic presumptions about how the world works from our close loved ones. We learn about what role we have, and what the expectations are in early childhood, and as we enter school, these messages are reinforced by the songs we listen to, the news we consume, the shows we watch, and the institutions – schools, health care, extra-curricular activities, the legal system. We all enter community life with a sense of identity, and how we fit into the world. This sense dictates how we relate to guests, who we seek out for donations and resources, and how we understand privilege, oppression and social justice.

Too often, if much of our identity make-up is from a dominant group (for example, white, upper middle class, educated) we simply assume our way is the best way. We're used to getting what we want, we believe that we can achieve anything we desire, and this worldview is reinforced by all of society's structures. The dominant narrative teaches us that our good intentions in serving the poor and working for justice are enough. In community, these folks often avoid looking inward for seeds of oppression, and simply enact and exploit their male, white, or class privilege.

For people who identify with targeted groups, community can be a painful place where energy and work are focused outward at poverty and war, and little is done to acknowledge internal community dynamics related to privilege and oppression. Folks born with less privilege often have tons of insight; when opportunity has been limited from an early age, rather than automatically granted, people have a different understanding of poverty, injustice, relationships, etc.

By examining our personal histories of privilege or lack thereof, we can build understanding within the diverse identities that make up our communities. "Why does he interact with guests like that?" "Why doesn't she attend our planning meetings?" The first step is to gain awareness of who we are – what identities intersect with us, what expectations does society have of each of these roles, and how have we reacted to both the identities and expectations? This article is based on a model developed by that tracks the socialization of our roles.

1. Birth into Established System of Inequality

We are born into a society with established rules, expectations, and roles for us to fill. Even before we take our first breath, we begin being trained into a certain identity role based on gender, race, class, ability, etc. and are given certain expectations for each identity. In most circumstances, we are categorized into girl or boy, and assumed to be heterosexual. We have no choice about these expectations, or the society that we're born into.

Fill out the following graph to name the various identities with which you were born.



Identity Profile

			Awareness		Privilege	
	My Identity Is...	What societal expectations accompany each of these identities?	I'm Most Aware of these Identities	I Think Least about these Identities	These Identities Grant Power in Society & Community	These Identities Do NOT Grant Power in Society & Community
Gender Identity (With what gender do you identify?)						
Gender Expression (How do you express your gender identity -according to societal norms of dress, etc.?)						
Race						
Ethnicity						
Sexual Orientation						
Religion						
Social Class						
Age						
Ability						
Nation of Origin & Citizenship						
Education						
Other?						

Along with these identities, we're born into an established system that perpetuates injustice. One of the ways that oppression is perpetuated is with a foundational set of presumptions. These ideals permeate our culture, institutions and our relationships. We're born into a society based on these presumptions, which include:

Presumption	Example
1. The Scarcity Principle and Individualism There aren't enough resources (jobs, scholarships, health care) to go around, so I'm going to get what I can for me and my family, regardless of the consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women must be cut-throat to compete with men for jobs • Men must earn high incomes to provide for their families, regardless of their happiness
2. Dualism and Hierarchy People and things fit into strict categories of opposites, with one element outranking the other (as opposed to being on a spectrum of equally valuable characteristics).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men = breadwinner, strong, leaders; Women = emotional, supportive, dependent. Gender roles stem from these ideas. • Categories of White-Non White, Heterosexual – Everything Else dominate...
3. Colonialism and Domination My way of life is really the best, most efficient, sensible way to live and people should follow my lead.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrants should assimilate.... • “Why are [those people] so loud/violent/rude?”

Reflection Questions, Stage 1

1. What insights do you have from filling out the identity profile?
2. Which identities most influence your participation in community? How?
3. How were the societal presumptions enacted or rejected in your family – what situation were you born into?
 - What were your family's attitudes about resources?
 - How were traditional gender roles enacted or rejected in your family?
 - How did your family view different ways of living, spending, eating and dressing?

2. Early Childhood

In our early childhoods, we learn how to behave and relate from our loved ones. We're taught about the roles and expectations we need to follow. Some examples include: "Boys don't cry;" "Other religions aren't as truthful;" "You should stay away from those people;" "Don't worry about your broken toy, we'll just buy you another". Our loved ones, operating out of their own experiences, form us to the best of their ability but are heavily influenced by the presumptions of society.

Reflection Questions, Stage 2 *Choose one of your strong identities from the profile above to answer the rest of the questions.*

- At an early age, what were you **taught about your identity** from your loved ones:
 1. In terms of gender, how were you taught to express sadness? Fear? Affection?
 2. Do you have any early memories about your family's attitudes on people, and groups of people, that were different in terms of class, ethnicity, race or ability?
 3. Who were you allowed, and not allowed to play with? What toys were you given?

3. Immersion in Institutional and Cultural Messages

Once we start school and start interacting with the outside world, we're bombarded with messages about our identities. We learn that our roles and rules for them are larger than just our families. We get consistent messages from religion, the family doctor, family friends, the store, the police officers, and teachers. At school, it's OK to tease boys who only hang out with girls, and girls who act like tomboys. African-Americans tend to commit more crimes, poor kids are usually dumb, and homosexuals and trans people are pedophiles and should be avoided. The messages are relentless and reinforcing, and to resist them is to invite scorn, isolation or even violence. But if we fit neatly into our identity roles and consent to parroting these messages, we can avoid being penalized.

At this age, we're also bombarded with messages from our culture: the media (news shows, internet ads, advertising, newspapers, radio), the language we use, song lyrics, etc. Cultural messages enforce stereotypes about different identities and reinforce dualism and inequality. Rape culture in song lyrics, "his and hers products," racist crime news reporting, and Reality TV tend to reinforce misogyny, ableism, homophobia, ageism and racism.

Reflection Questions, Stage 3 *Continue using the identity you chose for Stage 2 to answer the rest of the questions.*

1. In Middle School and High School, what were the **expectations of people with your identity**?
 - How were you expected to look and dress?
 - Who were you expected to become friends with?
 - How were these expectations enforced by other students and adults you encountered? What was your reaction?
2. What **cultural sources** most strongly influenced your sense of self – what television shows, internet sources, Facebook messages, advertisements, video games, songs, religious messages?
 - How did these messages influence your self-esteem and confidence?

4. The Results: Status Quo or Exit Ramps

As a result of all this conditioning, most of us feel (at least secretly) insecure that we don't quite fit into the rigid roles of society. People in dominant roles who reap the benefits of oppression – U.S. citizens, whites, the temporarily able-bodied, adults, men, heterosexuals, etc. might tend to be defensive, oblivious, guilt-laden. They might have a “dominance malaise,” in which they recognize the injustice and their part in benefiting from it, but feel powerless and hopeless to fight the oppression. People in targeted groups – trans people, the elderly, the poor, women, etc. may suffer “internalized oppression”. This might manifest as low self esteem and low confidence, anger, fear, or hopelessness. Internalized oppression can also lead to people in targeted groups to embrace their assigned role and reinforce stereotypes, which can be comforting when they receive praise for being super-gay, super-black, or a super-mom. Internalized oppression can also lead people in targeted groups to be overly critical of other targeted people, tearing them down in order to bolster a sense of esteem that has been withheld from them by society.

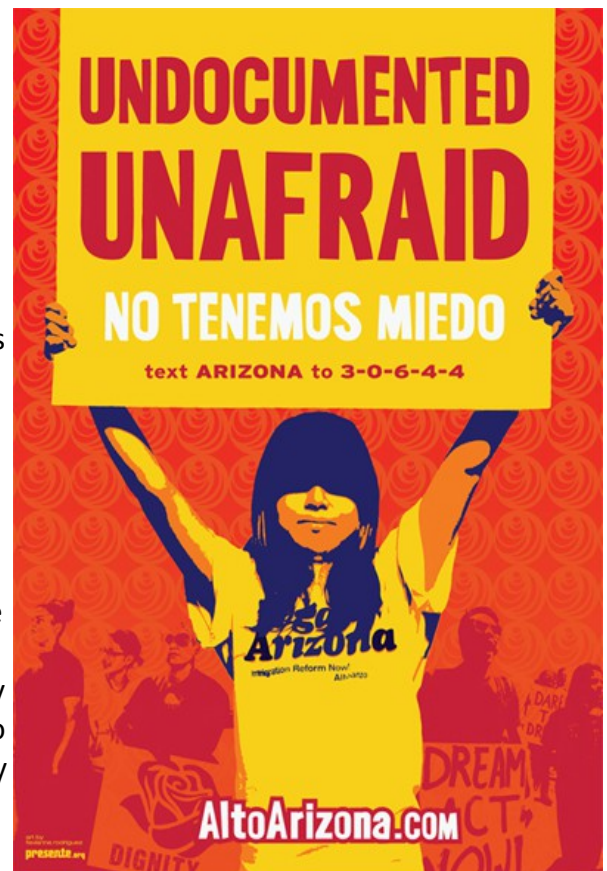
If unacknowledged, internalized oppression and dominance malaise can disrupt community relationships. Dominance malaise can lead to people to focus solely on charity, rather than justice; that way, the power dynamics of society are preserved, and folks can still feel good about doing good works. Dominance malaise can lead to a hero syndrome, where we incorrectly believe that our unique skills and privileged upbringing grant us the answers to our guests' problems. It can also lead to a withdrawal from justice causes out of a sense of overwhelm and hopelessness. Internalized oppression limits the growth and true expression of people in targeted groups, dampening authentic relationships.

