

Powerful Partnerships: Transformative Alliance Building
by
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Introduction

We offer this chapter in hope that our experience can benefit others dedicated to participating in effective multiracial alliances for social, economic, environmental, and racial justice. For clarity, we state our intentions upfront: *The purpose of this chapter is to 1) share with readers, especially white anti-racists, the way a common approach to accountability inhibits our racial identity development and derails social justice efforts and 2) outline a vision for how we can participate in the formation of more productive, stronger multi-racial alliances.* We would also like to mention that although this paper critiques the form of accountability with which we are most familiar, we in no way mean to suggest that general principles of accountability should be abandoned. We recognize that some people have been successfully creating healthy alliances that have accomplished important justice work within the context of accountability for years. Unfortunately, our collective experience leads us to believe these are the exceptions rather than the rule. Because of this, we find it necessary to offer a critique of relationships wherein white folks narrowly focus on one-sided accountability to people of color and then describe a different model leading toward what we call Transformative Alliance Building.

Who are we? AWARE-LA and RJA

AWARE-LA (Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere-Los Angeles) is an all-volunteer group of white folks working to combat racism within our selves, communities, and the world. The leadership team of AWARE-LA includes eight members, each with 5-10 years or more experience working to understand and dismantle racism, white privilege, and white supremacy. AWARE-LA recognizes the need to maintain close relationships with people of color and build multi-racial alliances. For that reason, the group initiated the development of a multi-racial, Racial Justice Alliance (RJA) that includes AWARE-LA members and people of color from various social justice networks in the Los Angeles area.

How does this chapter reflect a multi-racial, collaborative effort?

Two members of AWARE-LA's leadership team took responsibility for conducting interviews and writing this chapter. The primary author spoke with three white AWARE-LA members and three folks of color from the RJA, and then both authors engaged in cycles of questioning, writing, presenting, and editing to get feedback from the AWARE-LA leadership team, members of the multi-racial RJA team, and other folks of color with whom they share a professional relationship. The three white folks interviewed include co-author Cameron Levin, Jason David, and Susan Goldberg. The three folks of color include Salina Gray, Diane Burbie, and Hamid Khan. The authors intentionally chose three women and three men to participate as well as three folks of color with diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds and experiences.

Why are we contributing to this book?

AWARE-LA began building alliances with people of color after its first year of existence, in 2005. This first effort involved creating a multi-racial group intended to produce a one-day racial justice dialogue in Los Angeles. This group did not sustain itself and disbanded after less than one year. Following the 2006 White Privilege Conference, the leadership team of AWARE-LA agreed that it was time to build a *Racial Justice Accountability Board (RJAB)* to serve as a mechanism of accountability to people of color and a space to begin developing its

formal, multi-racial work. However, as people of color attended initial dialogues, many were uncomfortable with the model of accountability to which AWARE-LA members were accustomed. These folks of color bristled at the idea of being an approving body and named problems with the use of one-sided accountability guidelines. Many spoke of the dehumanization they had seen it engender, destructive effects on relationships, and perpetuation of oppressive systems. They argued that we needed to build our alliance on equal footing, with *all* parties being accountable for confronting their privileges and acting as honestly and humanely with each other as possible. This, they said, is a more viable path toward productive alliances for social justice.

The RJA members called on the AWARE-LA leadership to take responsibility for holding *themselves* accountable for their own process and expressed dissatisfaction with the idea that people of color should carry the burden of monitoring white people's anti-racism work within the white community. Essentially, the folks of color said they trust AWARE-LA's ability to work with white folks and if the sole purpose of the RJAB was to hold AWARE-LA accountable, then they wanted nothing to do with it. (*Note: We acknowledge that a group of folks of color collectively vocalizing their trust in a group of white folks doing anti-racism work with other white folks is rare. But, this is the relationship AWARE-LA and the members of RJA have with one another.*)

Hearing from these folks of color, AWARE-LA realized that in our context in Los Angeles, the accountability model within which many white anti-racists are trained (one where one-sided accountability to people of color remains the overriding focus) was creating real barriers for us to do the work we collectively wanted to do. The AWARE-LA leadership team returned to the multi-racial group proposing to work toward "Accountable Alliance Building." Again, the folks of color questioned the model. After much discussion we understood that if white folks' primary emphasis is on one-sided accountability to people of color, we will continue creating superficial relationships that lack deeply honest, meaningful dialogue.

This experience prompted us all (AWARE-LA and RJA) to look more closely at the dynamics existing within what we experience as the social justice movement's most prevalent form of accountability relationship. We now see that although many traditional principles of accountability ought to be retained as part of a trust-building process, multi-racial alliances will be stronger when they involve healthy relationships that invite each party to bring their full, honest selves to the table. With full recognition that there may be people who already create healthy, productive alliances in their own communities, we found it necessary to formally describe the development of this type of alliance relationship for ourselves. We call the model Transformative Alliance Building.

Principles of Accountability

It is important to re-state, we are not advocating that accountability guidelines be abandoned. The white folks involved in this are *not* trying to get out of their responsibility to self-reflect and develop skills. In fact, we believe accountability guidelines are extremely valuable because white people's lack of sensitivity to race issues makes it essential that white folks develop the ability to engage in relationships non-oppressively. We also believe that people of color should retain authority over naming what is racism and we recognize that trust between folks of color and white folks must continually be re-affirmed early in the relationship. Although we do not believe white folks should be cast out and treated inhumanely when they make racist mistakes, we do recognize that people of color may understandably pull back trust when this occurs and the responsibility falls on the white folks involved to help rebuild that trust. For these reasons, accountability principles give directions for growth and are extremely useful tools.

On the other hand, the context in which many white anti-racists attempt to *live out* accountability statements can be destructive to relationships and social justice work. What we would like to highlight is that *principles of accountability are successfully enacted within ongoing relationships founded on mutual respect*. Without functional, healthy relationships, attempts to hold oneself to accountability guidelines can turn those very principles into static standards of behavior that can breed serious problems within real-life situations. For example, white anti-racists might have two respected colleagues of color asking for opposing actions simultaneously. In those situations, to whom is the white person more accountable? When is there room to question requests made by a person of color?

Unfortunately, we have seen a pattern time and time again where the ultimate goal of working toward social justice becomes lost and, instead, attention becomes singularly focused on questions of accountability. When entire relationships begin to center around this question, we find that they also tend to reinforce patterns that derive from our social conditioning within a society based in white supremacy. The shallow dialogue perpetuated by this narrow focus thwarts our efforts at building long-lasting relationships and, as a result, our justice efforts falter. With that said, we would like to offer a more complete explanation of the problems we have encountered.

When One-sided Accountability is the Sole Focus

There are many problems bred from relationships in which one-sided accountability becomes the focus. What we present here are four threads of criticisms that emerged through our interview dialogues. In totality, they argue that these relationships unwittingly perpetuate our society's structures and create dysfunctional relationships that lead to 1) inauthentic communication, 2) unhealthy white anti-racist people, 3) inherent inequality, and 4) ineffective collaborative practices. Although these four issues do not represent an exhaustive list, we believe they are significant enough to warrant serious questioning of the productivity of relationships wherein one-sided accountability becomes the overriding focus, displacing the real goal – working for social justice. We ask readers to open their hearts and minds to imagine to what degree their relationships and practices might reinforce some of the problematic dynamics we have experienced.

Inauthentic Communication

A primary barrier to developing productive alliance relationships is inauthentic communication. Because white anti-racists often interpret “living out accountability guidelines” as meaning that white people's attitudes and behaviors shall *always* be free of unconscious racism or enactments of privilege, white people can avoid saying anything that might reveal a lack of understanding. This translates into white people regularly holding back their thoughts and feelings within conversations – both with people of color *and* other white anti-racists.

When Susan spoke of what constitutes an unhealthy accountability environment, she said it is signaled by a sense that “*there is never room to mess up*” when engaged in relationships. She describes a destructive pattern that emerges when white people cannot break free from the sense that they are constantly “*walking on eggshells*” or “*pins and needles*” saying:

“I think unhealthy accountability has to do with this constant need to prove yourself by saying always the right thing and doing the right thing, even when those actions or words are not genuine. So, having a sense of being watched or almost a sense that the mistake is being waited on...whether it's waiting for your own self to mess up, or waiting for other people to mess up.”

Essential to highlight is that this felt sense among many whites that a mistake is being waited on *may or may not* be supported by interactions with the people of color in their lives. Oftentimes, it is another white anti-racist who is waiting to pounce on another white person when an error occurs. The essential point is that when white folks feel that they must refrain from sharing their honest thoughts, the resulting inauthentic sharing is readily apparent to people of color and damages the potential for developing deep relationships.

Fundamentally, the sense that a “*mistake is being waited on*” often has a negative effect on the level of trust felt within relationships. Susan describes how white people’s efforts to avoid mistakes in order to be seen as trustworthy can, in fact, end up eroding the very trust we seek to build.

“There’s an assumption of the mistake and it’s that ‘if you don’t act in certain ways and say certain things, then I can’t trust you.’ Yes, people’s behavior and language is important. And yet, it ends up being twisted because then you are never being genuine. So how are you ever going to really have a relationship? So, it’s a set up. It comes from a place of trying to connect, but it ends up being an unfortunate set up because you can’t honestly connect because you’re never honestly being who you are.”

This lack of honest connection is disastrous for our common work of ending racism and white supremacy because these relationships are constantly on the brink of failure. Although we recognize that trust requires continuous work, we suggest that we need to separate what it means to be accountable and trustworthy from what it means to make errors. If we do not do this, too many white anti-racists will continue to fear exposing their lack of understanding and therefore remain guarded and inauthentic.

Diane sums up the critique of inauthentic relationships that lack a foundation of 1) open communication, 2) deep dialogue, and 3) the acceptance that mistakes will occur with this statement:

“The list of [accountability] principles is like mom and apple pie. There’s nothing wrong with the principles. But, it’s not the principles that are broken; it’s the relationship. It’s the fact that you believe that we’re going to do real changing stuff with superficial relationships with each other, and that ain’t gonna happen.”

