February 2018 Catholic Worker Gathering: Combating Racism

9:00 Welcome and Introductions
- Introductions, Agenda Review for Day, Group Norms
- Working Definitions

9:30 The Pillars of White Supremacy and Wall of History
Small group discussion questions:
1. Talk more about the feelings that came up for you?
2. What themes did you notice?
3. What did you notice about the CW movement in relation to racism?

10:20 Break
10:35 How Racism Functions: The Table of Oppression

11:15: Tools for Spotting Racism in Our Communities
Small group discussion questions:
- Which statements stuck out to you?
- What emotions did this exercise bring up?
- What ideas do you have about moving forward?

11:40 Large Group Reflections

12:00   Lunch
1pm   Police & Prison Abolition
2:00   Break
2:15   The Catholic Worker Aims and Means
3:15   Final Reflection
4:00   Close

Working Definitions

White Supremacy: The belief system and ideological umbrella that grants superiority to those identified as "white" over those marked as "non-white," and defines "white" as the "norm." As an ideology, white supremacy manifests itself at three levels: culturally, institutionally, and individually.

Racism: The system created by white colonial rulers in the 17th century that carries out the ideology of white supremacy. It gives preferential access to survival resources (wealth, housing, education, legal protection, etc.) to white people, while impeding access to people of color. (under this definition, "reverse racism" doesn't exist.)

Racism = race prejudice + misuse of power by systems and institutions

Anti-black racism: A force that dehumanizes black peoples, bodies, and communities in order to provide resources and power to a racist system

Racial prejudice: Negative beliefs or behaviors towards another group based on stereotypes and pre-judgements.
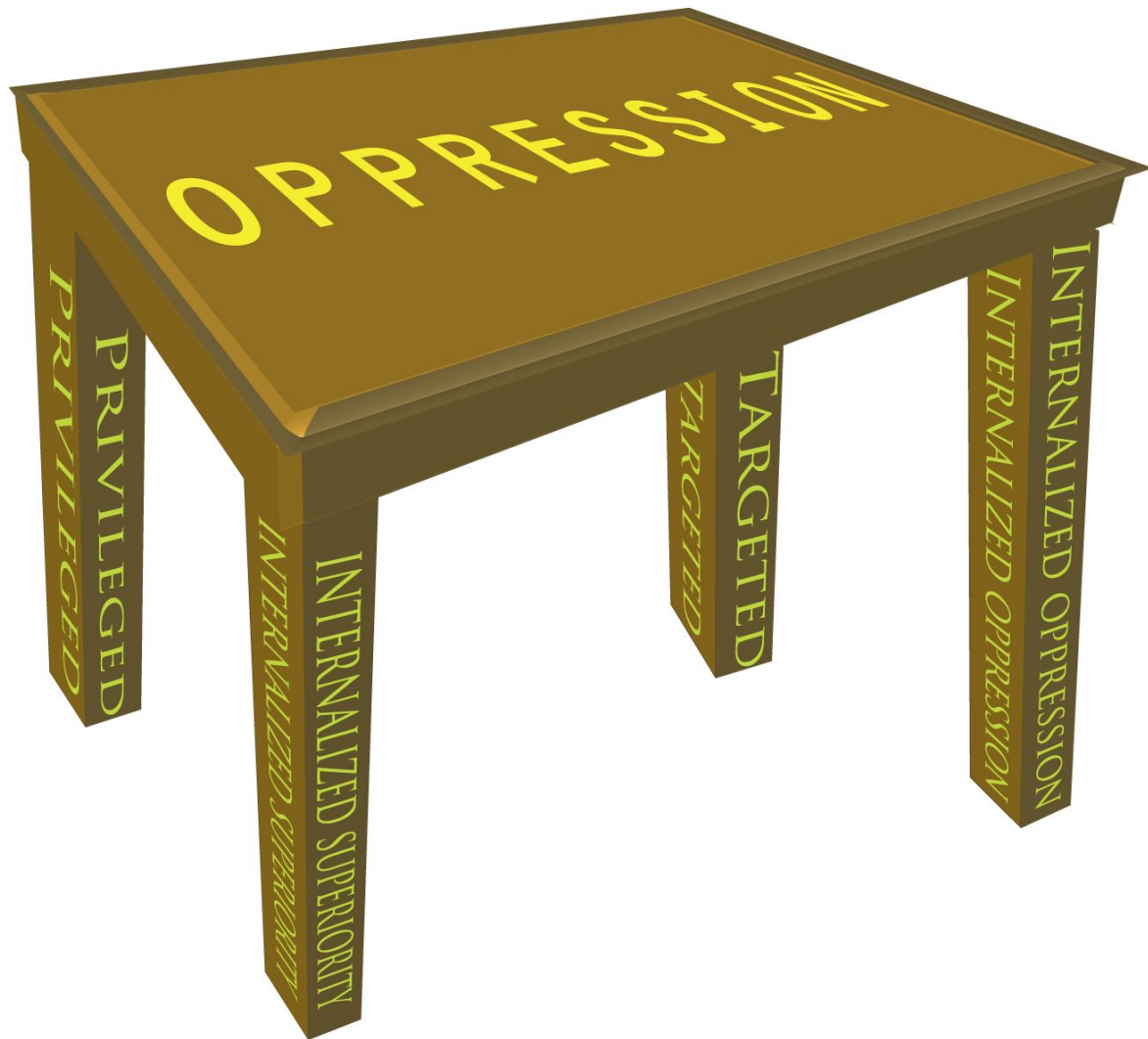
White privilege - The unearned and accumulated advantages that white people receive that are denied to, or are at the expense of, people of color. White privilege enables white people to benefit psychologically and materially from these accumulated advantages, whether they seek them or not.