Enforcements on the Road of Status Quo

It is not easy to exit the road of Status Quo even in a “progressive” community. Conforming to our assigned roles is rewarded in every realm (for parents, spouses, employees, community members, volunteers, guests, etc) People who question their assigned roles are often considered nit-pickers, troublemakers, sissies or do gooders. **Fear and insecurity** are powerful motivators for us to conform, even in an otherwise peace-loving community.

Ignorance and obliviousness are other enforcements, especially for dominant groups, who set all of the norms of society, and who are rarely forced to acknowledge their privilege. Obliviousness is a difficult barrier to overcome in community- it takes openness, trust, and honesty. People in targeted groups may be too overwhelmed in their own circumstance, and unable to discern the connections between oppressions.

Power and powerlessness are powerful motivators towards supporting the status quo. When we critique gender roles in our community, dress differently than society expects us to, or name racism when it happens in our houses, we're calling into question the very fabric of our dualistic, hierarchical society, upsetting the established balance of power. Many of our houses are set up for people with privilege to “give” to people with less privilege. Acknowledging the dynamics and consequences that surround this structure can provide some clarity for our communities, and maybe even point the way to some exit ramps to the status quo.



Exit Ramps: Following a Different Path

For each of us, it takes someone or something to show us the exit ramp away from the powerful road of Status Quo. Most members of society stay there, and are rewarded and reinforced for maintaining it. Exit ramps make us newly aware of oppression, and start us on a new path of awareness and hopefully action. They can happen any time in our lives: maybe we have a particularly insightful parent or teacher, read a book on women in college, or witness an act of blatant racism. Maybe we experience a dissonance with cultural messages we receive about immigration or the elderly, or maybe a “last straw” event happens which forces us to face homophobia in a new way. Exit ramps often lead us to community life as young people; as we remain in community, it's up to us to continue to be open to them, and not close down.

Reflection Questions, Stage 4

1. When have you experienced “**dominance malaise**”? (Do you have any particular memory, or any ongoing feelings of anger, helplessness, guilt related to your role in a dominant group?)
 - How might it play out in community life? In relationships with guests, other community members, in how you interact with volunteers?
 2. When have you experienced “**internalized oppression**” as a member of a targeted group? (Do you have any particular memory, or ongoing feelings of low self esteem or confidence, resentment or fear?)
 - How might it play out in community life? In relationships with guests, other community members, in how you interact with volunteers?
1. What **Exit Ramps** have helped you along the way?
 - What are your goals in moving forward on the Exit Ramp?



Racism and White Privilege: Some Definitions

Sourced from coloursofresistance.org and soaw.org

- **Oppression** is an unequal distribution of power between different identity groups (such as men and women, gay and straight, etc). Different oppressions include things like ageism, racism, sexism, ableism, and heterosexism. These systems of advantage benefit some groups (often called the “dominant groups”) and discriminates against other groups (often called the “targeted groups”). Member of dominant groups generally have greater access, opportunity, wealth and power, and sometimes have a hard time acknowledging and exploring the system of advantage that benefits them. *(See following page for “Oppression Graph”)*
- **Race** is NOT based on biology; it is a CREATED category with historical roots used to classify groups of people. During colonial expansion by European nations, the idea of race was created and defined in terms of skin colour where non-white people were considered “lower” races. Even though we created the concept, and it doesn’t exist scientifically, it has enormous consequences in U.S. society.
- **Racism and Prejudice** Anyone of any race can have “**racial prejudice**” which are positive or negative stereotypes based on racial characteristics. To be racist (rather than simply prejudiced) requires having institutional power, and in the U.S., this power is held by white folks. We mostly run the banks and corporations, we make up the largest proportion of lawmakers and judges, we have the money, and we make the decisions; whites control the systems that matter. Because of this power, when we act on our racial prejudices, we are being racist. **Only white people can be racist**, because it is we who have institutional power. People of color can be prejudiced, but they cannot be racist, because they don’t have the institutional power.
- **“Reverse Racism”** Those in denial about white privilege use the term reverse racism to refer to hostile behavior by people of color toward whites, and to affirmative action policies, which allegedly give ‘preferential treatment’ to people of color over whites. In the U.S., there is no such thing as “reverse racism.”
- **Internalized Racism-** The conscious or subconscious acceptance of the stereotypes and harmful racist messages perpetuated by society. Internalized racism leads to replaying and buying into these messages, which leads to self-hatred and horizontal hostility towards others in one’s racial group. The patterns of internalized racism are self-destructive coping mechanisms. They result from systematic and institutionalized mistreatment - not the inevitable or chosen pattern of any group of people.
- **Individual Racism-** Individual racism takes place in the personal interactions between people. For example, if a banker refuses a loan to a person of color because they have racist conditioning to distrust African Americans, he is acting out of individual racism.
- **Structural Racism:** Structural Racism lies underneath, all around and across society. It encompasses: (1) **historical** racism, which lies underneath the surface, providing the foundation for white supremacy in this country. (2) **cultural** racism, which exists all around our everyday lives, providing the normalization and replication of racism and, (3) **Institutional Racism** which occurs in the policies and practices in schools, organizations of any size, companies and other institutions that, intentionally or not, chronically disadvantage people of color to the advantage of whites.