Essentially, what we have found is that moving beyond superficial, and therefore fragile, relationships depends upon an approach to accountability that allows everyone to make mistakes, grow, and be challenged to further develop non-oppressive relational practices. Ultimately, all of us have been raised within intertwining systems of oppression. The degree to which each of us takes up responsibility for remaining accountable to non-oppressive principles is what will help us build deep relationships that allow for each person to be fully human and also retain a focus on social justice work.

Unhealthy White Anti-racist People

Within groups trying to disrupt systematic white supremacy, accountability can often mean that feelings, experiences, and perspectives of people of color should carry more weight than those of white people. This dynamic usually includes some underlying premises, such as the belief among *both* white folks *and* people of color that 1) white folks are inherently untrustworthy, 2) all white folks will always be part of the problem, 3) white folks are only legitimate allies deserving humane treatment if their anti-racist practice is flawless, and 4) white people should always defer to people of color. Whether overtly stated or subtly implied, when whites and/or folks of color promote these beliefs it encourages white folks to feel insecure,

guilty, worthless, and avoid developing a healthy racial identity. Each of these results leads to particular problems.

A main issue is that if white folks feel that they are essentially lesser partners in the fight against racism, they are not prompted to create a healthy, productive white racial identity for themselves. Intending to actively work *against* the dominant white supremacist culture, many white anti-racists try to distinguish themselves from what are considered the norms of whiteness. Unfortunately, when white folks lack a sense of wholeness and distance themselves from all things white, they often fall into troubling forms of cultural appropriation as they seek acceptance and validation from people of color. They often run toward the cultures of people of color they have learned to follow and this approval-seeking dynamic reinforces the sense that white folks are too unstable and unhealthy to be trusted.

Salina recognizes the lack of healing involved and comments that one-sided accountability reinforces an unhealthy form of “*deference*.” She states that she is uncomfortable with what comes with relationships wherein white people try to find personal validation by conforming to the wishes of people of color:

“I’m very uncomfortable when people walk on the proverbial pins and needles around me and do things because they feel that it’s what I expect or want them to do. So, for me, I’d be more comfortable hanging out with an avowed racist than a bunch of mainstream whites who claim to be down, because claiming to be down often means to be culturally assimilated. Often, it’s them using language that they feel will make me comfortable, it’s doing and having interests they feel will allow me to accept them as a black person instead of a white person.”

Clearly, the cultural assimilation that makes Salina uncomfortable is not an expected outcome of accountability principles. What we want to highlight, however, is that when white folks worry solely about being accountable they often ignore the development of a healthy racial identity that is part of their personal healing.

Yet, white people frequently feel validated when distancing themselves from anything considered white. Cameron offers how he experienced this dynamic:

“The whole idea when working with communities of color is that you should hide or minimize your whiteness. You want to be as thin and small as possible as a white person. You want to be as accepted and embraced as everything but for that. So, the greatest compliment is, ‘You’re not really white. You’re black. Or you have black bones. Or you have a black heart.’”

White folks distancing themselves from their whiteness often goes hand in hand with the belief that they are less valuable human beings. Cameron speaks of the long road he has taken to find a way out of this way of seeing that essentially required him to deny his value:

“Working in many organizations run by people of color with majority staff of color, I internalized that my humanity was of less value because I was white. Therefore I could be treated without concern for my humanity and the message was...that is the way it should be.”

This is a long-standing pattern in which many folks within anti-racism circles, both white and folks of color, have played a role. Whiteness, and all things associated with it are often considered of little to no value. Then, viewing whiteness as a something of a curse, large numbers of white folks turn away from anything associated with their home communities. This reaction is hardly surprising.

Another feature of this pattern includes the continued presence of extreme guilt within white people. Salina puts guilt at the top of the list of problems with this way of approaching relationship building:

“Accountability, when I think about it, is about white guilt, the notion of superiority or inferiority, this idea of answering to someone. It makes me think of a lot of contrition, certainly inequity and inequality. I think of contrition, parent-child relationship, and hierarchy. And hierarchy is inherently problematic when you talk about humans. I think that there’s still a lack of healing when you talk about accountability. There’s a wholeness of the individual that I think is missing.”

We would like to highlight the point that we readily hear how white guilt renders white people ineffective allies and frustrates people of color. Yet, people rarely openly state that the focus on one-sided accountability actually *fosters the continuation of white guilt* and that this guilt is a serious barrier to white people finding the kind of healing needed to do effective ally work.

Jason speaks of his experience wherein accountability structures depended on white guilt to encourage white people to continually defer to people of color.

“From the perspective where an accountable relationship is based in this idea that white people can only be accountable when coming from ‘I will only follow the leadership of person of color.’ ‘I’m only doing good work if I get a stamp of approval from people of color.’ ... I just feel like it just requires a lot of guilt on the part of a white person or a white-led organization, either guilt or this having no sense of identity kind of place. It really requires that in order to make that work.”

So far, we have seen that white folks perceiving themselves to be less-than-equal relationship partners can support white folks in 1) maintaining an unhealthy sense of self, 2) distancing themselves from their whiteness, and 3) seeking validation from people of color. Additionally, however, the absence of a clear racial identity in relationship to anti-racism work leads to even more problems.

The lack of a healthy white racial identity also reduces white folks’ interest in thorough self-inquiry. One common result is that they cut themselves off from any learning that might come from their experience. Not only do white folks stop themselves from fully seeing how the white supremacist culture continues to live within them, but they also deny learning that could prove helpful to collaborative partnerships.

Diane is especially disheartened by what she sees when white people feel the need to stand separate from everything related to white culture:

“I think it’s detrimental to both sides....I don’t think white people are motivated or encouraged to participate and offer insight. They might not even believe they have anything to offer to the process, and it’s not true at all...Part of this is, ‘I need to stand apart from my white culture, my white affiliation, and be allied to you.’ Well, I don’t want you to do that. I want you to be able to reach into your experience from your white culture, and me reach into my experience from my black culture and do our collective thinking.”

Of course, dominant white culture should be critiqued, interrogated, and transformed. Anti-racism efforts require this. But, as long as white folks reactively run away from all things associated with the white community, they remain less capable of mining the possibly helpful learning they have inculcated through their varied experiences.

Additionally, the premise that white folks are inherently untrustworthy often translates into white people believing spending time in white caucus spaces reinforces racism. This can

limit white folks' ability to facilitate their own self-inquiry. Diane expresses her concern this way:

“I think the aggregate awareness of white people has been slowed because it’s been led by people of color. I think it is an absolute oxymoron to say that understanding one’s own culture is critical to racial relations and let me have someone outside your race tell you about your own culture, which has been far too long the model and the time spent.”

An important issue is that if white folks believe that “being accountable” means they should turn *only* to people of color for guidance, white folks will continue to avoid responsibility for organizing within the white community in order to move other white folks forward. While true that much about racism and white privilege can be learned through the leadership of people of color, self-examined white people are able to speak to the experience of being white. When white people have a healthy sense of self through having clearly investigated that experience, they can then speak about it with other white people and further their growth.

Ultimately, we believe the accountability model most of the collaborators on this chapter were acculturated into, and the sense of worthlessness it engenders in white people, encourages white folks to run away from the very relationships that most need transformation. Only when white folks find a strong internal grounding in a healthy sense of self will they effectively develop and maintain transformative relationships with the larger white community that can expand movements for justice.

Inherent Inequality

We recognize disrupting white supremacy necessarily involves challenging the dominant, white power structure. However, when white folks reactively enter relationships characterized by a power reversal that puts people of color in a superior position over white people, the problems inherent in any intentionally hierarchical system are bound to arise. Systems of dominance we have been acculturated into, such as white supremacy, patriarchy, etc., are reflected in one-sided accountable relationships because one group continues to have power over another group. Although understandable that many believe an initial power reversal is an important step on the road toward dismantling the white supremacist system, relationships built upon this uneven foundation lead toward feelings of dehumanization and differential worth and therefore do not help us create the non-oppressive relationships necessary to create a non-oppressive society.

Further, relationships based on inherent inequity foster dysfunctional relational patterns. First, white folks tend to act in patronizing ways toward people of color. Paraphrasing a lengthy explanation, Hamid describes how when white people feel they need to constantly ask, “*what do you need?*” it is as though the person of color cannot take care of him or herself. Jason describes building relationships within this context and the questions that arose within him during times when racism emerged in a room:

“Especially as a white person, how do I come in? Because that is what I should be doing, taking responsibility for all of racism that is causing this pain in this moment. So I’ve got to make things better. I’ve got to come in and rescue and caretake...so then I act out of a place that feels really ungrounded and uncomfortable.”

Ultimately, discomfort is felt on both sides and this dynamic demeans everyone in the process.

A second dysfunctional characteristic bred from relationships based in inequity involves the belief that one group cannot be trusted to do effective work without oversight by the other group. When we believe white anti-racists are *incapable* of holding themselves accountable for their own development this means that people of color *must* monitor white people’s progress. This can be problematic because it 1) requires folks of color to spend their time attending to

white folks instead of working in their own communities, 2) continues a long historical pattern of white folks being served while folks of color's energies are depleted, and 3) sets up a dynamic of one group "overseeing" another, as opposed to "working in relationship with" in order to provide feedback.

Certainly, many folks of color remain willing to provide mentorship to white folks who require help seeing issues of race and white privilege. But, we suggest that these mentorship relationships are strongest when built on a foundation of mutual partnership, respect, and equality. Not only that, we believe white people can and should be encouraged to imagine they can become sufficiently skilled so they can begin to hold themselves accountable and provide leadership within the white community.

Ineffective Collaborative Practices

A final theme that emerged involves the development of ineffective collaborative practices that limit the social justice movement as a whole. Of primary importance is that relying on a model based in inherent inequity reduces the likelihood that we will fully access and utilize the skills brought to the table by various members of the lesser-valued group. Diane speaks extensively on this subject:

"Here's the problem. The whole accountability dynamic doesn't invite the best thinking of the collective. It simply advocates blind support of the most affected. And I think that the most affected bring in a hugely important perspective to the equation. And I think great partnerships of examined white folks do too. And those two added together, that's what gets positive change. But, that seldom happens."