Anti-Racism: the strategic interventions that intentionally interrupt the patterns of white supremacy among individuals, institutions, and group cultures.

Ally/Accomplice: Ally (in anti-racism): A white person who takes action against the oppression of people of color, and does personal work and risk-taking to dismantle racism. Ally-ship could mean engaging with other white people to give and receive feedback around racism; acting in solidarity with people of color, centering the voices of and offering support to people of color, and staying engaged with the fight against racism.

Sources and Further Reading: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, Waking Up White by Debby Irving, "Definitions and Descriptions of Race," YWCA Madison, "The Five Faces of Oppression" article by Iris Young

The Table of Oppression: Handout

Privilege: The unearned and accumulated advantages, entitlements, benefits, choices, assumptions, and expectations white people receive that are denied to, or at the expense of, people of color. White privilege is bestowed upon people based upon their social group membership, whether they seek them or not.

Targeting: Racism is the one-way, systemic oppression that targets people of color. It is expressed in five distinct ways: marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, violence, and exploitation. (These ways are described in "The Five Faces of Oppression" article by Iris Young.)

Internalized Superiority: The conscious or subconscious acceptance by people in the agent group (white people) of the stereotypes and harmful racist messages perpetuated by society. These beliefs are often subconscious, and therefore this "scripting" can guide their decisions and behavior. It often shows up in implicit bias, and horizontal hostility towards other white people.

Internalized Oppression: The conscious or subconscious acceptance of racist messages by targeted individuals (people of color). The acceptance and acting out of these beliefs are often subconscious, and leading 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.

Worksheet on Internalized Superiority and Internalized Oppression
Mark the statements that ring true for you.

Examples of Internalized Superiority for the Agent group

1. You have been taught, learned or ever believed that your good intentions and feelings matter more than any negative impact you may have.

2. If you have ever cultivated a situation where people of color are dependent you (or if you've ever seen this dynamic happen in community).

3. You have been taught, learned, or ever believed that the way white middle class U.S. citizens speak is superior to the ways other people speak.

4. You have been taught, learned or ever believed that you, your community, or the movement has THE answer.

5. You have been taught, learned or ever believed in the model of individualism and personal purity.

6. You have ever valued reason and efficiency over emotions and relationship building.

7. You have been taught, learned or believed that you have the right to speak as an expert on issues that target people of color.

8. You ever have expected to be welcomed in communities of color (including local neighborhoods and other countries).

9. You grew up in a household where you heard that racism was bad, and that we should be colorblind.

10. You have been taught, learned, or ever believed that white history, culture, or norms were more important or right compared to the history, culture, or norms of people of color.

