

Two Draft Essays by Linda Evans. Linda is a recently released political prisoner. She does prisoner rights orrganizing in San Francisco.

Note: I originally wrote this article for "John Brown 2000," a national anti-racist organizing conference held in New York in May 2000. John Brown lived in the mid-1800's, and dedicated his whole life to the abolition of slavery. He waged guerrilla warfare against those who wanted to extend slavery into non-slave states. The U.S. government hanged John Brown after he and others tried to arm a slave revolt by raiding an arms arsenal in Harper's Ferry, Virginia in 18?? . His life has been an example for me of the dedication and militance that white activists need to adopt in today's struggles to fight racism and defeat white supremacy.

Alliance Building: Looking Forward, Looking Back

The need to build anti-racist alliances is not at all abstract: today police are on the rampage in the streets from New York to Minneapolis, Los Angeles to Louisville, and in the prisons from Angola, Louisiana, to Pelican Bay in California. In order to stop killer cops and win community control of the police, it's urgent that we build the strongest alliances possible between white anti-racists and the Black and Latino communities where police kill with impunity. We need to ally to save hospitals and schools, to stop racist attacks on immigrants, and to turn back gentrification. Yet such alliances are increasingly rare. How can effective alliances be built between white anti-racists and activists from communities of color? These are some examples and lessons from my own organizing experiences, both on the streets and in the last 15 years I've spent in prison as an anti-imperialist political prisoner.

Some alliances may be built first on individual action and relationships. It's important to fight every incidence of racism that we encounter, both institutional and interpersonal. Racist language and characterizations occur constantly in conversations, advertising, and media. A good example of challenging this is the struggle led by Native Americans against athletic teams' racist names and mascots: public pressure can make them change. It doesn't take long to write a letter to the editor or to e-mail the public relations department of a company that uses racist advertising. Perhaps even more important is confronting racism in employment or admissions and curriculum policies where you work or go to school, or in day-to-day conversations. If you hear someone using racist language, interrupt them and explain why the language is offensive to you and racist in content. Lots of times white people use racist language or generalizations in all-white situations because they think they won't be confronted unless people of color are present. Challenging racism whenever and wherever it occurs is the only way we will ever eradicate it. Racist language, ideas, and actions degrade society for all of us -- not just the people of color who experience racism most harshly and unremittingly. Confronting racism is about our own integrity and principles, a concrete way we can struggle for the

kind of world we want to live in. Also, building friendships with activists from diverse communities has enriched my life immeasurably and taught me some of the most important lessons of my life. Fighting racism and white supremacy benefits everyone who wants justice and a more equitable world.

Besides exposing and criticizing racism, you can take positive action to impede its development. Anti-racist training and political self-education are a good way to start. For example, in prison racial and national hostilities are encouraged as a way to prevent prisoner unity. From 1994-1995, women prisoners at FCI-Dublin organized a Council Against Racism. We were disbanded by prison authorities before we could achieve some of our more long-term goals like directly intervening to resolve racially-based conflicts between prisoners. However, we did accomplish some short-term goals like forcing the institution to translate most institutional forms, medical appointments, and prisoner orientation sessions into Spanish. We also organized a Multi-Cultural Festival where women prisoners from many different countries performed their nations' music, poetry, and dance. Experiencing other cultures and supporting each others' performances markedly lessened racial tensions, though the effect was regrettably transitory -- exactly why the prison administration outlawed the organization.

But most of us want to organize beyond individual anti-racism, to confront institutionalized white supremacy. The next step may be to offer your solidarity by contacting organizations where people of color are addressing issues that affect their communities: killer cops/ police brutality, environmental racism, immigration rights, gentrification, workfare/ welfare cuts, prisons. Very often white organizations try to recruit people of color as members, as a way to "diversify" or "better represent the community as a whole," -- or worse, to access funding sources that specify serving communities of color. This approach ignores the fact that white-dominated structures leave little real power for people of color. An example:

Years ago in Austin, a group of white women recognized that our efforts to include Black and Chicana women in feminist activities were mechanical, even tokenistic, because these women of color did not choose to belong to white-dominated feminist organizations. We were anti-racists, and believed that the women's movement needed to fight for the demands of Black women and Chicanas. These women were involved in organizing for the survival of their community -- specifically against gentrification and the takeover of their neighborhoods by white real estate developers. In Austin, this invasion had been spearheaded by the takeover of a community lakeside park for national jet-propelled speedboat competitions. The destruction of the park had brought an invasion of reckless drunk drivers, property destruction, and finally a serious hit-and-tun injury of a young Chicana. The Black Citizens' Task Force

and Brown Berets formed an alliance to stop the boat races. We approached them, pledging to organize white opposition to "boat-racism" and gentrification. The Black Citizens' Task Force and Brown Berets were rightfully dubious of our commitment and political perseverance -- there had been little contact or solidarity from the white community since the Civil Rights movement. Gradually we built trust amongst us through our day-to-day practice -- confronting white boat race fans, skirmishes with cops, organizing broad support to lobby the City Council and attend their public meetings.