A key idea here is the acknowledgement that those who have suffered most from racism have an enormous amount to contribute. The knowledge and experience gained from having lived through oppressive circumstances and situations cannot be underestimated.

The trouble is that if white folks who have done a lot of internal work *and* have developed a sophisticated analysis of systemic racism are expected to offer unquestioned support, we lose the possibility of co-creating more effective approaches and practices. Essentially, if we believe white people *cannot* contribute to the knowledge base because of their racial positioning, we lose whatever valuable ideas might come from a more equitable and honest sharing.

Finally, distrust is reinforced when the "*blind support for the most affected*" dynamic plays out in situations where white folks become advocates and allies without becoming full partners in an initiative. According to Diane, in the end, minor battles might be won when isolated tasks are accomplished, but the larger justice effort does not move forward. This happens because the structure of one-sided accountability does not ask people to resolve the inner psychic issues that affect all of us raised within a culture of white supremacy. Our unresolved issues then continue to negatively impact our ability to form partnerships wherein we can look beyond a single task and concentrate on the type of long-term, sustainable effort that requires honest, real, deep relationships. On a large scale, the problematic aspects highlighted within the four themes just discussed are disastrous for the racial, social, economic, and environmental justice movements.

A Different Direction: A Path toward Transformative Alliances

The AWARE-LA members who have been part of the creation of this model have spent many years internalizing accountability principles and building anti-racist practices. They are clear that the principles asking white folks to become cognizant of the privilege and racism infused within their thoughts, emotional reactions, and behaviors are essential. They also hold as

invaluable those principles that help develop 1) non-oppressive communication skills and 2) equitable relationships with people of color.

Yet, AWARE-LA is also clear that it has been a struggle to expand their thinking outside of the “accountability to people of color” box in order to claim the following: *Relationships intended to serve a racial/social/economic justice agenda will be stronger and more productive if they are founded from their beginnings on a model that values each individual’s essential humanity, offers mutual respect, and holds open the possibility for trust to be achieved.* Perhaps most radical is the contention that white folks who are at the beginning stages of racial awareness should consider themselves, and be considered, legitimate allies. In keeping with this approach, new white anti-racists should also be treated with respect and consideration.

Although recognizing that some people have already been building healthy, functional cross-race relationships for years, these may represent a small minority within social justice circles. We also must acknowledge that for many people who have never experienced relationships with white folks that inspire a sense of trust and/or hope, our model will likely feel overly optimistic. For this reason, it may be helpful to see our offering as a future ideal, something to be worked toward, even if it feels out of reach at this time. We would now like to present our framework for the direction we, AWARE-LA and RJA, intend to take as we move forward.

The Transformative Alliance Building Model

We offer our Transformative Alliance Building model as an alternative to relationships focusing on one-sided accountability structures. We start by admitting that this model asks many of us to forge a new path. We know building relationships where the highest value is placed on creating equitable, sustainable relationships that can work to uphold our common goal of advancing movements for justice is something we will need to navigate together. Here is a basic outline of the model from which we are working:

- The immediate goal is to build transformative alliances between anti-racist white folks and people of color.
- To build these alliances successfully, we need to create healthy and productive relationships.
- In order to build these relationships, white people must take responsibility for how we are socialized to act out white supremacy culture and white privilege. (White people are called to create a new way of being in relationship. This is where accountability principles remain important. But, the overriding understanding is that only when anti-racist white people and people of color work towards genuine relationships can both groups be free to create transformative alliances.)
- Transformative alliances are the vehicles that allow us to create effective movements for racial, social, economic, and environmental justice (the ultimate goal).

We believe that this model will be instrumental in our ability to actually make good on the intentions we set for ourselves.

Where do we begin?

To be sure, developing healthy relationships takes time and effort. We recognize this process will neither be easy, nor assured. Part of starting off in the right direction, however, involves white people helping to foster relationships with people of color by being anti-racist allies. This is done through engagement in the following:

- Anti-racist actions
- Consciousness raising

- Learning about social justice and the history of the white supremacist system in the United States
- Honest/constructive dialogue
- Demonstrating growth over time

When white people develop these practices, opportunities are created for people of color to build trust with anti-racist white people. Not surprisingly, many of these features come straight out of the accountability principles that we find essential.

When we talked with our AWARE-LA colleagues about what it looked like for them to take up these guidelines during their beginning stages, their statements reflect the learning of essential skills. Jason explains:

“I’m being constantly vigilant in my honesty, in my self-reflection, in my willingness to take risks, in asking for dialogue around times when I am having conflict in relationship, or feeling like there’s my own internalized racism playing out.”

Jason’s recognition that developing the characteristics of an ally is anchored in a self-reflective process is also mirrored within Cameron’s experience. But, Cameron highlights the importance of approaching the work non-defensively and with an honest intent to experience change. To Cameron this means:

“the ability to be engaged about issues of race and racism and having the skills and the capacities to really take in what’s being said and not react from a defensive place, to take the information that’s being shared and be able to integrate it into my way of being in my practice. It’s not enough to just say, ‘Thank you. I appreciate what you’re saying.’ But I also have to be reflective in the practice that comes from that hearing. So, for me, it is really the ability to non-defensively listen to what’s being said, to be able to have a constructive engagement with how I’m being challenged and then to be able to turn around and integrate that information and have it lead to new practices.”

“The most basic skill is not to get defensive. That’s really hard to learn to do, but to really hear what somebody’s saying, to not try to apologize too quick. Like ‘I’m sorry, I didn’t mean it that way.’ But, it’s not about me. I had to learn that me telling them ‘I’m sorry’ is to make me feel better.”

The skills Jason and Cameron speak of take time to develop and depend on the ability to engage in relationships with people who have 1) a more advanced understanding of how racism and white privilege manifest, and 2) the time, energy, and openness to engage in this ongoing dialogue process.

We would like to highlight that the difference between the form of accountability we critiqued and the Transformative Alliance Building model is that *our model explicitly suggests that white folks deserve respect and consideration even while initially working to develop skills.* One of the guiding understandings is that white anti-racist folks who are committed will undoubtedly make racist mistakes or act out white privilege and that they must be 100% accountable for this behavior. At the same time, white anti-racist folks still need to be treated considerately as allies who are invested in, and working for, justice and not as untrustworthy white people.

Where does this lead?

With commitments to develop our knowledge, skills, and anti-racist practices, white folks can better participate in creating a foundation for functional, continuing relationships. The intentions for each person entering these relationships would include:

- Building trust as friends and allies.
- Entering into alliance on an equal footing by honoring one another's humanity.
- Providing leadership alongside one another (not over).
- Remaining accountable (individually and collectively) for how we act out our various privileges.
- Being responsible for what it means for each of us to live under a white supremacist system and culture.

The key words associated with our intentions for transformative alliances include: mutuality, partnership, sustainability, united front, common purpose, collaboration, and respect.

What would alliance relationships look like?

Through our interview and collaborative processes, we developed some initial descriptions of what alliance relationships would entail. Important are the following characteristics. People of color and anti-racist white people would...

- Have sustainable and meaningful relationships based on mutual trust and respect.
- Be invested in working out problems when they arise.
- Find productive solutions that are strengthened by our collaboration and collective effort.
- Be committed to having one another's back through thick and thin.

This last point is perhaps the most challenging. A key difference within this model versus the common form of one-sided accountability relationships is that white anti-racist people in alliances would be able to expect support from people of color when the situation warrants.

Cameron states that:

The biggest thing you can ask a person of color to do is stand up for white anti-racist people. That's the ultimate thing to do. I think when a person of color is willing to risk that, that's a true alliance."

As partners in alliance relationships, each individual's full humanity would be considered and honored, regardless of race.

In addition to these four main characteristics, the interviewees also commented on elements that would be expected to be present within alliance relationships. For Salina, alliance relationships would allow people to honestly relate without one person needing to continually try to please the other. She speaks of appreciating white people who are "*unapologetically white*," meaning those who are comfortable with whom they are as long as they are working against white supremacy. This, then, allows balance to emerge:

"When I think of alliance, first off I think of equality. I think of two whole individuals, or entities. I think of mutual respect, mutual appreciation. I think of more of a give and take. I think of balance. I think of more just and even flow between the two and I think of unity of purpose, unity of thought, unity of work."

Diane builds on the idea of mutually, but highlights how this type of relationship also involves conscious decision-making regarding who will be a good partner:

"It is when you are willing to fully give, and that's a very discerned decision and I think, for me at least, it's a mutually invested commitment to be self-examined and then to be in partnership."

This is an essential point. We recognize that not all cross-race relationships can be alliances. Alliances will only occur when *both* parties are 1) fully dedicated to self-examination, 2) are willing to confront the privileges they receive, and 3) feel inspired to commit to the individual or group.

Some additional features include the ability to be in honest dialogue, feeling that respect is mutual, and being given the benefit of the doubt that intentions are positive. Here is what Susan said specifically about what makes an alliance relationship:

“It looks like being engaged and committed to each other in our lives within and outside of our social justice work together. The relationship isn’t superficial. It is being interested in the whole story of each other’s lives. In this kind of real relationship, when issues come up that need to be addressed, the relationship is there to support you and the challenge is one that helps you grow and continue learning. When an issue arises that makes someone uncomfortable it would be talked about immediately with the understanding that we will always be trying our best and that we are always trying to be supportive and filled with consciousness. This kind of relationship would honor the fact that those of us who are engaged in this work are motivated by genuine caring and a deep desire to make the world a better place. So, when attention is brought to a mistake, either conscious or unconscious, this type of relationship allows me to immediately work on shifting the problem areas.”

Susan’s comments reflect a radical difference between the approaches. Whereas in the form of accountability we were acculturated into white people’s mistakes are often used to justify exclusion or harsh treatment, alliance relationships recognize that mistakes are bound to happen and are not taken as indicators of the white person’s lack of investment.

But, what allows us to build relationships where this is possible? We next consider the different requirements necessary for alliance relationships to occur.

What is required to build an alliance relationship?