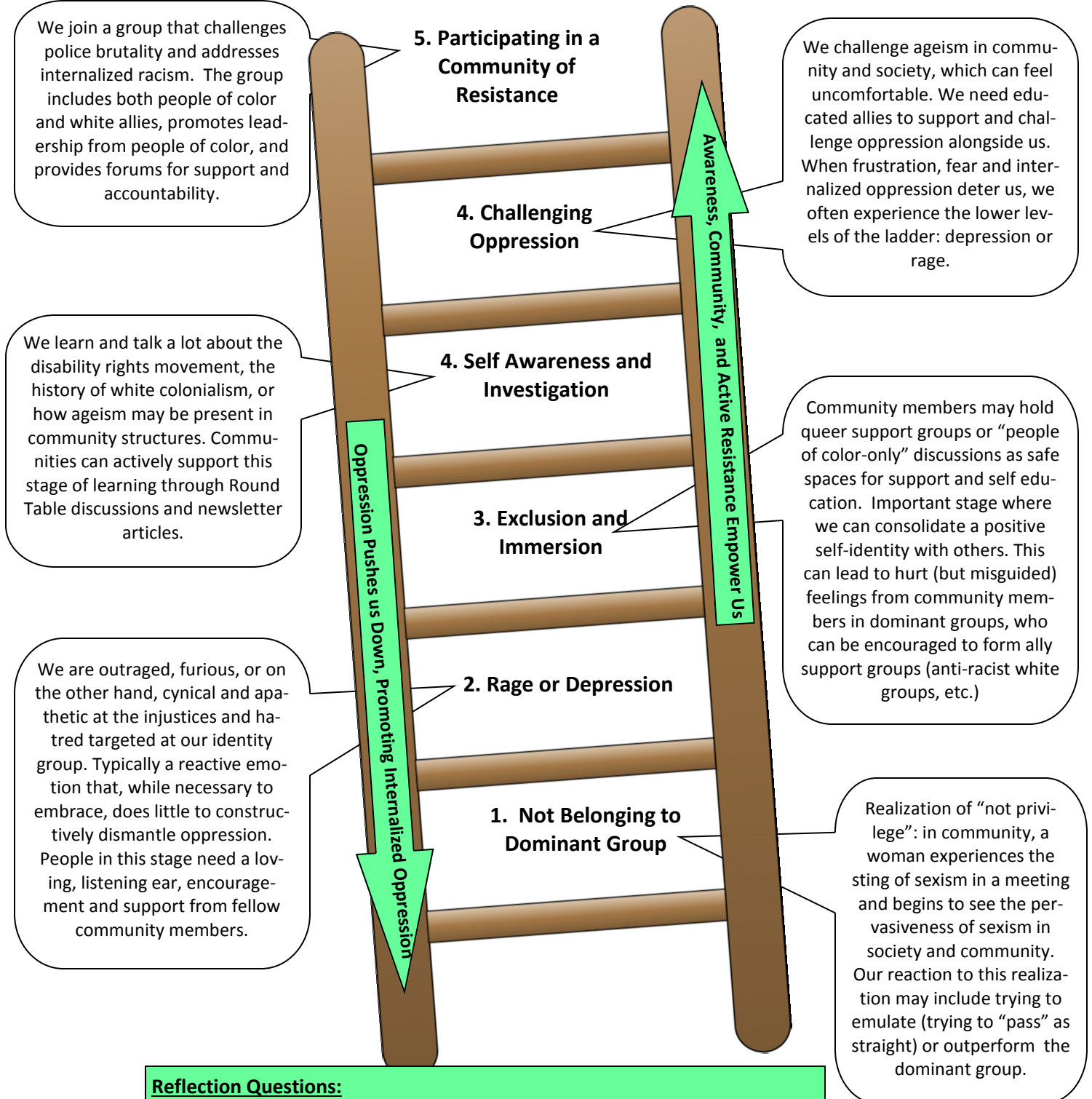
Reflection Questions

- Are any of these definitions surprising or new to you?
- How do you see the role of power operating in the definitions of racism and “reverse racism”?

<u>Targeted</u> <i>(less power)</i>	<u>Oppression</u>	<u>Dominant</u> <i>(more power)</i>
Women	Sexism	Men
LGBTQ	Heterosexism	Heterosexuals, Cis-gender
Disabled	Ableism	Able-bodied
People of Color	Racism	Whites
Youth, Elderly	Ageism	Adults
Non-Christians	Religious Oppression	Christians

Ladder of Empowerment: Targeted Groups

We each have unique combinations of gender, race, ethnicity, class, ability, etc. that intersect and affect our participation in community. We (consciously or not) spend a lot of energy navigating how each of these identities—especially those that fall within the targeted, rather than dominant category—will interact with society and community. The ladder is not linear, and we can experience multiple stages at once. This worksheet describes the stages of empowerment with different forms of oppression. Ideally, our community supports us in traveling toward empowerment and away from internalized oppression.

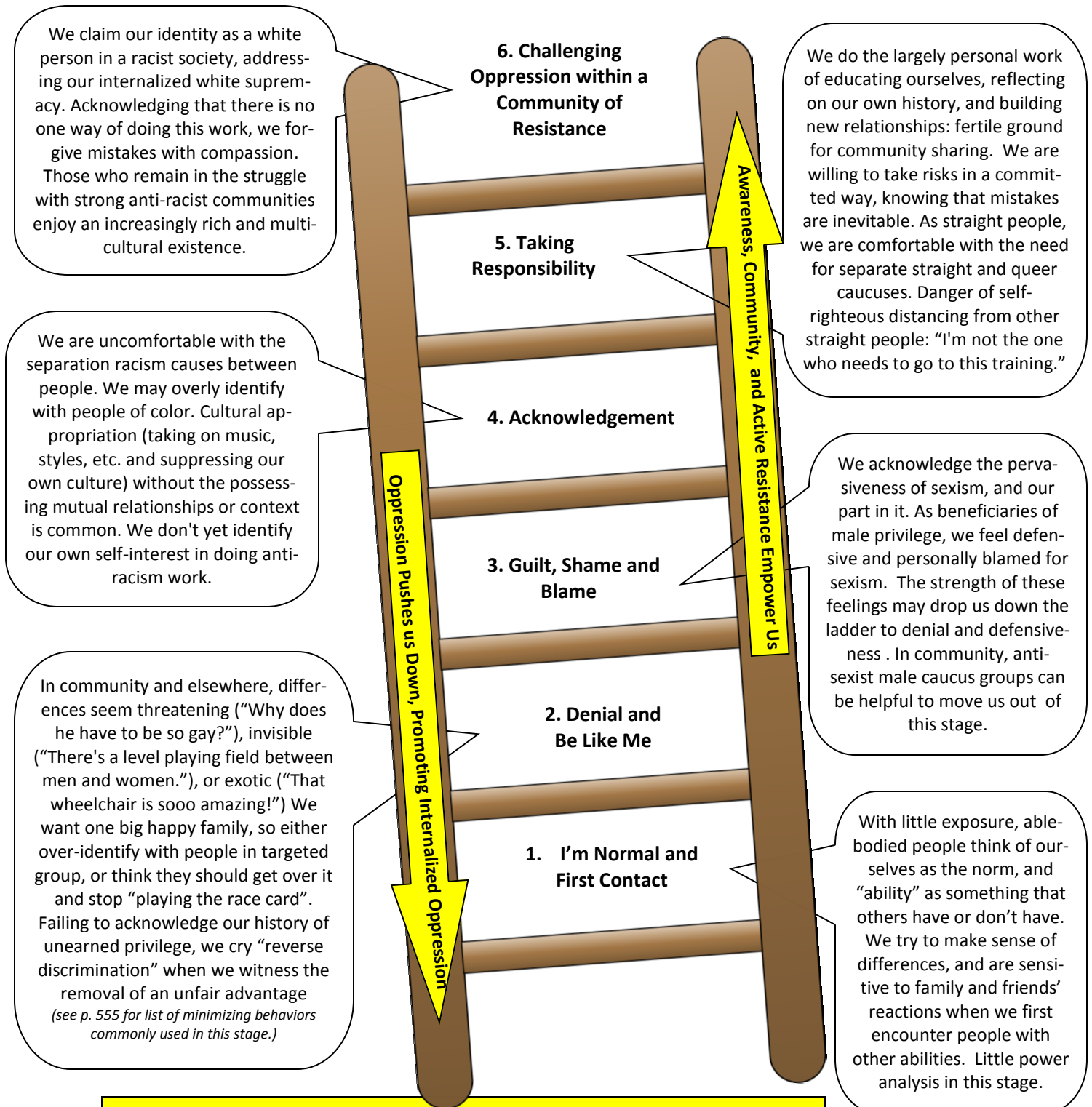


Reflection Questions:

- What life events have propelled you both up and down the ladder?
- What stage currently predominates your energy, and in what ways does this play out in community?
- How could your community support you within your current stage?

Ladder of Empowerment: Dominant Groups

The stages of this ladder can help people in dominant groups (especially white folks, men, straight and able-bodied folks) better understand their identities within an oppressive system. Understanding what stage we're in can help us function more authentically in community and better deal with complex social issues. We can't skip steps in ascending the ladder, but after a challenging conversation, meeting or conflict, it's all too easy to slip many steps down (especially into denial/defensiveness). The lower we are on the ladder, the more we cooperate and accede to oppression; movement up happens from personal relationships & education.



Reflection Questions:

1. In what stage do you currently reside? (Give specific examples of attitudes, incidents, etc. that put you there)
2. What are the barriers to you moving up the ladder? How could your community support you?

Group Exercise: Privilege Awareness Circle

This exercise gives some specific examples of how the oppressions of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism reward some groups at the expense of others.

Stand up, or raise your hand if this statement applies to you. Pay attention to the number of times (out of 20 named privileges) you stand up.

