

INTERNALIZED WHITE SUPREMACY

The Impact of Internalized White Supremacy in our Community

- Internalized white supremacy affects white people and the dominant white culture in many ways. Some of these include:
- Resistance to change
- Paternalism
- Ignorance and misinformation
- Scapegoating/blaming/labeling
- Self-righteous anger
- Continued oppression
- Resistance to acknowledging/correcting past
- Individualism

WHITE PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE

The following three pages are adapted from Paul Kivel's *Uprooting Racism*, 1996, pp. 40-46. We've noted original authors when Kivel utilized other's work.

Tactics of Resistance

<i>Tactic</i>	<i>What it is</i>	<i>What it sounds like</i>
Denial	Denial of existence of oppression; denial of responsibility for it	Discrimination is a thing of the past. It's a level playing field. It's not my fault; I'm not responsible
Minimization	Playing down the damage	Racism isn't a big problem anymore It's not that bad
Blame	Justifying the oppression, blaming the victims of oppression for it	Look at the way they act. If they weren't so angry. . . Women are too emotional
Lack of Intent	Claims the damage is unintentional	I didn't mean it like that. It was only a joke.
It's over now	The oppression happened in the past and is no longer an issue	Slavery was over a long time ago. Feminism has gone too far.
Competing victimization	Claiming that targets of oppression have so much power that society is threatened.	Women really have all the power. We just want our rights too. They're taking away our jobs. White people are under attack.

Sources of Resistance

(adapted from Arnold, Burke, James, Martin, and Thomas *Educating for a Change*, 1991, p. 134)

Our identity and relation to power: we may feel guilt or anxiety for being a white person when racism is the issue or a man when sexism is the issue. We may be afraid to speak out because we'll be seen as a troublemaker and become isolated from the dominant group.

Our discomfort with the content and the perspective: the implications of what we're learning may be very threatening to us if we are white.

Our discomfort with the process: those of us used to doing things a certain way may get impatient or frustrated when the process is unfamiliar, slow, or confusing. We may assume that the way we respond to the process is the way everyone responds to the process, whether or not that is true. Some of us feel we have a 'right' to be included, while others never expect to be fully included.

Our fear about losing: taking in and/or acting on the information presented may mean loss - of family, or friends, or a job. A white person who opens up to how racism is playing out in their family or community may risk losing important relationships if they decided to speak or act.

Our fear of critical thinking: many of us tend to hear critical thinking as criticism. For example, the suggestion that we could do better on race issues in our organizations is heard as criticism that we're doing a bad job. This can be particularly difficult when we have a lot of personal investment in the organization or community.

Distancing Behaviors

(adapted from Edler's unpublished paper *Distancing behaviors among white group dealing with racism*)

<i>The behavior</i>	<i>What it is</i>
Definitions	Requiring clear definitions of racism (or sexism, etc.) before committing to analysis or action (when clear definitions of religion, politics, morals, etc. are not required in similar situations)
Where are the others?	A demand that people of color be present for white people to understand themselves or commit to analysis or action (when we don't demand the presence of poor people or politicians to analyze or act on poverty or politics)
This 'ism' isn't the only problem	The suggestion that there is little reason to concentrate on a particular 'ism' when there are others just as serious
The distinguished lecturer	A tendency to talk about the problem without taking any action; a competition over who has the best analysis;
The instant solution	The proposal that 'love' is the solution, or 'changing the schools' is the solution , or a focus on one strategy which makes good sense but remains centered in how things should be rather than how they are
Find the racist	When one or a few white people target another white person for inappropriate comments or ideas, leaving those doing the 'accusing' feeling righteous but actually closing down any opportunity for meaningful discussion
Target the expert	Asking people of color to answer questions and represent all people of color with their answers
Geography	Claiming the real problems are 'in the South,' or somewhere else; or claiming, for example, that racism isn't a problem for you because there were not people of color in your community growing up.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ANTI-RACIST WHITE ALLIES

Attitudes and Behaviors

Adapted from *10 attitudes and behaviors which help us become Strong Anti-Racist Allies*, developed by Grassroots Leadership's Barriers and Bridges Program

- All white people are racist. I am a racist.
- I will never know what it is like to be a person of color in this country. While it is important to build empathy, I need to acknowledge that I cannot know what it is really like.
- I expect to be uncomfortable as a white anti-racist ally. Discomfort offers an opportunity for reflection and deeper understanding, which leads to change, which can be scary, but necessary and fulfilling. Because white supremacist culture allows white people to remain comfortable, I will need to actively seek situations that will provide me the opportunity to change and grow.
- I can love myself even though I am racist because I have made a commitment to fight my own racism and racism in the larger society. I expect to make mistakes, learn from them, and am compassionate to myself and others as I make this journey.
- Despite my best intentions I will still act out racism and people of color may have reason to be angry with me. I will not die from anger or criticism; in fact I will grow and become stronger.
- When people of color criticize what I say or do, I will accept it as useful information to help me in my learning without always having to explain to them why I said what I said or did what I did. I realize that sometimes my explanations leave the impression that the criticism is not heard and blocks further communication. I always keep the right to act on the criticism in whatever way seems most appropriate once I have had time to reflect.
- I do not expect or want to be 'absolved' for my racism by people of color. I am centered in my own commitment to fight racism, without needing that commitment to be acknowledged by others.
- I am always open to questioning my assumptions, even when I act on them because I must act. I realize that I will always have more to learn about how my commitment to fighting racism can be more effective.
- I am part of an active anti-racist, freedom movement which began long before I came and will carry on long after I am gone. I am proud to contribute to that movement and to be building a support community of white anti-racist allies.

Moving From Concern to Action

Adapted from work by Andrea Azvazian, James Edler, University of Maryland, and Judy H. Katz, author of White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racist Training.

- Have I intentionally and aggressively sought to educate myself further on issues of racism by talking with others, viewing films/videos, finding reading material, attending lectures, joining a study group or other activities?
- Have I spent some time reflecting on my own childhood and upbringing and analyzing where, how and when I was receiving racist messages?
- Have I spent some time recently looking at my own attitudes and behaviors as an adult to determine how I am contributing to or combating racism?
- Have I eliminated my use of language, light and dark imagery and other terms or phrases that might be degrading or hurtful to others?
- Have I openly disagreed with a racist comment, joke, reference, or action among those around me?
- Have I made a clear promise to myself that I will interrupt racist comments, actions, etc. that occur around me – even when this involves some personal risk?
- Have I grown in my awareness of racism in TV programs, advertising, and news coverage?
- Have I objected to those in charge about racism in TV programs, advertising, and news coverage?
- Have I taken steps to organize discussion groups or a workshop aimed at unlearning racism with friends, family members, colleagues, or members of my house of worship?
- Have I organized to support political candidates committed to racial justice and to oppose political candidates who are not?
- Have I contributed financially to an organization, fund, or project that actively confronts the problems of racism?
- Do my personal buying habits support stores and companies that demonstrate a commitment to racial justice both in the U.S. and in other countries?
- Have I organized to support multi-cultural anti-racist curriculum in local schools?
- Do I see myself as a resource person for referrals – directing white people to individuals, organizations and resources who assist others in dismantling racism?
- Have I made a contract with myself to keep paying attention to the issue of racism over weeks, months, and years?