Several elements are required for creating and sustaining alliance relationships. First, there needs to be an emphasis on long-term commitment, seeing beyond the single issue of race when considering the effects of oppression, and both sides engaging in personal healing work. Salina speaks extensively about how each member of an alliance needs to do self-examining work to heal from the experience of living within a white supremacist system:

“For an alliance to be an alliance, and to be an effective alliance, you really have to have individuals or entities that have really done the proverbial work. If you’re talking about race, I think you have to have individuals who have really gone deep within and addressed and worked out the issues and challenges of growing up in a society such as ours, where white supremacy is the overarching design. Both sides. I think the whites need to do the work. What does it mean to be white growing up in a system of white supremacy? And what does it mean to be black growing up in the system? And not only what does it mean, but how has it affected me in my life and my interactions in my relationships? And what do I need to do to move beyond the confines of white supremacy? And only once you’ve done that and committed to doing work to heal yourself, because whites need the healing, and blacks need the healing, then you can form an alliance...Each of us should be held to the same standards.”

What we notice within Salina’s statement is the idea that alliances cannot truly form until the work of healing and self-examination is engaged. We see this model as an approach to building transformative alliances and we believe that unless both parties are open to being transformed, a healthy dynamic will not emerge.

Diane discusses why it is so important for us all to do the work of examining deeply our own experiences and finding peace within it:

“I think the end of this is mutuality because I don’t think the self-examining is different for whites than it is for people of color. It’s just exactly the same. I think it is the notion of coming to terms with the fact that I am more than myself. I am part of a culture and a culture that I don’t always define, but it informs and influences who I am and how I think and then secondly, to find my peace within that, to find my peace within the elements of my culture that I take pride in and I hold up and I acknowledge and I look to and I pass on to another generation and also to acknowledge the parts of my culture that I didn’t craft but are real.”

This idea of finding a certain kind of resolution regarding who we are within our culture and what kind of change we want to work toward in the world is essential if each partner is going to stand solidly side by side during moments of difficulty.

Three additional requirements for building alliances include understanding that 1) building trust still depends upon a significant investment of time, 2) people are bound to make mistakes if we have been recipients of certain privileges our whole lives, and 3) over time we should be able to question moments when our partner’s actions appear to be based in an oppressive system. Susan explains this most clearly:

“So there is a sense of mutual respect around our needs. Again, I think it depends on the relationship whether or not I can expect [allies] to be accountable for their own growth. If it’s somebody that I’ve known for a long time then there is the assumption that there is that accountability around a whole variety of issues, including sexism, homophobia. ...it’s okay to struggle. In fact, it’s good to struggle, especially when you’re doing the best that you can to be a conscious, whole, loving person in the world and to not do harm. We are going to make mistakes. So, what we’re looking for in that is to really be able to talk to each other mutually and inspire each other’s continued growth.”

In sum, we hope that alliance relationships will be increasingly possible. We also know the challenges we face. Collectively, we have a lot to learn and a lot from which to heal. For many people, the idea of mutuality will feel premature, especially for those who have had no prior experience that validates or reinforces the idea that white folks can ever be sufficiently skilled to warrant trust. For this reason, we find it important to address why we feel working to build this type of relationship is so important.

What are the benefits of alliance relationships?

The success of our efforts for justice will be radically improved when we have sustainable, long-term, functional relationships. Diane speaks about how unequal accountability structures prompt short-term collaborations, but she then clarifies why we must strive to build long-term alliances among self-examined people who each hold themselves accountable to being in relationships non-oppressively:

“I think you can better serve the world when you are accountable to those principles, and those principles are applied to self-examination. Then you show up in the world differently. You show up for white people differently. You show up for people of color differently. That’s when you become a change agent in the world. And I say it’s to be determined because I don’t think we’ve unleashed even a fraction of the power of what we could do if we could ever get past the constructs that prevent us from working in partnership and joining other thinking.”

From our experience, this is one of the most inspirational aspects, the idea that when we combine 1) individuals who have each done the requisite self-examination with 2) a healthier relationship

dynamic, that we will tap into a deep well of power and intentionality that, so far, has all-too-commonly remained mired in dysfunctional relationships.

How can white anti-racists increase their ability to build transformative alliance relationships?

AWARE-LA believes its model of Radical White Identity can help white folks become more effective allies. The model recognizes white anti-racists need a healthy, productive, and explicit white identity that involves investigating their roots, history, privilege, and organizing potential. Since space constraints limit our ability to fully explain the model here, we will simply offer some key benefits we see in building this type of identity. First, we find that with the solid sense of self this model offers, white folks move away from an insecure, guilt-ridden, validity-seeking form of anti-racism work. This allows white folks to have deeper and more balanced dialogues with people of color because they understand their dedication to their work comes out of their own self-inquiry and interest. Second, white folks feel increasingly confident about their ability to engage in anti-racism work with the wider white community.

Most basically, AWARE-LA members learn to see themselves as valuable, invested contributors to the wider effort to dismantle white supremacy. Cameron speaks of how this model has affected him:

“I think that what’s so critical is that once you have that internal sense of self based on being a white anti racist, then you’re able to negotiate a problematic role from a much healthier place. I don’t feel responsible for the history of the white supremacy system but I do feel accountable to its results and how I benefit from the system. I recognize how my privilege protects me from seeing these realities. I think we don’t want to stop feeling guilt or shame ever. That’s not the goal. ...But it’s not something I’m held by and guided by. ...I have a foundation within myself as a white anti racist. The bottom line for me is that I have a stake in ending the white supremacist system. I’m part of the fight for justice.”

Finally, this secure foundation is essential to white folks’ ability to effect the most change possible. It keeps them energized, motivates them to push themselves, and helps them build stronger multi-racial alliances that can propel the movements for justice forward. It is this effect on white folks’ anti-racist practice we find most meaningful.

What if people do not want to create alliance relationships?

Not all relationships between white folks and people of color can be alliances in the way we discuss. The problematic dynamics described within our critique of one-sided accountability relationships will remain a common pattern for a long time because many white folks *and* folks of color will likely continue to support an unequal, hierarchical approach. For example, there are plenty of white folks who adamantly refuse to believe that their voices are valuable or that they can become sufficiently skilled to warrant trust from people of color.

That said, what happens when the people with whom we are collaborating are interested in a relationship based solely on one-sided accountability guidelines? First, we will have to make a choice whether or not to commit to these relationships. If we do, one helpful recognition to accept is that skepticism is understandable and due to our country's history. For example, some folks of color might have zero interest in collaborating with white folks due to a history rife with disappointment and injury caused by white people and society. Others may be willing to engage in collaborative work, but they may have learned to offer trust very slowly. On the other hand, some white folks are so filled with self-hatred they cannot see themselves as worthy of equal standing. In other words, we must remember each of us is an individual with differing approaches.

What this means is that we will likely struggle to remain true to our deepest beliefs when in circumstances that seem to betray our sense of equity and humanity. For example, white folks may sometimes need to follow the rules of one-sided accountability even when it goes against a deeply felt sense of truth, knowing that trust may never come. This might involve taking a position of deference even when a sense of personal experience suggests the situation is dysfunctional. For folks of color, this could mean engaging with white folks who remain needy and deferential. With enough time and investment, work and effort, mistrust and dehumanization might give way to more equitable alliance relationships. In the meantime, we imagine we each will continue to struggle, setting our sights on creating healthy relationships and admitting when we fail.

Conclusion

Given the myriad problems with one-sided accountability relationships, including their tendency toward inauthentic communication, unhealthy white anti-racist people, inherent inequality, and ineffective collaborative practices, we need to forge a new path. We present the model of Transformative Alliance Building as an invitation to join us in attempting to create relationships where the highest value is placed on mutual respect, partnership, equity, and the preservation of each individual's full humanity. We do this knowing we remain responsible for continuing our individual growth processes. But, we believe only when the foundations of our relationships find anchor in the values of alliance will we avoid the dead ends that come with a singular focus on accountability.

Mission Statement of European Dissent, New Orleans

We are persons of European descent who recognize that our varying ethnic histories have been forged into a common "white community" in order to nurture and sustain racism.

We work in consultation with The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, a national multiracial network of organizers who do training workshops in leadership development, community empowerment, and Undoing Racism.

Our goal is to be a visible force in the creation of a multiracial network of people intent on building working relationships between the white community and the communities of color in the struggle for a just society.

We actively look at, analyze, change and help other whites to change the ways we as whites participate in racism personally, culturally, and institutionally. We have made a commitment to undo racism personally, in our families, social life, work places, churches and community work.

To achieve this goal we feel it is our responsibility to articulate and demonstrate dissent in our communities by organizing other whites to oppose and undo racism.

We do this by organizing training seminars in conjunction with The People's Institute, through study and education; by expanding our membership and base of support; by engaging in public actions and community struggles which expose and combat racism; and by supporting one another in our efforts to undo racism in our personal and work lives.

Accountability of anti-racist whites

The following is a working document of European Dissent on accountability. It is a working document because we recognize that it needs to be continuously updated and critiqued by us and people of color. These are principles that we are striving toward. We understand that serious work is required if we are to follow the principles to the degree that we want.

We understand that society has taught us how to be racist. Now we are forging new ground in learning how to be anti-racist.

Because this is new ground and people of color are not always trusting we will be anti-racist, we cannot leave these principles to chance; we must constantly articulate and make them clear in our lives.

The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, which first enunciated these principles, defines accountability as:

***"A position by which one will be held in check or account for one's decisions and actions . . . the acceptance of a role that fits within a cultural, political, and social perspective that leads to the liberation of

peoples of color from racism, oppression, and cultural subordination.

It requires a commitment to the vision of African-Americans and other oppressed peoples to assume self-determination over those areas deemed by them to directly affect their lives."**

I. Accountability of Whites to European Dissent Organization

We accept the fact that each of us has individual racism and that each of us participates in institutional racism, and we understand we have privilege because we are white. With this in mind, we have made a commitment to undo racism.

1. All members of European Dissent will have attended a two and a half day "Undoing Racism" training with The People's Institute, or will have made a commitment to attend one in the next six months.

2. We agree with the statement of purpose (European Dissent Mission Statement).

3. We collectively and individually agree to work on our own personal and cultural racism and will take an active, public stance against institutional racism and report back to the group with our progress.