Our experience has many parallels in today's struggles: the fight for the survival of ethnic studies and bilingual education, against red-lining and agribusiness takeovers of Black-owned farms in the South, to support Native American land and fishing rights. Organizing direct support for the demands of communities of color is a way white activists can fight their own tendencies to dominate decision-making. We can fight white supremacy and arrogance in our own practice by **relinquishing control.**

Another form of organizational alliance-building takes place in campaigns with a broad, single-issue focus. White anti-racists in the AIDS movement, for example, can struggle that funds be directed to Black, Native, Latino, and Asian-Pacific Islander organizations, so they can decide how best to utilize those resources. Only a very few AIDS activists on the outside have advocated for HIV+ prisoners or prisoners with AIDS -- though this is another important way to fight the white-centeredness of the AIDS movement. Prisoners with AIDS have urgent needs: compassionate release for all terminal illnesses, consistent access to new treatments and quality medical care, programming opportunities equal to those of other prisoners, political and material support for peer education programs. Responding to the ongoing needs of HIV+ prisoners and their families, political prisoners have founded AIDS education and support groups -- another form alliance-building inside. An example:

At FCI-Dublin (then FCI-Pleasanton), we initiated the process of forming PLACE (Pleasanton AIDS Counseling and Education) by discussing the idea with Black, Native American, and Latina women, approaching individuals and their organizations inside the prison -- the Black Cultural Workshop, Four Winds, and Latina Club. PLACE was a joint effort: its existence represented an important alliance between the diverse communities here. We made consistent efforts to fight racial divisions, translating all our literature and programs into Spanish, co-sponsoring Women's Health Fairs with Black History Month committees, and training women of different ethnic backgrounds to be spokespeople and AIDS educators. We directed proceeds from our Prisoners Fight AIDS Walk-a-thons to organizations that focused on the most oppressed and under-served people with AIDS -- women, a hospice in the Black

community, drug addicts and queers of color -- in addition to contributing to a camp for children with AIDS. In this way, PLACE also built an alliance with the community outside. (PLACE was outlawed by the prison and shut down in 1997.)

Resources and money are often the issues that break alliances apart. White supremacy in our society means that white activists generally have more access to money and resources than our comrades from communities of color. Part of the success of any alliance depends on a commitment to share these resources. Many political relationships have been built specifically to facilitate the acquisition and transfer of resources -- solidarity campaigns providing material aid. Fund-raising specifically to finance travel for people of color to national demonstrations or conferences is central to facilitating their participation, and should not be limited just to a specified number of scholarships. When these solidarity efforts also organize political action, a transformation occurs -- individuals go beyond simply making a donation and are radicalized by joining the resistance struggle.

In alliances between white people and people of color, leadership is also an important dynamic. Formed during the late 1970's and early 1980's, the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee (JBAKC) was a national organization that grew out of local work to defeat white supremacy. In JBAKC, we believed that following the leadership of Black revolutionaries and organizations was the way we could be most effective in fighting white supremacy. We recognized that the people who experience racism most directly are the most knowledgeable about how best to oppose it, and that any actions taken by white people fighting the KKK, for example, could well have repercussions that would affect the Black and Chicano communities. Over a period of five years, we built consistent, respectful lines of communication with the Black Citizens' Task Force and the Brown Berets, to ensure that they could contribute meaningfully to our planning process, or veto actions if they felt they were inappropriate or endangered their communities. This meant some joint meetings and almost daily discussions on the telephone, at our joining weekly picket line to demand a community-based police review board, or at community events. Our Black and Chicano comrades, in turn, often asked for us to fulfill specific responsibilities or to organize support in the white community for their campaigns.

We learned another lesson about self-determination because of the dynamic between local and national Black organizations. JBAKC nationally was directly responsible to the New Afrikan Peoples' Organization (NAPO), a revolutionary nationalist organization that is struggling for land and independence as the concrete expression of self-determination for the Black nation inside the U.S. In Austin, the Black Citizens' Task Force did not identify their organization as either revolutionary or nationalist -- they organized primarily around the immediate needs of the local

Black community. Members of the Austin chapter of JBAKC initially felt conflicted by these ideological differences, but to intervene in these political differences would have been racist and inappropriate. What was primary was our commitment to anti-racist organizing. We soon realized that NAPO's leadership complemented and broadened the perspective of the daily work we did with the BCTF. For example, NAPO's revolutionary political perspective helped us to relate our local struggles against killer cops and against the KKK to nation-wide campaigns for community control of the police and to the broader struggle for Black national self-determination. Similarly today, developing relationships with local activists of color who work with national organizations or networks can allow white anti-racists in local communities to contribute to national campaigns and strategies.

