



THE 5 METHODS READER



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ABOUT CRCAA

Community Ready Corps Allies & Accomplices (CRCAA) is a committee called for Community Ready Corps (CRC), a Black liberation organization that combats white supremacy and builds self determination in disenfranchised communities. CRCAA organizes white people to practice the 5 methods to divest of white power and weaponize white privilege, and we do so in a direct and disciplined relationship with CRC.

ABOUT THE 5 METHODS READER

This document is not intended to be comprehensive, nor do we claim authority to name the “most important” documents, leaders, or struggles. We offer this to share resources that have shaped CRCAA’s understandings of white supremacy and how to fight it.

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METHOD #1

CONTRIBUTION (NOT CONTROL)

CRCAA Principles

1. **Contribution not control calls for activity rather than passivity.** We need white people to do MORE organizing in our own communities in solidarity with oppressed people, not less. You've probably heard that newly anti-racist white activists have a tendency to "take up too much space" - this is absolutely true. There's a difference between "contribution" (which is about being useful) and "input" (which is about being seen, heard, and deferred to); we need to know that difference. Contribution is about filling a needed role, and we say that it is NEVER our role to tell Black people how to organize.
2. **Competence is a privilege; humility is a must!** Weaponize your competence for the struggle - and don't abuse the power that comes with it. Our skillsets that are so valuable in the white supremacist capitalist market place are largely outcomes of our unearned privileges. On the other hand, privilege under-develops us in other important ways. We have much to gain by divesting of our personal "market" power and instead building and sharing coordinated power across dividing lines. Contribution not control means learning how to have healthy, interdependent, non-oppressive organizing relationships, particularly with people who have no reason to trust us in the first place. Like all of the 5 methods, Contribution not control is a practice, not an event. You won't always get it right, which is why you can't do it alone - you need trusted comrades who will accurately reflect back to you and hold you accountable. For the record, we believe that Black people and organizations always have the right to reject our "contributions" if our contributions are becoming controlling.
3. **Regulate your nervous system.** We've been conditioned to be racist and abusive, and we have deeply ingrained behavioral patterns around entitlement, fear, and control. Our unconscious somatic "survival strategies" often lead us to do racist harm. We have to recondition ourselves in order to show up in this work in principled ways. The reconditioning looks different for different people, but there's always a process. What's yours? And who are you accountable to?

White Supremacy Culture

From Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001

This is a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture which show up in our organizations. Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify. The characteristics listed below are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being pro-actively named or chosen by the group. They are damaging because they promote white supremacy thinking. They are damaging to both people of color and

to white people. Organizations that are people of color led or a majority people of color can also demonstrate many damaging characteristics of white supremacy culture.

Perfectionism

- little appreciation expressed among people for the work that others are doing; appreciation that is expressed usually directed to those who get most of the credit anyway
- more common is to point out either how the person or work is inadequate
- or even more common, to talk to others about the inadequacies of a person or their work without ever talking directly to them
- mistakes are seen as personal, i.e. they reflect badly on the person making them as opposed to being seen for what they are ó mistakes
- making a mistake is confused with being a mistake, doing wrong with being wrong
- little time, energy, or money put into reflection or identifying lessons learned that can improve practice, in other words little or no learning from mistakes
- tendency to identify what's wrong; little ability to identify, name, and appreciate what's right

antidotes: develop a culture of appreciation, where the organization takes time to make sure that people's work and efforts are appreciated; develop a learning organization, where it is expected that everyone will make mistakes and those mistakes offer opportunities for learning; create an environment where people can recognize that mistakes sometimes lead to positive results; separate the person from the mistake; when offering feedback, always speak to the things that went well before offering criticism; ask people to offer specific suggestions for how to do things differently when offering criticism

Sense of Urgency

- continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences
- frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of communities of color in order to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community)
- reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little

antidotes: realistic workplans; leadership which understands that things take longer than anyone expects; discuss and plan for what it means to set goals of inclusivity and diversity, particularly in terms of time; learn from past experience how long things take; write realistic funding proposals with realistic time frames; be clear about how you will make good decisions in an atmosphere of urgency

Defensiveness

- the organizational structure is set up and much energy spent trying to prevent abuse and protect power as it exists rather than to facilitate the best out of each person or to clarify who has power and how they are expected to use it



- because of either/or thinking (see below), criticism of those with power is viewed as threatening and inappropriate (or rude)
- people respond to new or challenging ideas with defensiveness, making it very difficult to raise these ideas
- a lot of energy in the organization is spent trying to make sure that people's feelings aren't getting hurt or working around defensive people
- the defensiveness of people in power creates an oppressive culture

antidotes: understand that structure cannot in and of itself facilitate or prevent abuse; understand the link between defensiveness and fear (of losing power, losing face, losing comfort, losing privilege); work on your own defensiveness; name defensiveness as a problem when it is one; give people credit for being able to handle more than you think; discuss the ways in which defensiveness or resistance to new ideas gets in the way of the mission

Quantity Over Quality

- all resources of organization are directed toward producing measurable goals
- things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict
- little or no value attached to process; if it can't be measured, it has no value
- discomfort with emotion and feelings
- no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people's need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail (for example, you may get through the agenda, but if you haven't paid attention to people's need to be heard, the decisions made at the meeting are undermined and/or disregarded)

antidotes: include process or quality goals in your planning; make sure your organization has a values statement which expresses the ways in which you want to do your work; make sure this is a living document and that people are using it in their day to day work; look for ways to measure process goals (for example if you have a goal of inclusivity, think about ways you can measure whether or not you have achieved that goal); learn to recognize those times when you need to get off the agenda in order to address people's underlying concerns

Worship of the Written Word

- if it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist
- the organization does not take into account or value other ways in which information gets shared
- those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in organizations where ability to relate to others is key to the mission
antidotes: take the time to analyze how people inside and outside the organization get and share information; figure out which things need to be written down and come up with alternative ways to document what is happening; work to recognize the contributions and skills that every person brings to the organization (for example, the ability to build relationships with those who are important to the organization's mission)
- only one right way

- the belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it
- when they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them (the other, those not changing), not with us (those who know the right way)
- similar to the missionary who does not see value in the culture of other communities, sees only value in their beliefs about what is good

antidotes: accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal; once the group has made a decision about which way will be taken, honor that decision and see what you and the organization will learn from taking that way, even and especially if it is not the way you would have chosen; work on developing the ability to notice when people do things differently and how those different ways might improve your approach; look for the tendency for a group or a person to keep pushing the same point over and over out of a belief that there is only one right way and then name it; when working with communities from a different culture than yours or your organization's, be clear that you have some learning to do about the community's ways of doing; never assume that you or your organization know what's best for the community in isolation from meaningful relationships with that community

Paternalism

- decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it
- those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power
- those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions
- those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does
- those without power do not really know how decisions get made and who makes what decisions, and yet they are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them

antidotes: make sure that everyone knows and understands who makes what decisions in the organization; make sure everyone knows and understands their level of responsibility and authority in the organization; include people who are affected by decisions in the decision-making

Either/Or Thinking

- things are either/or ó good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us
- closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from mistakes or accommodate conflict
- no sense that things can be both/and
- results in trying to simplify complex things, for example believing that poverty is simply a result of lack of education
- creates conflict and increases sense of urgency, as people are felt they have to make decisions to do either this or that, with no time or encouragement to consider alternatives, particularly those which may require more time or resources



antidotes: notice when people use either/or language and push to come up with more than two alternatives; notice when people are simplifying complex issues, particularly when the stakes seem high or an urgent decision needs to be made; slow it down and encourage people to do a deeper analysis; when people are faced with an urgent decision, take a break and give people some breathing room to think creatively; avoid making decisions under extreme pressure

Power Hoarding

- little, if any, value around sharing power
- power seen as limited, only so much to go around
- those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization, feel suggestions for change are a reflection on their leadership
- those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened
- those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed (stupid), emotional, inexperienced

antidotes: include power sharing in your organization's values statement; discuss what good leadership looks like and make sure people understand that a good leader develops the power and skills of others; understand that change is inevitable and challenges to your leadership can be healthy and productive; make sure the organization is focused on the mission

Fear of Open Conflict

- people in power are scared of conflict and try to ignore it or run from it
- when someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue rather than to look at the issue which is actually causing the problem
- emphasis on being polite
- equating the raising of difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line

antidotes: role play ways to handle conflict before conflict happens; distinguish between being polite and raising hard issues; don't require those who raise hard issues to raise them in acceptable ways, especially if you are using the ways in which issues are raised as an excuse not to address the issues being raised; once a conflict is resolved, take the opportunity to revisit it and see how it might have been handled differently

Individualism

- little experience or comfort working as part of a team
 - people in organization believe they are responsible for solving problems alone
 - accountability, if any, goes up and down, not sideways to peers or to those the organization is set up to serve
 - desire for individual recognition and credit
 - leads to isolation
 - competition more highly valued than cooperation and where cooperation is valued, little time or resources devoted to developing skills in how to cooperate
 - creates a lack of accountability, as the organization values those who can get things done on their own without needing supervision or guidance
- antidotes: include teamwork as an important value in your values statement; make sure the organization is working towards*

shared goals and people understand how working together will improve performance; evaluate people's ability to work in a team as well as their ability to get the job done; make sure that credit is given to all those who participate in an effort, not just the leaders or most public person; make people accountable as a group rather than as individuals; create a culture where people bring problems to the group; use staff meetings as a place to solve problems, not just a place to report activities

- iim the only one
- connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, ëlí have to do it
- little or no ability to delegate work to others

antidotes: evaluate people based on their ability to delegate to others; evaluate people based on their ability to work as part of a team to accomplish shared goals

Progress is Bigger, More

- observed in systems of accountability and ways we determine success
- progress is an organization which expands (adds staff, adds projects) or develops the ability to serve more people (regardless of how well they are serving them)
- gives no value, not even negative value, to its cost, for example, increased accountability to funders as the budget grows, ways in which those we serve may be exploited, excluded, or underserved as we focus on how many we are serving instead of quality of service or values created by the ways in which we serve

antidotes: create Seventh Generation thinking by asking how the actions of the group now will affect people seven generations from now; make sure that any cost/benefit analysis includes all the costs, not just the financial ones, for example the cost in morale, the cost in credibility, the cost in the use of resources; include process goals in your planning, for example make sure that your goals speak to how you want to do your work, not just what you want to do; ask those you work with and for to evaluate your performance

Objectivity

- the belief that there is such a thing as being objective
- the belief that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process
- invalidating people who show emotion
- requiring people to think in a linear fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways
- impatience with any thinking that does not appear logical to those with power

antidotes: realize that everybody has a world view and that everybody's world view affects the way they understand things; realize this means you too; push yourself to sit with discomfort when people are expressing themselves in ways which are not familiar to you; assume that everybody has a valid point and your job is to understand what that point is



Right to Comfort

- the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort (another aspect of valuing logic over emotion)
- scapegoating those who cause discomfort
- equating individual acts of unfairness against white people with systemic racism which daily targets people of color

antidotes: understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning; welcome it as much as you can; deepen your political analysis of racism and oppression so you have a strong understanding of how your personal experience and feelings fit into a larger picture; don't take everything personally

Excerpt from THE ROLE OF WHITE PEOPLE IN THE MOVEMENT AT THIS TIME

(Southerners on New Ground - SONG https://southernersonnewground.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/White_People_Role_in_this_Time_April2015_WEB.pdf)

“White people are taught that racism is a personal attribute, an attitude, maybe a set of habits. Anti-racist whites invest too much energy worrying about getting it right; about not slipping up and revealing their racial socialization; about saying the right things and knowing when to say nothing. It’s not about that. It’s about putting your shoulder to the wheel of history; about undermining the structural supports of a system of control that grinds us under, that keeps us divided even against ourselves and that extracts wealth, power and life from our communities like an oil company sucks it from the earth. The names of the euro-descended anti-racist warriors we remember – John Brown, Anne Braden, Myles Horton – are not those of people who did it right. They are of people who never gave up. They kept their eyes on the prize – not on their anti-racism grade point average. This will also be the measure of your work. Be there. There are things in life we don’t get to do right. But we do get to do them.”

—Ricardo Levin Morales, 2015, for Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)

Over the last year, SONG’s base and thousands of other LGBTQ people have taken to the streets answering the call to do our part in demanding Black Lives Matter and Not1More Deportation. Black, immigrant, white, rural, urban, transgender, queer and undocumented SONG members have invited strangers over to their homes, planned their first vigil or protest, shut down highways and intersections, staged actions at city council meetings, launched campaigns, facilitated their first planning meeting and much more.

Also in this moment our membership, constituency, allies, different organizations in and out of the region have asked SONG to name some of our practices and to call on our white LGBTQ family to persevere in the struggle for liberation, both within our SONG roles and in the community. As current white leaders in SONG, now is the time to match the courage of our comrades, to make room and support Black, of color, immigrant, undocumented, and transgender and gender nonconforming people in launching and leading 21st Century movement building in this country.

The following tool is a starting point for developing more connection, unity and shared work inside of our white membership at SONG – across broad class, ability, locations, ethnicity and levels of experience. With this document we hope to centralize some of our orientation,

principles, practices and possibilities towards our roles in advancing anti-racist, multi-racial organizing.

As a Southern, multi-racial, cross-class, multi-gendered, membership-based LGBTQ liberation organization with a 21-year lifespan, SONG has continually engaged questions about race, about power and how to reshape it, and about role and position of different people in all levels of the organization. Our legacy is rich with elders, both Black and white, who have dedicated their lives to dismantling racism and rebuilding communities.

As SONG leaders wrote in the 1990's, "We are a part of each other." We invite you to join us in wrestling with these questions and engaging these ideas, experience, thoughts, and theories in practice:

- What does white leadership look like in this time? As white people in the movement for Liberation, what is our role in this time (not for all time)? How does our feminist, propoor, pro-Black, pro the oppressed, pro-queer and trans politic inform not just what we think or say, but what we do?
- What is the greater organizing and work needed in this time from white people, so that we can move beyond just safety and survival and into leadership in the struggle for Black lives, immigrant lives, and trans women of color lives?
- What are the key fights in our time that we white people can engage to advance broad movement goals that confront and dismantle white supremacy and structural oppression?

1. Our Work Is Our Gain. Assumptions and Principles Underlying Our Work:

- It is our job to dismantle white supremacy. Beyond personal, familial or community interactions we have to advance community organizing and confront power at sites of violence, fear and scarcity.
- We understand liberation work to be an inherently interdependent combination of the following: Identity + Consciousness + Vision + Work.
- We know that not any one document can provide all the answers we are searching for.
- We prioritize organizing over activism, collective and shared leadership and accountability over 'Individual Rock Stars'.
- There is honor in struggle. There is honor in the work. To this end, struggle is protracted and lifelong.
- Our work is our gain. As we transform our world and relinquish privilege, we gain integrity, peace, humanity, and collective liberation.
- It is our responsibility to build, develop and grow each other as white leaders in movement. The only way any of us have come this far is because people invested in us, were generous with us when we messed up, and pushed us to be better and stronger.
- We are opposed to fundamentalism in all its forms - political, spiritual, identity-based and beyond. We do not believe that there is any one dogma, ideology, or method that will



liberate us completely. Otherwise, we would be free already. We create hybridity with concepts and practices that are quite varied, though all are within our principles.

- We unapologetically side with oppressed people. Our relationships, organizational culture and strategies must reflect that. We are pro-Black, pro-working class, pro-queer, pro-trans, and pro-Feminist.
- We believe in approaching this work, our conditioned selves, and our inevitable mistakes, with a combination of chutzpah and humility.

2. Positioning + Role. What this Time Asks of Us:

By positioning we mean → In this time politically, what is our orientation, grounding and responsibility?

By role we mean → HOW we can better engage this moment, the work and each other? • We are in a time with too few highly trained organizers. By this we do not mean paid or professional organizers but local leadership that is trained up, supported, and brave moving local work. It's time to use and share ALL of our skills and training with other LGBTQ people of color and white people.

- We need more powerful, experienced, supported and developed LGBTQ people of color leaders. In order to advance wins for all of us, the pool of such leaders must be grown, and leadership power of existing LGBTQ leaders of color must be advanced.
- We understand that women of color (trans and not) and LGBTQ women of color already are (whether acknowledged publicly or not - ahem white supremacy!) central and key protagonists of our time in the work of movement building.
- We must fortify our commitment to show and not just tell our politics (Consciousness + Work + Vision + Identity).
- Our movement objectives are grounded in resiliency and against fragility. We always lean towards growing our ranks of fierce, determined and agile white leaders who can make interventions for justice and liberation.
- The struggles and impacts of white privilege are political, spiritual, emotional and conduct-based and thus need to be addressed on all of those different levels.
- We share a commitment to supporting other oppressed people to come out, destroy fear and unleash power.
- We refuse to play "oppression olympics" and recognize that white people who experience different forms of oppression can have the potential to move against white supremacy in powerful ways. Often, we do not. It is our work to make that happen whenever we can.
- We share a commitment to support concrete organizing WINS against white supremacy that are in line with our values and build more people of color and white leadership.

WHITE PEOPLE IN THIS TIME SHOULD COME TOGETHER IN STRUGGLE TO:

Come Out

- Break silence (interpersonal, communal, organizational, societal) and amplify (through support, flanking, resourcing) strategic people of color-led liberation efforts.
- Organize white people, not as a monolith [meaning looking at specific sets of white people –older lesbians etc. towards liberation goals (vs. organizing people of color communities).

- Develop other white leaders. We share a commitment to supporting others to come out, destroy fear and unleash power.
- Make a case to other white people to secure resources in support of strategic, key, radical, people of color-led organizing.
- Center collective resiliency over shame, discomfort and hesitancy. As Brene Brown and many others have said, “Courage comes through struggle.”

Destroy Fear

- Dismantle the, “Fear of a Black Planet,” mentality and work together to root out and dismantle the specific poison that is anti-Black racism. We believe that deep-seated fear www.southernersonnewground.org 4 (rooted in racism) lies under that discomfort or lack of connection with Black people and communities.
- Find new ways to articulate, deepen understanding, and amplify the ways that white supremacy injures our own soul survival and our collective survival.
- Let us return again and again to living out in action core SONG values including ‘Hope over Fear’ and ‘Excellence and Rigor over Perfectionism’.