4. We agree to be honest with each other.

5. We agree to respect each other.

6. We will support group decisions.

7. We will create a liberated zone where individuals can and should say what is on their minds without fear. This also means that we will speak to the group, rather than outside of the group, if we have a problem. We will create the space where we talk with each other rather than about each other. This means that we will bring up problems about process, group maintenance and individual involvement in the liberated zone.

8. Each member will take responsibility for continuity of the organization through the following: Attendance; staying current on decisions and activities of the group; following through on tasks we have agreed to; maintaining structure in the organization; holding meetings regularly, including committee meetings; everyone being involved in some way beyond attendance; nurturing new members.

9. We agree to develop and maintain trust. We should be able to trust that the group will be with us and support us when we step out against racism.

10. We will have a commitment to struggle. We will commit to push one another to another level. We will be committed to being challenged on a personal, cultural and institutional level.

11. We will commit to sharing information, events, and resources.

12. We will have a commitment to being responsible to the next generation. We will educate our young people.

II. Accountability of Whites to Other Whites

1. We will commit to anti-racist work within our families, with friends, in our jobs and our community work.
2. We will commit to the appreciation of the whole of each other's personhood. We will respect each other's culture, class and religious differences. We will identify gender perspectives. We will be sensitive to each other's family situations.
3. We will commit to do anti-racist problem solving with each other. We will not write each other off. We will question without a sense of one-upsmanship. We will resist arrogance. We will be willing to share our weaknesses. We will question each other's accountability.
4. We will commit to create and promote an anti-racist culture and learn to work our culture in with other cultures in a non-intrusive, non-imposing and respectful way.
5. We will help build an anti-racist network. We will be welcoming to new people. We will nurture new people beyond European Dissent.

III. Accountability of Anti-Racist Whites to People of Color

1. We will commit ourselves to informing and checking with people of color about our work both personally and organizationally. We will listen to what they say and what they are not saying. We will make a commitment to use European Dissent as a sieve, so that we can filter out some things before taking the discussion to people of color. We will share our accountability statement with them.
 2. We will engage in the struggle as anti-racist whites side by side with people of color. We will be committed to becoming a visible ally. We will be committed to action and taking public anti-racist positions. We will help build a multiracial, anti-racist movement.
 3. We will accept Black leadership. We commit ourselves to define what we mean by "accepting Black leadership." We will learn not to blindly follow leadership because it is a person of color. This too will have to be defined.
 4. We will learn to know when we are relying too much on people of color to do the work we should be doing.
- (Working draft: November 1996, minor revisions May 1997)

'PASSING IT ON:'
REFLECTIONS OF A WHITE ANTI-RACIST SOLIDARITY ORGANIZER

by Sharon Martinas, Co-founder, Challenging White Supremacy Workshop;
Edited by CWS Workshop co-founder, Mickey Ellinger

The purpose of this chapter is to share reflections on the goals, strategies, pedagogies, and challenges of practicing different kinds of accountability during the 13 year herstory of the San Francisco-based Challenging White Supremacy Workshop..

The perspective is that of its co-founder and coordinator; so the narrative will use a lot of 'I statements.' The discussion will not attempt to present perspectives of workshop participants on the workshop's effectiveness, which is a story for another time.

ABOUT THE CWS WORKSHOP

The mission of the CWS Workshop was to 'train principled and effective grassroots antiracist organizers.' Typical workshops were called 'Becoming an Anti-Racist Activist,' 'Becoming an Anti-Racist Organizer,' or 'Introduction to Grassroots Anti-Racist Organizing.' The workshop began in the Spring of 1993, after its co-founders were inspired by participating in The People's Institute's UNDOING RACISM WORKSHOP. The CWS workshop closed in June 2005.

Each workshop lasted from 10 to 15 weeks, and met 3 hours per week. Participants were expected to complete reading assignments of 100-150 pages per week, to volunteer in a prearranged racial justice organization for 6 to 8 hours per week, and to raise funds to pay the honoraria for organizers of color who presented to the workshop.

Workshop participants were mostly white, college-educated, working and middle class grassroots social justice activists between the ages of 20 and 30. Approximately 90% of each workshop class of 30 were women; and 60% were lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered activists. After 2001, all applicants had to have at least 1-2 years of prior experience as social justice activists in order to participate in the workshop.

In its last five years, the CWS Workshop developed a program for more experienced grassroots antiracist activists called 'The Workshop as a Lab.' Prior workshop participants took on various workshop roles as preparation for their antiracist community work. They learned to become Small Group Organizers (aka facilitators). They adapted certain workshops focused on challenging white privilege and facilitated these workshop sessions. They mentored workshop participants, who were volunteering with local racial justice organizations, in some basic principles and practices of accountable behavior. They trained other participants in grassroots fundraising tactics. They recruited and interviewed potential workshop participants; and they organized all workshop logistics. This group of antiracist organizers-in-training became known as the workshop's Organizing Crew. They spent 4 months in intensive training preparing for their workshop roles.

CWS AS A 'SOLIDARITY' WORKSHOP

The CWS Workshop was an antiracist solidarity workshop. Its co-founders, Mickey Ellinger and Sharon Martinas, came from a political tradition of white antiracist solidarity activists who, from the late 1960's through the 1980's, practiced our beliefs that a key role of U.S. white revolutionaries was to win other white activists to support national liberation movements on both sides of the U.S. borders.

Mickey and I grew up politically in the era of SNCC, the Black Panther Party, American Indian Movement, National Liberation Front of Vietnam, The Young Lords Party, the Puerto Rican Independence movement, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front of El Salvador, the Pan African Congress and the African National Congress of South Africa. All of these organizations and movements were fighting for land, justice and self-determination.

We believed that the struggles for justice of racially and nationally oppressed communities in the United States – Black, Puerto Rican, Mexican and Native people – were or could become national liberation movements, and that these movements, along with struggles abroad, could bring down U.S. imperialism. White activists had a specific role to play in organizing other white activists to see that anti-racist struggles were central to defeating U.S. imperialism.

Mickey and I created the CWS workshop as a political education project to pass on to a new generation the revolutionary tradition which had grounded our political lives. 'Back in the day' (1960's - 1980's), this tradition was called 'solidarity politics.' (1)

Goal #1: Passing On the Theory and Practice of Anti-Racist, Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Politics

The first and most important form of accountability of the CWS workshop was to the ideology and political practice of 'solidarity politics.'

Winning people to this definition of accountability presented enormous challenges throughout the herstory of CWS: how to make a vision and a politic that came from a different time and world view relevant and meaningful to a young generation of white activists who were growing up in profoundly different political, social and economic times.

The early 1990s were very different from the late 1960s. By the time the CWS workshop opened its doors, the U.S. had crushed most national liberation movements world wide. Most white activists had no experience working with revolutionary movements led by people of color. They probably had never heard of the term 'solidarity,' and they lacked the experience to be able to discuss 'accountability' in doing 'solidarity work.' Nonetheless, we believed that it was still true that U.S. white supremacy was fundamental to the staying power of the U.S. system, so we searched for ways to translate that understanding to different movements in a different world.

Working with Multiple Meanings of 'Accountability'

Through my study and reflections on the ways that The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, and its affiliated anti-racist white organization, European Dissent, used the term 'accountability,' I began to see relationships between the practices of 'accountability' and 'solidarity' that I knew from experience but for which I did not have the language. (2)

I also learned that there are multiple meanings of 'accountability' for social justice activists today. For example, here are just a few of the multiple meanings I learned from CWS workshop participants through the years:

** For some, 'accountability' means the practice of doing what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it, and calling if you can't get it done. In this meaning, 'accountability' is a synonym for 'dependability,' and connotes 'reliability' and 'ethical practice' of an individual activist.

** 'Accountability' may also mean the process of building trustful, authentic relationships with others, both white and of color. Used in this sense, 'accountability' connotes 'relationship building,' especially between two people.

** An activist may hold herself 'accountable' to a particular community organization, or specific group of people. 'Accountability' here may involve a feeling of 'loyalty,' and a practice referred to as "I've got your back." Trust built day by day, for a long period of time, is a key factor in this aspect of accountability.

** A group of social or racial justice activists may hold themselves accountable to a particular social justice movement. In this meaning, 'accountability' combines general agreement with the political praxis (analysis, practice, evaluation, goals, visions) of that movement; as well as with the implicitly or explicitly shared cultural values and norms of that movement. When this meaning of accountability is experienced, participants often use the term 'community' to describe their participation in that movement.

In an anti-racist solidarity workshop, 'accountability' can and does involve all of the aspects mentioned above. But how can the *learning experience of a workshop*, which is not *the work*, as Catherine Jones points out in her powerful article, 'The Work is Not the Workshop: Talking and Doing, Visibility and Accountability in the White Anti-Racist Community', be utilized to frame the values and ethics of 'accountability' in the politics of 'anti-racist, anti-imperialist solidarity?' (3)

Goal #2: Practicing Anti-Racist Solidarity with Local Racial Justice Organizations

Mickey and I understood that even though we could share our solidarity stories with workshop participants, we could not 'teach' solidarity. All we could do was to organize a political program that offered participants the opportunity to practice solidarity with organizations led by people of color so that they could experience how it might transform their lives as it had ours. No, we could not 'teach' solidarity, but perhaps our workshop program could 'model' it.

It took CWS years to develop an effective and accountable racial justice solidarity program for white workshop participants. However, by the time the workshop closed its doors in 2005, CWS's solidarity program was the strongest and most effective component of the workshop's curriculum.

I learned through error and trial, in that order, how difficult it is to use a workshop to prepare mostly white participants to practice accountable solidarity relationships with organizers and organizations of color. Here are some of the lessons I am still learning about how to do this work in an accountable and effective way:

**** It helps to have a definition of 'solidarity' to provide a political foundation for the workshop's anti-racist solidarity program.*

CWS's definition of 'solidarity' was 'an act of bonding with a people struggling for their liberation.' The definition was influenced by Mickey's and my political experiences as anti-racist, anti-imperialist organizers in solidarity with national liberation movements of the 1960's through the 1980's.

