

Creating anti - racist Organizing Strategies

***Each One Teach One;
Create an Anti-Racist Organizing Core;
Create Strategic Collaborations or Alliances
with Organizers of Color;
Organize with Principles, Pragmatism and Pressure;
Organize Anti-Racist Education for white activists;
Creating Grassroots Anti-Racist Organizations;
Creating Grassroots Anti-Racist Movements.***

CREATING ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZING STRATEGIES

(These suggestions are initial guidelines only. This area of anti-racist work is just beginning and there is little collective evaluation of the various strategies. Be creative!)

Each One Teach One

The *Each One Teach One* anti-racist grassroots organizing strategy was used by African American organizers in the Southern freedom movements of the 1950's and 1960's. As the name suggests, each organizer focuses her/his efforts on intensive, one-on-one communications as a method of bringing another person into the struggle.

The *Each One Teach One* strategy is:

- /// **Personal** – an intensive conversation between two people;
- /// **Experiential** – the organizer can draw on her/his own processes of anti-racist transformation to communicate commitment to anti-racist work;
- /// **Respectful** – to be effective, the strategy requires *Active Listening* and *Respectful Dialogue*;
- /// **Political** – the message conveys the struggle for justice;
- /// **Spiritual** – the organizer is inviting the other person to join her/him on a life-transforming path of becoming an anti-racist activist.

Create an Anti-racist Organizing Core

Use an *Each One Teach One* strategy to organize a small group (two or more) of anti-racist activists committed to becoming principled and effective anti-racist organizers. Organizing with a core is important because:

- ** This work is too difficult to do alone.
- ** A core group can keep an anti-racist organizer accountable.
- ** A core group can create, implement and evaluate new strategies.
- ** A core group can nourish your spirit when you need it most.
- ** A core group can practice and model respectful behavior.
- ** A core group can create a nucleus of an anti-racist community.
- ** A core group can practice visible accountability to a larger group or constituency where the anti-racist organizing is going on.

Ideally, the anti-racist organizing core group should be multi-racial. But sometimes this may not be possible, especially if the group or constituency to be organized is predominantly white.

Creating Strategic Collaborations or Alliances with Organizers of Color

If the core group is all white, the primary anti-racist organizer needs to develop relationships of *strategic collaboration or alliances* with organizers of color who have a strong interest in seeing that the group or constituency being organized creates a consistent, long term anti-racist agenda.

There are many models of relationship-building between activists of color and white anti-racist activists. And there are perhaps even more differences of opinions among radical activists of all colors about how these relationships can or should be built. Some folks advocate for "multi-racial only." Others call for a "solidarity" model." Some stress the centrality of building accountable relationships. Others focus on developing unity of political analysis and strategy. Many white anti-racist organizers stress the centrality of "taking leadership from activists of color." But these anti-racist organizers may have very different views about the concept of "leadership," or what "taking leadership" means in practice.

Like any other strongly debated issue in radical grassroots political work, there is wisdom to learn from all perspectives. Critical evaluation of anti-racist practice, *and sharing the experiences of that practice and evaluation*, is crucial for strengthening the anti-racist work of all organizers in this vital area.

Organize with Principles, Pragmatism and Pressure

The "Organize with Principles, Pragmatism and Pressure" grassroots anti-racist organizing strategy is based on an analysis developed by Enid Lee, an African-American trainer in the public schools. Ms Lee speaks of what motivates white teachers who participate in her training sessions to take anti-racist action:

" You have the people who change because they feel a moral imperative. They see themselves as upstanding citizens, as good people, and so they want to do the right thing. And those people can be appealed to *on principle*. Then there are those who are entirely *pragmatic*, who will change out of enlightened self-interest. Things are not going well within the classes; they can't control the kids. So they want to do something to change the annoying situation. And then there are those who will change because it's legislated, because they are told *they have to*. ***So we have three motivations: it's right; it will help me; I must.***"

(Enid Lee, "The Crisis in Education: Forging an Anti-Racist Response." Rethinking Schools. Autumn, 1992. Vol. 7 #1. Emphases added.)