Unleash Power

- Organize against the right wing by fighting and defeating their origin sites of violence, death and fear.
- Transfer and offer ALL the skills we have acquired to leaders of color. One of the ways power and white supremacy is maintained is through not engaging in full skill transfer (providing 1 workshop on grassroots fundraising or base building instead of longer and deeper investment in each others leadership). Often times these are skills that we have gained because of cultural capital, political capital, class privilege, more free time etc.
- Co-conspire with people of color to execute key interventions with other white people, targeting origin points of harm, putting our bodies on the line in strategic ways, and setting examples of principled leadership in white communities.
- Develop stamina and reflection by incorporating reflection, self-criticism, and accountability into all we do.
- Build trusting, life-changing relationships and the fortification of our spiritual will to do this work through struggle and shared work.
- Commit to not working solo to be the “good white person” by identifying other white people as accountability partners (at SONG we often call them ‘accountabili-buddies’).

3. Conduct: ‘No Manners, No Mercy, No Sense’

Within ourselves, inside SONG, in coalitions, campaigns and other formations, we have seen some of the ways that white privilege, white superiority, white pathology and neurosis have caused harm and damaged our ability to build trust, confidence and long-term comradeship with communities of color, particularly Black Southern communities. Conduct is about how we as white people conduct ourselves in the work, in white spaces, in multi-racial spaces, and in



majority people of color spaces. This non-exhaustive list was important for us to include because it reflects how our collective pathology manifests in ACTION, and we need to be able to acknowledge, minimize and correct these tendencies to prevent further inhibition of true comradeship with communities of color. Our call is to act, to organize, and to move rather than to analyze and espouse politics that are disconnected from collective work. We know that this list is not exhaustive, and behaviors vary widely in white communities based on class, gender, ethnicity, disability, and so many other factors. Some of the ultimately racist tendencies, sometimes compounded or complicated by other privileges or oppressions we might face, that often prevent or inhibit organizing, include:

- Martyrdom. I will work my fingers to the bone, forefront my fatigue, suffering and pain and inadvertently take up a lot of literal and emotional space in work and friendship.
- Need for validation and credit for each action. Expectations of affirmation and attention from anyone for every little thing, but often people of color.
- Condescension. White on white 'call out culture'. Overly critical of what work is or isn't happening, or other white people's 'wackness' without intervening or offering support. We all got where we are because people believed in us and invested in us even as we made multiple mistakes.
- Gatekeeping. Establishing relationship or position, and then closing the door behind us.
- Language Injustice. Using the fact that we had the privilege to learn languages besides English (Spanish, for example) to be an inappropriate, self-centering, cultural bridge between monolingual Spanish speakers (and others) to English-centered organizing work.
- Distancing self from other white people or white exceptionalism. The need to constantly prove our politics or that we are 'down' in social and/or political spaces, not acknowledging other white people, loudly and publicly criticizing white people, only trying to be around people of color, etc.
- Credentialing. 'Proving' our legitimacy or down-ness with the struggle because of our proximity to people of color ('My partner is a person of color') goes along with distancing self from other white people or white exceptionalism.
- Rock Stardom. Self-promotion with disconnectedness from a current base of work and base of people.
- Constant centering of our own opinions and concern or being 'academified'. White people offering thoughts before or instead of work, and weighing in on decisions or discussion in a setting that they are new to. This is often a tendency that corresponds with people fresh out of college or academia. The tendency to believe that what we contribute to the work is 'ideas,' while everyone else should be the ones who see to planning, logistics, execution of tasks, etc. Intellectuals have a huge place in every social justice movement, but criticism without problem solving urgently needs to be unlearned.
- Privileging of individual choices or 'self-determination' over collective. Unwillingness of individual white people to get in line with a collective plan or the leadership of people of color often manifests as blocking collective processes due to individual preferences. As white people, we are often not aware how much space we take up with this, or how much it harms collective work.
- Political Fundamentalism and Rigidity. Leading with criticism or judgment that other people's work isn't radical enough (YOU and your crew are the only radicals!); unwillingness to think creatively, listen or follow; unwillingness to seek compromise.

- Tokenism. This can look so many ways from 'only hearing feedback from other people of color' to putting undue pressure on individual leaders of color to come join 'your initiative'.
- Entitlement. An often unconscious, and deeply rooted, belief that we deserve attention, credit, space, airtime, and physical space for ourselves and our concerns.
- Taking things personally and thinking about yourself all the time. Thinking that everything is about us (disagreement, decisions, etc.) and getting stuck in our feelings and using that as a reason to not follow through with work.
- Taking everything so seriously. Our conditions are serious, but warmth and humor help move groups through struggle and conflict. People who are really uptight are just really hard to work with, and often come off as caring more about small things (Did we start on time???!!), as opposed to big things (Are we all clear on the risks we are taking in the action tomorrow?).
- White Ethnicity. Part of how white supremacy functions in the US is the invisibilizing of ethnicity and difference in order to white wash our understandings of history. The two extremes of this are suppression of truth and exceptionalism:
 1. Suppression of truth: white people suppressing our actual lived experience of immigration, or ethnicity, culture etc. because we don't want to come off as 'trying to be down or exceptional' but then end up withholding big parts of ourselves from work.
 2. Exceptionalism: White people who say, "But I'm a JEW or I'm IRISH, etc." and then choose some of the more justice-minded parts of Jewish or Italian history to use to legitimate how 'down and non-white' we are.
- Fragility. Taking everything personally, being overly sensitive or cautious or inadvertently brittle or inflexible when plans change. Organizing is a practice done with people, and working with people means plans always change. We need to get used to that. No perfect win is born from following a perfect plan perfectly. That does not exist.
- Not recognizing the immense pressure that our current grassroots LGBTQ people of color leaders are under. A desperate need for more LGBTQ people of color leaders means that the current leaders we have are under immense pressure from navigating daily and systematic oppression, while also holding movement pressure and demands on their time. They also hold the reality that they are in movements that sometimes seek to elevate their leadership and sometimes seek to tokenize, undermine and extract time and energy from them and often do both at the same time. If they do not answer your email immediately it could very well not be personal.
- Leading with anxiety, hesitancy, and fear. Needing to over process, always being worried, demanding more time and energy of our comrades. Not realizing how exhausting this is for others to deal with, etc.
- Formality vs. Informality. Because of racism, white people and people with other forms of privilege granted through oppression will be informal in relationships, meetings, and work environments with people of color. This is conveyed through tone of voice, our way of speaking, using someone's first name, body language (touching someone's arm in

conversation or going in for a hug), etc. Sometimes this is clearly appropriate, but not always. White supremacy hurts people of color by limiting their choices including choices about when and how they interact with white people. Respect people's self determination around how much proximity they want to have to you.

- Assuming over-familiarity. Often we find that a certain kind of informality is immediately acceptable in many white communities, whereas in many southern communities of color, you start with formal behavior, and informality (if it ever comes) is a type of intimacy that is earned. Not using elder's titles, or demanding your personal preferences for how you are spoken to, regarded, etc. undermines good, multi-racial first impressions. It can feel like we are just trying to "bring our whole self to the space," but doing that outside of observing our surroundings and without listening to others is not appropriate.
- Appearance and Respect. White people have the privilege (especially those of us with class privilege) to choose to not think about if our attire and hygiene on a given day will impact how we are perceived to the point of affecting our safety. So, we definitely are often unaware of how we are read and perceived by those around us based on these factors. Don't get us wrong: we think gender, cultural, ethnic and personal representation is fantastic. Rep yourself as you are! But, we have heard again and again that it is hard for leaders in a multi-racial organization to build with white people who do not see how the cleanliness (or lack thereof) of our clothes is often seen as a sign of disrespect not only to communities of color but also to many poor communities. Most white, middle class people experience no (or much less) social punishment or repercussions for having holes in our clothes, etc., than working class people and people of color endure. If you cannot afford to wash your clothes, no judgment. But, if your aesthetic preference bends this direction, we ask our white comrades to consider how often we profess "all we are willing to do for the movement" and yet we are unwilling to compromise about something like washing our clothes. It feels like a privileged approach.
- Inconsistency. Getting very involved with many things quickly and then dropping off the face of the earth often erodes trust. Many people do this, white and of color, and overcommitment never helps build organizing in the long term if we cannot follow through.
- Self Obsession: Staying in our own brains, over-studying, over-thinking every move before we make it, over-analyzing, and over-criticizing.
- Deep-seeded Fear of Black People. This manifests as jumpiness, discomfort, disdain, hesitancy, over-accommodation.

METHOD #2

ORGANIZATION

CRCAA Principles

To build a movement that can win, and by “win” we mean actually defeat white supremacy and transform society, we need to transition from activism to organizing.

1. **From individualism to collectivism:** It's not enough to be the one special, “good” white person in the Black liberation movement; it's our job to bring white people along with us in numbers. We have to recognize that we can't end systemic racism through individual consumer or behavioral choices. We have to actually come together and build a mass movement to dismantle white supremacy and build a better world for everyone. On the most basic level, this means we must join and build with organizations & collectives. CRCOA can be one such organization, as a training ground and political home for white anti-racists, but we also encourage our folks to be active in workplace, neighborhood, and religious and/or cultural organizations and communities as well - these are sites of collective power where we can contribute to building an anti-racist culture.
2. **From separation to connection:** In order to organize other white people, we need to make the transition from focusing on how we are different or not like other white people, to tapping into how we are exactly the same. This transition likely involves facing the parts of ourselves we don't like, and getting real about our self interest (not just our sense of morality or humanitarianism). We have to be able to set aside our judgements of white people and learn how to love them (and ourselves). You can't effectively organize people you don't love.
3. **From doing all the work to getting other people to pick up work:** The goal of organizing is to facilitate other people to do work, not to do all the work ourselves. We have to replicate ourselves, or our movements will never reach a scale that can have a real impact. The most valuable work we can do as anti-racist white people is recruitment and leadership development of other white anti-racist organizers, because this work has the exponential impact of bringing more folks into the work, which expands the scale of what's possible.



"The Low Road" (Marge Piercy)

(a poem by Marge Piercy <https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/piercy/lowroad.html>)

What can they do
to you? Whatever they want.
They can set you up, they can
bust you, they can break
your fingers, they can
burn your brain with electricity,
blur you with drugs till you
can't walk, can't remember, they can
take your child, wall up
your lover. They can do anything
you can't stop them
from doing. How can you stop
them? Alone, you can fight,
you can refuse, you can
take what revenge you can
but they roll over you.
But two people fighting
back to back can cut through
a mob, a snake-dancing file
can break a cordon, an army
can meet an army.
Two people can keep each other

sane, can give support, conviction,
love, massage, hope, sex.
Three people are a delegation,
a committee, a wedge. With four
you can play bridge and start
an organization. With six
you can rent a whole house,
eat pie for dinner with no
seconds, and hold a fundraising party.
A dozen make a demonstration.
A hundred fill a hall.
A thousand have solidarity and your own
newsletter;
ten thousand, power and your own paper;
a hundred thousand, your own media;
ten million, your own country.
It goes on one at a time,
it starts when you care
to act, it starts when you do
it again and they said no,
it starts when you say We
and know you who you mean, and each
day you mean one more.

Strengthen Collectivity: Combat Individualism

(by Stephanie McMillian <http://koleksyon-inip.org/strengthen-collectivity-combat-individualism/>)

Individualism is the ideology of competition, of capitalism. It consists of prioritizing one's perceived immediate personal interests above collective interests, and being blind to the fact that one's long-term personal interests actually correspond to the interests of the whole. This leads people to behave in ways that are detrimental to the collective, and ultimately to each individual as well.

Under capitalism, society does not meet the needs of the people, and we are structurally prevented from meeting our needs collectively. Capitalism's engine is competition. There is

competition between classes as well as within classes. Within the working class, the capitalist system pits each person (or family) against all others in a struggle for survival.

Humans are social animals who, before agriculture arose and society was divided into classes, lived in bands. Our species evolved with a natural tendency to cooperate. But when people living under capitalism attempt to express this tendency, they are sharply discouraged. For example, when strangers spontaneously assist one another after a disaster, they are quickly dispersed and ordered to leave this task to the state.

The capitalist class holds ideological hegemony (dominance and control) over the whole society. They exert constant pressure to shape our ideas, thoughts, and emotions in ways that serve them. Therefore, unless we make a conscious contrary effort, the ideologies that serve this dominant class are spontaneously felt as “normal” or “natural.”

Individualism is a powerful ideological weapon that the capitalist class (the bourgeoisie) uses to crush the subjectivity of the working class (the proletariat), and thus to prevent the potential liberation of the world from capitalist rule. Individualism is promoted and fortified by every possible cultural and economic means. We are indoctrinated from birth. Parents are compelled to teach their children to survive in the competitive framework (which they have no choice about living in) by “getting ahead,” to “look out for number one,” to put oneself in the best position possible (i.e., through education, or seeking a rich mate) to accumulate wealth for personal security.

Individualism is the ideology of the petit bourgeoisie (those who circulate capital by selling either services or goods, who tend to aspire to belong to the ruling class). It manifests itself as the striving for market power, for personal advancement, for comforts, for security and stability within the framework of the system. In contrast, proletarian ideology seeks to overturn the capitalist system and meet our needs collectively. But capitalism has been able to indoctrinate even members of the working class in petit bourgeois ways of thinking, to manipulate them into acting against their own interests, in ways that benefit capitalists instead.

As proletarian militants, we are no less subject to ideological domination than anyone else. The difference is that we are consciously aware of it, to varying degrees, and thus we are able to combat it. In order to fight the system, we must fight its dominant ideologies at every level: in society as a whole, in our organizations, and in our own individual hearts and minds.

This is an active and constant process of struggle. It will continue even after the ruling class has been defeated politically— we are so deeply conditioned that it may take generations to uproot their poisonous ideas. Ultimately, it will require that we construct a society (an economy, in particular) that retains no structural or social mechanism for rewarding individualism.

We should not be ashamed to discover individualism in our own hearts, or shame others for manifesting it— it is inevitable in capitalist society. Instead, the way to fight it is to bring it to light, examine it in relation to our overall political goals, and then consciously reject it (over and over again, as it will constantly re-arise).

Ideological strength requires an underpinning of political unity; these advance together. The motive for struggle on the ideological front is not to serve some abstract morality, but to achieve a specific political goal.



Individualism is not the same as individuality. Combatting individualism does not mean that everyone must be identical (which is impossible anyway) or that anyone should suppress their own thoughts, desires, or particular characteristics. On the contrary, we must recognize the value of each individual as inherent, and at the same time as it relates to the collective. Each person has specific strengths to contribute to our common work, and these should be enhanced and supported. Our weaknesses should be shared so we can help each other overcome them. We appreciate diversity and differences among us, which contribute to a dynamic social/political life, increasing our range of possibilities in action and thought. (In fact, for any motion to occur at all, in a dialectical process, differences are required, by definition). In groups, as in any aspect of the natural world, diversity ensures resilience, flexibility, adaptability, and evolution.

In order to struggle against individualism, we must recognize its manifestations. In political organizations, there are many ways that this destructive ideology materializes. They include (not exclusively) these 12 common types:

1. Misplaced priorities. Nothing is as important and urgent as crushing capitalism. Nothing. Countless lives will continue to be destroyed until we accomplish this task. The future existence of all life on Earth is at risk as long as this system exists. Everything we do should be, in some way, in service to our cause. Of course our basic needs must be met, which beyond self-reproduction (subsisting) also include maintaining one's health and balance (mental, emotional, physical, social and cultural). These should support and renew our capacity to contribute to revolution. Even if we eliminate frivolous activities from our lives, we still have to make difficult choices about how we spend our time, because the system keeps us very busy in our effort to survive and meet our responsibilities. (This overload is intentionally devised so we are too overwhelmed to resist). Therefore we have to constantly evaluate how much energy we give to particular activities, make correct choices even when they are painful, and order our lives in favor of the revolutionary struggle.
2. Competition among ourselves. This can involve using one's experience, knowledge, accomplishments, abilities or personality to gain personal power or prestige, and to repress the collective will. Instead, we should all strive to strengthen our collective democratic functioning by assisting each comrade to express her/himself, to overcome weaknesses, build strength, and maximize participation. We should struggle among ourselves within a framework of overall unity, in order to discover the truth together, and not attempt to impose one's own will over others (whether their disagreements are verbalized or silent), or monopolize any aspect of work. Individual power without collective power is useless and can never defeat our enemy.
3. A lack of commitment. In order to increase consumption of commodities, capitalist society obsessively pushes self-indulgence as an ideal. ("Because you're worth it.") It has created concepts of "comfort," "fun" and "satisfaction" that correspond to their economic need for us to buy things. Whatever doesn't please us in the moment, we are encouraged to abandon and replace. This leads to a market-based approach to life, including toward nature, love, spirituality, political work, and everything else. Unfortunately, political work is not comfortable, fun, and instantly gratifying in the ways that we are conditioned to desire. Instead it is challenging, complex, and requires immense persistence. When this fact is discovered, a common response is to abandon it.