Most workshop participants tended to use the term 'being an ally' rather than 'standing in solidarity.' But 'being an ally' connotes an individual relationship to another individual, whereas 'standing in solidarity' assumes an organization to organization relationship in the context of a movement for self-determination of thousands of oppressed people -- even whole nations--struggling to free themselves from the system of U.S. imperialism.

It wasn't until 2001, eight years after CWS began, that a young activist, politicized in the Bay Area racial justice struggles of the 1990's, asked in a workshop session, "Sharon, what does 'solidarity' mean today?" I responded, "I think you are already practicing it, because you have the experience to ask that question."

**** To practice anti-racist solidarity work, I think we have to understand what 'respecting the leadership of organizers of color' means. White workshop participants need to be given the opportunity to experience it for themselves. That experience has the capacity to transform their lives, if they are open to that transformation. But if they only read about 'leadership' in a workshop reader, the experience may awaken their anti-racist consciousness, but not move them to making a life-time commitment to solidarity work.*

Therefore, a workshop anti-racist solidarity program must prioritize developing firm, accountable relationships with community organizations of color that are strong, guided by principles and practices of self-determination and accountability in their own communities; and whose vision, goals, strategies and practices can inspire, educate and motivate white anti-racist activists in the workshop.

The Bay Area is blessed with having many powerful grassroots radical organizations of color. But that development has not happened overnight. U.S. government attacks on national liberation organizations from the 60's through the 1980's decimated our local movements for justice. Many of our elders were imprisoned, murdered, or alive but of the 'walking wounded.'

A new generation of radical and revolutionary organizers of color emerged in the early 90's, in response to the Los Angeles uprising of 1992 after the trial of the policemen who beat Rodney King; and the first U.S. war against Iraq. These organizers developed their leadership capacities in the struggles for immigrant rights (fighting Prop. 187) and defending affirmative action against Prop. 209. (4) They honed their organizing capacities through training programs like SOUL (School of Unity and Liberation. (5) They led fierce demonstrations and grassroots electoral campaigns which CWS workshop participants participated in and supported. But their grassroots institutions, their community organizations, were still new and developing their own local leadership. Most of these organizations were not yet ready to consider taking on white volunteers, and many organizations were politically unwilling to do so. Their experiences with the racism of white social justice activists made them understandably distrustful of working with us.

In the years between the path-breaking Critical Resistance Conference at Berkeley in 1998 (6) and the Bush regime's wars against Iraq and the so-called 'war on terrorism' in 2001, the new generation of organizers of color had strengthened their grassroots institutions to the point that many were willing to experiment with taking on 'racial justice volunteers' from the CWS workshop. Our Racial Justice Volunteer program began in the Fall of 2001. It was coordinated by an experienced and accountable solidarity organizer named Brooke Atherton.

**** While the experience of solidarity cannot be taught in a workshop, I believe that the practice of accountable behavior can be taught.*

A story of how CWS's racial justice volunteer program got off the ground might illustrate this point. In 2001, a coalition of organizations of color held a community forum to discuss, in a global justice framework, our movement's response to Bush's wars. CWS was invited to the forum and asked to help with childcare and logistics. Brooke headed up the volunteer coordination effort. When 25 mostly white volunteers who had signed up to work, came on time, did what they were asked to do with precision and humility, some organizers of color were so impressed they asked her to set up childcare for the weekly meetings of their organizations' membership.

One racial justice volunteer placement rapidly expanded to 15, as the word spread that CWS could provide organizations of color with accountable volunteers, mostly for routine tasks that overworked organizers of color were glad to share.

The Racial Justice Volunteer Coordinator did meticulous phone and personal followup with each CWS volunteer, checked regularly with the volunteer's supervisor at the host organization for feedback on the volunteer's work, developed a basic 'accountability check list' for volunteers, personally mentored the new Volunteer Coordinators for the next CWS workshop session, and contributed to writing the workshop's 'Racial Justice Program Booklet' which each workshop participant received as part of the CWS orientation program. (7) In all her work, Brooke modeled what it looked like in real life to practice accountable behavior as an anti-racist solidarity organizer.

As CWS workshop coordinator, I prioritized supporting the Racial Justice Program Coordinator's work, since I had already decided that the racial justice volunteer placement program was the core of CWS's programmatic work. This support involved sharing with her all my own experiences and lessons learned as an anti-racist solidarity organizer, and sharing her work load because she spent hundreds of volunteer hours as Racial Justice Program Coordinator. And it was up to me to do the heart-breaking work of having to ask a workshop participant to leave the workshop, if, after numerous discussions, the participant was still practicing unaccountable behavior -- like not showing up for her volunteer work shifts, and not calling her supervisor ahead of time.

Even with two organizers putting in so much time for the racial justice placement program, lots of vital work still fell through the cracks. Perhaps most important was that sometimes we did not learn about a participant's unaccountable behavior till the end of that workshop session, or when we were calling the organization the next season to see if they wanted CWS volunteers. It became obvious to me that the 'Workshop as a Lab' program, in which CWS trained the 'Organizing Crew' for the next 15 week workshop, needed to prioritize training new anti-racist solidarity activists to become solidarity organizers who could help coordinate the CWS Racial Justice Program.

**** Becoming a Racial Justice Program Coordinator: reflections
on some early steps*

In the last 3 or 4 years of the CWS workshop, we offered a workshop called 'Becoming an Anti-Racist Organizer.' (8) When that workshop was no longer offered because of the work load of trying to coordinate two 15 week workshops each year, we focused on a four month training program called 'Workshop as a Lab.' The program was geared to orient volunteers whom I had recruited from prior workshops to become the 'Organizing Crew' for the next workshop. (9)

Among the 'Organizing Crew' were activists whose primary anti-racist experience was in doing volunteer solidarity work with local racial justice organizations, led by organizers of color. Out of this group, came the new group of volunteer coordinators of the 'Racial Justice Volunteer Placement program.'

The efforts of these 3-5 Racial Justice Coordinators, working collaboratively together each workshop session, mentoring and supporting no more than 8 workshop participants each, vastly improved the accountability of the whole program, as well as strengthening their own skills and commitment to anti-racist solidarity organizing.

I began to dream of expanding CWS's racial justice volunteer program to include an intensive training curriculum for anti-racist solidarity organizers, grounded in 20-30 hours per week of volunteer internship with local racial justice organizations, mentoring from elder solidarity organizers in the community, and a new curriculum focused on developing their capacities as anti-racist solidarity organizers. Unfortunately, the CWS workshop ended unexpectedly in the Spring of 2005, so that dream was never realized.

**** CWS tried to create a coordinated workshop curriculum and program that models what solidarity work looks like, on a daily basis, and sustainable for a life time.*

While the Racial Justice Volunteer Placement program was the core of the workshop's curriculum, it was not the only way in which participants learned what it might mean to do solidarity work. Other aspects of the work included:

** Reading about the histories and contemporary struggles of national liberation and racial justice movements as a core part of the readers specially edited for the workshop. In practice this meant about 150 pages every other week. (Alternate reading weeks focused on the history of white supremacy and white privilege, and different essays by activists of color and white activists experienced in challenging the white privilege political and cultural expressions of social justice activists.)

** Inviting guest organizers of color, many of whom coordinated the organizations with whom participants were volunteering, to speak about their racial justice organizing work. This part of the program, in conjunction with the readings mentioned above, was called 'Legacies of Liberation.'

** Training workshop participants to do grassroots fundraising to make sure that guest trainers of color received a respectful honorarium for their willingness to share their wisdom with a predominantly white group through the panel presentations.

** Learning how to invite their friends to the presentations by organizers of color, and to debrief with their friends after the workshop.

** Setting up a weekly calendar of racial justice events and encouraging participants to go to these events and to invite their friends.

** Training workshop participants in the art of 'practicing active listening,' so that when organizers of color presented to the workshop, participants were focused on what the organizers were saying, rather than jumping immediately to how, as white activists, they *felt* about the organizers' presentations.

** Training Small Group Organizers in the art of respectfully refocusing small group discussion so that it started with what the presenters had actually said, before requesting participants' reflections. In a tiny way, this activity modeled how we white activists can 'decenter our whiteness' while learning to do solidarity work.

** Making sure that small group discussions focused on connecting participants' experience with their racial justice placements with their readings, and their experiences within the workshop setting. (i.e., modeling 'the work is not the workshop.')

** Organizing special small group discussions exclusively for discussion of racial justice volunteer placement experiences.

Goal #3: Learning the real history of the U.S. white supremacy system, especially its negative impact on white-led social justice movements

In 1983, Robert Allen, an African American editor of 'The Black Scholar,' in collaboration with Pamela Allen, a white feminist who had been politicized in the Mississippi freedom struggle of the 1960's, wrote Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States. It's a history of how racism in white-dominated movements - from Abolitionism in the 19th century through the Central America Solidarity movements of the 1980's - have undermined and disrespected movements of peoples of color, and prevented the building of multi-racial alliances that might have ended systemic oppression and created new worlds of social justice for everyone in the U.S. The book blew my mind!

Mickey and I used the lessons from the book and our own experience with white social justice movements to create a curriculum on white privilege that was grounded in the history of the U.S. white supremacy system. We focused on the impact of the politics and practice of white privilege in social justice movements: how white privilege frames our movements' agendas, limits our choices of allies, harms equitable leadership development strategies, undermines resource-sharing, and prevents the development of relationships of mutual respect and trust with organizations and movements led by grassroots organizers of color.

We created interactive history exercises like 'How Mother Earth Became a Piece of Real Estate' -- focusing on the theme of land struggles, land loss of communities of color, and land grabs by European descended 'pioneers' backed up by federal government laws and policies-- and 'Family Herstories' during which participants interviewed their own elders for the hidden histories behind how European immigrants became white people. Great stuff!

But when we looked at contemporary white led social justice movements, especially those in which participants were actively involved, people complained about 'stereotyped role plays' and that 'their organizations' were being targeted, even though the rules of the exercises prohibited mentioning any groups by name.

I learned some tough lessons about challenging white privilege. White guilt can pop up in unexpected ways. Just because nothing is said personally, doesn't mean that folks don't take it personally. I also learned that I was a poor role model for practicing accountability toward white social justice movements, since I don't even believe they are practicing 'social justice' if they're doing their work in a racist way. My attitude came through, and frequently (and often justifiably) pissed people off.

