

**ANALYZING and
ORGANIZING
WITH AN
ANTI-RACIST
LENS**

ANALYZING
WITH
AN
ANTI-RACIST
LENS:

**A Perspective for
White Social Justice
Activists**

(The concept of 'Analyzing with an Anti- Racist Lens' was created by Enid Lee, an African-American anti-racist trainer, in her essay "Looking Through an Anti-Racist Lens," in Beyond Heroes and Holidays. Edited by Enid Lee, Deborah Menkart and Margo Okazawa Rey. Washington, DC. Network of Educators on the Americas, 1998. pp. 402-404. For more info, check 'Teaching for Change' catalog. P.O. #73038, Washington, DC. 20056. www.teachingforchange.org. email: orders@teachingforchange.org. Phone: 800-763-9131.)

WHY SHOULD WHITE SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISTS PUT ON AN 'ANTI-RACIST LENS?'

**** To help remove 'race-colored' glasses**

'Race-colored glasses' have socially conditioned Europeans and European-Americans for over 400 years to believe that European-based people and cultures are superior to peoples and cultures indigenous to Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific Islands, and the Arab world.

**** To see the world more clearly**

Seeing the world with an 'anti-racist lens' will enable white social justice activists to be able to identify racial/national oppression and resistance, and the white privilege that exists in their worlds, but which they have been socialized *not to see*.

**** To see themselves as white people more clearly**

Wearing an 'anti-racist lens' will allow white social justice activists to develop *in-sight* into their own souls which have been severely corrupted and damaged by conscious or unconscious participation in a system of white supremacist injustice which actually provides non-ruling class white people with some benefits.

**** To facilitate their spiritual and moral transformation**

The foundation of becoming an anti-racist activist is spiritual and moral. It is a lifetime process and it is liberating process. Although it must be expressed in the real world to be *effective* -- through anti-racist behavior, culture, politics and organization -- an inner spiritual journey will help ensure that it is always *principled*.

**** To motivate grassroots anti-racist activism.**

Mass-based, multi-racial radical and revolutionary movements, led by activists of color, are the most powerful and effective way to bring about fundamental, revolutionary transformation of the United States. *The organized power of the people can win!*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO
'ANALYZE WITH AN ANTI-RACIST LENS?'

**** The United States is a white supremacy state.**

-- If you do not understand the white supremacy system, everything about the United States will confuse you.

(Paraphrase of a statement by Dr. Frances Cress Welsing, an African American psychiatrist and author of The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors.)

**** The U.S. White Supremacy System's aspects are:**

- (1) Racial/national oppression,**
- (2) White Privilege, and**
- (3) The class power of the**
(mostly) white ruling class.

**** The U.S. white supremacy system was historically constructed, consciously perpetuated, and manifests itself in every aspect of life in the U.S. today.**

-- It is a foundation of the economic system.

*** The economic exploitation and oppression of the majority of people of color, and the economically-based 'affirmative action programs' for non-ruling class white people affect who eats well, and who goes hungry; who is housed and who is homeless; who invests in the stock market and who lives from pay check to pay check; who lives by the 'underground economy,' and who works on Wall Street.

-- It is perpetuated by every institution, and reinforced by an interlocking web of all institutions.

-- It is enforced by the violence of the state: the police, INS, prisons, military, the criminal injustice system.

-- It is recreated in all aspects of U.S. culture.

*** The culture of white supremacy includes: how U.S. history is written and lied about; the media, everyday language, art, group dynamics, music, values and assumptions about who and what is 'valuable,' internalized white supremacy and internalized racial oppression, racialized fears, white guilt, etc.

-- It is reinforced and perpetuated through political issues, social and political organizations, mainstream and progressive movements for political change.

*** This history of white-dominated progressive movements, from the crowds at the Boston Tea Party through today's anti-global capitalist activists, reproduce white privilege and racial oppression in political demands, culture, organization, short and long term goals.

-- The U.S. white supremacy system is international. U.S. imperialism has exported white supremacy to every nation impacted by U.S. dollars, guns, politics and culture.

-- The white supremacy system impacts every individual human being in the United States.

*** Individuals are treated differently in everyday life, depending on their racial/national origin and ancestry.

*** Individuals treat each other differently in everyday life, depending on their racial/national origin and ancestry.

*** Individuals manifest different aspects of either internalized racial oppression or internalized white superiority depending on how the white supremacy system values their existence as human beings.

**** The U.S. White Supremacy System reinforces all other systems of oppression, especially capitalism & imperialism, patriarchy & heterosexism, and the violence of the state.**

**** Where There is Oppression, There is Resistance.**

-- Learn to 'Organize with an Anti-Racist Lens.'

-- Hold On To Your Visions.

-- *The Power of the People Will Win!*

FOCUSING YOUR ANTI-RACIST LENS on:

**** Racial/National Oppression:**

°°° Racial/National Oppression exists in *all* aspects of U.S. society. If white social justice activists can't see it, it may be because they are looking through *race-colored glasses*.

°°° Because of white supremacy, ALL systems of oppression hit communities and nations of color *first, hardest and longest*.

°°° To figure out how racial oppression is functioning in a specific situation that involves institutional policy, politics or practice; focus on the EFFECTS of the policy, politics or practice, *not on who is carrying them out*.

**** White Privilege:**

°°° In order to practice social justice activism, white grassroots activists have to understand white privilege: what it is, how it works, how it has been perpetuated in U.S. history, *and what white social justice activists can do to challenge it*.