4. Laziness. Some people believe they've performed a great deed by joining an organization and declaring support for the cause. They stop here, congratulating themselves and posting revolutionary quotations all over Facebook. But this is like confusing the starting point in a marathon with the finish line. We can't stand on unearned laurels, but have to run the full distance: to do the hard work of constructing theory, defining a political line, and building organizations—pushing ourselves through to victory and beyond.
5. Passivity. Letting others always take the lead, and refusing to take initiative (once a collective approach has been decided) is an avoidance of responsibility. Each person should strive to participate and contribute to the maximum of her/his potential, to express ideas without fear, and be willing to do whatever work is necessary.
6. Hero/martyr complex. While it's essential to work to one's maximum capacity and strive to increase it, it can be tempting to overestimate what one's capacity actually is. A juggler with too many eggs will drop some of them. Similarly, taking on too many tasks and making too many commitments will result in failure to carry all of them out. Unreliability leads to uncertainty and paralysis for the other members of an organization, who have interconnected tasks that depend on one another for success. In addition, it could cause the person to burn out, rendering them totally ineffective. Instead of attempting personally to handle every task, we should help others share responsibilities. We have to accept that some tasks will not be accomplished (as well or at all) until sufficient collective capacity is built.
7. Defensive/aggressive ego. In a collective endeavor, criticism should never be personal; thus there is no reason to be personally offended by it. We should not only be willing to listen to criticism with an open mind, but to welcome constructive criticism, and learn to evaluate our own work in the spirit of understanding our weaknesses in order to overcome them. Criticism of the work of a comrade or ally should always be offered in a constructive manner, with the intention of assisting their work. An alternative should be suggested along with it. We should not pick each other apart for every small mistake (which can be very demoralizing), but focus on fundamental issues.
8. Self-expression. Intellectuals (especially in academia) attempt to generate novel ideas for professional or "personal branding" purposes, rather than focusing on constructing theory to concretely assist class struggle. This is theory for theory's sake, or intellectualism. This practice converts theory into just another commodity, a gift to our enemy. The way to combat this is to produce our ideas (in whatever form) collectively. For artists, the concept of "art for art's sake" is a way to justify creating work without political or social content. This means squandering one's creativity and skills by offering them for the benefit of the ruling class, instead of for the working class. Intellectuals and artists should participate in other areas of political work, or they won't fully understand their subjects.
9. Self-esteem. Working hard is good, but not so good if there is an underlying motive of elevating one's own social position or being the center of attention. We do not need to build our self-esteem by seeking admiration, praise and flattery. Our self-respect and sense of connection should come from being an effective social agent for our class, connected

to countless others within a historical process. We should appreciate one another as comrades, and let each other know when we're doing good work, but not be motivated by a desire for public recognition.

10. Friend sourcing. Because of the atomization of our society, and consequent feelings of isolation, sometimes people join and use organizations as a means to alleviate loneliness, to make friends or develop relationships, whereas it should be the other way around: allowing friendships to arise from a foundation of political unity. If the personal aspect of a relationship is made primary over the political aspect, this can interfere with political functioning. Political agreement or disagreement can be falsely based on emotion. Underlying conflicts can manifest as personal attacks hidden under the guise of political disagreements, picking quarrels, harassment, or avoidance of common work because of discomfort. This creates a negative atmosphere which can sidetrack people's attention and undermine group cohesion. There is no room for drama in political organizations. We should focus on our overall goal, and be good comrades first, friends second.
11. Liberalism. Tolerating destructive behavior because one doesn't like conflict or want to "rock the boat," allows that behavior to continue and increase. Manifestations of liberalism include gossiping behind people's backs instead of bringing up problems collectively, failing to take opportunities to assert revolutionary ideas in appropriate situations, witnessing (or being subject to) oppressive acts or speech without saying anything, failing to hold comrades accountable, supporting or attacking views based on feelings about the person expressing them, and tolerating mediocrity in our work. These all result in an unprincipled peace that can lead to group apathy.
12. Going off the rails. The members of a revolutionary organization act only within the framework of political unity. Strength comes from disciplined collectivity, and individual initiative must be based on this foundation. Taking action as an individual in ways that have no relationship to collectively agreed-upon strategy or goals can be dangerous. For example, committing an illegal act (impulsively or from a concealed plan) without the knowledge and agreement of the collective, puts others at risk, damages collective work, and destroys mutual trust. Failing to take the safety of the organization seriously and to abide by its security protocols is inexcusable.

Everything in capitalist society is geared to stop us from organizing to fight for revolution. We feel constant pressure to cave in to individualism. We are tempted with possibilities for self-advancement if we abandon the struggle, or are threatened with the opposite if we don't fall in line. If we insist on rejecting individualism, this can cost us our jobs. Friends may tell us we're crazy, boring, or depressing to talk to. Our family members might tell us that we are failing in our responsibilities to them when we devote time to political work. On TV and in movies, we are given poisonous models of human behavior.

Resisting all these influences is class struggle on the ideological front. We have to keep our bearings, pick our battles wisely, and refuse to kneel down under pressure. In our organizations, we must assist one another to overcome individualism and all enemy influences.

Black Power & White Organizing (Anne Braden)

(From Key List Mailing, by Friends of SNCC, San Francisco, November 13, 1966)

One of the very good effects that has come with the call for Black Power from the freedom movement is that today more people are recognizing the necessity to organize in the white community. Some of us have been saying for a long time that this is a necessity—and to its everlasting credit, SSOC* people were among those who saw this before it became a popular concept. Now there is much more general acceptance of the idea. We have SNCC to thank for this, of course. Stokely Carmichael has been quoted as saying SNCC is not interested in saving this country, it just wants to save black people. But it may well be that if SNCC does the correct things to save black people, it will save the rest of us as a by-product.

A CALL FOR CHANGE

Certainly when SNCC began saying it was useless to talk about coalitions because there were no meaningful white groups to coalesce with, many white people began to see they had not been doing their homework. When SNCC told its white organizers they could not work effectively in black communities, it may have been thinking mainly of what was best for those communities. But in the process, it forced a lot of people to examine themselves and their role in the movement; at least some of them are turning to the work they should have done long ago, organizing the white community for social change. I think this trend is moving so firmly now that we need not belabor the theory of it. We have now reached the point where we need to deal in the practicalities of how we will go about this thing of organizing white people. In this, I am referring mainly to organizing poor white people. Many of us have long been trying to organize middle class white people to support the freedom movement—and not totally without some breakthroughs. But we always knew that if we really wanted to create a new South, we who believed in black-white unity must also organize among the poor and disinherited whites of the South. Now for the first time in 30 years, it appears that the circumstances are ripe for doing so.

THE UNCHARTED ROAD

For most of us, this is an uncharted road. This applies to the SSOC generation certainly, and also to my generation which came along in the late '40's, too late to have experience in the movements of tenant farmers and industrial workers that did reach poor white southerners in the 1930's. This means we have to learn partly by trial and experiment, and we have to expect to make some mistakes. The main point now, it seems to me, is to get this effort out of the parlor-talk stage as quickly as possible and begin to create some experiences we can learn from. In other words, let's do something—even if it turns out to be the wrong thing. As a matter of fact, we are beginning to have a few scattered current experiences from which we can learn. SCEF had one such organizing project in East Tennessee which failed, at least for the time being, and we learned a number of things in the process. We now have pilot projects aimed at reaching !! poor white people in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Louisiana, we are also lending full-time staff to a similar project initiated by people in Nashville. SSOC is making some similar efforts, as are a few other scattered groups. It is on the basis of these experiences—admittedly limited so far—that I want to point out what I think are some of the dangers we face, and some of the necessities.

SELF-AWARENESS

First and foremost, as we move into organizing work in white communities, I think we need to remember who we are and what we are about. Virtually all of us came out of the Negro freedom movement—that is, our lives have been shaped to a large degree by this movement. We are what



we are today because we became convinced that we can never have a good society in this country (or in the world) unless white people overcome their inherent racism, and build a unity of black and white to work toward mutually important goals. In other words, our work in the white community is in large part a search for a situation in which there can be a meaningful black-white alliance. Some might say that if this is our viewpoint, we just want to "use" these white people—that their needs are not important in themselves. I don't think this is the case at all. Certainly the inherent needs of poor white people are reason enough to organize—they, like poor black people, are ill-fed, ill-housed and lacking in opportunities for education, medical care, political expression, and dignity. But I think what we are recognizing is that these white people will never be able to solve these problems unless they find ways to unite with the black movement seeking the same things. All of southern history proves this to be the case. Unless we are continuously aware of this basic fact and necessity—I think we can make some very serious mistakes. In many areas, white people live in their own ghettos, just as Negroes do. I can see the possibility that our organizers could become so engrossed in the problems of these neighborhoods, in the immediate day to day issues facing the people they are working with—that they could completely forget to raise the question of the need to seek alliances in the black communities. I can see how one might work for a year or so, begin to see some results in terms of community organization among whites and come to feel he has been rather successful. He could do this and yet never have raised the matter of white racism which the white people have to overcome before they can create the social changes that will really help them. The ultimate and worst result of such organizing, although it would never be our intention, could be the formation of new white racist groups.

TOWARD COALITION

It was my concern over this danger that led me to write a paper for a SSOC conference last spring suggesting that any organizing in the white community should be an effort to organize white and black together. I also suggested that, where possible, work in white communities should combine the efforts of black and white organizers. I realize now that this may not always be possible. This is not, I am convinced, because it wouldn't work in white communities. And right here, I'd like to correct the false rumors that are circulating that the project in East Tennessee failed because it was an effort to organize black and white together. The failure of that project had absolutely nothing to do with the black-white issue. It was for other reasons !! that may be worth discussing sometimes, but which are not pertinent at all to this particular point. The reason a joint black-white effort may not always be possible is that more and more there is the trend for black people to want to organize their own groups and alone. Furthermore, we have found in regard to SCEF projects, that black people who want to try to work in and with white communities are few and far between. So I am not suggesting any rigid approach. I hope it is obvious that I am not suggesting anything so mechanical as organizers ringing doorbells in white communities and opening the conversation by saying, "I'm here to talk about white supremacy and Negro-white unity and what you can do about it." This is stupidity. Any organizer worth his salt listens a long time before he talks much, and he learns to adapt his approaches to the people he is working with and to their life situations.

COMBATTING RACISM

What I am saying is that our organizers (and here I mean movement people, not just SCEF) need to have constantly on their minds this necessity for getting at the question of racism; they need to be looking for the opportunities to make it real to the people they are working with. We all know that white supremacist attitudes change fastest not by logical argument, but when people have new experiences. We need to be on the lookout all the time for ways in which we can create those

experiences for people. We need to look for the situations in which white people need the strength that can come from alliance with black people on issues of common concern. And we need to encourage them to seek these alliances.

WHITE RESPONSIBILITY

Let us face the fact that if alliances are built in the coming period, whites are going to have to seek them. Stokely Carmichael has said that integration is irrelevant when initiated by black people, and he is probably right. In any event, this attitude is spreading among black people, and in many places they are not going to take the first step toward even temporary alliances. It is time for some initiative on this to come from the white community—and a big part of our job is to help others see the necessity for it. Another thing those of us working in white communities are going to have to realize is that in keeping this question uppermost in our minds and efforts, we will be pretty much on our own. SNCC is not likely to be coming around reminding us of it—nor are militant black people anywhere. White people have always needed black people to nudge their consciences. From now on, we are going to have to be our own consciences, I think. This is because most militant black people won't be taking our efforts to organize poor white people very seriously. It's not that they are opposed to it; SNCC has said they want it to happen, and I think they do. But most of them don't think it is possible. So they have more important things to do. And the job of keeping the white organizing efforts on the track and geared to the goals we started with will be up to us.

THE PITFALLS

There are two pitfalls I think we need to avoid. One is the tendency to think there is some easy and painless way to combat racism in the white southerner—or in the white American anywhere. This illusion, I think, is what leads people to decide not to mention the question, to hope that unity will come someday if we don't talk about it very much. It's sort of the soft-sell approach—boiling the frog without his realizing he's being boiled. I've been a white southerner all my life. I've seen a lot of racism, and I've seen a considerable number of people change their views. Nothing in my experience or my observation has ever led me to doubt a proposition that I consider key: that there is no easy way to get over this hump, that it must be tackled head on, that people must be confronted with the consequences of their racist views and put into a situation where they have to face the truth. Truth is painful, and people usually have to turn themselves inside out to accept it. Once they have done that, things happen. I think it's worth the pain—and the effort. Again, I'm not saying you always do this in the first conversation with somebody; it may not be a verbal approach that will work at all—it may have to be a situation where a man who has always hated Negroes suddenly knows he needs black people. But in some form, it has to be a confrontation, and it has to be painful. There is no short cut. The other pitfall that worries me may seem to contradict the first, but I don't think it does. This is the danger of thinking most white southerners are hopeless on this question—that there is nothing that can be done about it so we should keep quiet on it if we possibly can. I've seen this attitude over and over in white organizers from the North, dating back to 20 years ago when I had some occasion to work with northern white union organizers who came South. Their present day counterparts sometimes have the same timid approach—the feeling that race is unmentionable with the white southerner and you avoid the subject if you can.



FACTS OF LIFE

I think we who are white and southern can steer a course between these two pitfalls. We don't expect it to be easy for people to change the patterns of a lifetime. But we have more faith that it can be done. There's not a one of us in this movement who has not changed drastically from what we were when we grew up. We changed because certain experiences came into our lives. We changed not because anyone tried to protect us from the issue—or because they let it alone and figured we'd find our own way gradually if not too much was said. Most often we changed because we were confronted with the issue dramatically and had to re-think our lives. I think we need to stop feeling, even unconsciously, that we are something special—that we could change but others somehow don't quite have the intelligence or flexibility to do so. I think we need an abiding faith that every white southerner is potentially in a state of flux—that he can go one way or the other—and that we have a responsibility to nudge history along just a bit by providing him with the opportunities to experience new things and think in new ways.

KEEPING THE PERSPECTIVE

Unless this perspective is constantly in our minds, I have the fear that all our work in the white community—although it may address itself to some economic and political issues—will at best be the tinkling brass and the sounding cymbal. At worst, it could create some Frankenstein monsters that we will live to regret. *Note: SSOC is the Southern Student Organizing Committee.

Commitment is the Key

(Excerpt from Organization Means Commitment pamphlet by Grace Lee Boggs, 1971)

The difficulty in understanding the role of the revolutionary cadre organization does not stem from any intrinsic mystery in this role. Rather, it stems from the lack of experience of Americans in the political process of continuing commitment to the kind of systematic, collective, dialectical, theoretical and practical struggle which is at the heart of a revolutionary cadre organization. For historical reasons, the approach of most Americans to social movements has always been a pragmatic or problem-solving approach which is essentially anti-intellectual. In what has been described as the “headache syndrome,” they react to and try to resolve each problem it arises, as if each were a sporadic, isolated or accidental problem in a system which is fundamentally sound, and therefore capable of quick and easy solutions.

In the recent period, confidence in the soundness of American institutions has plummeted, chiefly under the impact of the revolutionary struggles of Vietnamese people and the revolt of Blacks. The result is that a great many Americans, Black and white, no longer think of American problems as isolated or accidental. They have traced their roots to the “system” of “capitalism and racism” and concluded that a revolution is necessary in the US. They have further identified the chief revolutionary social forces to make this revolution as the Blacks and other non-white (so-called) minorities.

However, for the most part, these people still strongly resist the ideas of committing themselves to the kind of collective and protracted struggle in the dialectical relationship to the revolutionary social forces outlined above. They no longer look at the problems of this society in a piecemeal fashion, to be solved one by one. But they still regard the revolutionary struggle as a series of isolated events, “happenings” and “experiences.” The result is that they do not have a framework

within which to do the continual evaluation that is necessary, and their angry attacks on the system turn into abstractions and rhetorical denunciations.

Always “on the go,” attracted to whatever or whoever turns them on, they jump from one activity or group to another, judging the revolutionary content of that activity or group by its militancy or by the excitement and relief which it offers from boredom and frustration, i.e., quantitatively and subjectively. In the past few years, white youth, rebelling against the materialism and individualism of their middle-class parents, have been drifting in and out of communes and collectives. They claim to be seeking collectivity but they are unwilling to make the long range commitment to any group which is the prerequisite to collective struggle and collective learning. As a result, the collectives and communes springing up and disappearing all over the country are little more than aggregates of subjectivities in which each individual is still doing his or her “own thing.”

These young people have substituted for the pragmatic, anti- intellectual attitudes of their forebears, a new anti-intellectual attitude which is the unique product of the post-World War II society. Raised in a world of unceasing novelty and mobility, of revolutions in production and abundance in consumption, of instant communication and space- ship transportation, they have been culturally deprived of the experience through protracted struggle which has been the good and bad fortune of every previous generation, if only in the productive arena. As a result, they have an existentialist philosophy or the conviction that life consists essentially of momentary experiences.

In the 1960's, this lack of experience in protracted struggle was not a serious handicap. In fact, in retrospect, it was an enormous advantage since it enabled young people to leapfrog the old radical organizations with their obsolete theories and programs (still stemming from the experience of 1917 revolution in Russia), and to create instead a new and unique style of politics. This “new style of politics” centered around the dramatization of confrontations which were then carried into every living room through television. Staging these confrontations and using the mass media with enormous skill, the movement leaders of the late 50's and 60's, Black and white, were able to overnight bring home to the entire society the barbarism of US racism and the genocidal war in Vietnam. Radicalized by these methods young Americans, particularly young Black Americans, exploded in the streets of practically every major city in the country, creating by the late 60's a social crisis of unprecedented magnitude with the entire society.

However, while the social crisis was obviously maturing, no cadre organization was being created to evaluate the new reality and to give direction to the emerging social forces. The result is that today the great majority of Americans, both those who feel oppressed by the system and those who support the system because of the benefits they have received from it, are completely bewildered. They feel as if they were being tossed about in the eye of a great storm with no idea where they should go or how to get there. Likewise, in the absence of a revolutionary cadre organization, most young people who played such an important role in creating the movement of the 60's have been without any framework within which they could collectively evaluate the situation and make new projections to the country, let alone transform themselves into more responsible, more conscious, more dedicated and more critical cadres. Left to their own individual devices, the great majority of them have drifted out of the movement or have gone the way of left or right opportunism. This is to say, many have become pure adventurers, making



isolated and desperate attacks on the power structure or anyone who they think supports the power structure. Others have become careerists, "on the go" in one way or another, as consultants, project directors, or staff persons supported by federal, city and state agencies and by churches and universities in order to co-opt the "heavies" of the movement.

METHOD #3

EDUCATION

CRCAA Principles

1. White people are socialized to think of ourselves & other white people as The Experts. **As anti-racists, we practice showing up as learners and respecting oppressed people as experts on understanding and fighting oppression.** As anti-racists, we prioritize studying the intellectual work of oppressed people - enslaved people, imprisoned people, disenfranchised people - and maintain a critical eye towards intellectuals who were academically trained in elitest, white supremacist institutions.
2. **Study has its place, but nothing can replace observation and participation in real life struggles against oppression.** Education isn't something we go off and do in intellectual isolation or in a study group; we practice education in how we show up in relationships and in struggle. We have a responsibility to take the teacher role with other white people, to take that burden off of people of color. When it comes to teaching others, actions speak louder than words. You can lecture people about anti-racism all day, most people won't remember a word you said. When you SHOW people anti-racism by DOING anti-racism, that's where the changes start to happen.
3. Marcus Garvey taught us that part of being educated is **developing a deep understanding of your enemy**, so in addition to studying resistance movements led by oppressed people, we also take the time to study our enemies, specifically the white supremacist/white nationalist movement. It's important for us as anti-racists to understand how the white nationalist movement developed historically, and to pay attention to the messaging and tactics being used by that movement today in its efforts to expand and consolidate white nationalist power.