Some Strategies: 'Creating an Anti-Racist Agenda'

In spite of its hard edge, the 'no passing the hankies in this workshop' feel to it, CWS had a very optimistic strategy. To challenge white privilege in social justice movements, white activists can 'Create an Anti-Racist Agenda.' The 'Agenda' is grounded in six principles, which I called 'moral, spiritual, and political rudders that can guide individual and collective transformation of antiracist activists.'

The principles are:

- ** Act on your principles (Do the right thing. Practice and model respectful Behavior. Challenge white privilege);
- ** Create an antiracist culture of resistance (language, group dynamics, study of history);
- ** Stand in solidarity (with radical racial justice struggles);
- ** Prioritize the issues of radical organizers of color;
- ** Respect the leadership of radical organizers of color;
- ** Hold on to your visions (of a world without white supremacy).

The principles are based on learning to analyze, strategize, and practice antiracist political activities. It does not focus on emotional release, nor on delving deeply into personal stories.

The principles also suggest that the workshop is only a place to practice what we want to do in the world. It is not a substitute for that world. 'Workshopitis' doesn't help us become stronger antiracist organizers.

But often when I came home exhausted on Sunday nights after the workshop, I wondered, "How can I keep accountable, as a solidarity organizer, to radical organizers of color in the Bay Area when I'm spending 60 hours a week working almost exclusively with white activists?" In this period it was not possible for me to have a structured solidarity relationship with an organization, such as CISPES was able to have with the FMLN or the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee had with the New African Peoples Organization. My own moral, spiritual and political rudder often felt very much off its keel.

Creating an Anti-Racist Pedagogy for the Privileged: Many Unanswered Questions

Even though I had been an anti-racist solidarity organizer and a grassroots political educator for nearly 30 years, I was ill prepared to create anti-racist curriculum for white social justice activists in the 1990's.

Sometimes participants and I miscommunicated because I didn't speak 'workshopese.' Consider these examples of linguistic challenges:

** When young white workshop participants called me a 'facilitator' of the CWS workshop, I looked up the linguistic roots of 'facilitator' in my dictionary. Sure enough, 'facilitator' comes from 'facile': to make something easy. "Hell No!" I protested. "I don't want to make anti-racist work for white folks easy. I want it to be the most difficult work they've ever done in their lives. People of color are regularly murdered for doing racial justice work. Making it easy for white folks to do the same will just reinforce our white privilege, and strengthen the white supremacy system."

** Small groups in the workshop operated on the principle of self-determination for participants of color: Activists of color could join groups with other people of color and bi-racial people, or they could join a white group if they wished to. White participants, on the other hand, could join only white small groups.

Once, an all white small group criticized the workshop for not allowing them enough time for processing. Their spokesperson was a young woman with blond, curly hair. I looked at her in confusion after she offered her criticism. "Processing"? I repeated. "Excuse me, but this is a workshop, not a hair salon. And I don't see any African American women in your group that might want their hair processed!"

But there were far more serious challenges in the curriculum creating activity. Here's a beginning list of questions that I grappled with, often unsuccessfully, during the herstory of the CWS workshop:

1. How can CWS pass on anti-racist solidarity politics that emerged in the era of strong national liberation movements in a very different world?
 - a. 'Back in the Day' we learned our politics by first looking at global power relations, then U.S. power relations, followed by power relations in our communities, and finally, what work we as activists should take up to help change these power imbalances.

Today, most workshop participants start their work with an "I statement:" How do I feel? What are my particular experiences? What are my skills and challenges? And then they slowly build their analysis out to a global world view. What impact does this have on exercise creation?

- b. ‘Back in the Day,’ most Third World national liberation struggles that were winning against U.S. imperialism around the world were governed by Marxist-Leninist political analyses and strategies. Most white anti-racist solidarity activists took our revolutionary cues from these winning movements, and believed we were ‘correct’ to do so.

Today, most college educated white workshop participants have learned to view the political and ideological world through the lens of ‘post-modernism’ which was founded by anti-Marxists and based on a belief that there are no political truths, only individuals’ diverse perspectives. What impact does this culture clash have on curriculum?

- c. ‘Back in the Day’ many white solidarity activists tended to organize ourselves in democratic centralist organizations with strong leadership and high expectations of discipline. We tried to mirror the strengths of national liberation movements, which were involved in open warfare with U.S. imperialism.

Today, many or most young white social justice activists have been strongly influenced by feminist and anarchist organizational structures, which often value peer learning, collective decision making, and collaborative leadership. How can we create curriculum that is respectful of this democratic culture while challenging the cultural arrogance of some of the white movement’s assumptions and values?

- d. ‘Back in the Day,’ political alliances and other organizing strategies tended to put more weight on having a similar political line: analysis and strategy. We focused more on results and effects.

Today, many white activists put as much or more weight on personal relationships with individual organizers. They tend to put as much or more emphasis on the process by which decisions and actions are made as on the results of those decisions and actions. What kinds of curriculum can challenge participants to evaluate both processes and results equally as needed?

- e. ‘Back in the Day,’ white middle class anti-racist solidarity activists were often able to do our work without worrying about paying huge debts to banks for our college education; and white working class folks were still able to guarantee that their children would have a better life financially than they did.

Today, though white activists still have far more financial flexibility and access to networks of white class privilege than activists of color, their time of relative financial ‘freedom’ is much shorter. And white working class folks have seen dramatic losses of jobs, income, and homes, with no basis for hoping that their children will have a better life.

How can our curriculum take account of the shrinking material benefits of white privilege in this neo-liberal era of global imperialism?

- f. ‘Back in the Day,’ white activists and activists of color believed that the revolution was around the corner so our pace of activity was frantic. Many of us felt we weren’t serious revolutionaries if we worried about ‘taking care of ourselves.’

Today, many white activists prioritize taking care of themselves as revolutionary work, a way to stay in for the long haul. They prioritize having a more balanced life, with time for friends and relaxation, as well as paid work and political activities. How do we develop a rigorous, tough curriculum which also respects the desire for a balanced life?

2. In the work of training white anti-racist solidarity organizers, how can CWS follow the effective organizing strategy of starting where people are at while maintaining strong anti-racist principles of keeping white people focused on the task of challenging our white privilege?

- a. CWS analyzed the social location of non-ruling class (i.e., poor, working and middle class) white people as being both oppressed and privileged. We are oppressed by class, gender, sexual orientation, age, politics, and physical ability; but we are privileged by race in relation to all peoples of color.

Many white social justice activists come into political consciousness through the experience of their own oppression. How can an anti-racist pedagogy of the privileged be created which can respectfully move activists from identity politics to solidarity politics?

- b. CWS had a race centered analysis. Like the Peoples Institute which inspired CWS, we saw racism as a major (not the only) barrier to building grassroots multi-racial alliances that could bring fundamental change to this country.

Many white participants in the workshop held an intersectionality analysis. They saw racism, patriarchy, classism and heterosexism as interrelated and equally powerful systems of oppression in the U.S. How can an anti-racist pedagogy of the privileged respect different political analyses of workshop participants while holding fast to the workshop’s fundamental political frames?

CWS’s solidarity principles talked about ‘respecting the leadership of people of color.’ We distinguished ‘respect’ from ‘following the leadership of people of color.’ What kinds of tools can we use to create a pedagogy of solidarity and accountability that fosters respect of white activists for organizers of color, while also supporting the crucial role of critical thinking on the part of young white activists?

3. CWS strongly believed in the importance of modeling effective, accountable and solidarity-practicing leadership as a part of the leadership development of a new generation of solidarity organizers.
 - a. Effective leadership necessitates one-on-one relationships with participants. But CWS was never able to carry this out because for most of its herstory, CWS had one workshop coordinator and up to 40 participants.
 - b. Accountable leadership requires being able to address daily problems that arise in a workshop on the spot. Because CWS had only one coordinator for most of its herstory, momentary decisions never had the crucial backing of several experienced souls collaborating together.
 - c. Accountable leadership for young white activists necessitates having leaders who are both grounded in historical solidarity politics and practice, and in contemporary white activist sub-cultures. CWS tried to function without that real multi-generational leadership for most of its existence.
 - d. Solidarity-practicing leadership is probably best modeled by a multi-racial team of workshop coordinators. CWS had that for only one of its 13 workshop years. (10)
 - e. In spite of these serious, long term leadership problems, this coordinator made the decision, year after year, that it was better to have a CWS workshop available, with all its problems, than none at all.

As I reflect on the many amazing, committed white anti-racist solidarity organizers who participated in a CWS workshop, and are now themselves modeling accountability and solidarity in grassroots movements around the country, I believe that I made the right decision.

TRANSITIONS

In the Spring of 2005, CWS held its last workshop.

I can now reflect somewhat calmly on the workshop's inability to meet the multi-faceted challenges of trying to create an anti-racist pedagogy for the privileged. At the time, I felt like my life as an anti-racist solidarity organizer was finished and that I was a failure. This self-definition as a 'failed revolutionary' was not a particularly functional place from which to ask the obvious question, 'So what do I do now?'

KATRINA SOLIDARITY WORK

Katrina answered the question for me. Glued to my television in September of 2005, I sat in 'shock and awe' as I saw New Orleans nearly destroyed by a government-made disaster. I shook with rage as I watched desperate New Orleanians abandoned on their rooftops simply because they were Black. I sobbed when I heard Malik Rahim, co-founder of Common Ground, tell a KPFA interviewer that the police had turned away a whole carload of health workers and all their supplies, because the emergency workers were African Americans.

At the same time, my email box was filled with messages from mostly white activists asking for others to join them to go to volunteer in New Orleans. Thousands of white activists have made that journey, and they've worked with grassroots groups, not with the Red Cross. They came with big hearts, wanting to help, some perhaps wanting an adventure. They came because they were able to. 'Have knapsack, will travel on a moment's notice' is a particular capacity that white and class privilege provides, especially to young adult activists who are healthy and do not yet have children.

