

TELLING OUR STORIES

*ACT ON OUR PRINCIPLES
CREATE A CULTURE OF RESISTANCE*

Telling Our Stories

The purposes of this exercise are to:

- Deepen our own awareness of the processes by which we are becoming anti-racist activists, including how we developed and deepened an anti-racist consciousness;
- Share these stories to create group wisdom and mutual personal/political support;
- Learn how to discern the common themes in our stories; and
- *Use these common themes as bases for creating new strategies for doing anti-racist organizing, especially the strategy called Each One Teach One.*

Preparation:

Please prepare the steps of this exercise at home so that your story telling will be succinct. Here are some suggested guidelines:

- (1) **Who** influenced, motivated and/or inspired your developing activism and consciousness?
(women or men of color; white women or men?)
- (2) **What** experiences influenced, motivated and/or inspired your activism and consciousness?
(Concerts, political activities, cultural events, readings, classrooms, friends, etc.)
- (3) **When** did these people and experiences happen? Your age? Over a short or long time period?
- (4) **Where** did they happen? (Cities, states; specific kinds of locales in different communities such as cafes, streets, homes, schools, cultural centers. etc.)
- (5) **How** did they happen? Describe the processes by which you were influenced, inspired, motivated. Be very very specific. *What were the blocks and barriers that you encountered? How did you overcome them?* Give details. This is the data for organizing strategies and tactics.
- (6) **Why** do you think you were *open* to being influenced, motivated, inspired at the time you were? What ~~was~~ going on in your external and internal life that specifically created this openness?

Please remember that this is an exercise that focuses on your paths to *anti-racist activism*. It is not primarily a consciousness-raising exercise, nor is it intended to recount how you (if you are white) were socialized to become a racist. We who are white are all socialized to be racists. That is an assumption of this workshop.) If this exercise is effective, it will help you to develop a beginning sense of anti-racist solidarity with other participants in your small group. It should also generate ideas for organizing strategies.

Each story teller will have only 10 minutes. Therefore, mention only the *critical people and events which influenced you*. (If you do not consider yourself to be an anti-racist activist yet, focus on how you are developing an anti-racist consciousness.) Be specific. Give lots of details.

Exercise: This is an *AROC group* exercise, with two groups of *Pair 'n Shares* (4 people total).
People of color have the option to meet in separate groups.

PART ONE:

- (1) Choose a small group organizer, timekeeper, and rotating scribes.
- (2) Scribes should record racial/national origins, class background and present class position, gender, sexuality; age and any other self-identifiers requested by each story teller, but no names.
- (3) Scribes should record details of stories as much as possible. Details will be key in developing common themes.

PART TWO: (45 minutes to one hour):

Each person will have 10 minutes to tell your story of how you are becoming an anti-racist activist, including the deepening of your anti-racist consciousness.

People of color may want to include paths by which you acted to combat internalized racism and inter-racial or inter-ethnic hostilities.

PART THREE: (30 minutes)

- (1) Review all stories for common themes of **Who, what, when, where, how and why?**
- (2) List those common themes on newsprint.
- (3) What do these common themes tell you that may be useful in helping to motivate or inspire someone you know to become an anti-racist activist? Again, be very specific.

Example: Many of us (who are mostly young white lesbians) developed our anti-racist consciousness after we heard or read about the stories and struggles of women of color. We therefore suggest that we might be able to motivate a friend's anti-racist consciousness by inviting her to an event at which a woman of color activist was speaking, going with our friend to the event, and discussing it with her afterward.

Example: Many of us (who are mostly women of color) developed our commitment as anti-racist activists from our families. Each of us had at least one adult mentor. Therefore, we would suggest that anti-racist events for our community should be family-oriented activities.

- (4) Scribe, please type up ALL your group's data. Give to workshop organizer next session.
- (5) Gather your group's wisdom:
 - What insights did you gain from doing the exercise?
 - In what ways did the exercise empower you?
(Strengthen your creative capacity to act)
 - What skills did you learn to enable you to challenge some aspect of the white supremacy system?
 - How can you share this experience with someone who was not in your small group? (*Each One Teach One*)
 - What suggestions do you have for improving the exercise?

PART FOUR: WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION (Time permitting: 45 minutes)

- Share some of your stories with the whole group.
- Gather the whole group's wisdom.