Marcus Garvey on Education

"To be learned in all that is worth knowing. Not to be crammed with the subject matter of the book or the philosophy of the classroom, but to store away in your head such facts as you need for the daily application of life, so that you may better in all things understand your fellowmen, and interpret your relationship to your Creator.

You can be educated in soul, vision, and feeling, as well as in mind. To see your enemy and know him is a part of the complete education of man; to spiritually regulate one's self is another form of the higher education that fits man for a nobler place in life, and still, to approach your brother by the feeling of your own humanity, is an education that softens the ills of the world and makes us kind indeed.

Many a man was educated outside the school room. It is something you let out, not completely take in. You are part of it, for it is natural; it is dormant simply because you will not develop it, but



God creates every man with it knowingly or unknowingly to him who possesses it - that's the difference. Develop yours and you become as great and full of knowledge as the other fellow without even entering the classroom.

Malcolm X on Afro-American History

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: First I want to, as Brother James has pointed out, thank you, as we do each week, or have been doing each week. It seems that during the month of January it doesn't snow or rain or hail or get bad in any way weather-wise until Saturday night, and it stays like that Saturday through Sunday, and then the sun comes back out on Monday—it seems. But since I was a little boy I learned that one of the things that make you grow into manhood are tests and trials and tribulations. If you can come through the snow and the rain and the sleet, you know you can make it easily when the sun is out and everything is right. So I'm happy to see that those of you who are here tonight don't let anything get in your way, that is, weatherwise.

During the next three weeks, we're going to have a series that will be designed to give us a better understanding of the past, I should say a better knowledge of the past, in order that we may understand the present and be better prepared for the future. I don't think any of you will deny the fact that it is impossible to understand the present or prepare for the future unless we have some knowledge of the past. And the thing that has kept most of us—that is, the Afro-Americans — almost crippled in this society has been our complete lack of knowledge concerning the past. The number one thing that makes us differ from other people is our lack of knowledge concerning the past. Proof of which: almost anyone else can come into this country and get around barriers and obstacles that we cannot get around; and the only difference between them and us, they know something about the past, and in knowing something about the past, they know something about themselves, they have an identity. But wherein you and I differ from them is primarily revolved around our lack of knowledge concerning the past.

....

When you deal with the past, you're dealing with history, you're dealing actually with the origin of a thing. When you know the origin, you know the cause. If you don't know the origin, you don't know the cause. And if you don't know the cause, you don't know the reason, you're just cut off, you're left standing in midair. So the past deals with history or the origin of anything—the origin of a person, the origin of a nation, the origin of an incident. And when you know the origin, then you get a better understanding of the causes that produce whatever originated there and its reason for originating and its reason for being.

It's impossible for you and me to have a balanced mind in this society without going into the past, because in this particular society, as we function and fit into it right now, we're such an underdog, we're trampled upon, we're looked upon as almost nothing. Now if we don't go into the past and find out how we got this way, we will think that we were always this way. And if you think that you were always in the condition that you're in right now, it's impossible for you to have too much confidence in yourself, you become worthless, almost nothing.

But when you go back into the past and find out where you once were, then you will know that you weren't always at this level, that you once had attained a higher level, had made great achievements, contributions to society, civilization, science, and so forth. And you know that if you once did it, you can do it again; you automatically get the incentive, the inspiration, and the energy necessary to duplicate what our forefathers formerly did. But by keeping us completely

cut off from our past, it is easy for the man who has power over us to make us willing to stay at this level because we will feel that we were always at this level, a low level. That's why I say it is so important for you and me to spend time today learning something about the past so that we can better understand the present, analyze it, and then do something about it.

....

So, one of our greatest desires here at Organization of Afro-American Unity meetings is to try and broaden the scope and even the reading habits of most of our people, who need their scope broadened and their reading habits also broadened today.

Another thing that you will find is that those who go to other places usually think of themselves as a minority. If you'll notice, in all of their struggling, programming, or even crying or demanding, they even refer to themselves as a minority, and they use a minority approach. By a minority they mean that they are lesser than something else, or they are outnumbered, or the odds are against them—and this is the approach that they use in their argument, in their demand, in their negotiation.

But when you find those of us who have been following the nationalistic thinking that prevails in Harlem, we don't think of ourselves as a minority, because we don't think of ourselves just within the context of the American stage or the American scene, in which we would be a minority. We think of things worldly, or as the world is; we think of our part in the world, and we look upon ourselves not as a dark minority on the white American stage, but rather we look upon ourselves as a part of the dark majority who now prevail on the world stage. And when you think like this, automatically, when you realize you are part of the majority, you approach your problem as if odds are on your side rather than odds are against you. You approach demanding rather than using the begging approach.

And this is one of the things that is frightening the white man. As long as the Black man in America thinks of himself as a minority, as an underdog, he can't shout but so loud; or if he does shout, he shouts loudly only to the degree that the power structure encourages him to. He never gets irresponsible. He never goes beyond what the power structure thinks is the right voice to shout in. But when you begin to connect yourself on the world stage with the whole of dark mankind, and you see that you're the majority and this majority is waking up and rising up and becoming strong, then when you deal with this man, you don't deal with him like he's your boss or he's better than you or stronger than you. You put him right where he belongs. When you realize that he's a minority, that his time is running out, you approach him like that, you approach him like one who used to be strong but is now getting weak, who used to be in a position to retaliate against you but now is not in that position anymore.

....

So we're living in troubled times. We're living at a time when anything can happen. Just a couple of years ago it couldn't happen unless Sam said so, or unless Khrushchev said so, or unless de Gaulle said so. But now it can happen anytime. It's not in the power of just one race to say when this can happen or when that can happen; it can now be set off by dark nations. So the world is in trouble.



Another characteristic of this era that we're living in, that's causing it to be a troubled world, is the fact that the dark world is rising. And as the dark world rises, the white world declines. It's impossible for the dark world to increase in its power and strength without the power and strength of the white world decreasing. This is just the way it is, it's almost mathematics. If there is only so much power, and all of it has been over there, well, the only way this man's going to get some over here is to take it away from those over there. That's plain fact.

Up until recent times, all of the power has been in Europe, it has all been in the hands of the white man. The base of power has been in London and Paris and Brussels and Washington, D.C., and some of those places like that. Now the bases of power are changing. You have a base of power in Accra, in Ghana, in Africa. Another base of power in Zanzibar. Another base of power in Cairo. Another base of power in Algiers. Another base of power in Tokyo. Another base of power in Peking. Well, as these bases of power increase, it decreases Europe as a base of power. And this is what's causing trouble. The white man is worried. He knows that he didn't do right when he had all the power, and if the base of power changes, those into whose hands it falls may know how to really do right. [Laughter] The rise of the dark world is producing the fall of the white world.

And I've got to point out right here that what I'm saying is not racist. I'm not speaking racism, I'm not condemning all white people. I'm just saying that in the past the white world was in power, and it was. This is history, this is fact. They called it European history, or colonialism. They ruled all the dark world. Now when they were in power and had everything going their way, they didn't call that racism, they called it colonialism. [Applause] And they were happy too when they could stand up and tell how much power they had. Britain used to brag about the sun never set on her empire. Her empire was so vast, you know, that the sun would never set on it, she bragged. I heard Churchill say it, and Macmillan, and some of those others who sat over there telling everybody else what to do.

But now the shoe is on the other foot. There is no nation today that can brag about its power being unlimited, or that it can take unilateral action in any area of the earth that they desire. No white nation can do this. But just twenty years ago they could do it. Twenty years ago the United States could do it, twenty years ago England could do it, France could do it, even little old runt Belgium could do it, and Holland could do it. But they can't do it now. Because the base of power is shifting. And this is what you and I have to understand, really, in order to understand what's happening in Georgia, in Alabama, in Mississippi, and in New York City.

The power is shifting, and as it shifts the man in whose hands it once was gets worried, and the man in whose hands it falls, who hasn't had it for a long time, he gets power-happy, you know, and he is not particularly interested in playing according to the rules, especially the rules that this man laid down. Now as the base of power shifts, what it is doing is bringing an end to what you and I know to have been white supremacy. Supreme means to be above others. And up until recent times, the white nations were above the dark nations. They ruled supreme on this earth. They didn't call it white supremacy, but this is what it was.

Now white supremacy has come to an end. Only meaning that the time when the white man could reign supreme all over the world—that's ended, that's outdated, that's gone by, it can't happen any more. And it is reflected in what Macmillan meant when he spoke in Africa three years ago about the winds of change. At this time Macmillan was the prime minister of England and he was making a tour through Africa; and he came back crying to the other Europeans about the winds of change that are sweeping down across the African continent, meaning that the people who formerly had permitted Europeans or whites to oppress them had changed their

minds. They didn't want to be oppressed any longer, they didn't want to be exploited any longer, they wanted to be independent and free to build a society of their own for themselves.

As soon as this mood or tempo began to be visible on the African continent, some of this earth's leading white statesmen at the top level admitted it—and didn't admit it secretly, admitted it openly. Adlai Stevenson got up in the United Nations, I think it was last year, and accused the dark nations of playing a skin game in the UN. And you know what he meant by skin game? He meant that people of the same skin color were banding together. Meaning that people with dark skins were banding together in the UN against people with white skins. This is something to think about. Now this means that the United States representative to the United Nations, an international body, was alert enough, had sufficient foresight, to see that in this era that we're living in right now, dark-skinned people were coming together, they were uniting, they were forming blocs—the Afro-Asian bloc, the Afro-Asian-Arab bloc, the Afro-Asian-Arab-Latin bloc, you know—and all these blocs were against him. He could see this, and this is what caused so much worry and so much confusion today. [Applause]

As soon as he saw that these dark-skinned people were getting together in unity and harmony, he began to put out the propaganda that the dark-skinned people aren't ready yet. This is his analysis after our efforts—that we aren't ready for freedom. And to try and prove that we weren't ready for freedom, they let the people in the Congo go so far free and then turned right around and stirred it up to make them look foolish—so that they could use that to say that Africa wasn't ready for freedom.

They say the same thing to you and me over here, that we're not ready yet— isn't that what they say? Certainly, they say that you're not ready to live in a decent house, and that you're not ready to go to a decent school, or that you're not ready to work on a decent job. This is what they say, and they don't say why we're not ready, they don't say why. And if we're not ready, they don't say that we once were ready, but we're not now—they try and make it look like we never were ready, that we never were in history a people who occupied a responsible position on the cultural tree, the civilization tree, or any other tree. They try to give us the impression, you know, that we never were qualified, therefore we can only qualify today to the degree that they themselves qualify us. And they trick us this way. Trick us into going to them and asking them, "Qualify me, you know, so I can be free." Why, you're out of your mind.

They also know that the only way we're going to do it is through unity. So they create another trap. Every effort we make to unite among ourselves on the basis of what we are, they label it as what? Racism. If we say that we want to form something that's based on Black people getting together, the white man calls that racism. Mind you. And then some of these old white-minded Negroes do the same thing, they say, "That's racism, I don't want to belong to anything that's all Black." A lot of them say this. But it's only because they themselves have been bitten by the bug, the white bug. And they think the only way they can belong to something that is going to be progressive or successful, it has got to have the white man in it. Many of them think that.

But these are traps. He traps us because he knows it's impossible for us to go forward unless we get together. But what basis are we going to get together on? We've got to get together on the same basis they got together. Italians got together because they were Italian, the Jews got together on the basis of being Jews, the Irish got together on the basis of being Irish. Now what



basis are you and I going to get together on? We've got to have some kind of basis. But as soon as we mention the only basis that we've got to get together on, they trick us by telling our leaders, you know, that anything that's all Black is putting segregation in reverse. [Laughter] Isn't that what they say? So the people who are Black don't want to get together because they don't want segregation. See, the man is tricky, brothers and sisters. I mean the man is tricky. He's a master of tricks. And if you don't realize how tricky he is, he'll have you maneuvered right on back into slavery—I shouldn't say back into slavery because we're not out of it yet. [Applause]

These are traps that he creates. If you speak in an angry way about what has happened to our people and what is happening to our people, what does he call it? Emotionalism. Pick up on that. Here the man has got a rope around his neck and because he screams, you know, the cracker that's putting the rope around his neck accuses him of being emotional. [Laughter] You're supposed to have the rope around your neck and holler politely, you know. You're supposed to watch your diction, not shout and wake other people up— this is how you're supposed to holler. You're supposed to be respectable and responsible when you holler against what they're doing to you. And you've got a lot of Afro-Americans who fall for that. They say, "No, you can't do it like that, you've got to be responsible, you've got to be respectable." And you'll always be a slave as long as you're trying to be responsible and respectable in the eyesight of your master; you'll remain a slave. When you're in the eyesight of your master, you've got to let him know you're irresponsible and you'll blow his irresponsible head off. [Applause]

And again you've got another trap that he maneuvers you into. If you begin to talk about what he did to you, he'll say that's hate, you're teaching hate. Pick up on that. He won't say he didn't do it, because he can't. But he'll accuse you of teaching hate just because you begin to spell out what he did to you. Which is an intellectual trap—because he knows we don't want to be accused of hate.

And the average Black American who has been real brain-washed, he never wants to be accused of being emotional. You ever watched them? You ever watched one of them? Do that. Watch them, watch the real bourgeois Black Americans. He never wants to show any sign of emotion. He won't even tap his feet. You can have some of that real soul music, and he'll sit there, you know, like it doesn't move him. [Laughter] I watch him, and I'm telling you. And the reason he tries to pretend like it doesn't move him is that he knows it doesn't move them. And it doesn't move them because they can't feel it, they've got no soul. And he's got to pretend he has none just to make it with them. This is a shame, really.

And then you go a step farther, they get you again on this violence. They have another trap wherein they make it look criminal if any of us, who has a rope around his neck or one is being put around his neck—if you do anything to stop the man from putting that rope around your neck, that's violence. And again this bourgeois Negro, who's trying to be polite and respectable and all, he never wants to be identified with violence. So he lets them do anything to him, and he sits there submitting to it nonviolently, just so he can keep his image of responsibility. He dies with a responsible image, he dies with a polite image, but he dies. [Laughter] The man who is irresponsible and impolite, he keeps his life. That responsible Negro, he'll die every day, but if the irresponsible one dies he takes some of those with him who were trying to make him die.

So the era that we're living in is an era in which we see the people in the East on the rise and the people in the West on the decline. That is, the dark world is rising and the white world, or the Western world, is having its power curtailed. This is happening and it's happening every day.

Take right there in Saigon, in South Vietnam. Don't you realize that twenty years ago those little people over there didn't have a chance? All they needed would be for a battleship to sail up to the coastline, and everybody over there would bow down, "Yessir, boss." That's how they said it, same as you say it over here. But not now. Now they don't yes anybody's boss. They get them a rifle and run boss clean on out of there. [Laughter and applause]

The entire East, the dark world, is on the rise. Whether you like it or not. And as the dark world rises up, it puts the white world on the spot, it puts the Western world on the spot, and it puts you and me on the spot. Why does it put us on the spot? Because although we're in the West, we're from the East. Many, many Black Americans don't realize this. You are not of the West, you are in the West. You're not a Westerner, you're from the East. You're not white—you're in the white world, but that doesn't make you white; you're as Black as you ever were, you're just in the white world. [Applause]

And next month they'll come up to show you another trick. They'll come at you and me next month with this Negro History Week, they call it. This week comes around once every year. And during this one week they drown us with propaganda about Negro history in Georgia and Mississippi and Alabama. Never do they take us back across the water, back home. They take us down home, but they never give us a history of back home. They never give us enough information to let us know what were we doing before we ended up in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Texas, and some of those other prison states. They give us the impression with Negro History Week that we were cotton pickers all of our lives. Cotton pickers, orange growers, mammies, and uncles for the white man in this country—this is our history when you talk in terms of Negro History Week. They might tell you about one or two people who took a peanut and made another white man rich. [Laughter] George Washington Carver—he was a scientist, but he died broke. He made Ford rich. So he wasn't doing anything for himself and his people. He got a good name for us, but what did we get out of it? Nothing. The master got it.

Just like a dog who runs out in the woods and grabs a rabbit. No matter how hungry the dog is, does he eat it? No, he takes it back and lays it at the boss's feet. The boss skins it, takes the meat, and gives the dog the bones. And the dog is going right on, hungry again. But he could have gotten the rabbit and eaten it for himself. [Laughter] And boss couldn't even have caught him until later, because he can outrun the boss.

It's the same way with you and me. Every contribution we make, we don't make it for our people, we make it for the man, we make it for our master. He gets the benefit from it. We die, not for our people, we die for him. We don't die for our home and our house, we die for his house. We don't die for our country, we die for his country. A lot of you all were fools on the front lines, were you not? Yes, you were. You put on the uniform and went right up on the front lines like a roaring hound dog barking for master. And when you come back here—you've had to bark since you came back. [Applause]

So Negro History Week reminds us of this. It doesn't remind us of past achievements, it reminds us only of the achievements we made in the Western Hemisphere under the tutelage of the white man. So that whatever achievement that was made in the Western Hemisphere that the spotlight is put upon, this is the white man's shrewd way of taking credit for whatever we have



accomplished. But he never lets us know of an accomplishment that we made prior to being born here. This is another trick.

....

Just as a tree without roots is dead, a people without history or cultural roots also becomes a dead people. And when you look at us, those of us who are called Negro, we're called that because we are like a dead people. We have nothing to identify ourselves as part of the human family. You know, you take a tree, you can tell what kind of tree it is by looking at the leaves. If the leaves are gone, you can look at the bark and tell what kind it is. But when you find a tree with the leaves gone and the bark gone, everything gone, you call that a what? A stump. And you can't identify a stump as easily as you can identify a tree.