These activists provided important relief services. Concentrating much of their work in the devastated Ninth Ward, they gutted houses, organized medical clinics, provided nourishing food and drinkable water, ran errands, set up computer communication systems, and created innovative child care and education projects. But for the most part they carried out their community work in total ignorance of the rich history of resistance to racism in New Orleans. They did not stop their work to listen to the stories of African American residents. They did not respect the centuries-old African American culture of New Orleans. And they often acted as if they knew what needed to be done, without first asking community residents what residents wanted to do.

Many grassroots activists of color in New Orleans began to express concerns about the behavior of white social justice volunteers. In response, experienced anti-racist organizers in New Orleans - mostly from the African American-led Peoples Institute for Survival and Beyond, and their white anti-racist collective, European Dissent - began to network with their counterparts around the country. Many of the national activists knew each other from CWS workshops in San Francisco and from the national anti-racist movement building activities of the Catalyst Project, also based in San Francisco. In the language of The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, these anti-racist organizers networked; they built a 'net that works.'

Out of dozens of cross country phone conversations emerged a new anti-racist organizing strategy.

We would act in solidarity with the growing grassroots racial justice movement in New Orleans that was working for the 'right of return' of all 'internally displaced persons' to their home communities in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. (11)

We would recruit experienced white anti-racist organizers to go to New Orleans to partner with local anti-racist organizers, and we would provide political support for these solidarity organizers in New Orleans.

We would collaborate closely with the Peoples Institute and European Dissent in their efforts to provide anti-racist political education and mentoring to white social justice volunteers, so that these volunteers might learn to do their work with accountability to the African American community, and solidarity with local racial justice organizations led by organizers of color.

We would encourage these ‘outside’ anti-racist solidarity organizers to continue doing Katrina solidarity work when they returned to their home and campus communities. (12)

Out of this national anti-racist solidarity effort has emerged a new generation of white anti-racist organizers in New Orleans. This new generation gives me great hope for the future.

**Learning From History:
The Legacies of the Black Liberation Movement
and the 'First,' 'Second,' and 'Third' Reconstructions'**

Many organizers affiliated with the movement for the right of return called this movement part of the ‘Third Reconstruction.’ They hoped that a Black Liberation Movement for justice, dignity and self-determination, led by residents forcibly displaced by U.S. government policies, would bring on a new era of justice and democracy in the U.S., as did their ancestors in the eras of the First and Second Reconstructions.

The First Reconstruction (1865-1877) was initiated and inspired by the mass movement of formerly enslaved African Americans, in alliance with free African Americans and progressive whites, north and south. Together, this alliance created Southern legislatures with substantial Black representation, built the first comprehensive free public school system in the U.S., and brought social welfare programs to both African Americans and poor whites for the first time in U.S. history.

In 1877, the federal government abruptly ended this experiment in multi-racial grassroots democracy. They withdrew the U.S. army from the South, disarmed all Black soldiers, and ignored, even supported the vicious violence of the KKK, the lynching of thousands of African Americans, and the construction of almost a century of legal apartheid in the South. (13)

The Second Reconstruction (1955-1975) was the period of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Once again, African Americans led a mass movement for dignity, human and civil rights, and self-determination. This time they built a broad multi-racial and multi-class alliance of millions of people: Latinos, Puerto Ricans, Asian Americans and progressive whites. Once again, this alliance pressured the government to enact broad measures of racial and social justice. And it inspired new social justice movements: women's liberation, LGBT justice, anti-war, students and locally based grassroots organizing against poverty and for human rights. (14)

Many people believed that it was possible that the U.S. could actually be radically transformed. In the title of a book on the period, there was "Revolution in the Air." (15)

Sadly, history repeated itself. Once again, the U.S. government and its allies in the political parties and corporations crushed this liberation movement with betrayal and murderous violence. In 2009, we are still living through the aftermath of the near destruction of the Black Liberation Movement.

Learning From History? The Roles of White Anti-Racist Solidarity Activists in the Third Reconstruction

Reading the tangled histories of racism and anti-racism in white social justice movements after both the First and Second Reconstruction periods suggests to me that many white activists in those movements at first worked in solidarity with African Americans struggling for freedom. These activists learned vital organizing skills from their solidarity work, and then went back home to organize in their own communities.

Most of these white activists proceeded to build strong movements against their own oppression (class, gender, sexuality, social location or issue) at the expense of the concerns of the Black Liberation movements which had taught them what it means to fight for justice, inspired their work and opened the political space in which to win their own demands. The tiny minority of white activists who remembered their political roots were mostly marginalized and silenced. (16)

The politics of the Challenging White Supremacy workshop -- its concept of 'Creating an Anti-Racist Agenda' and its emphasis on solidarity with radical grassroots organizations of color -- was a direct response by its co-founders to our first hand experiences of these betrayals in the aftermath of the Second Reconstruction.

Nearly three decades later there is a new white anti-racist movement in this country. It is young and fragile, but it is national, growing, and one of its epicenters is New Orleans. (Another is the Bay Area, where the Catalyst Project is beginning the second season of its path-breaking 'Anne Braden Training Program' for white social justice activists at the time of the writing of this article. (17)

I believe that the new generation of white anti-racist solidarity activists has both the tools and the demonstrated commitment to make a new history as part of the Third Reconstruction. They have the capacity to stay with the struggle as long as it takes.

That's why I am so hopeful. The work has been passed on.

END NOTES

(1) See Dan Berger, 'Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity.' 'Enemies of the State: Interviews with anti-imperialist political prisoners Marilyn Buck, David Gilbert and Laura Whitehorn;' 'Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism, the political statement of the Weather Underground;' Breakthrough, the political journal of Prairie Fire Organizing Committee; and No KKK! No Fascist USA!, the newspaper of the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee.)

(2) The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, an anti-racist training organization based in New Orleans, defines *accountability* as:

“Accountability is a position by which one will be held in check or account for one's decisions and actions...the acceptance of a role fits within a cultural, political, and social perspective that leads to the liberation of peoples of color from racism, oppression and cultural subordination. It requires a commitment to the vision of African Americans and other oppressed peoples to assume self-determination over those areas deemed by them to directly affect their lives.” (Definition heard at an *Undoing Racism Workshop* by PISAB.)

European Dissent, the anti-racist white organization affiliated with The People's Institute, reminded me, through their early newsletters, that a key aspect of 'accountability' is *commitment*. Some expressions of commitment are:

** Among a group of white anti-racist activists, taking a stand against racism, in both personal and public lives; being honest, trusting, respectful and caring of each other; supporting each other on their anti-racist paths;

** Supporting and respecting the group by coming to meetings regularly, carrying out assigned tasks, bringing in new members, and working to maintain the group's integrity;

** Working with other white people to respectfully challenge racism, promote anti-racist culture and networks;

** With people of color, accepting leadership of people of color while defining within the allied group what precisely 'accepting leadership' really means.

(3) Read Catherine's essay at www.cwsworkshop.org/katrinareader/node/404.

(4) Proposition 187 asserted that immigrants without papers could not get health care or receive an education, and would have made health workers and teachers into immigration cops, reporting immigrants to the Immigration and Naturalization Services for deportation. Proposition 209 made it illegal to utilize affirmative action programs for people of color and white women to challenge inequities in jobs, education and public contracts in California.

(5) SOUL's website is www.schoolofunityandliberation.org.

(6) Critical Resistance's website is www.criticalresistance.org.

(7) For a copy of CWS's 'Racial Justice Program' booklet, please email cws@igc.org.

(8) For a typical workshop agenda, see www.csworkshop.org.

(9) For more details on the agenda for this training program, please email Sharon at cws@igc.org.

(10) Elizabeth 'Betita' Martinez co-coordinated the workshop for the Spring session of 2001. As a co-coordinator of the Institute for MultiRacial Justice, she recruited activists of color, and CWS recruited predominantly white activists. We planned our agenda topics collaboratively, but with different emphases. The two groups of participants met together every other week. Alternate weeks featured separate meetings with separate emphases appropriate to each group's participants.

At the end of the workshop session, CWS participants evaluated their time spent with the Institute's participants as vital to their learning experiences. But the participants of color in the Institute's workshop evaluated their time spent jointly with the white activists as mostly wasted. They requested an entirely separate workshop for the coming fall. This was one more lesson for us as coordinators about the challenging work of attempting to build and strengthen multi-racial relationships that involve white activists!

(11) 'Internally Displaced Persons' is a United Nations Human Rights designation for people displaced by war or natural disaster from their homelands, but who are still in their country of residence. Under the UN Treaty, to which the U.S. is a signatory, Internally Displaced Persons have the right to return to their home communities, and to receive adequate restitution from the central government. For more information, please check out the website of the U.S. Human Rights Network: www.ushrnetwork.org.

(12) For some eloquent accounts of this work, see www.csworkshop.org/katrinareader. Click on 'Anti-Racist Solidarity: Perspectives and Tools.' Check out the organizational accounts by European Dissent, the Catalyst Project, and the Anti-Racist Working Group. For individual reflections by members of these organizations, read the essays by Ingrid Chapman, Catherine Jones, Rachel Luft, Molly McClure and Pamela Nath.

(13) The classic account of the Reconstruction period is W.E.B. Dubois, Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880. (NY: Atheneum, 1973).

(14) The term 'The Second Reconstruction' is taken from Manning Marable's Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007. Third Edition)

Book on the 1960's are too numerous to mention here. I have my favorites, and would be happy to share a bibliography with you. Email me at cws@igc.org.

(15) Max Elbaum, Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to Lenin, Mao and Che. (NY: Verso Books, 2002)

(16) For a history of this phenomenon, check out Robert and Pam Allen's Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States

See also the path-breaking analysis and strategy developed by SNCC, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. In 1966, SNCC became an organization advocating Black Power. In an illuminating article, SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael explained the multiple aspects of Black Power as SNCC understood it, and why they had asked white activists and supporters of SNCC to go organize against racism in their own communities, where racism is located, in order to be able to help build the kinds of multi-racial alliances that could effectively challenge the white supremacy system in the U.S. (See Stokely Carmichael, 'What We Want: SNCC Chairman Talks about Black Power.' [New York Review of Books: Sept. 22, 1966])

(17) The Catalyst Project's website is www.collectiveliberation.org.