As long as its common goals are kept primary, an alliance benefits from political discussion and struggle. For example, many of us in JBAKC were lesbians: we confronted anti-gay and sexist attitudes among comrades in the BCTF and Brown Berets as we did in the rest of society. We were able to struggle with our comrades' sexism and homophobia just as our work with activists of color exposed deeply-ingrained racist assumptions in ourselves. Based in the over-riding commitment to our work together, mutual respect enabled us to criticize and struggle with each other in ways that ultimately strengthened our alliance rather than destroying it.

Following the leadership of activists or organizations of color doesn't mean being passive or waiting for orders. A mock lynching occurred just outside East Austin: a black-faced effigy was shot up and hung from a tree, with white supremacist literature scattered nearby. The Black and Chicano communities were prepared for self-defense, but decided not to directly confront the incident. For their white allies, this mock lynching was one more indication that the Ku Klux Klan's paramilitary operations were expanding. We planned out a campaign to oppose and expose the Klan's growth in Texas, consulting with the BCTF and Brown Berets as we implemented each step. The KKK was actively recruiting -- using community access TV facilities, starting up a chapter of the NAAWP (National Association for the Advancement of White People), using free advertising offered by the alternative community newspaper, publicizing the paramilitary training that they conducted on National Grasslands. We confronted them directly and consistently: making arguments against their access to community resources, threatening a boycott and picket line against the newspaper if they ran the NAAWP ads, holding demonstrations outside TV and radio stations where the Klan was interviewed, going door-to-door with a petition to shut down all their paramilitary training camps. We talked with hundreds of people ace-to-face about the Klan, killer cops, and manifestations of white supremacy internationally in Palestine and South Africa. JBAKC was initiating

these anti-racist campaigns, but we prioritized and maintained communications with NAPO and our Black and Chicano comrades locally. Our own initiatives to fight white supremacy strengthened the alliance we were building with communities of color, both in Austin, state-wide and nationally.

Our resistance to today's white supremacy must be creative and consistent:

** It's crucial to keep up the pressure to win community control of the police, to stop the murders of people of color by killer cops. The freedom fighters of the Black Liberation Army and Black Panther Party were the first to target police in defense of Black communities across the U.S. Campaigns against killer cops and police brutality should include demands to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners/POWs from these revolutionary organizations.

** The fight for prisoners' human rights exposes the genocidal and white supremacist goals of mass imprisonment: criminalization of whole communities and especially young people of color, the destruction of families and future generations via mass incarceration, the racially-selective death penalty and "war against drugs." White prison activists can be more effective by building direct relationships with organizations of prisoners' families and other grassroots prison reform efforts based in communities of color.

** We must never forget that tens of thousands of white supremacists are active in armed paramilitary organizations: although they operate clandestinely, they pose a clear and very present danger, and must be exposed and confronted.

** Activists in the anti-globalization movement should self-consciously build alliances both internationally and locally by working on issues that affect people of color. Their communities have been devastated by economic restructuring in its local forms: gentrification, cutbacks in social services, lost jobs because of runaway shops, hospital closings, homelessness, the construction of prisons instead of schools.

It's crucial that we build alliances that connect all these issues, in addition to confronting racist attitudes and institutional practices. Making these alliances a priority will strengthen our ability to effectively fight white supremacy and ultimately to build a revolutionary resistance movement.

"Think Globally, Act Locally," is a familiar slogan that has allegedly been embraced by the anti-globalization movement for several years. Applying this slogan to real political activism has taken many forms. Recently, for example, local demonstrations were held simultaneously with those against the International Monetary Fund/ World Bank meetings in Prague, Czech Republic. In the San Francisco area, these actions were dedicated to the issue of the local housing crisis. A recent issue of a remarkable San Francisco newspaper inspired me to examine more deeply this slogan and its mandates for the priorities of activists determined to defeat capitalist globalization.