And this is the position that you and I are in here in America. Formerly we could be identified by the names we wore when we came here. When we were first brought here, we had different names. When we were first brought here, we had a different language. And these names and this language identified the culture that we were brought from, the land that we were brought from. In identifying that, we were able to point towards what we had produced, our net worth. But once our names were taken and our language was taken and our identity was destroyed and our roots were cut off with no history, we became like a stump, something dead, a twig over here in the Western Hemisphere. Anybody could step on us, trample upon us, or burn us, and there would be nothing that we could do about it.

...

When we came here as slaves, we were civilized, we had culture, we had a knowledge of science. They don't take a slave who's dumb—a dumb slave is not good, you have to know how to do something to be a profitable slave. This was a country that needed an agricultural system. They had no agriculture in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. What was the agricultural product, what farm product was Europe famous for? Tell me. You can't. They had none, they were growing weeds up there in Europe. The farm products, the agricultural system, existed in Africa and Asia. You had mastered the growing of cotton, you had mastered the growing of all of the farm products that are necessary to give a person a balanced diet, on the African continent. You were a master of woodcraft, metalwork, and all of these other skills; and it was this that they needed. They didn't need just someone with muscle to do work—they needed someone with skill. So they brought our people here, who were the fathers of skill, who had all of these skills. And they brought us here to set up an agricultural system for them, to weave their clothes and show them how to weave, and do the other things that make a civilization and society a balanced civilization and society.

So when our people got here—and they came here from a civilization where they had high morals; there was no stealing, no drunkenness, no adultery, fornication; there was nothing but high morals—when they got here, they found a country that had the lowest morals that existed on earth at that time, because it was peopled and run by prostitutes, by cutthroats, by criminals; and they created a society to fit their nature. And when our people came into that, they were shocked—they rebelled against it, they didn't want to stay here. In the first place, they had been tricked over here, put in chains and brought here, as history points out. Initially—there's a book called *The Slave Trade* by Spears, 1 in which it points out that one of the first slave ships to come here was piloted by an Englishman named John Hawkins, and John Hawkins's ship was called *Jesus*, the good ship *Jesus*. This was the boat that was used—it's in history—they used *Jesus* to bring them here. And they've been using him to keep you here, too. [Laughter]

When our people got here and found out what they had gotten into, they didn't want to stay. Many of them started looking for that ship that brought them here. The slaves had an old spiritual which they sang: "Steal away to Jesus, steal away home." You think that they were talking about some man that got hung on the cross two thousand years ago, whereas they were talking about a ship. They wanted to steal away and get on board that ship that was named Jesus, so that they could go back home on the mother continent, the African continent, where they had been tricked and brought from. But you've got poor Negroes today, who have been brainwashed, still sitting in church talking about stealing away to Jesus; they talk about going up yonder, dying, if they're going somewhere. Showing you how your mind is all messed up. They were talking about a boat.

Or, they used to sing a song, "You can have all this world, but give me Jesus." They weren't talking about that man that died supposedly on the cross, they were talking about a boat. "You can have this world"—this Western world, this evil, corrupt, run-down, low-down Western world—but give me Jesus the boat, [Applause] but give me the ship Jesus, so I can go back home where I'll be among my own kind. This is what the spiritual came from. But they've got it in the church today, and that old dumb preacher has your and my—yes, dumb preacher—has your and my mind so messed up we think that Jesus is somebody that died on a cross, and we sit there foaming at the mouth talking about "you can have all this world, but give me Jesus." And the man took all this world and gave you Jesus, and that's all you've got is Jesus. [Laughter and applause]

There were three people involved in the crime that was committed against us—the slave trader, the slave master, and a third one that they don't tell you and me about, the slave maker. You've read about the slave trader and you've read about the slave master; in fact, you know the slave master—you're still in his hands. But you never read in history the part played by the slave maker.

You can't make a wise man a slave, you can't make a warrior a slave. When you and I came here, or rather when we were brought here, we were brought here from a society that was highly civilized, our culture was at the highest level, and we were warriors—we knew no fear. How could they make us slaves? They had to do the same thing to us that we do to a horse. When you take a horse out of the wilds, you don't just jump on him and ride him, or put a bit in his mouth and use him to plow with. No, you've got to break him in first. Once you break him in, then you can ride him. Now the man who rides him is not the man who breaks him in. It takes a different type of man to break him in than it takes to ride him. The average man that's been riding him can't break him in. It takes a cruel man to break him in, a mean man, a heartless man, a man with no feelings.

And this is why they took the role of the slave maker out of history. It was so criminal that they don't even dare to write about it, to tell what was done to you and me to break us in and break us down to the level that we're on today. Because if you find the role that that slave maker played, I'm telling you, you'll find it hard to forget and forgive, you'll find it hard. I can't forgive the slave trader or the slave master; you know I can't forgive the slave maker. [Applause]

Our people weren't brought right here to this country. They were first dropped off in the West Indian islands, in the Caribbean. Most of the slaves that were brought from Africa were dropped off first in the Caribbean, West Indian islands. Why? This was the breaking-in grounds. They would break them in down there. When they broke them in, then they would bring the ones whose spirit had been broken on to America. They had all kinds of tactics for breaking them in. They bred fear into them, for one thing.



I read in one book how the slave maker used to take a pregnant woman, a Black woman, and make her watch as her man would be tortured and put to death. One of those slave makers had trees that he planted in positions where he would bend them and tie them, and then tie the hand of a Black man to one, a hand to the other, and his legs to two more, and he'd cut the rope. And when he'd cut the rope, that tree would snap up and pull the arm of the Black man right out of his socket, pull him up into four different parts. I'll show you books where you can read it, they write about it. And they made the pregnant Black women stand there and watch as they did it, so that all this grief and fear that they felt would go right into that baby, that Black baby that was yet to be born. It would be born afraid, born with fear in it. And you've got it in you right now—right now, you've still got it. When you get in front of that blue-eyed thing, you start to itching, don't you? And you don't know why. It was bred into you. But when you find out how they did it, you can get it out of you and put it right back in them.

Now, I'm not talking racism. [Applause] This isn't racism—this is history, we're dealing with just a little bit of history tonight. We've only got a few minutes left, so I'm trying to go fast. I'm kind of tired, so I can't go too fast—you'll have to excuse me—but I just want to get the rest of this out.

They used to take a Black woman who would be pregnant and tie her up by her toes, let her be hanging head down, and they would take a knife and cut her stomach open, let that Black unborn child fall out, and then stomp its head in the ground. I'll show you books where they write about this, I'll name them to you: *Slave Trade* by Spears; *From Slavery to Freedom* by John Hope Franklin; *Negro Family in the U.S.* by Frazier touches on some of it. All night long—*Anti-Slavery* by Dwight Lowell Dumond—I'll cite you books all night long, where they write themselves on what they did to you and me. And have got the nerve to say we teach hate because we're talking about what they did. Why, they're lucky, really, they're lucky, they're fortunate. [Applause]

Slaves used to sing that song about "My Lord's going to move this wicked race and raise up a righteous nation that will obey." They knew what they were talking about—they were talking about the man. They used to sing a song, "Good News, a Chariot Is Coming." If you notice, everything they sang in those spirituals was talking about going to get away from here. None of them wanted to stay here. You're the only ones, sitting around here now like a knot on a log, wanting to stay here. You're supposed to be educated and hip, you're supposed to know what's happening, you know—they're not supposed to know what's happening. But everything they sang, every song, had a hint in it that they weren't satisfied here, that they weren't being treated right, that somebody had to go.

The slave maker knew that he couldn't make these people slaves until he first made them dumb. And one of the best ways to make a man dumb is to take his tongue, take his language. A man who can't talk, what do they call him? A dummy. Once your language is gone, you are a dummy. You can't communicate with people who are your relatives, you can never have access to information from your family—you just can't communicate.

Also, if you'll notice, the natural tongue that one speaks is referred to as one's mother tongue—mother tongue. And the natural intelligence that a person has before he goes to school is called mother wit. Not father wit—it's called mother wit because everything a child knows before it gets to school, it learns from its mother, not its father. And if it never goes to school, whatever native intelligence it has, it got it primarily from its mother, not its father; so it's called mother wit. And the mother is also the one who teaches the child how to speak its language, so that the natural tongue is called the mother tongue. Whenever you find as many people as we who aren't able to speak any mother tongue, why, that's evidence right there something was done to our mother. Something had to have happened to her.

They had laws in those days that made it mandatory for a Black child to be taken from its mother as fast as that child was born. The mother never had a chance to rear it. The child would be brought up somewhere else away from the mother, so that the mother couldn't teach the child what she knew—about itself, about her past, about its heritage. It would have to grow up in complete darkness, knowing nothing about the land where it came from or the people that it came from. Not even about its own mother. There was no relationship between the Black child and its mother; it was against the law. And if the master would ever find any of those children who had any knowledge of its mother tongue, that child was put to death. They had to stamp out the language; they did it scientifically. If they found any one of them that could speak it, off went its head, or they would put it to death, they would kill it, in front of the mother, if necessary. This is history; this is how they took your language. You didn't lose it, it didn't evaporate—they took it with a scientific process, because they knew they had to take it to make you dumb, or into the dummy that you and I now are.

I read in some books where it said that some of the slave mothers would try and get tricky. In order to teach their child, who'd be off in another field somewhere, they themselves would be praying and they'd pray in a loud voice, and in their own language. The child in the distant field would hear his mother's voice, and he'd learn how to pray in the same way; and in learning how to pray, he'd pick up on some of the language. And the master found that this was being done, and immediately he stepped up his efforts to kill all the little children that were benefiting from this. And so it became against the law even for the slave to be caught praying in his tongue, if he knew it. It was against the law. You've heard some of the people say they had to pray with their heads in a bucket. Well, they weren't praying to the Jesus that they're praying to now. The white man will let you call on that Jesus all day long; in fact he'll make it possible for you to call on him. If you were calling on somebody else, then he'd have more fear of it. Your calling on that somebody else in that other language—that causes him a bit of fear, a bit of fright.

They used to have to steal away and pray. All those songs that the slaves talked, or sang, and called spirituals, had wrapped up in them some of what was happening to them. And when the child realized that it couldn't hear its mother pray any more, the slaves would come up with a song, "I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray," or the song "Motherless Child": "Sometimes, I feel like a motherless child. Father gone, mother gone, motherless child sees a hard time." All of these songs were describing what was happening to us then, in the only way the slaves knew how to communicate—in song. They didn't dare say it outright, so they put it in song. They pretended that they were singing about Moses in "Go Down, Moses." They weren't talking about Moses and telling "old Pharaoh to let my people go." They were trying to talk some kind of talk to each other, over the slave master's head. Now you've got ahold of the thing and you're believing in it for real. Yes, I hear you singing "Go down, Moses," and you're still talking about Moses four thousand years ago—you're out of your mind. But those slaves had a whole lot of sense. Everything they sang was designed toward freedom, designed toward going back home, or designed toward getting this big white ape off their backs. [Applause]



Power Anywhere Where There's People!

Excerpts from a speech by Chairman Fred Hampton Sr. delivered at Olivet Church, Chicago, 1969

Power anywhere where there's people. Power anywhere where there's people. Let me give you an example of teaching people. Basically, the way they learn is observation and participation. You know a lot of us go around and joke ourselves and believe that the masses have PhDs, but that's not true. And even if they did, it wouldn't make any difference. Because with some things, you have to learn by seeing it or either participating in it. And you know yourselves that there are people walking around your community today that have all types of degrees that should be at this meeting but are not here. Right? Because you can have as many degrees as a thermometer. If you don't have any practice, then you can't walk across the street and chew gum at the same time.

Let me tell you how Huey P. Newton, the leader, the organizer, the founder, the main man of the Black Panther Party, went about it.

The community had a problem out there in California. There was an intersection, a four-way intersection; a lot of people were getting killed, cars running over them, and so the people went down and redressed their grievances to the government. You've done it before. I know you people in the community have. And they came back and the pigs said "No! You can't have any." Oh, they don't usually say you can't have it. They've gotten a little hipper than that now. That's what those degrees on the thermometer will get you. They tell you "Okay, we'll deal with it. Why don't you come back next meeting and waste some time?"

And they get you wound up in an excursion of futility, and you be in a cycle of insaneness, and you be goin' back and goin' back, and goin' back, and goin' back so many times that you're already crazy.

So they tell you, they say, "Okay you people, what you want?" And they you jump up and you say, "Well, it's been so long, we don't know what we want", and then you walk out of the meeting and you're gone and they say, "Well, you people had your chance, didn't you?"

Let me tell you what Huey P. Newton did.

Huey Newton went and got Bobby Seale, the chairman of the Black Panther Party on a national level. Bobby Seale got his 9mm, that's a pistol. Huey P. Newton got his shotgun and got some stop signs and got a hammer. Went down to the intersection, gave his shotgun to Bobby, and Bobby had his 9mm. He said, "You hold this shotgun. Anybody mess with us, blow their brains out." He put those stop signs up.

There were no more accidents, no more problems.

Now they had another situation. That's not that good, you see, because it's two people dealing with a problem. Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, no matter how bad they may be, cannot deal with the problem. But let me explain to you who the real heroes are.

Next time, there was a similar situation, another four-way corner. Huey went and got Bobby, went and got his 9mm, got his shotgun, got his hammer and got more stop signs. Placed those stop signs up, gave the shotgun to Bobby, told Bobby "If anybody mess with us while we're putting these stop signs up, protect the people and blow their brains out." What did the people do? They observed it again. They participated in it. Next time they had another four-way intersection. Problems there; they had accidents and death. This time, the people in the community went and got their shotguns, got their hammers, got their stop signs.

.....

A lot of people get the word revolution mixed up and they think revolutions a bad word. Revolution is nothing but like having a sore on your body and then you put something on that sore to cure that infection. And I'm telling you that we're living in an infectious society right now. I'm telling you that we're living in a sick society. And anybody that endorses integrating into this sick society before it's cleaned up is a man who's committing a crime against the people.

.....

We got to face some facts. That the masses are poor, that the masses belong to what you call the lower class, and when I talk about the masses, I'm talking about the white masses, I'm talking about the black masses, and the brown masses, and the yellow masses, too. We've got to face the fact that some people say you fight fire best with fire, but we say you put fire out best with water. We say you don't fight racism with racism. We're gonna fight racism with solidarity. We say you don't fight capitalism with no black capitalism; you fight capitalism with socialism.

....

The pigs would come up to the mothers and say, "You like the Breakfast For Children program?" "Yeah, I like it."

And the pigs say, "Oh-oh." The pigs say, "Well, the Breakfast For Children program is a socialistic program. Its a communistic program."

And the women said, "Well, I tell you what, boy. I've been knowing you since you were knee-high to a grasshopper. And I don't know if I like communism and I don't know if I like socialism. But I know that that Breakfast For Children program feeds my kids. And if you put your hands on that Breakfast For Children program, I'm gonna come off this can and I'm gonna beat your ass like a"

.....

I don't care how much theory you got, if it don't have any practice applied to it, then that theory happens to be irrelevant. Right? Any theory you get, practice it. And when you practice it you make some mistakes. When you make a mistake, you correct that theory, and then it will be corrected theory that will be able to be applied and used in any situation. That's what we've got to be able to do.

....

We have decided that although some of us come from what some of you would call petty-bourgeois families, though some of us could be in a sense on what you call the mountaintop. We could be integrated into the society working with people that we may never have a chance to work with. Maybe we could be on the mountaintop and maybe we wouldn't have to be hidin' when we go to speak places like this. Maybe we wouldn't have to worry about court cases and going to jail and being sick. We say that even though all of those luxuries exist on the mountaintop, we understand that the people are right here in the valley.

We in the Black Panther Party, because of our dedication and understanding, went into the valley knowing that the people are in the valley, knowing that our plight is the same plight as the people



in the valley, knowing that our enemies are on the mountain, that our friends are in the valley, and even though its nice to be on the mountaintop, we're going back to the valley. Because we understand that there's work to be done in the valley, and when we get through with this work in the valley, then we got to go to the mountaintop. We're going to the mountaintop because there's a motherfucker on the mountaintop that's playing King, and he's been bullshitting us. And we've got to go up on the mountain top not for the purpose of living his life style and living like he lives. We've got to go up on the mountain top to make this motherfucker understand, goddamnit, that we are coming from the valley!

METHOD #4

DIVESTMENT

CRCAA Principles

1. Because a cross-class alliance of white people is maintaining white supremacy, we believe that **it will take a strong cross-class alliance of white people to dismantle it.** It is not possible to build this cross-class alliance if we continue to practice a culture of silence, secrecy, and plain ol' fronting about our class positions. The first step towards building a cross-class alliance is to get clear and honest with ourselves and each other about what we have, why we have it, and what we're doing with it.
2. Why do we have it? **White wealth is stolen wealth.** It is the spoils of generations of white supremacist violence, exploitation, and theft. Divestment is the pathway to right relationship with Black and Indigenous communities. Showing up to claim allyship without divesting of stolen/hoarded resources is fraudulent. Holding on to stolen/hoarded resources while maintaining a lifestyle built on the backs of Black and Brown people undermines our mission to destroy white supremacy. Ending this system of oppression will entail changing our relationship to money. This process is not instantaneous but neither should it be delayed. We nurture and nudge each other to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Mistakes are inevitable, growth is always possible, and willingness is essential.
3. Philanthropy is a strategy capitalists use to INCREASE their decision making power. **Divestment is the opposite of philanthropy.** This means we do not use our ability to give money as a way to extract more social and political capital for ourselves and we don't dictate how money should be used. We trust Black leadership to put it to good use. Divestment comes with no strings and does not entitle us to influence the direction of the work. We don't take credit for divestments either. If we do talk publicly or privately about our them, we talk in terms of the percentage of wealth divested, not the amount of money given. The only purpose of talking out loud about divestment is to encourage and to hold other white people accountable for divesting too.

Excerpt from ASSATA: An Autobiography

(Assata Shakur, *Chicago Review Press, Inc.* 1999)

I have never understood exactly what a "liberal" is, though, since I have heard "liberals" express every conceivable opinion on every conceivable subject. As far as I can tell, you have the extreme Right, who are fascist, capitalist dogs like Ronald Reagan, who come right out and let you know where they're coming from. And on the opposite end, you have the Left, who are supposed to be committed to justice, equality, and human rights. And somewhere between those two points is the Liberal. As far as I'm concerned, "liberal" is the most meaningless word in the dictionary.