1. I have a college education.
2. I have NOT ever had to think or worry about sexual pressure or sexual harassment from co-workers, bosses, or community members.
3. My race does not automatically inspire suspicion and fear in the police and others.
4. I DO NOT typically have to ask people to speak up so I can hear them.
5. I generally expect that the police, restaurant servers, and people behind the counter will treat me with respect and friendliness.
6. I DO NOT have to think, or worry about my sexual orientation, in terms of my co-workers, bosses, or extended family's opinions, comments, or reactions..
7. I identify as a man.
8. I can swear, dress in thrift store clothes, or be unfriendly without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poor character, poverty or the illiteracy of my race
9. I can live in the neighborhood of my choice, fairly confident that neighbors won't be hostile to me because of my race.
10. I am NOT thought of as too old, or too young, to "understand" or "get it"
11. If I choose to commit to a romantic partner, I WILL NOT have to do research and find a lawyer to ensure the rights automatically granted to heterosexual couples.
12. In day to day activities, I've NEVER been limited by whether places have ramps, handrails, or long distances of walking.
13. I have NEVER had to try to explain oppression (such as sexism or ableism) to members of a dominant group.
14. It is expected that people of my gender do most of the talking in meetings, take leadership in campaigns, control finances, and are responsible for manual labor.
15. Common terms that are commonly used in society in a derogatory ways like "fat", "old", "slow" have NOT been used to describe me.
16. Throughout my life, I've been able to drive and shop wherever I want without fear of harassment or police.
17. I have never been a victim of a violent crime.
18. I have a similar, or higher socioeconomic status compared to my friends and family.
19. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge", I will be facing a person of my race.
20. I have NEVER been arrested for anything but an intentional act of resistance.

Reflection Questions

1. What feelings are brought up after doing this exercise?
2. Is the number of times you raised your hand/stood up equivalent to the amount of privilege you thought you had?
3. In what other ways have you been aware of being part of a targeted or dominant group?



White Privilege: Everyday Examples

Many of us have a general understanding that the system of racism serves to privilege whites and penalize people of color, but fail to recognize the subtle ways that white privilege benefits them on a daily basis. Some examples that apply to community life:

- I can give talks and be considered an expert on things other than my own race
- I expect that the police, restaurant servers, and people behind the counter will treat me with respect and friendliness
- My anger at social injustice will not be written off as “playing the race card,” or over-reacting
- I am rarely mistaken for a guest or a client
- If I do jail time, it will likely be at a time and place of my choosing
- I can generally drive anywhere in my city without being worried about being targeted by police
- Racism is something I can think about when I choose to
- I can be pretty sure that neighbors will not be hostile to me or my race if I move into an all Black neighborhood
- I can remain oblivious of the neighborhood history, culture and customs of persons of color (who constitute the world's and my neighborhood's majority) without having any penalty for my ignorance
- My way of resolving conflict, singing songs and dressing is considered the norm
- Because my race has provided me with accumulated wealth, I can take up the mantle of simplicity and voluntary poverty with gusto
- I can join a community without being considered a representative of my race
- I can swear, dress in donated clothes or be unfriendly to a volunteer, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race
- In our community newsletter, at rallies and protests, it's accepted that we white community members can speak as authorities on issues that directly affect people of color
- If I lay around the house, eat unhealthy food or get drunk, it is not considered an example of my race's history of poor choices

Reflection Questions

4. Are any of these a surprise to you?
5. Can you think of other examples you've seen of white privilege?
6. How do you talk to others about white privilege?



Some Tendencies of White Culture...

Compiled by Carolyn Griffeth from Witnessing Whiteness and Re-evaluation Counseling Materials

Isolation: At the heart of whiteness is the feeling of isolation which is rooted in family life where there little closeness and sense of inherent belonging. We develop many strategies/identities to make up for this lack of felt belonging. Many of us continue to live isolated, racially segregated lives.

Grasping for identity: Either co-opting ethnic identities not our own or using our relationships with people of color to create an identity for ourselves.

Savior identity: Playing the helper/savior role to feel better about ourselves. "I've sacrificed so much in solidarity with the poor."

Making everything about yourself/ your statement/ your identity: Subverting the collective to make your own political statement or to attract more attention to yourself. "What should I wear to the protest?"

Superiority mentality: I know just what these people need to do to improve their situation! Assuming you're the expert, not coming as a learner. **Critical patterns:** Seeing the worst in others, criticizing. Critiquing everything. Creates a lack of safety and the paralysis of analysis.

Better than/ Not as good as: Continually making comparisons and rankings. Creates disconnection and makes everyone feel bad.

Acting and leading in dominating ways: Not getting behind the leadership of others particularly people of color. Believing your perspective is the only perspective. Speaking first and taking up too much space.

Ambition is everything: Belief that one should be personally driven and autonomous—not constrained by the needs of family or community. Wanting to see the under-privileged kid **go away** to college.

Belief in meritocracy: "Anyone can become anything if they try hard enough." Even if we know this is baloney, we still often unconsciously judge ourselves and others by this myth. Ignorance of privilege. **Belief that I must be exceptional to be acceptable:** This drives all kinds of over-achiever/perfectionist/competitive patterns that separate white people from one another and lead us to be driven, disconnected, and to feel bad about ourselves. This is the message given to those raised middle class.

Valuing of reason over relationship and emotions: Reducing discussions of issues to facts and figures rather than caring and connection. Talking like the expert. Particularly common for white men.

Emotional superficiality. Pretending everything is great and therefore not really engaging or showing ourselves. Artificiality and pretense. **Conflict avoidance** which undermines our relationships. Making a big deal of it if anyone challenges us or disagrees.

Entitlement and greed: Expecting to be welcome/included in all groups/cultures/countries. Expecting the best service, the best in everything despite the cost to others. Can lead to rudeness.

Not knowing how to just hang out, be natural. Not taking the time to have a conversation with your neighbors or to build relationships with people in a coalition.

Reflection Questions

1. If you are white, which of these tendencies resonate with you? If you are not white, how have you experienced these dynamics?
2. How have they influenced you or your relationships?
3. What effect do these characteristics – held by the dominant group - have on society as a whole?

Some Characteristics of Internalized Racism in People of Color...

Internalized racism is the conscious or subconscious acceptance of the stereotypes and harmful racist messages targeted individuals. Internalized racism leads to replaying and buying into these messages, which leads to self-hatred and horizontal hostility towards others in one's racial group. The practices and beliefs of internalized racism are self-destructive coping mechanisms resulting from systematic and institutionalized mistreatment - not the inevitable or chosen pattern of any group of people. Any of these traits may or may not be present in any targeted individual, and it should be left to targeted individuals to name if any of these dynamics are at play.

Patterns of internalized racism cause people of color to:

- Have self-consciousness and self-hatred of physical characteristics that make them racially distinct such as skin color, hair texture or eye shape.
- Believe (consciously or not) that whites are more trustworthy, intelligent and attractive
- Develop defensive patterns of fear, mistrust, withdrawal, and isolation from other people of color especially those in leadership
- Be ashamed of anything that ventures from the mythical perfection of the white middle class standards ("too dark" skin, "too kinky" hair, "too loud" music, "too ethnic", "too loud" people)
- Accept a limiting and rigid view of what "authentic" culture and behavior is (criticizing as "trying to be white" those who excel in school, people who talk in a particular way; those who like "white" music, etc.)
- Perpetuate "getting by" behaviors particularly feelings of tenderness, love (in African Americans, some of these behaviors were developed during the slavery era to simply survive, such as hiding or disguising feelings)
- As a result of internalized racism, structural racism, and feelings of powerlessness, be limited in the ability to think flexibly, act with long range goals, or delay rewards.
 - Engage in numbing behaviors (drugs, alcohol, and other addictions; compulsive sexual behaviors) and poor decision making (flashy materialism, unwise financial decisions, elaborate street rituals and posturing,) based on these limitations. "Any black effort is doomed to failure in the long run, so I'm going to settle for making myself feel good right now. I deserve that, at least!"
- Attempt to "take care of" white people, making sure none get upset, within the groups they are part of. This stymies one's authentic voice especially if it might make whites uncomfortable.

Reflection Questions

1. If you are not white, which of these tendencies resonate with you?
2. If you are white and have witnessed any of these tendencies, have you been able to relate them to the larger workings of a racist society?