11. You have ever believed that it would be helpful for a person of color to adopt traits associated with whiteness.

. Examples of Internalized Oppression for the Targeted Group .

1. You have ever felt defensive patterns of fear, mistrust, withdrawal, and isolation from other people of color.

2. You have ever been taught that the way you speak is inferior to the way white middle class U.S. citizens speak.

3. You have been taught, learned or ever been ashamed of anything that ventures from the mythical perfection of white middle class standards ("too dark" skin, "too kinky" hair, "too ethnic", food, "too loud" people).

4. You have been taught, learned or ever believed that you need to "take care of" white people, making sure they don't get upset.

5. You have ever taken your anger or frustration towards white people out on people of color.

6. You have ever felt like an impostor in a predominantly white space.

7. You have been taught, learned or ever believed that you must compete for resources against other people of color.

8. You have ever encouraged a person of your same race to act in a less stereotypical manner.

9. You have been taught, learned or ever believed in a rigid view of what your "authentic" culture and behavior is (such as criticizing as "trying to be white" those who excel in school, talk in a particular way, or like "white" music, etc.)

10. You have been taught, learned or ever believed that in order to succeed, you needed to adopt characteristics associated with whiteness.

11. You have been taught, learned or ever believed (consciously or not) that white people are more trustworthy, intelligent and attractive.

<u>**Tools for Spotting Racism in Our Communities**</u>

It's often difficult for white folks to how racism may be playing out in their organization. Like white privilege, **white culture can seem invisible to white people**, like the air we breathe. Following are four ways that racism can play out in organizations, with an emphasis on service and justice groups. The topics are listed in the Catalyzing Liberation Toolkit from the Catalyst Project and Criss Crass, with summaries by the St. Louis Anti-Racism Collective.

A. Universalizing White Experience

When "white" is considered standard, normal, and good. People with white privilege internalize this superiority and sense of being "normal," which has consequences on the personal, institutional and societal level. Examples of whiteness as normative can include images of leadership and ways of communicating. In social justice organizations, white folks can view their organizing styles, meeting culture, and organizational policies as normal and average. White folks may react poorly to suggestions, or different ways of doing things, from people of color. Examples include:

- White folks wondering why people of color can't get on board with the program or agenda
- Urgency, rather than relationship building or listening, dictates how the group operates
- Failure to recognize that a white-led organization has specific cultural ways of communicating and running meetings, campaigns, and programs, which can inadvertently marginalize people of color
- Expecting new people in a white-dominated organization, especially people of color, to "fit in" to the normative style of organizing and communicating
- White folks escalating tactics because of a strong sense of urgency, even though there are different risks posed to black, brown, and undocumented activists

B. Deracialization

Deracialization involves removing an issue from the larger context of racism and failing to challenge the impact of racism on that issue. Deracializing restricts the self-determination of the people who are most impacted by that issue to define their own struggle. This term was developed by Critical Resistance, a prison abolition organization. Examples include:

- Organizations combatting homelessness, war, or climate change, and not naming and challenging the intersection of racism with these issues
- Treating injustices like climate change and war as if they affect all people equally
- White folks feeling free to speak in newsletters, to volunteers, and publicly as experts on subjects that disproportionately affect people of color, while groups and people of color are often ignored or not believed.
- White-led organizations failing to acknowledge both the history, and current organizations, of people of color doing similar work

C. Contradictory Resistance

In the dynamic of contradictory resistance, white folks work to end oppression but simultaneously fight to maintain the privileges they have. This can look like fighting to maintain positions of power in an organization, or white activists sacrificing long-term strength and the goals of activists of color in order to win short-term gains for their own agenda. Sometimes this looks like prioritizing the clout or power of an organization over the cause by playing it safe or avoiding the appearance of being "too radical." Examples include:

- Organizations that address war, poverty, or education (issues that disproportionately affect people of color) without people of color being in leadership or even at the table.
- Organizations place greater focus and emphasis on the (mostly white) members and donors of the group rather than those impacted by the injustice.
- White folks being unwilling to be uncomfortable, have less control, or less power within a group. Demanding that the group give them something "useful" to do, prioritizing that their skills are being used well over the larger goals of the group