History has shown me that as long as some white middle-class people can live high on the hog, take vacations to Europe, send their children to private schools, and reap the benefits of the white skin privileges, then they are “liberals.” But when times get hard and money gets tight, they pull that liberal mask off and you think you’re talking to Adolf Hitler. They feel sorry for the so-called underprivileged just as long as they can maintain their own privileges.

Excerpts from “The Weapon of Theory”

(Speech given by Amilcar Cabral at the first Tricontinental Conference of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America held in Havana, Cuba, January, 1966)

We are not going to use this platform to rail against imperialism. An African saying very common in our country says: “When your house is burning, it’s no use beating the tom-toms.” On a Tricontinental level, this means that we are not going to eliminate imperialism by shouting insults against it. For us, the best or worst shout against imperialism, whatever its form, is to take up arms and fight. This is what we are doing, and this is what we will go on doing until all foreign domination of our African homelands has been totally eliminated.

Our agenda includes subjects whose meaning and importance are beyond question and which show a fundamental preoccupation with struggle. We note, however, that one form of struggle which we consider to be fundamental has not been explicitly mentioned in this programme, although we are certain that it was present in the minds of those who drew up the programme. We refer here to the struggle against our own weaknesses. Obviously, other cases differ from that of Guinea; but our experience has shown us that in the general framework of daily struggle this battle against ourselves — no matter what difficulties the enemy may create — is the most difficult of all, whether for the present or the future of our peoples. This battle is the expression of the internal contradictions in the economic, social, cultural (and therefore historical) reality of each of our countries. We are convinced that any national or social revolution which is not based on knowledge of this fundamental reality runs grave risk of being condemned to failure....

We do not think we will shock this assembly by stating that the only effective way of definitively fulfilling the aspirations of the peoples, that is to say of attaining national liberation, is by armed struggle. This is the great lesson which the contemporary history of liberation struggle teaches all those who are truly committed to the effort of liberating their peoples.

It is obvious that both the effectiveness of this way and the stability of the situation to which it leads after liberation depend not only on the characteristics of the organization of the struggle but also on the political and moral awareness of those who, for historical reasons, are capable of being the immediate heirs of the colonial or neo-colonial state. For events have shown that the only social sector capable of being aware of the reality of imperialist domination and of directing the state apparatus inherited from this domination is the native petty bourgeoisie. If we bear in mind the aleatory characteristics and the complexity of the tendencies naturally inherent in the economic situation of this social stratum or class, we will see that this specific inevitability in our situation constitutes one of the weaknesses of the national liberation movement.

The colonial situation, which does not permit the development of a native pseudo-bourgeoisie and in which the popular masses do not generally reach the necessary level of political consciousness before the advent of the phenomenon of national liberation, offers the petty bourgeoisie the historical opportunity of leading the struggle against foreign domination, since by nature of its objective and subjective position (higher standard of living than that of the

masses, more frequent contact with the agents of colonialism, and hence more chances of being humiliated, higher level of education and political awareness, etc.) it is the stratum which most rapidly becomes aware of the need to free itself from foreign domination. This historical responsibility is assumed by the sector of the petty bourgeoisie which, in the colonial context, can be called revolutionary, while other sectors retain the doubts characteristic of these classes or ally themselves to colonialism so as to defend, albeit illusorily, their social situation.

The neo-colonial situation, which demands the elimination of the native pseudo-bourgeoisie so that national liberation can be attained, also offers the petty bourgeoisie the chance of playing a role of major and even decisive importance in the struggle for the elimination of foreign domination. But in this case, by virtue of the progress made in the social structure, the function of leading the struggle is shared (to a greater or lesser extent) with the more educated sectors of the working classes and even with some elements of the national pseudo-bourgeoisie who are inspired by patriotic sentiments. The role of the sector of the petty bourgeoisie which participates in leading the struggle is all the more important since it is a fact that in the neo-colonial situation it is the most suitable sector to assume these functions, both because of the economic and cultural limitations of the working masses, and because of the complexes and limitations of an ideological nature which characterize the sector of the national pseudo-bourgeoisie which supports the struggle. In this case it is important to note that the role with which it is entrusted demands from this sector of the petty bourgeoisie a greater revolutionary consciousness, and the capacity for faithfully interpreting the aspirations of the masses in each phase of the struggle and for identifying themselves more and more with the masses.

But however high the degree of revolutionary consciousness of the sector of the petty bourgeoisie called on to fulfill this historical function, it cannot free itself from one objective of reality: the petty bourgeoisie, as a service class (that is to say that a class not directly involved in the process of production) does not possess the economic base to guarantee the taking over of power. In fact history has shown that whatever the role — sometimes important — played by individuals coming from the petty bourgeoisie in the process of a revolution, this class has never possessed political control. And it never could possess it, since political control (the state) is based on the economic capacity of the ruling class, and in the conditions of colonial and neo-colonial society this capacity is retained by two entities: imperialist capital and the native working classes.

To retain the power which national liberation puts in its hands, the petty bourgeoisie has only one path: to give free rein to its natural tendencies to become more bourgeois, to permit the development of a bureaucratic and intermediary bourgeoisie in the commercial cycle, in order to transform itself into a national pseudo-bourgeoisie, that is to say in order to negate the revolution and necessarily ally. In order not to betray these objectives the petty bourgeoisie has only one choice: to strengthen its revolutionary consciousness, to reject the temptations of becoming more bourgeois and the natural concerns of its class mentality, to identify itself with the working classes and not to oppose the normal development of the process of revolution. This means that in order to truly fulfill the role in the national liberation struggle, the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie must be capable of committing suicide as a class in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers, completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which they belong.



This alternative — to betray the revolution or to commit suicide as a class — constitutes the dilemma of the petty bourgeoisie in the general framework of the national liberation struggle. The positive solution in favor of the revolution depends on what Fidel Castro recently correctly called the development of revolutionary consciousness. This dependence necessarily calls our attention to the capacity of the leader of the national liberation struggle to remain faithful to the principles and to the fundamental cause of this struggle. This shows us, to a certain extent, that if national liberation is essentially a political problem, the conditions for its development give it certain characteristics which belong to the sphere of morals.

ACCOMPLICES NOT ALLIES: Abolishing the Ally-Industrial Complex: An Indigenous perspective & provocation

(Indigenous Action <http://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/>)

This provocation is intended to intervene in some of the current tensions around solidarity/support work as the current trajectories are counter-liberatory from my perspective. Special thanks to DS in Phoenix for convos that lead to this 'zine and all those who provided comments/questions/disagreements. Don't construe this as being for "white young middle class allies", just for paid activists, non-profits, or as a friend said, "downwardly-mobile anarchists or students." There are many so-called "allies" in the migrant rights struggle who support "comprehensive immigration reform" which furthers militarization of Indigenous lands.

The ally industrial complex has been established by activists whose careers depend on the "issues" they work to address. These nonprofit capitalists advance their careers off the struggles they ostensibly support. They often work in the guise of "grassroots" or "community-based" and are not necessarily tied to any organization.

They build organizational or individual capacity and power, establishing themselves comfortably among the top ranks in their hierarchy of oppression as they strive to become the ally "champions" of the most oppressed. While the exploitation of solidarity and support is nothing new, the commodification and exploitation of allyship is a growing trend in the activism industry.

Anyone who concerns themselves with anti-oppression struggles and collective liberation has at some point either participated in workshops, read 'zines, or been parts of deep discussions on how to be a "good" ally. You can now pay hundreds of dollars to go to esoteric institutes for an allyship certificate in anti-oppression. You can go through workshops and receive an allyship badge. In order to commodify struggle it must first be objectified. This is exhibited in how "issues" are "framed" & "branded." Where struggle is commodity, allyship is currency.

Ally has also become an identity, disembodied from any real mutual understanding of support.

The term ally has been rendered ineffective and meaningless.

Accomplices not allies.

ac·com·plice

*noun: **accomplice**; plural noun: **accomplices***

a person who helps another commit a crime.

There exists a fiercely unrelenting desire to achieve total liberation, with the land and, together.

At some point there is a “we”, and we most likely will have to work together. This means, at the least, formulating mutual understandings that are not entirely antagonistic, otherwise we may find ourselves, our desires, and our struggles, to be incompatible.

There are certain understandings that may not be negotiable. There are contradictions that we must come to terms with and certainly we will do this on our own terms.

But we need to know who has our backs, or more appropriately: who is with us, at our sides?

The risks of an ally who provides support or solidarity (usually on a temporary basis) in a fight are much different than that of an accomplice. When we fight back or forward, together, becoming complicit in a struggle towards liberation, we are accomplices. Abolishing allyship can occur through the criminalization of support and solidarity.

While the strategies and tactics of asserting (or abolishing depending on your view) social power and political power may be diverse, there are some hard lessons that could bear not replicating.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING TO BE A GUIDE FOR IDENTIFYING POINTS OF INTERVENTION AGAINST THE ALLY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX.

“Salvation aka Missionary Work & Self Therapy”

Allies all too often carry romantic notions of oppressed folks they wish to “help.” These are the ally “saviors” who see victims and tokens instead of people.

This victimization becomes a fetish for the worst of the allies in forms of exotification, manarchism, ‘splaining, POC sexploitation, etc. This kind of relationship generally fosters exploitation between both the oppressed and oppressor. The ally and the allied-with become entangled in an abusive relationship. Generally neither can see it until it’s too late. This relationship can also digress into co-dependency which means they have robbed each other of their own power. Ally “saviors” have a tendency to create dependency on them and their function as support. No one is here to be saved, we don’t need “missionary allies” or pity.

Guilt is also a primary ally motivating factor. Even if never admitted, guilt & shame generally function as motivators in the consciousness of an oppressor who realizes that they are operating on the wrong side. While guilt and shame are very powerful emotions, think about what you’re doing before you make another community’s struggle into your therapy session. Of course, acts of resistance and liberation can be healing, but tackling guilt, shame, and other trauma require a much different focus, or at least an explicit and consensual focus. What kind of relationships are built on guilt and shame?

“Exploitation & Co-optation”

Those who co-opt are only there to advance self interests (usually it’s either notoriety or financial). As these “allies” seek to impose their agenda, they out themselves. The ‘radical’ more militant-than-thou “grassroots” organizers are keen on seeking out “sexy” issues to co-opt (for notoriety/ ego/super ally/most radical ally) and they set the terms of engagement or dictate what struggles get amplified or marginalized regardless of whose homelands they’re operating on. The



nonprofit establishment or non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) also seeks out “sexy” or “fundable” issues to co-opt and exploit as these are ripe for the grant funding that they covet. Too often, Indigenous liberation struggles for life and land, by nature, directly confront the entire framework to which this colonial & capitalist society is based on. This is threatening to potential capitalist funders so some groups are forced to compromise radical or liberatory work for funding, others become alienated and further invisibilized or subordinated to tokenism. Co-opters most often show up to the fight when the battle has already escalated and it’s a little too late.

These entities almost always propose trainings, workshops, action camps, and offer other specialized expertise in acts of patronization. These folks are generally paid huge salaries for their “professional” activism, get over-inflated grants for logistics and “organizational capacity building”, and struggles may become further exploited as “poster struggles” for their funders. Additionally, these skills most likely already exist within the communities or they are tendencies that need only be provoked into action.

These aren’t just dynamics practiced by large so-called non-governmental organizations (NGOs), individuals are adept at this self-serving tactic as well.

Co-optation also functions as a form of liberalism. Allyship can perpetuate a neutralizing dynamic by co-opting original liberatory intent into a reformist agenda.

Certain folks in the struggles (usually movement “personalities”) who don’t upset the ally establishment status quo can be rewarded with inclusion in the ally industry.

“Self proclaiming/confessional Allies”

All too often folks show up with an, “I am here to support you!” attitude that they wear like a badge. Ultimately making struggles out to feel like an extracurricular activity that they are getting “ally points” for. Self-asserted allies may even have anti-oppression principles and values as window dressing. Perhaps you’ve seen this quote by Lilla Watson on their materials: “If you come here to help me, you’re wasting your time. If you come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” They are keen to posture, but their actions are inconsistent with their assertions.

Meaningful alliances aren’t imposed, they are consented upon. The self-proclaimed allies have no intention to abolish the entitlement that compelled them to impose their relationship upon those they claim to ally with.

“Parachuters”

Parachuters rush to the front lines seemingly from out-of-nowhere. They literally move from one hot or sexy spot to the next. They also fall under the “savior” & “self-proclaimed” categories as they mostly come from specialized institutes, organizations, & think-tanks. They’ve been through the trainings, workshops, lectures, etc., they are the “experts” so they know “what is best.” This paternalistic attitude is implicit in the structures (non-profits, institutes, etc) these “allies” derive their awareness of the “issues” from. Even if they reject their own non-profit programming, they are ultimately reactionary, entitled, and patronizing, or positioning with power-over, those they proclaim allyship with. It’s structural patronization that is rooted in the same dominion of hetero-patriarchal white supremacy.

Parachuters are usually missionaries with more funding.

“Academics, & Intellectuals”

Although sometimes directly from communities in struggle, intellectuals and academics also fit neatly in all of these categories. Their role in struggle can be extremely patronizing. In many cases the academic maintains institutional power above the knowledge and skill base of the community/ies in struggle. Intellectuals are most often fixated on un-learning oppression. These lot generally don't have their feet on the ground, but are quick to be critical of those who do.

Should we desire to merely “unlearn” oppression, or to smash it to fucking pieces, and have it's very existence gone?

An accomplice as academic would seek ways to leverage resources and material support and/or betray their institution to further liberation struggles. An intellectual accomplice would strategize with, not for and not be afraid to pick up a hammer.

“Gatekeepers”

Gatekeepers seek power over, not with, others. They are known for the tactics of controlling and/or withholding information, resources, connections, support, etc. Gatekeepers come from the outside and from within. When exposed they are usually rendered ineffective (so long as there are effective accountability/responsibility mechanisms).

Gatekeeping individuals and organizations, like “savior allies,” also have tendency to create dependency on them and their function as support. They have a tendency to dominate or control.

“Navigators & Floaters”

The “navigating” ally is someone who is familiar or skilled in jargon and maneuvers through spaces or struggles yet doesn't have meaningful dialogue (by avoiding debates or remaining silent) or take meaningful action beyond their personal comfort zones (this exists with entire organizations too). They uphold their power and, by extension, the dominant power structures by not directly attacking them.

“Ally” here is more clearly defined as the act of making personal projects out of other folk's oppression. These are lifestyle allies who act like passively participating or simply using the right terminology is support. When shit goes down they are the first to bail. They don't stick around to take responsibility for their behavior. When confronted they often blame others and attempt to dismiss or delegitimize concerns.

Accomplices aren't afraid to engage in uncomfortable/unsettling/challenging debates or discussions.

Floaters are “allies” that hop from group to group and issue to issue, never being committed enough but always wanting their presence felt and their voices heard. They tend to disappear when it comes down to being held accountable or taking responsibility for fucked up behavior.

Floaters are folks you can trust to tell the cops to “fuck off” but never engage in mutual risk, constantly put others at risk, are quick to be authoritarian about other peoples over stepping privileges, but never check their own. They basically are action junkie tourists who never want to be part of paying the price, the planning, or the responsibility but always want to be held up as



worthy of being respected for “having been there” when a rock needed throwing, bloc needs forming, etc.

This dynamic is also important to be aware of for threats of infiltration. Provocateurs are notorious floaters going from place to place never being accountable to their words or actions. Infiltration doesn't necessarily have to come from the state, the same impacts can occur by “well meaning” allies. It's important to note that calling out infiltrators bears serious implications and shouldn't be attempted without concrete evidence.

“Acts of Resignation”

Resignation of agency is a by-product of the allyship establishment. At first the dynamic may not seem problematic, after all, why would it be an issue with those who benefit from systems of oppression to reject or distance themselves from those benefits and behaviors (like entitlement, etc) that accompany them? In the worst cases, “allies” themselves act paralyzed believing it's their duty as a “good ally.” There is a difference between acting for others, with others, and for one's own interests, be explicit.

You wouldn't find an accomplice resigning their agency, or capabilities as an act of “support.” They would find creative ways to weaponize their privilege (or more clearly, their rewards of being part of an oppressor class) as an expression of social war. Otherwise we end up with a bunch of anti-civ/primitivist appropriators or anarcho-hipsters, when saboteurs would be preferred.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SOME WAYS FORWARD FOR ANTI-COLONIAL ACCOMPLICES:

Allyship is the corruption of radical spirit and imagination, it's the dead end of decolonization.

The ally establishment co-opts decolonization as a banner to fly at its unending anti-oppression gala. What is not understood is that decolonization is a threat to the very existence of settler “allies.” No matter how liberated you are, if you are still occupying Indigenous lands you are still a colonizer.

Decolonization (the process of restoring Indigenous identity) can be very personal and should be differentiated, though not disconnected, from anti-colonial struggle.

The work of an accomplice in anti-colonial struggle is to attack colonial structures & ideas.

The starting point is to articulate your relationship to Indigenous Peoples whose lands you are occupying. This is beyond acknowledgment or recognition. This can be particularly challenging for “non-federally recognized” Indigenous Peoples as they are invisibilized by the state and by the invaders occupying their homelands.

It may take time to establish lines of communication especially as some folks may have already been burnt by outsiders. If you do not know where or how to contact folks, do some ground work, research (but don't rely on anthropological sources, they are euro-centric), and pay attention. Try to more listening than speaking and planning.

In long-term struggles communication may be ruptured between various factions, there are no easy ways to address this. Don't try to work the situation out, but communicate openly with consideration of the points below.

Sometimes other Indigenous Peoples are “guests” on other's homelands yet are tokenized as the Indigenous representatives for the “local struggles”. This dynamic also perpetuates settler

colonialism. A lot of people also assume Indigenous folks are all on the same page “politically,” we’re definitely not.

While there may be times folks have the capacity and patience to do so, be aware of the dynamics perpetuated by hand-holding.

Understand that it is not our responsibility to hold your hand through a process to be an accomplice.

Accomplices listen with respect for the range of cultural practices and dynamics that exists within various Indigenous communities.

Accomplices aren’t motivated by personal guilt or shame, they may have their own agenda but they are explicit.