Source

https://www.rc.org/publication/journals/black_reemergence/br2/br2_5_sl

Inner Work to Combat Racism: Distancing Behaviors

It's easy for folks in dominant groups to catch themselves or others using these techniques to avoid acknowledging and acting on oppression. Here are some racism-based examples:

Tactic	Explanation
Denial	Denial of existence or responsibility for the oppression. When an issue involves racial justice: "It's not about race, it's really more about class" "Racism ended when Obama was elected"
Deflecting or Minimizing	Changing the subject, minimizing oppression when we see it: "Enough about racism, what about the drones in Pakistan?" "People of color may have it rough here, but at least they're better off than people in Afghanistan or Mexico."
Blaming the Targeted Group	When faced with an incident of police brutality against a person of color, we think, "What was the 'victim' doing wrong to deserve it?"
Over-Analyzing	Nitpicking about definitions of oppression to prove their existence, when we wouldn't do the same for other subjects. Debating the problem ad nauseum without taking any action.
Scapegoating	Shifting conversation to an extreme example of <i>someone else's</i> oppressive behavior. "We're all all-white community and haven't really looked at racism in our communal structures- true. But you should listen to my mother-in-law - she's sooooo racist! It's terrible!" The accusing person feel righteous, and meaningful discussion is closed down.
They Just Didn't Know	When soup line guests make racist comments, making excuses and rationalizing: "It was only a joke, don't take everything so seriously. They don't know any better. We don't want to make a scene."
Targeting the Expert	Without a real relationship, asking a person of color to represent all others in a tokenistic way: "What do Arab Americans think about the Syria situation?"
Claiming Innocence	"There aren't that many people of color in our town, so our community doesn't make it a priority to address racism." "We participate as little as we can in 'the system', so we're not responsible for structural racism."
Competing Victimization	Claiming that people of color have too much/enough power: "The events of the local Hispanic culture group are diverting resources away from our (very important) ministry to women."
Savior Complex*	Unrealistic view of ourselves as indispensable to people of color without acknowledgment of the privilege dynamics present. Guilt, shame, and a desperation to help, without being asked. "White hero" complex.
Superiority Complex*	Inappropriately taking leadership positions within communities of color; overestimation of our education and skills/underestimation of our inexperience; an "I know best" attitude.
Sympathy Trap*	Outrage over racism morphs into pity, causing us to act in disempowering, paternalistic ways; over-analysis without action; focusing only on the results of racism while underplaying groups' resources and successes.

*From Witnessing Whiteness, Shelly Tochluk
Based on Dismantling Racism from the Western States Center

Inner Work: White Anti-Racist Attitudes

In contrast with these Distancing Behaviors, white people can employ these attitudes in doing the daily anti-racist work at home, work and school.

Attitude:	In Action:
1. I do not expect to be absolved for my racism (or for the oppression white people have incurred,) either by people of color, or by the good works I do.	1. My work is not a shame- and guilt-fueled penance for the sins of whites. I don't need to anyone's thanks to challenge racism.
2. I intentionally seek to educate myself about racism, and lean into situations that are uncomfortable.	2. I attend discussions and actions hosted by local groups led by people of color. I read books, articles and publications that address racism. I try to leave the comfort zone of my white privilege.
3. I talk about racism at community dinner, at work, and with friends. When I do, I acknowledge that people of color have been talking about these subjects for a long time, and have been routinely ignored in the process.	3. I name racism when I see it, with a humble and open spirit. I don't pretend to be an expert, but speak the truth as I understand it, regardless of my social discomfort.
4. I remember that white privilege is not having to deal with racism all of the time. I do the inner work and examine how my own attitudes reinforce or combat racism.	4. I intentionally take time, alone and with community, to examine my relationships, actions and beliefs through an anti-racist lens.
5. I am hyper-vigilant about interrupting racism (challenging racist jokes, comments or references, etc), but I am NOT hyper-arrogant about the badge of "ally".	5. I don't expect people of color to advocate for themselves to whites who are being ignorant or hateful. I consider "ally" to be more of a journey and an attitude than a final, static goal.
6. Following the lead of people of color, I work for social change and to defend civil rights of all people.	6. I make it a priority to read newsletters, Facebook posts, and other material from organizations representing groups led by people of color in forming my opinions on social justice issues.
7. Despite my best intentions, I have blind spots and make mistakes. I realize "it's not about me." I avoid over-personalizing challenges from people of color. I accept criticism with a relaxed attitude.	7. When I say something that is unintentionally racist, I accept challenge graciously, knowing that it provides an opportunity for discussion, growth, and deeper relationships.
8. I contribute time, talent, or treasure to organizations that confront racism, and am willing to leave my comfort zone.	8. I am a member, and make donations of money and my time to local and national organizations that directly confront racism.
9. I listen responsively to people of color. I acknowledge that it is not their responsibility to educate me about racism.	9. I ask for feedback from the Palestinians I work with, and I'm willing to change based on that feedback. I don't ask my African American friends to prove that racism exists.
10. I choose to overcome my shame, fear and guilt, and seek out relationships with people of color that are genuine and honest.	10. I seek authentic relationships - not token ones - that involve both support and challenge.

Based on Dismantling Racism from the Western States Center

Distancing Behavior and Anti-Racist Attitudes: Questions for Reflection

Distancing Behaviors:

1. What situations bring up these distancing tactics for you?
2. Have you seen the distancing tactics used in your community? How did people respond?
3. How can you better respond to some of these distancing behaviors?

Anti-Racist Attitudes:

1. What is your reaction to “Anti-Racist Attitudes” - uncomfortable, inspired, angry, daunted? Why do you think this is your reaction?
2. What are your individual strengths and weaknesses in regards to “Anti Racist Attitudes”?
3. Have you seen these attitudes put into action in your community – if so, how?
4. If not, any guesses why? What are some of the obstacles to gaining these attitudes?



Racism in our Communal Structures: A Community Assessment Tool

The tool describes four stages of community development, so that we can identify our starting point. Most communities have a few characteristics from each stage, while others may have one dominant stage that prevails. Evolving through the stages requires step-by-step change - unfortunately, we can't skip steps.

Some white-dominated intentional communities are geographically located in places that have tiny non-white populations. While we must be careful to not use geography as an excuse to maintain white domination, in some cases, the goal of evolving towards becoming a multi-racial community just doesn't make sense. In those places, strong, independent organizations of color are most needed, and the white community can work to become an accountable, mutually-supportive ally group. This process entails developing structures of accountability to communities of color, and developing communal structures that normalize the anti-racist lens. In most cases, though, the all-whiteness of our community is something that is created, and that can be changed.

General Descriptions of the Four Stages of Community Development

The All White Community

These communities don't intentionally exclude people of color, but have not analyzed their organizational structure and culture for seeds of racism. These communities often ask the question "Where are all the people of color- why don't they volunteer here or support us?" When these communities are unsuccessful at recruiting people of color, they may tend to (subconsciously) blame people of color for not being interested in their important work, or decide that "the work" is more important than having a multi-cultural or anti-racist group.

The Token Community

These communities feel mostly like the All White Community, with a few people of color involved. This community has set specific goals for including people of color, but maintains a white dominated culture across the board.

The Multi-Cultural Community

This community celebrates diversity, with many people of color involved. It addresses race issues within the group, but is mostly controlled by decisions and standards set by whites.

The Anti-Racist Community

These communities analyze their practices and cultures regularly through an anti-racist lens. Caucusing (separate supportive discussions about racism) is used to encourage the growth of anti-racist white allies and empowered people of color. Power is shared between people of color and whites; racism and privilege are talked about regularly. The commitment to end racism is a consistent theme in community materials, ministries and meetings.

Questions for Reflection

1. Use the graph to examine your communal structures. Within each structure (communal culture, primary work, etc.) circle the stage that best describes your community. Describe details and examples of each.
2. Brainstorm some initial ideas for your community to evolve forward.

	All White Community	Token Community	Multicultural Community	Anti-Racist Community
Community Culture - What is celebrated? - What are the expectations of behavior? - How do we interact?	<p>We primarily measure success by how much is accomplished</p> <p>We pay more attention to “product” than process</p> <p>We don’t discuss our communal structures with any significant power or race analysis</p> <p>Consensus in name only; dominant members (whites) dictate most of the decisions</p> <p>We’re in denial that our community may be reproducing racism</p>	<p>White people’s ideas and practices (how meetings are conducted, how the house is run, etc.) dictate the norm</p> <p>When discussing oppression, we focus on individual prejudice, rather than structural racism</p> <p>We avoid conflict when possible</p> <p>Paternalistic; deep down we believe in our status quo: “the community knows best”</p>	<p>Non-white heroes and groups are celebrated in practical ways</p> <p>“Bootstraps” mentality and workaholicism still encouraged</p> <p>While celebrating individuals who have succeeded, we still generally assume a level playing field</p> <p>Expectations for community behavior are clearly laid out</p>	<p>We encourage a diversity of work styles, and are intentional about balancing what gets done with how it gets done</p> <p>We name racism when we see it, both in the world, and within our community.</p> <p>We can engage in conflict with one another without too much fuss</p> <p>We devote time, energy and money to community building and mentoring</p>
Primary Work/ Ministry - Hospitality - what kind and why? - Education? -What other groups do we work with?	<p>Our primary work involves white people serving/helping people of color</p> <p>Collaborations are typically with other white-dominated organizations</p> <p>We don't do much analysis of the relationship between service and justice, little emphasis on resistance</p>	<p>This community tries to “empower” people of color but lacks the analysis of power dynamics</p> <p>Justice is discussed mostly in terms of international issues</p> <p>People of color are mostly aware of our community because it is providing a direct service</p>	<p>This community has some participation from people of color in its daily work</p> <p>We seek to learn more about structural racism and its affect on our ministry</p> <p>Some opportunities for guests/clients to join community</p>	<p>Power is shared between people of color and whites in planning and implementing this community’s mission</p> <p>We regularly review our community’s mission and practices through an anti-racist lens</p> <p>We have mutually supportive relationships with organizations representing people of color</p>
Leadership & Decision Making - How are decisions made, in and out of meetings? - What is the process for entering community? -How is money handled?	<p>Decision making is controlled by whites, especially white men</p> <p>Sharing power with people of color feels threatening and not desirable</p> <p>Entrance into this community is on a “who you know” basis</p>	<p>People of color are encouraged to participate in mostly non-decision making ways: as event speakers, cooks, or infrequent volunteers</p>	<p>This community includes people of color in most areas of the work</p> <p>Whites still set the norms and have the strongest, or best-heard voices in meetings</p>	<p>We are very transparent in our decision making</p> <p>The process of entering community and participating in the work is easily understood and accessible to all people</p> <p>We're not controlling about “how things should be”, open to new ideas</p>