Every week since 1976, 20,000 copies of San Francisco Bay View (www.sfbayview.com) have been "delivered door-to-door in San Francisco's African-American neighborhoods and to shops, churches, colleges and community centers in San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond." (from the SF Bay View masthead) Named National Black Newspaper of the Year by the National Black Chamber of Commerce, SF Bay View is an eloquent voice for the African-American community in the Bay Area. The local issues detailed and exposed in its pages reveal exactly how globalization and structural adjustment take their toll in our own neighborhoods and in communities of color. My conclusions aren't specific to this geographical area, or to one issue of a specific newspaper. Rather, this is an effort to demonstrate that activists in the anti-globalization movement should look in their own communities for very concrete ways to combat globalization.

Internationally, countries seeking IMF/World Bank-sponsored loans are required to submit their economies to "structural adjustment:" cutbacks in all government spending and employment except for "national security" (police, armies, armaments); privatization of government-owned enterprises, including basic utilities/services and national resources such as oil and minerals; deregulation of all trade, requiring the abolition of tariffs and import quotas that protect domestic industry; deregulation of all investment flows, opening the economy to takeovers by transnational corporations

and speculators; IMF regulation of national currencies and exchange rates; as well as other conditios. News stories and editorials in the September 13, 2000 edition of SF Bay View focused on a number of local issues that have direct parallels with the consequences of structural adjustment as seen in other countries.

Cutbacks in government subsidies, and health and education services are always mandated by the IMF and World Bank. Here, San Francisco General Hospital plans to close the Diabetes Clinic, to stop testing poor and uninsured women for breast and cervical cancer, and to drastically reduce sigmoidoscopic services that detect colon cancer. Last year, SFGH cooperated with U.C.-San Francisco to sell the SFGH Renal Center to a private company that will not serve uninsured people. Additionally, the city is closing one of the SFGH operating rooms, cutting out 20 hospital beds, eliminating centers for treating endocrine disorders and infectious diseases, and closing down city clinics that provide dental care. Sound familiar? Hospitals and clinics are being closed down or privatized in every community in the U.S., making basic health care unavailable to poor and uninsured people. People of color suffer disproportionately from diabetes, develop breast cancer earlier than white women and die from it more often, and generally are the most in need of community-based health and dental services. Are cutbacks such as these any different than cutbacks that have devastated health services throughout Latin and Central America. In Africa, cutbacks in health provision have been so severe that plagues of preventable diseases like cholera, diarrhea, malaria, and TV now rage through the continent — and 15 million people have died with out access to AIDS treatments. The life expectancy for people in sub-Saharan Africa is now only 48 years — 30 years less than in developed countries. Structural adjustment destroys health care everywhere.

Another Bay View article detailed current education cutbacks: the Los Angeles chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union has taken the State Board of Education and other agencies to court because public schools don't even have textbooks for students to take home and study. We all know that the quality of public

school education is rapidly deteriorating throughout the U.S. because of the extremely low salaries paid to teachers and the lack of basic teaching tools like laboratories, computers -- and textbooks. The deterioration of U.S. public education has fueled the debate about "education vouchers," which would essentially privatize public education by requiring parents to pay tuition through the voucher system. This is the same phenomenon that has affected schools in other countries, where fees are now imposed for the "public education" guaranteed by their Constitutions -- fees that few people can afford. The year-long strike at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) occurred because of a new requirement that students must pay fees. This strike had many similarities with the uprising at U.C. Berkeley three years ago due to tuition hikes and cutbacks in the ethnic studies departments. The privatization of education in El Salvador, Vietnam, and all over Africa has resulted in declines in enrollment at every level of schooling -- families simply cannot afford to send their children to school. This is particularly detrimental to the education of girls: in most societies, families who can afford to educate only one of several children will send sons to school rather than their daughters. Structural adjustment destroys education.

Another fight being waged around the globe is the struggle for land and housing. In many poor countries, huge cardboard cities have been erected on the outskirts of urban areas. These are homes for refugees from the countryside who have been; forced off their land by cutbacks in government support for agriculture and by takeovers by export-oriented agribusiness. In Mexico City, for example, rent control in the central city was abolished to make way for transnational corporate development of luxury hotels and office towers. Several thousand people were forced out of their homes, many taking up residence with street children in manholes. In urban America there is a parallel in the displacement of communities like Hunters' Point and the Mission District, both being swallowed up by real estate developers and greedy landlords. The unconscionable number of homeless people in our streets is a direct result of the end of rent control and tenants'

rights. People of color in particular are forced out of their homes by rapidly rising rents and unreachable mortgage payments. Increasing numbers of people are homeless, forced to sleep in cars, subway and bus stations, or on pieces of cardboard on the sidewalk. This, too, is the result of structural adjustment.