Accomplices are realized through mutual consent and build trust. They don’t just have our backs, they are at our side, or in their own spaces confronting and unsettling colonialism. As *accomplices we are compelled to become accountable and responsible to each other, that is the nature of trust.*

Don’t wait around for anyone to proclaim you to be an accomplice, you certainly cannot proclaim it yourself. You just are or you are not. The lines of oppression are already drawn. **Direct action is really the best and may be the only way to learn what it is to be an accomplice. We’re in a fight, so be ready for confrontation and consequence.**

If you are wondering whether to get involved with or to support an organization:

- Be suspect of anyone and any organization who professes allyship, decolonization work, and/or wears their relationships with Indigenous Peoples as at badge.
- Use some of the points above to determine primary motives.
- Look at the organizations funding. Who is getting paid? How are they transparent? Who’s defining the terms? Who sets the agenda? Do campaigns align with what the needs are on the ground?
- Are there local grassroots Indigenous People directly involved with the decision making?



METHOD #5

INTERVENTION

CRCAA Principles

1. **Prevention is the best intervention.** “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” As white anti-racists, we proactively take responsibility for preventing racist harm, and we work to heighten our awareness of white supremacy and how it is at play in our environment. This means we have to learn to see the things our privilege hides from us. We learn to become aware of “pre-assault indicators” and take proactive steps to address potential white supremacist threats.
2. **Intervention is political, not just physical.** Solid political intervention will, more often than not, make physical intervention unnecessary. “Might makes right” is a white nationalist perspective; as anti-racists, we have the political and moral maturity to win many people to our position through other means. We urge anti-racists practicing intervention to be proactive and strategic, and to use all available tools to combat white supremacy. Remember that white supremacy is systemic and structural, and that grassroots racist vigilantes are both a symptom of and surrogates for that system. In addition to addressing racist vigilante activity, our movement must increase our collective capacity to intervene against the system itself.
3. **Anti-racist militancy requires revolutionary discipline.** History shows that the State will always attempt to characterize anti-racist community defense as violent. We have a responsibility as white people practicing intervention to do our part to minimize the State’s ability to criminalize and repress our comrades by practicing revolutionary discipline in both action and speech. Real struggle in real time is complex and nuanced and it has real consequences. We won’t always all agree on tactics, but one point of unity is clear: we stand for the People’s right to dissent and we stand against the criminalization of dissent. We must love and protect each other. We ask ourselves the following questions when engaging in the Intervention method: Is our intervention creating real protection, or is it creating more danger? Is our intervention really about preventing/addressing harm, or is it a way to satisfy an emotional need of ours? And who are we accountable to?

John Brown’s Last Speech (1859)

I have, may it please the Court, a few words to say.

In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted, the design on my part to free the slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter, when I went into Missouri and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moved them through the country, and finally left them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again, on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection; and that is, it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved (for I admire the

truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case), had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.

This court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me, further, to "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say, I am yet too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done as I have always freely admitted I have done in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit; so let it be done!

Let me say one word further.

I feel entirely satisfied with the treatment I have received on my trial. Considering all the circumstances. it has been more generous than I expected. But I feel no consciousness of guilt. I have stated from the first what was my intention and what was not. I never had any design against the life of any person, nor any disposition to commit treason, or excite slaves to rebel, or make any general insurrection. I never encouraged any man to do so, but always discouraged any idea of that kind.

Let me say, also, a word in regard to the statements made by some of those connected with me. I hear it has been stated by some of them that I have induced them to join me. But the contrary is true. I do not say this to injure them, but as regretting their weakness. There is not one of them but joined me of his own accord, and the greater part of them at their own expense. A number of them I never saw, and never had a word of conversation with, till the day they came to me; and that was for the purpose I have stated.

Now I have done.

Excerpt from "The Dialectics of Liberation"

(Speech given by Stokely Carmichael at the Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation in London, July 18, 1967)

I want to clear this up - to point out the difference between individual racism and institutionalized racism.

The first type, individual racism, consists of overt acts by individuals, and usually the immediate result is the death of the victim, or the traumatic and violent destruction of property. This type can be recorded on TV cameras and can frequently be observed in the process.

The second type is less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts, but it is no less destructive of human life. It's part of the overall operation of



established and respected forces in society, so it doesn't receive the condemnation that the first type does.

Let me give you an example of the first type. When unidentified white terrorists bomb a Black church and kill five Black children, that is an act of individual racism, widely deplored by most segments of the world. But when in that same city, Birmingham, Alabama, not five but five hundred Black babies die each year because of lack of proper food, shelter, and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally, and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination in the Black community, that is a function of institutionalized racism. When a Black family move into a home in a white neighborhood, and it is stoned, burned or routed out, the latter is an overt act of individual racism, and many people condemn that, at least in words. But it is institutionalized racism that keeps the Black people locked in dilapidated slums, tenements, where they must live out their daily lives subject to the prey of exploitative slum landlords, merchants, loan sharks and the restrictive practices of real-estate agents. We're talking now about the U.S., but I think you can apply a little of it to London. But the society either pretends it does not know of institutionalized racism, or is incapable of doing anything meaningful about the conditions of institutionalized racism. And the resistance to doing anything meaningful about institutionalized racism stems from the fact that Western society enjoys its luxury from institutionalized racism, and therefore, were it to end institutionalized racism, it would in fact destroy itself.

.....

You cannot grant anybody independence, they just take it; and that is what white America is going to learn. No white liberal can give me anything. The only thing a white liberal can do for me is help civilize other whites, because they need to be civilized.

.....

Another mystification white society uses is the word 'riot' - when rebellions break out in the large cities of America, the first thing people say is that they're riots. And white Western society is very good, the next thing they say is: 'We must have law and order.' Hitler had the most efficient system of law and order we've ever seen. He happened to have been a fascist. He did not have justice coupled with his law and order. The United States knows about law and order, it doesn't know about justice. It is for white Western society to talk about law and order. It is for the Third World to talk about justice.

For God's sake, I don't understand how the white West can ever talk about violence - they are the most violent people on the face of the earth. They have used violence to get everything they have. And yet, they're the first to talk about violence. The armed rebellions and the guerilla warfare going on in the United States today are not the most violent things going on in the world - Vietnam, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Hong Kong, Aden, Somaliland, that's where your violence really is. Violence can take the form of physical warfare, or it can take the form of a slow death. The Jews in the Warsaw ghettos were suffering from violence. It didn't take an actual physical form until they were put in the gas chambers, but they were suffering from mental violence. Wherever you go in Africa today, the Africans are suffering from violence inflicted on them by the white West, be it that they are stripped of their culture, of their human dignity, or of the resources of their very land.

....

Black people in the United States have no time to play nice police parlor games, especially when the lives of our children are at stake. Some white Americans can afford to speak softly, tread lightly, employ the soft-sell and the put-off - or is it put-down? - because they own the society. For us to adopt their methods of relieving our oppression is certainly ludicrous. We Blacks must respond in our own way, on our own terms, in a manner that fits our temperaments. The definition of ourselves, the road we pursue, and the goals we seek, are our responsibility. It is clear that society is capable of, and willing to, reward those individuals who do not forcefully condemn it - to reward them with prestige, status, and material benefits - but these crumbs of corruption will be rejected. As a people we have absolutely nothing to be lost by refusing to play such games. Anything less than clarity, honesty, and forcefulness perpetuates the centuries of sliding over, dressing up and soothing down the true feelings, hopes, and demands of an oppressed Black people. Mild demands and hypocritical smiles mislead white America into thinking that all is fine and peaceful; they lead white America into thinking that the path and pace whites choose for dealing with racial problems are acceptable to the masses of Blacks. It is far better to speak forcefully and truthfully. Only when one's true self, Black or white, is exposed, can society proceed to deal with the problems from a position of clarity, and not from one of misunderstanding.

Thus, we have no intention of engaging in the meaningless language so common to discussions of race in the world today: 'Things were and are bad, but we are making progress.' 'Granted, your demands are legitimate, but we cannot move hastily. Stable societies are best built slowly.' 'Be careful that you do not anger or alienate your white allies. Remember, after all, you are only 10 percent of the population.'

We reject the language and the views, whether expressed by Blacks or by whites. We leave them to others to mouth, because we don't feel that this rhetoric is either relevant or useful. Rather we suggest a more meaningful language - that of Frederick Douglass, a man who understood the nature of protest in society:

'Those who profess to favor freedom, yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground....Power concedes nothing with demands - it never did and it never will....The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.'

He was a slave.

....

Since there's been a lot of talk about psychology at this meeting, I've thought up a psychological problem. White liberals are always saying, 'What can we do?' I mean, they're always coming to help Black people. I thought of an analogy. If you were walking down the street and a man had a gun on another man - let's say both of them were white - and you had to help somebody, whom would you help? It's obvious to me that if I were walking down the street, and a man had a gun on another man, and I was going to help, I'd help the man who didn't have the gun, if the man who had the gun was just pulling the gun on the other man for no apparent reason - if he was just going to rob him or shoot him because he didn't like him. The only way I could help is either to get a gun and shoot the man with the gun, or take the gun away from him - join the fellow who doesn't have a gun and both of us gang up on the man with the gun. But white liberals never do that. When the man has the gun, they walk around him and they come to the victim, and they say,



'Let me help you,' and what they mean is 'help you adjust to the situation with the man who has the gun on you.'

If indeed white liberals are going to help, their only job is to get the gun from the man and talk to him, because he is a sick man. The Black man is not the sick man, it is the white man who is sick, he's the one who picked up the gun first.

"To the Woman Standing Behind Me in Line Who Asks Me How Long This Black History Month is Going to Last"

(Marilyn Buck, 1998 http://marilyn buck.com/to_the_woman_standing_behind.html)

The whole month
Even if it is the shortest month
A good time in this prison life
You stare at me
And ask my why I think
February is so damned fine
I take a breath
Prisoners fight for February
African voices cross razor wire
Cut through the flim-flam
Of Amerikkkan history
Call its cruelties out
Confirm the genius of survival

Creation and
Plain ole enduring
A celebration!

The woman drops her gaze
Looks away and wishes
She had not asked
Confused that white skin did not
guarantee
A conversation she wanted to have
She hasn't spoke to me since
I think I'll try to stand
In line with her
again.

The Massacre That Spawned the Alt-Right

(Shaun Assael and Peter Keating, *Politico*, November 3, 2019 <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/11/03/greensboro-massacre-white-nationalism-klan-229873>)

Forty years ago, a gang of Klansmen and Nazis murdered five communists in broad daylight. America has never been the same.

"Death to the Klan!" On Saturday, November 3, 1979, that chant swept over Morningside Homes, a mostly black housing project in Greensboro, North Carolina, as dozens of protesters—some donning blue hard hats for protection—hammered placards onto signposts and danced in the morning sun.

The American left had largely given up on communism by then, but these demonstrators were full-on Maoists. Their ranks included professionals with degrees from places like Harvard and

Duke. And they were descending on Greensboro, a city where sit-ins helped launch the civil rights movement in 1960, to ignite another revolution. They danced to a guitar player singing, “Woke up this morning with my mind set to build the Party.” Their children dressed in tan military shirts and red berets. They even brought an effigy of a Klansman, dressed in a white sheet and hood, which kids from the neighborhood joined in punching.

The communists planned to begin their march at noon, moving from the housing project to a local shopping center. But just after 11:20, a caravan filled with real Klansmen and Nazis surprised them, snaking through the neighborhood’s narrow byways. As the protesters stood their ground, a man in a white T-shirt leaned out the passenger window of a canary-yellow pickup truck, and yelled, “You asked for the Klan. Now you got ‘em!” The station wagon behind him carried four Nazis. Seven more vehicles followed, carrying nearly 30 more men, including an Imperial Wizard of the Klan.

What happened next took just 88 seconds, but still reverberates 40 years later. In a confrontation where white supremacists began firing pistols, rifles and shotguns, and with television cameras rolling but police nowhere to be found, five communists were shot dead in broad daylight. Ten others were injured, some left to lie bleeding in the streets.

But that November morning became momentous for more than the grotesque video [footage](#) that still lives on the Internet: The Greensboro Massacre, as it became known, was the coming-out bloodbath for the white nationalist movement that is upending our politics today.

Before Greensboro, America’s most lurid extremists largely operated in separate, mutually distrustful spheres. Greensboro was the place where the farthest-right groups of white supremacy learned to kill together. After November 3, 1979, it was suddenly possible to imagine Confederate flags flying alongside swastikas in Charlottesville. Or a teenager like Dylann Roof hoarding Nazi drawings as well as a Klan hood in his bedroom while he plotted mass murder.

Today, white nationalism is closer to the mainstream of American politics than ever before. The far right’s fears about “replacement” of the white race and outsider “invasions” have become standard tropes at conservative media outlets, and its anger is routinely stoked by the president of the United States. At the same time, right-wing violence is on the rise: Far-right terrorists accounted for the overwhelming majority of extremist murders in the U.S. last year, according to a January report by the Anti-Defamation League.

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The seeds for this iteration of white supremacy were planted 40 years ago in Greensboro, when the white wedding of Klansmen and Nazis launched a new, pan-right extremism—a toxic brew of virulent racism, anti-government rhetoric, apocalyptic fearmongering and paramilitary tactics. And this extremism has proven more durable than anyone then could imagine.

Segregationists of the Greatest Generation, who fought German soldiers on the battlefields of World War II, would have thought it beyond preposterous for the Klan and Nazis to make common cause. Adolf Hitler drew inspiration from Jim Crow, but American southerners strongly supported



going to war against Nazi Germany. In 1946, a list of American Nazi Party members, obtained by the U.S. Army, [showed](#) that just two percent lived in the South. Nazis were dedicated to the violent overthrow of the government, as part of their program of genocidal fascism. Through the 1950s, most neo-Confederates considered themselves patriotic Americans and had faith in the U.S. political system, even as they believed in and practiced white supremacy.

But many southern traditionalists experienced the upheavals of the next two decades as a series of betrayals. By the mid-1970s, federal courts had embraced civil rights, and civic and business leaders were dismantling legal segregation. Manufacturing, textile and tobacco jobs were vanishing. Politicians on the cosmopolitan left and corporate right were abandoning blue-collar voters. Vietnam veterans were coming home unappreciated and embittered. In addition, the FBI, after years of pursuing black nationalists, began infiltrating and undermining local Ku Klux Klans through a program, largely forgotten today, called COINTELPRO-White Hate. To be sure, only a small fraction of angry southerners turned to terror groups. But the Klan's membership grew in the '70s, and so did its public support. Gallup reported in 1979 that 11 percent of white Americans viewed the KKK favorably, up from just six percent in 1965. And with that rebound came something more: Those who were susceptible to recruitment were far more likely than their parents or grandparents to see the U.S. government itself as an alien force bent on destroying the white way of life.

Meanwhile, American Nazis were expanding their public presence. Some younger would-be fuhrers began trading armbands for sport coats and toning down their rhetoric in media appearances in order to seem more palatable. Other Nazi leaders, like William Pierce, head of the white separatist National Alliance, started looking for partners and muscle, hoping to turn far-right fanatics from vigilantes to insurrectionists. In 1978, Pierce published *The Turner Diaries*, a futurist fantasy-cum-blueprint for all-out race war. In Pierce's novel, oppressed whites join forces to create an underground organization that bombs New York and murders thousands of black and Jewish people, among many other horrific acts; the book's protagonist ultimately flies a nuclear warhead into the Pentagon. *The Turner Diaries* was a huge hit with the far right, and has influenced a wide spectrum of racists—and inspired notorious hate crimes—ever since.

It wasn't just avowed racists who gravitated to new extremes. In the weird, unusually rootless time between Watergate and the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, America's faith in public institutions collapsed, cynicism soared and belief in a wide range of conspiracy theories and cults, from UFOs to the Unification Church, sprouted in popularity. But those rooted in racial resentment took hold in especially bitter soil. White supremacists of all stripes came to believe they faced annihilation, and they prepared to fight it on the home front. The country, in other words, was primed for a fusion of the ultra-right.

The story of the Greensboro Massacre really begins with an episode that occurred in the summer of 1979, in a tiny, working-class city 60 miles to the southwest, called China Grove.

Klan leaders in North Carolina had spent the first half of the year stepping up their recruitment efforts by appealing to the heritage of white supremacy. The Federated Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, for example, staged a historical exhibit at the Forsyth County Library—and in an early sign of what was to come, a group of Nazis showed up to ogle the items on view, surprising the media.

On July 8, the same North Carolina Klan faction tried to screen *The Birth of a Nation*, the 1915 racist epic that depicts heroic figures in white hoods trying to beat back the scourge of Reconstruction at the turn of the century, at the China Grove Community Center. But before they could show the movie, more than a hundred protesters, led by communists from Durham and

Greensboro, marched on the building, chanting “Death to the Klan!” and “Decease the rotten beast.” Many carried pipes and chains.

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The Grand Dragon of the Federated Knights, a pot-bellied mason named Joe Grady, stood on the porch outside the building with some 20 men in robes and white-power t-shirts, rifles drawn, while members of the China Grove police force struggled to create a human buffer. Grady’s men were eager to fire on the crowd, but a policeman who walked up to him whispered that if they did, the officers trying to keep the peace were the ones who would get hurt. Grady reluctantly agreed to move into the musty bingo hall, where women and children who had been watching the approaching crowd were hiding. Once the Klansmen retreated, a cheer rose up from the protesters, who burned a pair of Confederate flags.

Afterwards, once the crowd was gone and the screening cancelled, Grady re-emerged to face the news cameras. Grabbing a shred of burned flag, he vowed, “There will be revenge for this.” But while Grady put on a brave face for the remaining television cameras, in the eyes of his hooded peers, he had committed a cardinal sin. He had allowed himself to look weak.

By that point, the Klan’s resurgence was already triggering confrontations around the country. In Decatur, Alabama, in May 1979, more than a hundred armed Klansmen blocked a civil rights march. Later, that August, rock-throwing protesters pelted Klansmen at an anti-immigration meeting in Castro Valley, California. None of those episodes led to lethal retaliatory violence, however. China Grove was different because it got the attention of a young Nazi named Harold Covington.