°°° White Privilege exists wherever there are *non-ruling class white people* (poor people, working class and middle classes).

°°° The white ruling class does not need *privilege*. It has POWER.

°°° Non-ruling class white folks are a bundle of contradictions: they are *both oppressed* on the basis of class, gender, sexuality and other forms of oppression (physical abilities, age, politics, cultures, ethnicities, religion, etc); *and they are privileged in relation to all peoples of color*.

°°° White privilege is the *other side of the coin of racial/national oppression*. To determine how white privilege is functioning in a specific situation, figure out who is getting hurt *some, but not the hardest*; and *who is benefiting some, but not the most*.

**** How the (mostly white) ruling class uses racial/national oppression and white privilege to keep its class wealth and power:**

-- How it uses racial/national oppression:

°°° By stealing the lands, enslaving and exploiting the land and labor, and making war on communities and nations of color;

°°° By killing peoples of color: (state violence);

°°° By 'brainwashing' peoples of color to make them believe they are inferior to all white people (cultural white supremacy);

°°° By dividing communities of color internally and between each community. Some examples of these constructed divisions are:

- Dividing families;
- Providing room in the system for the middle classes while further impoverishing the poor;
- Financing a system of local 'neo-colonialism' in which white money backs politicians of color to drive poor and working class people of color out of a city;
- Pitting citizens against immigrants for housing and jobs;
- Perpetuating stereotypes of different communities of color so they find it difficult to unite against their common oppressors.

-- How it uses White Privilege:

*** By creating and perpetuating the *Strategy of the Slave Owners* to ensure that oppressed white people do not unite with people of color;

*** By conceding short term victories to white progressive movements when those movements' demands can be used to perpetuate the white supremacy system. For example: granting abortion rights before the white women's movement united with the demands of women of color fighting against forced sterilization. The effects of this situation were disastrous for all women: racial/national oppression against women of color was perpetuated, and coalition building between women of color and white women for their common issues was undermined.

*** By perpetuating the 'normalization' of white culture and white superiority through all media and educational institutions.

*** By punishing and criminalizing white activists who unite with the struggles of communities of color.

*** By supporting an ideology of 'individual merit' and 'pulling oneself up by the bootstraps' that cements a cross-class white bonding of non-ruling class whites with the ruling class against communities of color.

**** The Interconnections of the Systems of Oppression:**

*** If you don't understand the white supremacy system, you can't understand the dynamics of the systems of capitalism and imperialism, patriarchy and heterosexism, or the systemic violence of the state.

*** All the systems of oppression are interconnected.

*** But each system of oppression has its own internal dynamics, so it must be analyzed on its own.

WHERE THERE IS OPPRESSION, THERE IS RESISTANCE

**** Mass-based, multi-racial radical and revolutionary movements, led by activists of color, are the most powerful and effective way to bring about fundamental, revolutionary transformation of the United States.**

-- Nations, communities and activists of color have been challenging the white supremacy system for more than 500 years.

*** They resist *first, hardest and longest.*

-- When non-ruling class white folks resist oppression, their resistance is contradictory. They fight militantly against their own oppression (class, gender, sexual orientation, political issues), but they rarely *also* fight against racial/national oppression, and thereby challenge their white privilege.

*** When they resist their own oppression, but not racial/national oppression, they *can win their short term demands, but they sacrifice the long term struggle.* They sabotage the coalitions and alliances with communities of color that are the only way they could effectively challenge the oppression that hits all oppressed peoples.

*** The history and present political practice of predominantly white progressive and radical movements demonstrates clearly that *racism (often expressed as white privilege politics, behavior, culture and practice) is the major barrier to building the long term coalitions and alliances that can bring down all the systems of oppression and begin to create a new world.*

**** White grassroots social justice activists have the responsibility to *both* struggle for racial justice and challenge white privilege in *all* their social justice work.**

BECOMING AN ANTI-RACIST ACTIVIST:

Some steps white social justice activists can take

-- Act on Your Principles.

*** It's the morally right thing to do.

*** It will spiritually cleanse the souls that have been distorted by acting in a culture of white superiority, entitlement, guilt and fear.

-- Practice and Model Respectful Behavior.

*** Spiritual and moral transformation is fundamental to political transformation.

-- Challenge white privilege: your own, your family's and friends,' your organization's, your movements.

-- Participate in local struggles for racial justice.

-- Create an anti-racist *culture of resistance*.

*** Study the histories/herstories of 500 years of resistance by communities and nations of color to the white supremacy system.

*** Study the contradictory history/herstories of resistance of non-ruling class white movements, as well as the hidden stories of anti-racist resistance among white activists.

*** Challenge racist language, values, assumptions and behavior: your own and your friends, in your daily life.

-- Practice *Each One Teach One*.

*** Figure out how to convince another social justice activist why she should become an anti-racist activist, *even if it takes more time and hard work than she is already doing*.

-- Learn how to organize with an anti-racist lens.

*** Stand in Solidarity with radical organizations of color.

*** Support national liberation movements.

*** Work for freedom of political prisoners.

*** Prioritize the issues of radical organizations of color.

*** Reframe issues with an anti-racist lens.

*** Respect the leadership of communities of color.

*** Frame all your group's programs, activities, mission statement, and alliances with an anti-racist lens.

-- Hold on to your visions.

-- *The Power of the People Will Win!*