An anti-racist organizing core group can use the "Organize by Principles, Pragmatism and Pressure" strategy to motivate people in its group or constituency to begin to "Create an Anti-racist Agenda." Some activists will move immediately to *Act on Their Principles*. They will want the group to challenge white privilege and fight for racial justice because it's the right thing to do. These folks will usually be a small minority of the overall group.

Most of the group is likely to be slowly won over by *pragmatism, or 'enlightened self-interest.'* They will become convinced that they can only win their issues if they are able to unite their struggles with activists of color fighting for similar demands. However, these white activists are unlikely to realize how much work they will have to do to change *their individual, group and political practice* in order to build multi-racial coalitions that can grow into long term multi-racial alliances.

An anti-racist organizing core must remember that white privilege confers real, though short term, benefits on white social justice activists, so many folks will be "reluctant reformers." (The term is taken from Robert Allen's Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States.) These folks will talk anti-racism but they will be reluctant to carry it out in practice. Organizing with principles, *patience* and pressure will help in these situations.

Some activists, however, will just not want to change. So anti-racist organizers will have to develop a strategy to bring *pressure* to bear on these 'reluctant reformers.' The goal of this strategy is not necessarily to change their hearts and minds, *but to change their behavior.*

This is tough work for democratically-minded anti-racist organizers. You'll be accused of 'dividing the group.' And some folks may leave. You'll make mistakes, also known as '*learning opportunities.*' But if you hold on to your visions, your group will come out stronger and more committed on its anti-racist path.

Organize an anti-racist education program for white activists

Anti-racist education should be *required and permanent* for all white folks who call themselves 'social justice activists.' Social justice work by white grassroots activists that is not anti-racist cannot change any power relations in this country, no matter how 'militant' its tactics or 'radical' its rhetoric.

Organizing an anti-racist education program for white activists should be a primary task of the anti-racist organizing core group. How they will organize it (with trainings, discussions, actions, etc.) is a tactical decision for each group. But a principle of the group should be that education and action, theory and practice, cannot be separated. And a central theme of the education program should be, "How can our group *act both* to challenge white privilege and to work for racial justice?"

White activists have a responsibility to address this question in all their anti-racist discussions, *but it is not for white activists only to decide.* Any activists of color in the group or constituency who wish to participate in this educational program should be welcomed and encouraged to do so. If other activists of color want to create their own educational program, the organizing core should act as an ally in this effort.

Creating *mandatory and permanent* anti-racist programs primarily for white social justice activists in radical grassroots groups is an untested (and possibly controversial) anti-racist organizing strategy. It will need lots of collective practice and constructive criticism to evaluate its effectiveness.

Creating Grassroots Anti-racist Organizations

(Note: For anti-racist trainings on creating anti-racist organizations with progressive non-profits, contact ChangeWorks (phone: 562-435-3933) or The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (504-944-2354 or 510-525-6850).

The following suggestions are only starting points:

Start from the perspective that anti-racism is a *foundation* of your social justice work, not an 'issue on your agenda.'

Rewrite your mission statement or principles of unity using an anti-racist lens.

Reframe *all* your group's programs and activities using an anti-racist lens.

Rewrite *all* your group's literature using an anti-racist lens.

Examine *every* aspect of your group's culture (language, art, food, assumptions, values, ideology, individual and group behavior) to determine how it expresses white privilege.

Develop a clear, conscious process for transforming that white culture into anti-racist culture.

Develop a long term, comprehensive, strategic plan for recreating your group as an anti-racist organization.

Institute the principle that "Constructive Criticism is an Act of Love."

Creating Grassroots Anti-racist Movements

The following suggestions are only starting points:

**Practice Individual & Organizational 'Each One Teach One'
with other activists and organizations
in your group's network.**

**Share Your Experience of Becoming
Anti-Racist Organizers.**

**Offer to create or participate in anti-racist trainings for
other (predominantly) white activists.**

**Respectfully challenge all aspects of white privilege--
individual, cultural, political, organizational --
in your movement.**

Practice and Model Respectful Behavior.

Request constructive criticism as an act of love.

**Create and practice anti-racist organizing strategies
specific to your movement.**

Hold on to Your Visions.

Create an Anti-racist loving community in your movement.

Dig in for the Long Haul.