<u>Resistance</u> - Who participates? - Does our analysis and process mirror the change we're seeking?	<p>Outreach for campaigns and actions is only to other white-dominated church groups and organizations</p> <p>Little analysis of power dynamics about the campaign itself</p>	<p>Messaging mostly speaks "for" targeted groups, with a few exceptions of token speakers</p> <p>The idea of "solidarity" retains the power imbalance between whites and people of color</p>	<p>Participants include a broad spectrum of people of color</p> <p>"Solidarity" starts to imply following the lead of people of color</p>	<p>Direct actions consistently include analysis and recognition of different levels of risk for whites and people of color</p> <p>Discussion of risking "jail time" is in the context of racism and the prison industrial complex</p> <p>Leadership from people of color in all realms of decision making</p>
<u>Sources of Support</u> -How do we ask for help? -What groups do we seek out? - Who are our volunteers and donors?	<p>This community may be primarily funded by a small number of large donors</p> <p>In terms of volunteers and donations of food, etc. we are supported by white wealthy schools, churches, students and groups</p>	<p>There are a few people of color who volunteer or donate money, but they don't often stay involved for long</p>	<p>When we have a specific need, we ask for help from a wide range of both whites and people of color</p> <p>Our most regular, committed volunteers include people of color</p>	<p>We have a large number of individual donors from diverse backgrounds</p> <p>People of color take leadership in different areas of finances, donations, etc. in supporting the community's mission</p>
<u>Core Values & Communication</u> -How is our philosophy communicated? -What modes do we use?	<p>Community values presume a privileged background</p> <p>Writing is white-centered: speaking from whites, to whites.</p>	<p>In newsletters, etc. people of color are conspicuously and inappropriately highlighted in a tokenizing way</p>	<p>Voices from people of color throughout material, but interpreted and framed by whites</p>	<p>Philosophy communicated in flexible way, acknowledging different experiences with racism</p> <p>We are willing to examine our mission through an anti-racist lens and evolve as needed</p>

Adapted from "Dismantling Racism" from the Western States Center.

This worksheet is part of a book project, "Recipes for the Beloved Community". Contact Jenny Truax for more info cwjedi@gmail.com

Interrupting Racism

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.” -

Desmond Tutu

Folks who choose not to interrupt oppressive moments are complicit in allowing oppression to go unchallenged. We want our fellow community members to care deeply when we are marginalized, and we want to be allies for each other, our guests and volunteers. Building upon a foundation of a loving and trusting community, with practice, confronting racism can be less intimidating; your community might even develop a shorthand for it.

Assertiveness Model

- **Breathe** - Ground yourself. If it is helpful, think to yourself about this person's hurtful remark, which is based on their own hurt and confusion, “I’m so sorry this happened to you.”
- **Name the behavior** - Call out the remark, not the person. Naming a comment as racist is difficult; it counters our social conditioning to fit in and please. Try: "Because of racism people often think..."
- **Name how the behavior makes you feel OR describe the impact of the behavior** - It helps the relationship and interaction to name your feelings. Talk about what assumptions underlie the comment, and why it is racist.
- **Give a Direction** - Ask for the person to reconsider their comment, to avoid making such comments in the future, etc.
- **Stay** - Depending on the nature of your relationship (is the person a close friend, or someone you’ve just met?) be willing to stay in the conversation, keep engaging in the email conversation, or pursue it later.

Example

- **Volunteer:** I’m glad you’re reaching out to black churches for the Close Guantanamo campaign, but they’re too busy with their food pantries and other social services to think about international issues. Maybe you should focus your organizing energy in other directions?
- **You:** (Calming breath). You’re making a generalization that African Americans in these churches don’t think about the world around them, and I’m uncomfortable with that idea. Because of racism, we're often taught to think things like that. What do you think?

**Our Liberation is a
Collective Process**

Practice Scenarios for Interrupting Racism

In groups of 3, take turns responding to each scenario, using the Assertiveness Model, if it's helpful. Discuss different options for each.

1. During a house tour for a Confirmation group of, white 8th graders, the adult chaperone asks, "I assume all your guests are black?" How do you respond?
2. At a family dinner, a relative asks, "Do you make those people staying with you get a job, or do you let them sit around all day?" You want to respond as a good ally, and also you're afraid of making a scene. You say...
3. A few members are talking about trying to get healthier food donated. Someone says "The guests don't really care about eating healthy, they just want their comfort food of fried chicken." What do you say?
4. During a meeting, the people of color in your community have not spoken at all. A new topic is introduced; what do you say?
5. A white volunteer is playing with an African American child, and keeps talking about the child's hair, showing it to her fellow volunteers. What do you do and say?
6. The new website is being discussed. People are saying that it should be directed at potential volunteers, rather than potential guests. What do you say?
7. When discussing a proposal to spend money in support of a campaign about police brutality, someone says, "I'd rather we spent the money on more food for the people we already serve, rather than offending our donors on an abstract issue." How do you respond?
8. Some volunteers are discussing your neighborhood, which happens to be in a poor black area that has a history of white flight and red-lining. "Is it safe here? It seems like there's a lot of crime." What do you say?
9. Your notice aloud that your community is financially supported by 90% white people. A fellow community member says, "So what? That's who supports us, who believes in our work, and who we have relationships with. There's nothing wrong with being supported by white people." How do you respond?
10. Your all-white community is in a mostly-white part of the state. When the subject of racism comes up, someone says, "Everyone in the city is white, so it's ok that we are all white too. Racism is not an issue for us." What do you say?

Anti-Racist Organizing: Invitations for White People

"... Solidarity is not meant to be comfortable. It is not shining light on yourself as ally at the expense of the oppressed who are demanding their counter-narratives be centralized. It is understanding that your whiteness protects you from certain things which in turn prohibits you from participation in others, because at the end of the day, when you get tired of marching and chanting, you can put your hands down and go home... Some of us simply don't have that luxury." -

www.freefrequency.strikingly.com

Remember, you are good and you are racist: We were handed racism, and didn't choose it. White supremacy is foundational to our society and affects every single one of us - no matter how much we read or how much analysis we develop. Sitting with the defensiveness, guilt and shame that arises when we talk about racism and white privilege is part of us learning and growing.

Learn about your blind spots: Just as a fish has a hard time discerning and explaining water, white people have a hard time noticing white privilege and white supremacy. It is our responsibility - as individuals and communities - to learn about these blind spots. A big one is our tendency to dictate and take over, and then wonder why no people of color are involved. The personal work of undoing our racism is essential to working with other people.

Make the connections: By focusing attention on looting, white folks are silencing a more important narrative -- a narrative about the unjust murder of an innocent teenager and state violence, which includes the disproportionate imprisoning of people of color, the militarization of police, racial profiling etc. Drones kill people abroad, and they also disproportionately affect people of color at home. The militarization of the police is directly related to our war-making abroad. Making these connections is essential.

Acknowledge that you are not "better" than other white people: A common distancing behavior for white folks - especially those in anti-war circles - is to applaud themselves for "getting it" and disparaging those who don't. This pattern is part of capitalist thought that encourages rugged individualism and competition. Instead, we need to draw near other white people embracing the idea of collective liberation with personal responsibility.