Along with displacement and homelessness, SF Bay View exposes the environmental racism of the U.S. Navy's refusal to clean up the toxic waste at Hunters' Point Shipyard. As of September, 2000, a toxic underground fire has been burning there for nearly 2 months. Firefighters tried to drown the fire with water for 3 weeks, apparently ignorant of the fact that water made the toxins more volatile and washed heavy metals, PCBs and pesticides into the Bay. Fish were thus poisoned, and so were the people who ate them. Air sampling in the wake of the fire wasn't even begun until the Environmental Protection Agency ordered the Navy to start monitoring after the fire had already burned for a month. The Navy's blatant disregard for the dangers posed to the neighborhood, coupled with its refusal to clean up the Shipyard to residential standards, exposes a clear strategy to destroy this community and turn it over to real estate developers. These developers are using every possible method to force or bribe people out of the neighborhood. The relocation of Pac-Bell Stadium to Hunters' Point and the invasion of the Mission District by dot.com entrepreneurs has meant skyrocketing commercial development potential.

At SF International Airport and other publicly-funded construction sites, local companies which hire Black and Latino construction workers have been forced out by huge corporations that sub-contract with non-union companies. This not only bankrupts local minority businesses -- it also forces down the level of wages for workers, and weakens the power of unions. Terror and intimidation tactics have been used to drive out local companies. A hangman's noose recalling racist lynchings was hung at the airport construction site, to intimidate Black construction workers hired by Liberty Builders, a local African-American construction

company. Attacks on efforts to organize workers into unions are fundamental to globalization. Deregulated capital investments know no boundaries, yet immigration quotas are tighter than ever. Structural adjustment makes it easy for transnational corporations to move to wherever labor is cheapest, with no re-training for displaced workers, and no unions allowed in the re-located factories.

Another aspect of globalization that hits hard locally is increased police power. All over the world, structural adjustment requires drastic cuts in spending on social services, but the IMF and World Bank support government programs to buy military hardware, computers, helicopters, and specialized training for increasing numbers of police. This militarization of police maintains control with an iron fist, and attempts to intimidate people into passivity. In the U.S., these repressive policies have had a genocidal effect: 1 out of ever 4 young Black men is currently subject to some crmiinal justice agency's control -- prison, parole, or probation. Chinosole, an esteemed Black professor at San Francisco State University, points out that thousands of young African-American women will never have children because they are locked up during their child-bearing years. Every week SF Bay View reports on far too many ways the criminal justice system oppresses the African-American community: the racial profiling and beating of Adrian Shepard for leaving his keys in his car; the disproportionate targeting of African-Americans by prosecutors recommending the death penalty; efforts to repeal California's brutal 3 strikes law and lower prison phone rates, the struggle to free political prisoners, and much more.

"Structural adjustment" is not occuring only in foreign countries deeply in debt to the IMF and World Bank. It is creating terrible suffering in oppressed nations right here in the United States. White anti-globalization activists have largely ignored the effects of economic restructuring on Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander communities. Calls for "more participation by people of color" in anti-globalization demonstrations locally or nationally discounty the reality that people of color have been self-consciously fighting

the effects of globalization every day for years — fighting for the very survival of their communities. Rather than lamenting the absence of people of color in anti-IMF/World Bank/WTO demonstrations, it's crucial that white activists work in solidarity with the daily survival struggles of oppressed people in our own communities. Struggles against international financial institutions and transnational corporations are not separate from resisting hospital closures, plant shutdowns, urban gentrification and new prison construction.

When white activists close our eyes to the urgency of these local struggles and to the leadership¹ that people of color have given, this is racism. If we ever hope to be successful in building coalitions to confront globalization, we need to actively fight white supremacy — not just institutionally, but in our own practice. Let's be clear: the people of the Global South are leading the global resistance. They have already been fighting the manifestations of structural adjustment for many years. Similarly, activists in the oppressed nations in the U.S. years ago identified the encroaching dangers of gentrification, or police brutality, of cutbacks in welfare, education, and health services. If white activists are really committed to building a movement powerful enough to turn back the tide of global capital, we must decide to participate, not dominate. We need to give up control of needed resources, and to listen and learn when community leaders talk about local issues and strategize about what to do.

One way to find out how globalization is affecting your community locally is to read newspapers like San Francisco Bay View, and to support the demonstrations and campaigns of activist organizations in communities of color. It's not just the IMF/World Bank/WTO or transnational corporations who are responsible for globalization. Local landlords, police, and governments are carrying out the policies dictated by a worldwide strategy to tighten capitalist control and raise profits for the already-rich. In communities of color, activists have already identified which people and institutions are implementing globalization here at home. They are defining a strategy to resist and to guarantee the survival