



Institutional Racism-- Then Through Now

Developed by Catalyst Project

GOALS

To understand how racism and white supremacy have operated historically and currently in institutional, structural ways. To understand racism and white supremacy as structural systems used to divide and control.

TIME NEEDED

60 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

Pens

Paper

Flip chart paper

HANDOUTS NEEDED

Definitions of racism and white supremacy

FLIP CHART PAPER TO BE PREPARED

3 pieces, each with one of these titles:

Genocide

Stolen/enslaved labor

Theft of land and resources

FRAMING:

We know that racism lies at the root of many of the things we are fighting against in the Occupy/Decolonize movement – use definitions below to define racism and white supremacy, and to talk about the difference between prejudice (interpersonal interactions, stereotypes, etc) and structural racism. Whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy has been codified through laws, and enforced through violence and imprisonment. We want to take some time to reflect on the historical context that shapes how racism operates today.

Catalyst Project originated some, but mostly adapted these activities from other training tools. With much respect (and credit where possible), we are sharing this curricula in the spirit of advancing liberation work.



DEFINITIONS:

Racism

Race prejudice plus power. Synonymous with the term White Supremacy (Source: adapted from the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond)

Structural Racism

A structural racism framework identifies aspects of our history and culture that have allowed the privilege associated with 'whiteness' and the disadvantage of 'color' to endure and adapt over time. It points out the ways in which public policies and institutional practices contribute to inequitable racial outcomes. It lays out assumptions and stereotypes that are embedded in our culture that, in effect, legitimize racial disparities, and it illuminates the ways in which progress toward racial equity is undermined. (Source: Karen Fulbright-Anderson, Keith Lawrence, Stacey Sutton, Gretchen Susi, and Anne Kubisch, *Structural Racism and Youth Development Issues, Challenges, and Implications*. New York: The Aspen Institute.)

White Supremacy

White supremacy is an historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white people and nations of the European continent and/or of European descent; for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege. (Source: Sharon Martinas, *Challenging White Supremacy Workshop*)



Small Groups (15 mins):

Break into 3 groups, each group taking one of the flip chart papers.

FACILITATOR:

Tell the group: as a small group, generate historical and current examples for your category. Also generate examples of resistance.

Note: many of us feel self-conscious about the amount of history we know or don't know. There is a reason that many of us don't know these things – we are not taught the truth about what whiteness costs. In your small groups, take this opportunity to ask questions if you don't know about something someone mentions. Don't get hung up on the exact dates or details of things. Share what you know and be curious about what you don't know.

When there are 5 minutes left, tell the groups to decide on a person to report back to the group.



Report Back(15 mins)

Report Back to the group

- Each group shares 3-4 examples from their conversation



Discussion (30 mins) Questions for the discussion:

- What examples did people come up with?
- Was it hard to come up with examples of these histories and resistance to it?
- Why is that?
- In whose interest is it for us to not learn these histories?

Make sure these points are covered in the discussion

- Creation of “white”/ white supremacy & capitalism in development of U.S. Examples of early laws (marriage law 1691, privileges granted: voting, citizenship, guns, land)
- Creation of white privilege to separate joint rebellion; instituted to divide & conquer, is still in effect today looking at histories of racial oppression as well as construction of white/racial privilege. Poor whites as footsoldiers for ruling powers
- How does it stay that way? Hegemony
- In whose interest was it to create whiteness, make us “white,” bacon’s rebellion, protecting ruling class
- White supremacy and capitalism as basis for establishing US. Connect to manifest destiny – core values, ideology justifying imperialism, racial superiority, entitlement
- There has always been resistance!