Listen, take the lead, and elevate the voices of those who are most affected: As white people, it is not our place to decide what a community response should be to the murder of a black teen. We should be lifting up voices of those who are directly affected by state violence- in our social media, newsletters and events - rather than centering our own voices. When we participate, we need to make listening our priority. White people shouldn't be running every meeting, leading the march, or grabbing the megaphone.

Work to better understand your white privilege: White privilege means that you are not targeted by systems of racial oppression; it's a privilege to choose which social justice issue you want to work on. White privilege grants whites more opportunities in leadership, and therefore we feel entitled to take on these roles in coalition work. We need to let go of control, to take background and support roles, and to be flexible.

It's a privilege to deplore violence on both sides, just as it is a privilege to not have to choose a side. You have nothing to lose in your silence. For others, being silent or "remaining calm" means that the next black teen to be murdered may be their loved one.

Be accountable: Take criticism. We will make mistakes and getting called out is uncomfortable, but it is how we grow. Be okay with making mistakes, and then make up for them. Set up relationships where you are giving and receiving feedback about your white privilege.

Create mutually supportive relationships: Showing up and supporting community groups that are led by people of color (even those that don't fit in "perfectly" with our CW philosophy) is not only important for creating coalitions, but also for challenging our own racism. It can help us acknowledge patterns of "White Hero Syndrome".

Reflection Questions: - What feelings does this brings up in you?
- What obstacles to we have to these invitations? - How can we do it better?

Adapted from a 2014 St. Louis statement penned by Colleen Kelly and Shona Clarkson

How we Talk About Structural Racism

Here are some issues related structural racism that play out in everyday life. Often, white folks and people of color respond quite differently to these issues. Within the lens of the Anti-Racist attitudes, how do you think about the following realities:

Should our communities have an accountability process for police practices and policies? This might include a Civilian Review Board that can investigate shootings and allegations of police misconduct. Such Boards, to be effective, need real subpoena power, need to be made up of a body that is representative of the local community, and must have the ability to review policy.

What are the attitudes of whites and people of color towards racial profiling in your community? Studies show that police across the country follow, pull over and arrest people of color at far higher rates than whites, despite equivalent crime rates.

Are anti-war and peace movements connected to domestic justice movements? So many times, the peace rallies are all white and the police brutality vigils are mostly attended by African American. What keeps these groups separate? What power dynamics or racism might be influencing this divide? Do you know of any mutually supportive organizations or coalitions in your community?

The War on Drugs has devastated the Black community in the US, resulting in some devastating statistics:

- Despite comparable usage rates, Black people are 3.7 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white people.
- For Black males in their thirties, 1 in every 10 is in prison or jail on any given day.
- 66% of all persons in prison for drug offenses are people of color.
- The U.S. is the world's leader in incarceration with 2.2 million people currently in the nation's prisons or jails -- a 500% increase over the past thirty years.

How do you think about drug use, and what the consequences of drug use should be? How do most people respond to the racialized makeup of the prison system? In what ways have “Black” and “criminal” become synonymous?

Minimum Sentencing Laws: Harsh sentencing laws such as mandatory minimums keep drug offenders in prison for longer periods of time. In 1986, released drug offenders had spent an average of 22 months in federal prison. By 2004, they served almost three times that length: 62 months in prison. Should we have mandatory minimum sentencing? Who does this penalize and who does it benefit?

How do we think about black exceptionalism? When African Americans excel in politics, entertainment and business, how do you talk about the societal myths of the “level playing field” and “pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps”? To what structures do we point to demonstrate the reality of institutional racism?

Do we too easily fall into charity mode when justice is what is needed? We need people working across the spectrum - for example, both housing people who are homeless and fighting for policies that keep people from becoming homeless. Are you committed to working on both ends? Where do your skills lie? How do we proclaim the importance of uniting charity with justice?

Sources: sentencingproject.org, handsupunited.org.



Communal Strategies for Action: Dismantling Racism

There is no road map for dismantling racism! These are just a few general suggestions to get you started!

- **Encourage Inner Work as a Community**
 - Without the difficult work of examining our own prejudices, attitudes and behaviors, communal strategies will fall short. As a community, encourage and create structures for members to educate themselves, to journal, and to discuss racism and white privilege (Book groups, journaling circles, etc)
- **Examine your Communal Structures**
 1. Review the **Community Assessment Graph** as a community.
 1. On a flip chart, describe your structures and place them under the appropriate categories of the All-White Club, Token, Multi-Cultural, or Anti-Racist. Is there a **dominant category**, or categories, that would describe your community?
 2. With this information, you have a common language for the different elements that either mirror, or combat racism. You also have named a starting place for your community.
 3. Together, brainstorm “**Change ideas**” that would help the group evolve forward in each category.
 4. As a group, **prioritize** the idea: choose just a few to start with, and keep the rest.
 5. Discuss each idea - the barriers to implementing it, and strategies to make it happen. Make **SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE goals** for each priority you choose. For example: “In 2015, we will, as a community, attend the events hosted by the local Hispanic cultural group and seek to build relationships there. We will check in in March to assess how we’re doing.”
 6. On a regular basis, evaluate your progress and adjust things as necessary. Be aware of the inevitable discomfort that comes with the territory here.
 2. Regardless of your starting place, you can’t skip over steps - it’s important to evolve slowly and intentionally to ensure authentic change.
- **Fishbowls and Listening Sessions**
 - A small group openly discusses an issue that touches on racism, surrounded by the larger group. The fishbowl helps promote understanding and is useful when some people have a lot of information, experience or interpersonal dynamics that others might not share. People within the fishbowl can alternate between people in dominant or targeted groups. People of color can talk about their experience of racism in community, and then whites can share about how their role with racism has hurt them.
- **Community Check Ins**
 - Within meetings, have regular time to discuss racism. Where did you notice it this week - within yourself, in the world? Where did you succeed and fail in combating it?
- **Retreat**
 - Take time away to address racism in a community-building format. Develop a common language and understanding about racism and power dynamics that influence your community interactions.
- **Support Groups and Caucusing**
 - Separate caucusing among dominant and targeted groups can be helpful to encourage honesty and vulnerability: anti-racist white groups, support groups for people of color, etc.
- **Communal Agreements: Being Allies for Each Other**
 - Discuss and create shared expectations for each other in regards to your anti-oppression work. Some possible examples of communal expectations:
 - Each of us will challenge racism when we see it
 - Whites will handle racist comments made in the house
 - We will commit to support and challenge each other in the midst of a racist society

Reading #1 Now You See Me - Sylvester Brown, Jr.

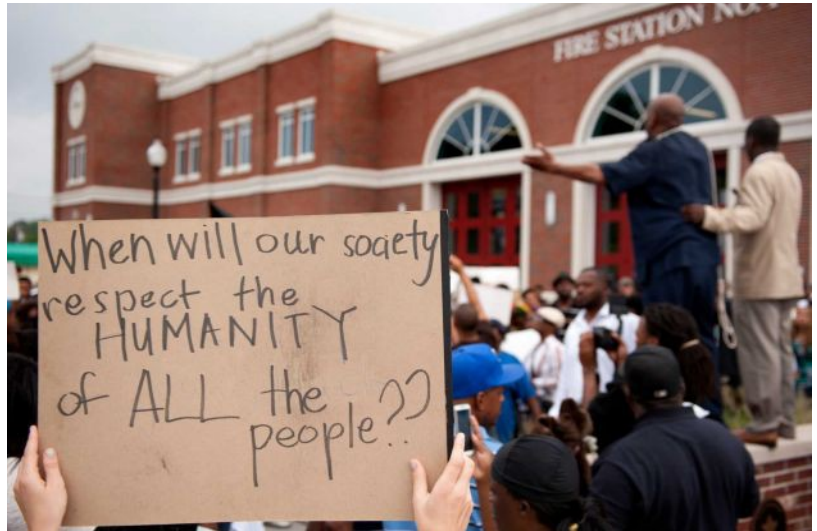
August 10, 2014

Now, for this brief moment, you see me.

As we gather in throngs, angrily, defiantly,
desperately confronting your apathy, your
arrogance, your utter disdain...you see me.

Now, after killing me; shooting me down like a
rabid pup, leaving my body on the cold, cold
ground for hours, like garbage...you hear me.

As my 18-year-old blood soaks into our concrete
detention, you fear me.