Born about 20 miles east of Greensboro, Covington had attended an integrated high school in Chapel Hill, where he proudly called himself the “school fascist.” Jowly and glib, Covington traveled to South Africa where he built a minor reputation as a soldier-for-hire who’d taken up arms to defend apartheid. By the time he resettled in North Carolina and launched a losing but surprisingly well-run campaign for Raleigh city council, Covington had become an articulate, publicity-seeking ideologue, with a sideline writing campy novels—a kind of L. Ron Hubbard of the racist resistance.

With a sense of himself as a global figure, Covington regarded most Klansmen he met as boorish. The backlash to China Grove convinced him they were also in disarray. And Covington saw no one in the back-country klaverns of North Carolina capable of stepping into the void. Long before he would become a YouTube provocateur by posting white-power videos online, Covington decided to herd them into a single white-power army himself.

In a preview of 8Chan, the message-board website that would become a haven for white nationalists in the 2010s, he began bringing together various strains of supremacists, or as he put it, “normalizing relations.” His early attempts didn’t go well. The few Klan members he was able to woo were largely fabulists who made up stories to make themselves seem more violent than they really were. Deciding he needed to get a better cut, Covington organized a racist retreat on September 22 at a borrowed farm outside Louisburg, about 30 miles northeast of Raleigh, and



sent word through the bars, garages and diners where “his people” hung out that they were all invited.

With the media dutifully attending what promised to be a freakshow, no detail was too small for Covington to stage-manage. Kids milled around a barbecue pit where a whole hog roasted, while parents doused a huge cross in kerosene. Nazis wore uniforms budgeted at \$25 for tailored pants, \$10 for boots and \$2 for arm bands. The sound system alternated bluegrass tunes and “The Ride of the Valkyries.” A cute blonde in a “White Power” t-shirt sauntered with a Doberman and a rifle for photographers. In a crib, a baby wore a small shirt that read “Future Klansman.” For extra inspiration, a noose hung from a tree.

Late in the afternoon, a caravan of 20 Klansmen pulled into the farm led by a gaunt mechanic with a plunging jawline named Virgil Griffin. Griffin carried the title of Imperial Wizard of a backwoods klavern known as the Invisible Empire in Mount Holly, close to the South Carolina border. But he was also something of a joke on the national stage. His rallies, unlike Covington’s barbecue, were often threadbare affairs that dissolved into chaos. At one event, he’d been shouted down by protesters singing the theme song from “The Mickey Mouse Club,” according to an [account](#) from a community journalist, Elizabeth Wheaton, who covered radical politics around Greensboro.

If Covington looked in the mirror and saw a worldwide revolutionary, Griffin viewed himself as a backwoods patriot. After the China Grove debacle, he concluded that local Klans needed better leadership and more action, and believed he could provide both. Covington was only too happy to help feed such ambitions, elaborately making the Imperial Wizard feel like an honored guest among the other extremists—who also included the Klansmen who had peeled off from the Grady’s Federated Knights after China Grove, and a Nazi-curious crew from Winston-Salem.

“You take a man who fought in the Second World War, it’s hard for him to sit down in a room full of swastikas,” a Klansman told the Associated Press. ... “But people realize time is running out. We’re going to have to get together.”

The extremists nattered about where to buy guns and how to deal with the summer heat—Klan robes were sweatier than Nazi uniforms. And they found common ground.

“You take a man who fought in the Second World War, it’s hard for him to sit down in a room full of swastikas,” a Klansman told the Associated Press, which published a report about the event called “North Carolina United Racist Front Forms.” Then he added: “But people realize time is running out. We’re going to have to get together.”

What Virgil Griffin didn’t know was that one of his closest allies was keeping the cops informed about this new alliance.

Unlike the years after 9/11 when American law enforcement took its focus off white nationalism to fight Islamist terror, the 1960s and ’70s were a period of robust intelligence-gathering in the supremacist underground. One of North Carolina’s most charismatic Klansmen, a car salesman named Bob Jones who recruited 12,000 members to his state chapter, was undone by an aide whose information led to him being dragged before Congress and held in contempt. In the case of Griffin, law enforcement’s material came from a chain-smoking handyman named Eddie Dawson.

Born in New Jersey, Dawson cut an odd figure for a Southern Klansman. He spoke with a twitchy northern accent and had an uncanny resemblance to the Hollywood actor William Holden. Having

drifted down to Greensboro in the early '60s—a time when black activists were staging sit-ins at segregated lunch counters—he managed to get invited to a meeting of the Klan, and quickly established himself as an enthusiastic recruit. In one career-building episode, he took an armed joy ride through a poor black neighborhood that he peppered with rifle fire.

Dawson, however, blamed the KKK for letting him get sentenced to nine months in jail after he was convicted of assault with intent to kill for the joy ride. He was still bitter when an FBI agent approached him at a coffee shop after he got out in 1969, and offered to pay him \$25 every time he told the Bureau about a Klan meeting. Dawson shook hands on the deal.

His time with the FBI ended the way most of his relationships did—unhappily. But Dawson resumed his double life a few weeks after Covington's barbecue, when leaflets began appearing around Greensboro that announced a "Death to the Klan" march. The posters were the work of a group called the Workers Viewpoint Organization (WVO), which was filled with professionals who had elite-school degrees, identified as Maoists, and used revolutionary rhetoric to match. They had attempted to organize local textile workers, then tried direct action by taking part in the anti-KKK protest at China Grove. Now, they were itching for another, more visible confrontation with the Klan.

The leftists had plausible reasons for choosing to organize and demonstrate in North Carolina. At the end of the '70s, the state ranked 49th in the U.S. in blue-collar wages and dead last in the percentage of workers who were unionized. But neither Duke educations nor medical training nor Maoist ideology prepared them to comprehend the culture of electricians, loggers or sheet-metal workers—jobs held by some of the men who would ride the caravan into Greensboro—beyond seeing them as either recruitable proletarians or irredeemable racists. The communists used language even more incendiary than the words on their flyers. On October 11, for instance, they issued a press release saying the KKK "must be physically beaten back, eradicated, exterminated, wiped off the face of the earth." And they took exactly the wrong message from China Grove: that the Klan would be too cowardly to mount any resistance to them.

Instead, WVO's leaflet lit a flame under Griffin and the Klan. It also alarmed the police in Greensboro. Soon, a detective who knew Dawson's FBI past was talking with him about disrupting local meetings of communists, which made perfect sense. After all, the KKK rated communists about the same as black people. But Dawson had another angle, too: He could help the police investigate the Klan. With a highly-developed sense of grievance that often left him feeling under-appreciated and under-used, he saw a chance to become the one who was pulling the strings—both as an informant and as an instigator—as confrontations heated up.

On Saturday, October 20, when Griffin marched his Invisible Empire through the fairgrounds in Lincoln County, about 100 miles southwest of Greensboro, and told a crowd of 150 that if they cared about their children, they would "kill a hundred niggers and leave them dead in the street." At a members-only meeting afterward, he introduced Dawson to talk about the planned WVO march. Towering over the 5-foot-6 Griffin, Dawson started out by warning that the communists were recruiting busloads of black college students to flood into Greensboro. Asked whether it would be a good idea to bring guns, he demurred. "I'm not your father," he replied. "But if you carry a gun, you better have damned bond money."



The vote among those in the audience was unanimous: They'd go to Greensboro to make their presence felt. The following weekend, as word spread, white supremacist groups met in at least three different locations around North Carolina and agreed to head there, too.

Dawson earned \$50 by telling the Greensboro PD about the October 20 meeting. And he let them know Griffin was planning to come to town and looking for allies. But Dawson neglected to mention his own starring role, or the fact he subsequently drove around Morningside Homes in his Cadillac late at night, pasting leaflets over the "Death to the Klan!" posters. His replacements featured a dark figure hanging from a noose and the phrase, "It's time for some old-fashioned American Justice."

The Nazi camp, meanwhile, was getting just as frothy. At a November 1 event that Covington staged for the media in the garage of a sheet-metal worker named Roland Wayne Wood, a dozen of his recruits mugged through a made-for-TV roast of the disgraced China Grove wizard, Joe Grady.

Once the cameras departed, the united racists got down to the business of how they planned to crash the communists' party in Greensboro. One suggested throwing eggs. Another went further, saying he had a pipe bomb that would be effective if thrown into a crowd. At 11:00 p.m., the group gathered around a television to watch themselves on the local news, only to become infuriated when a press conference held by the WVO's members got more airtime. As the screen showed one of the march leaders calling the KKK "scum," Jerry Paul Smith, the Klansman with the pipe bomb, took his gun and pointed it at the TV.

Police reports would later quote Wood as saying that he heard Smith mutter, "Kill the communist."

On the morning of November 3, Dawson called his Greensboro Police contact to say that three dozen supremacists from around the state, including Virgil Griffin, were assembling at a house owned by one of Dawson's Klan pals, a few miles from the Morningside Homes march site.

A little later, Dawson called again to warn that the place was chock full of firearms. But that information never made its way to the shift commander, who wrapped up a daily briefing at about 10:30 that morning by reminding his men the parade permit listed a start time of noon. The officers could get breakfast, he said, so long as they were on the route by 11:30.

As the Klansmen and Nazis made their way along Interstate 85 into Greensboro, a Greensboro Police detective spotted the caravan and called in to ask if tactical units were in place. His supervisor, showing no special concern, replied that there was still "another fourteen minutes by my watch" for breakfast.

The leftists planned to line up their crew at 11:00, then begin marching at noon. But at 11:22, a frightening transmission came over a CB radio: Klansmen were talking about closing in. Before the protesters could react, cars with Confederate-flag license plates began approaching. There were no cops in sight.

Dawson, who was leading the convoy, would later tell police and reporters that he merely wanted to put a scare into the Maoists before driving on to the spot at the shopping center where the march would end. It was Dawson who yelled, "You asked for the Klan. Now you got 'em!"

But then Griffin's white LTD screeched and swerved, nearly hitting a marcher. The caravan came to a stop. The communists went from singing to swinging, banging their placards on the cars. Members of the convoy poured out, punching through the melee, grabbing weapons. Dawson

told his driver to get the hell out of there—and since they were in the first car of the caravan, they were able to split.

The WVO had packed a few weapons, but were seriously outgunned. One of the WVO leaders, a physician named Jim Waller, lunged for a 12-gauge shotgun he'd stashed in a car, but a Klansman flew toward him before he could fire. The two rolled in the grass, fighting nose-to-nose over the weapon until others started piling on top of them and the pump mechanism snapped. Waller screamed as the pump-action crushed the bones in his shooting hand.

Amidst the chaos, other white supremacists lined up their shots. A Nazi named Jack Fowler opened the trunk of a blue Ford Fairlane and, with a cigarette hanging from his mouth, handed out rifles and shotguns. David Matthews, from Griffin's Klan, stood behind the door of a van and nailed his first target, a bookish pediatrician named Mike Nathan. Then Matthews took down an organizer named Jim Wrenn, who was crawling on his belly. Bill Sampson, a former Harvard Divinity student, tried to give Wrenn rifle cover but took two fatal shots in the heart.

Roland Wayne Wood observed Waller writhing from his crushed hand. Coolly aiming his shotgun, the Nazi delivered a blast into the physician's right side. Matthews, the Klan member, finished the job with another blast into Waller's back.

The convoy sped away, with Matthews' van the last to leave the scene. Climbing aboard, Matthews let the rest of squad know: "I got three of 'em." Moments later, police intercepted the van, but didn't get to Morningside Homes until the shooting was over.

Eighty-eight seconds of gunfire in Greensboro marked the worst violence in the South since the 1960s. And for the men who shot their enemies dead, November 3, 1979, was just the beginning of a new era of notoriety and collaboration. The botched trials and political response that followed ensured that white nationalism would grow to become more dangerous than ever today.

The legal system took three whacks at the Greensboro conspirators. First, police rounded up 14 Klansmen and Nazis, and the state of North Carolina charged most of them with first-degree murder and felony riot. Prosecutors lined up eyewitnesses, videotapes, weapons and FBI ballistics analysis. But they couldn't convince the surviving revolutionaries—who were stubbornly convinced the cops had conspired to leave them unprotected—to cooperate.

At trial, the Klansmen and Nazis wrapped themselves in the American flag and argued self-defense. "They acted like men to aid someone in distress," Wood's lawyer claimed. "They would not have been worthy of anyone's respect if they had done otherwise." He added that his client just wanted to sing, "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

On November 17, 1980, an all-white jury found the Klansmen and Nazis not guilty. "Anytime you defeat communism," said Jerry Pridmore, one of the men acquitted, "it's a victory for America."

The U.S. Justice Department then charged nine Klansmen and Nazis, this time including Griffin and Dawson, with conspiracy to violate the civil rights of the Greensboro victims. In April 1984, the federal jury, also all-white, refused to conclude the defendants had violated the law by acting out of racial rather than political hatred. It too delivered not-guilty verdicts across the board.



Finally, the victims filed a \$48-million lawsuit against 87 defendants, including the city of Greensboro, the state of North Carolina, the Justice Department and the FBI. Wood, now on trial for the third time, felt confident enough to give a Nazi salute when sworn to testify.

In June 1985, the civil jury delivered a landmark yet twisted verdict: They found eight defendants liable for wrongful death: Dawson, five Klan and Nazi shooters, the Greensboro police detective who received advance word about the attack from Dawson and the lieutenant who was the GPD event commander at the massacre. But the jury applied that decision only in the case of Michael Nathan, the one murder victim who wasn't a WVO member at the time of the shootings. To avoid appeals, the city of Greensboro settled for \$351,000, sending a check to Nathan's widow, who split it among the survivors.

Strike three.

The supremacists who emerged from the Greensboro trials understood they were free. Free not just to stay out of prison, or to keep burning rags and kvetching about the price of jackboots. Free to work together to stockpile weapons, terrorize neighborhoods and commit violence up to and including murder—so long as their opponents were communists.

"The Klan and Nazis felt emboldened," says Patricia Clark, a veteran Klan watcher who served on the [Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), which local citizens set up in the mid-2000s to investigate the massacre. "They thought they won the fight."

By 1980, membership in Klan-Nazi fusion groups began to outnumber that of old-school Klans. And as horizons of hate broadened and merged, alliances deepened around the country. As just one example, four months after Greensboro, the California Knights of the Ku Klux Klan rallied in the city of Oceanside and beat counter-protesters with baseball bats. The marchers brayed a version of "Sixteen Tons," the old coal-mining song. Their rewritten lyrics celebrated the Greensboro killings and ended, "If the Nazis don't get you, a Klansman will."

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The increasing unity of far-right factions was more than tactical. By transfusing "blood and soil" into American racism, it led to what historian John Drabble called in a 2007 [study](#) "the Nazification of the Ku Klux Klan." That was bad news for hustlers like Eddie Dawson. Dawson managed to dodge Klan retribution for informing. But he soon found it much harder to profit from playing different extremists against one another. Greensboro turned Dawson into a relic—and the hardening ideology of right-wing terror networks that followed made them harder for the FBI to penetrate.

Meanwhile, new doors swung wide open for fanatics like [Frazier Glenn Miller](#), a Covington acolyte and former Green Beret who rode in the Greensboro caravan. Miller founded the Carolina Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in 1980. And by merging Klan and Nazi symbolism while instilling paramilitary discipline in his followers, he quickly built the strongest white-power group in the state.

As an emboldened white-power movement spread, Miller connected its dots. The Greensboro veteran held public marches, harassed local black residents and amassed huge caches of explosives. In 1987, he issued a revolutionary "Declaration of War" filled with calls for assassinations. He coordinated with The Order, a violent extremist group inspired by *The Turner Diaries*. And he sought allies through voluminous racist literature and eventually on the Internet, where he extolled the mass shooting by Anders Behring Breivik in Norway. Miller returned to racist

murder in 2014, when he targeted a Jewish community center in Overland Park, Kansas, and killed three people. That landed him on death row, where he sits today.

Greensboro's aftershocks held their most important lessons for mainstream opportunists. By the end of the 1970s, southern nationalists had spent more than a decade trying to re-code their racism to make it more palatable. As master political consultant Lee Atwater put it: "You start out in 1954 by saying, 'Nigger, nigger, nigger.' By 1968, you can't say 'nigger'—that hurts you, backfires. So you say stuff like forced busing, states' rights."

Republican politicians soon realized they could go even farther. After Greensboro, it became clear that, as historian Kathleen Belew has [written](#), extremists "increasingly used anticommunism as an alibi for racial violence." And by targeting the far right's dual paranoias—federal authority and socialism—GOP operatives were able to harness its nativism while hanging onto the votes of establishment conservatives.

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Over the next 30 years, Republicans racked up spectacular gains in state legislative seats, governorships and U.S. Senate elections across the South by hammering cultural issues that the far right recognized as approving winks. A decade after Greensboro, establishment candidates were already posing in front of rebel flags and openly courting "white heritage" groups like the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The GOP advanced most in counties where the Klan had been active in the '60s, according to a 2014 [study](#) by political scientists from Notre Dame, Brandeis and Yale.

During the administration of President Barack Obama, the new generation of conservative politicians had the extremists' backs. In 2009, the Department of Homeland Security issued a report forecasting a rise in racist violence. Republicans objected so vociferously that DHS rescinded the projection and silenced its domestic terrorism unit. Mike Pompeo, then a congressman from Kansas, said it was "dangerous" to track homegrown violence.

By that point it was hard to tell who was co-opting whom on the right. Republicans were playing to the fringe without worrying where their most incitable elements might channel their anger.

And you know what happened next: Jonah turned the whale inside out. Donald Trump's bald invocations of racial and working-class grievances made him a hero to the ultras; "MAGA" is the most common word in Twitter user profiles among members of the alt-right, according to a study by J.M Berger of the research network VOX-Pol. From Charlottesville to Pittsburgh to El Paso, right-wing attacks have surged. The latest evidence: The FBI made almost 100 arrests related to domestic terrorism by July of this year, more than in all of 2018, according to agency director Christopher Wray, who told Congress the majority of cases involved "white supremacist violence."

In Greensboro, private citizens tried to find a way forward by empaneling a Truth & Reconciliation Commission—the first in U.S. history. But today's political landscape, where the language and resentments of white nationalism have taken deeper root than ever, raises the question: What happens when there is no reconciliation in truth?



Twenty-six years after the massacre, Virgil Griffin surprised everyone at the Greensboro Commission by showing up and taking questions.

Asked why no Klansman was killed in the shootings, he answered: "Maybe God guided the bullets."