D. Centered On the White

This is a dynamic of white activists ignoring or misunderstanding the resistance coming from communities of color. 500+ years of liberation struggles on this continent have been led by people of color, from colonization on through today. The idea of "recruiting" people of color into "the" movement (defined as white radical struggle) ignores this historical and contemporary reality. Examples include:

- White folks asking the question "How can we get more POC to join our group?" or "How come more people of color don't realize how important this issue is?"
- An organization focusing in a tokenistic way on diversity rather than implementing an anti-racist analysis
- A predominantly white organization using Black and brown icons (like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, Gandhi, etc.) to further their agenda without challenging present-day racism.
- A predominantly white organization putting energy and resources into appealing to white donors, participants, or board members and ignored its lack of diversity.

These four dynamics are very common in white-dominated groups such as the Catholic Worker. The following exercise provides specific examples of these four main dynamics to help communities look at their specific cultures, policies and practices. It can be used in meetings or retreats to open up a conversation about how race and racism play out in our communities.

Indicate if the following statement is true for your community

1. White people hold most or all of the leadership positions and also dictate the way that organizing, communicating, and handling conflict happens.

2. Though we serve and/or live near a significant number of people of color, it is NOT an expectation that white people joining our community will learn about the culture and history of the people we serve, or live among.

3. I have noticed that white people in my community attain official and unofficial leadership positions sooner and easier than their counterparts who are not white.

4. I've heard, or been a part of, conversations in my community that focus the sole responsibility for ending racism on individual behavior without acknowledging or addressing institutional oppression.

5. My community does not consistently acknowledge the influence of racism on the issues we focus on (particularly how people of color are disproportionately impacted by homelessness, militarization, or the destruction of the environment).

6. My community has encouraged white people in the group to speak publicly (to volunteers, to groups and in our newsletters) about issues that disproportionately affect people of color without first ensuring that the voices of people of color have been centered.

7. My community does not generally acknowledge the history of people of color working on the same issues we are (such as care for the earth or resistance work).

8. My community has not prioritized taking direction from organizations led by people of color working on the same issues we are.

9. The urgency of our work has often taken precedence over looking at our own behaviors or structures for the presence of racism.

10. My community has sometimes prioritized the comfort of white volunteers over the comfort or privacy of the guests we serve.

11. We rarely talk about the importance of building relationships with, or accountability to, the people in the neighborhood or larger community where we work.

12. Our community is set up so that people of color are often dependent on white people.

13. In my community I have heard the question asked, "How can we get more people of color to join *our* group/activities?"

14. My community has many white donors and/or volunteers who are disconnected from the communities of color that we serve.

15. I have been a part of direct actions of resistance where the white leaders propose escalated tactics without attention to the different risks posed to black and brown activists.

16. Our decision making process is generally not very transparent or understandable, especially to those that are affected by it, such as our guests. You generally have to be "in the know" to get things done around here.

17. Our community has not developed a strategy around how we confront racist language and behavior from our volunteers.
18. Our community expects its members to adopt voluntary poverty, without adequately addressing either the security that centuries of accumulated wealth has provided white people, or the unjust financial burdens faced by people of color.

19. Sometimes the white people in our community assume that the reason that more people of color aren't a part of the CW is because they don't "get" the Catholic Worker, or they assume that people of color don't care that much about war or the environment.

20. Our predominantly white community uses black and brown icons (like Dr. King, and Gandhi) to further our agenda without prioritizing challenging present-day racism.

21. Our community has at times have preferred to remain silent rather than to appear "too radical" in supporting a people of color-led cause or action.

Sources and Further Reading

- List of community-oriented resources for combating racism (including digital copy of Anti-Racism Chapter from Recipes for the Beloved Community): https://goo.gl/8DQ7kd

- "The Cycle of Socialization" by Bobbie Harro

- "White Supremacy Culture" – Tema Okun

- Crossroads Anti-Racism Organizing and Training

- "The Five Faces of Oppression" - Iris Young

- Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice

- Catalyzing Liberation Toolkit

- Critical Resistance

- Clearinghouse of Anti-Racism resources on Karen House Catholic Worker website