Now, as I once again face German Shepherds and M-16s held in the shaky, sweaty hands of mentally pubescent,
conditioned “heroes”....you feel me.

I am the subject of “Today’s News”; the analysis of stale analysis, the giant awakened by a blast of unrestrained,
unnoticed and unchecked indifference.

And you...now, you've come home...if only for the moment.

Like absentee parents, you revisit the nightmare you abandoned to chase “the Dream.” Where were you while poverty
and unemployment mounted...while they packed the children of your parent’s parents in prisons, herded your kin into
Gateway ghettos and stereotyped us all into irrelevance?

Your impotent call for calm is too late, even though my blaze validates your worth.

This is the “fire next time.” It is St. Louis finally claiming its 1960’s moment. It is the vomit that spews after a centuries-
long diet of naked injustice. It is the protruding pus from a rancid, untreated wound. It is the communal outcry to the
manifesto of systemized, antiseptic assassination.

Now, as I run your streets, trashing your QuikTrips and looting your Taco Bells; as I gag on tear gas and defiantly await
rubber to turn to lead, you see me as you've always projected me: angry, reckless, violent, out-of-control, in need of
restraint.

I am different...but not.

If only, in this brief moment, you can really see the “me” that is us, that is we.

Reading #2: Adapted from “I am Racist, and So Are You” - Rachel Shadoan

...Mike Brown. Renisha McBride. Trayvon Martin. Eric Garner. These are only a handful of the hundreds of people killed each year because of white people’s fear. Because of fear like mine. Because of racism like mine....

We must... admit to ourselves that our irrational fears are rooted deeply in this country’s history of enslaving, oppressing, and murdering black people. We cannot continue to take the easy way out. This cannot be allowed to continue. People are *dying*, because white people have not stepped up to the plate and addressed the racism that has wormed its tendrils through our souls.

It is our turn at bat.

Look, I’m not here to condemn you. Condemning you, after all, would condemn me as well. I’m here to tell you that it’s not us against the racists. We’re not fighting a battle with the Paula Deens of the world. If only it were that simple, that cut and dried. The battle is instead **us against racism**, and that racism resides in each of us. This war begins within....

We must be gentle with ourselves. We accomplish nothing by doing more violence to our psyches than our system has already done. You are not a bad person because you are racist. I am not a bad person because I am racist. We are just people, products of a racist culture that we didn’t choose but got stuck with anyway. It is, however, our responsibility, to address our own racism. We cannot change a racist system—a system that oppresses and brutalizes black people and other people of color—without first changing ourselves....

I know you can do this. I know we can do this.

I know we can do this, because we must do this. It is our turn at bat.



Reading #3 : Because I Am White - Adhamh Roland

I am white. I am from St. Louis.

I am 66% less likely to be stopped by police in Ferguson, the town where my father was raised,

I am less likely to be searched by the cops than African Americans or Latinos in Ferguson, though more likely to have contraband in my possession,

I can't find statistics for how likely it is that I would be shot, unarmed, in my neighborhood by a police officer,

Because I am white.

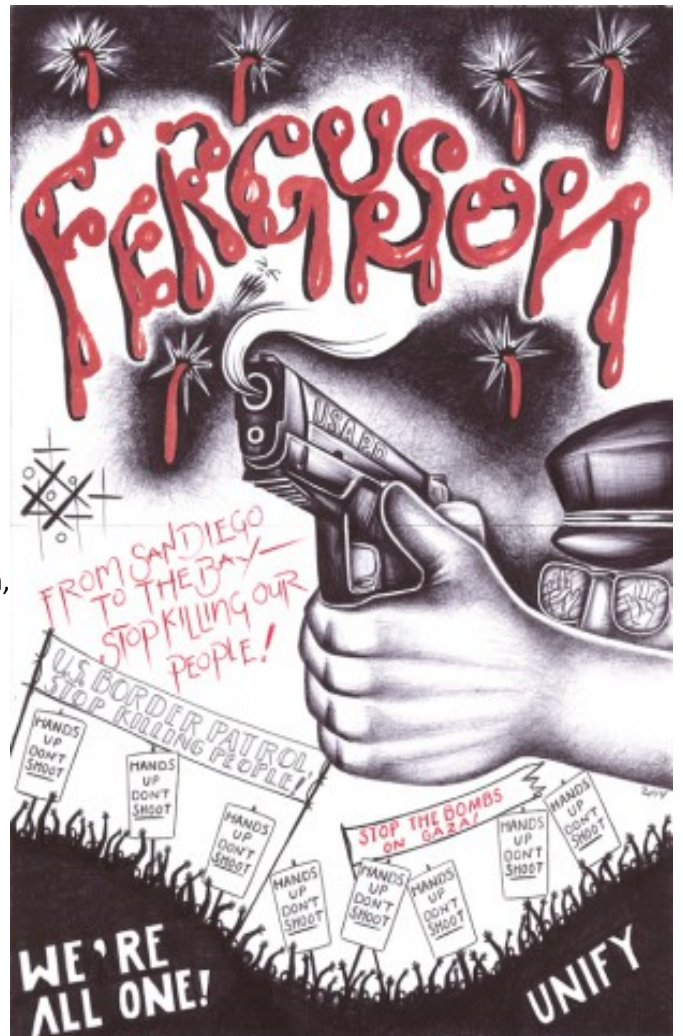
I share something with Darren Wilson and George Zimmerman,

We share the experience of living in a culture that tells us that our lives have more value,

Just because we are white.

And when the streets of Ferguson cry out in righteous, inconsolable grief and rage

Because there are only so many ways one can utter/scream/wail the word "again?"



I have the choice to avert my gaze from the gaping wounds of history, of today,

The choice to consider my legacy as disconnected, independent, objective, normal,

The choice to consider all else as other, biased, dangerous Because I am white.

I choose to turn and face the ways that racism advantages me just for being white

And the other side of that advantage—disadvantage, from the micro to the merciless.

I choose to stand with the Black community of Ferguson, of St. Louis County, of St. Louis City,

To stand with targets of police crimes and repression all over the country and the world.

I choose to consider these collective wounds as implicating us all

And that their healing requires my participation... Because I am white.

Reading #4: We Are the Ones We've been Waiting for - Adapted from Alice Walker

It is the worst of times. It is the best of times...

It is the worst of times because it feels as though the very Earth is being stolen from us, *by us*: the land and air poisoned, the animals disappeared, humans degraded and misguided. War and oppression are everywhere.

It is the best of times because we have entered a period, if we can bring ourselves to pay attention, of great clarity as to cause and effect...

It is as if ancient graves, hidden deep in the shadows of the psyche and the earth, are breaking open of their own accord. Unwilling to be silent any longer. Incapable of silence.

No leader or people of any country will be safe from these upheavals that lead to exposure, no matter how much the news is managed or how long people's grievances have been kept quiet....It is an awesome era in which to live.

It was the poet June Jordan who wrote "We are the ones we have been waiting for." We are the ones we've been waiting for because we are able to see what is happening with a much greater awareness than our parents or grandparents, our ancestors, could see.

This does not mean we believe, having seen the greater truth of how all oppression is connected, how pervasive and unrelenting, that we can "fix" things.

But some of us are not content to have a gap in opportunity and income that drives a wedge between rich and poor. Not willing to ignore brutalized children.

Not willing to let segregation and discrimination destroy our society.

Not willing to disappear into our flower gardens, cul-de-sacs, or the illusion of independence.

We have wanted all our lives to know that Earth, who has somehow obtained human beings as her custodians, was also capable of creating humans who could minister to her needs, and the needs of her creation.

We are the ones.

Reading #5: Peace

"Prayers for PEACE, yes, but which PEACE? Are we just praying for looting to stop or are we praying for a disruption of the forces of racism which have brought us to this point? The problem is not at Canfield or the Quik Trip. There hasn't been peace for a long time. The protests are making that plain to the world. We don't have a Ferguson problem, we have a St. Louis problem, an American problem. PEACE requires transformation of the systems which are valuing white lives (and comfort) over black lives."

-David Gerth



Recipes for the Beloved Community is a book project organized and written by Jenny Truax and Carolyn Griffeth, who are both part of the St. Louis Catholic Worker Community.

For more info on this project: Carolyn 314.588.8351 cdgriffeth@yahoo.com or
Jenny 314.974.9937 or cwjedi@gmail.com

For additional anti-oppression resources (including a similar packet on Sexism and Heterosexism), visit the website of the St. Louis Catholic Worker: www.karenhousecw.org