ANTI-RACISM KIT FOR THE MARCH 8TH COALITION

INTRODUCTION

The Anti-Racism Kit was developed by the anti-racism working group which was struck and mandated to produce this Kit during the final evaluation meetings of the March 8th Coalition (1989/90). The anti-racism working group was set up because white women in the coalition, in particular those women who had several years experience in political organizing, failed to take up a leadership role in the initiation and implementation of an anti-racist perspective. Issues of racism were not adequately adressed by white women as they arose during the course of organizing for IWD and, while one anti-racism educational was organized, there was a general failure of white women to take on the responsibility of the on-going anti-racist education required in coalition work.

As a result, it was First Nations Women, Women of Colour, and Immigrant Women who consistently addressed racism and did anti-racist education; they were thus alienated and frustrated in their efforts to fully participate in the Coalition. At the same time, as there were few Women of Colour in the Coalition, First Nations, Black, South Asian, Latin American, Arab and Immigrant Women did not have political support and white women failed to provide this support. Included in this Kit are letters from Women Working with Immigrant Women and the University of Toronto Women's Centre and a transcription of an oral submission by the Latin American Women's Collective to the evaluation process of March 8th, 1990. Through meetings of the white women's group, the development of this Kit was suggested.

The March 8th Coalition has traditionally utilized structures and processes which perpetuate the systemic racism we are trying to transform. It is the responsibility of the March 8th Coalition as a whole to challenge the individual manifestations of racism and change the structures and processes which reproduce racism within the Coalition. It is towards this end and our goal of building an anti-racist, multi-racial Coalition that the anti-racist working group was established and the Kit developed.

The anti-racist working group was comprised of women that are First Nations, Latin American, Jewish, Arab, Immigrant and white. There were nine of us from the March 8th Coalition (1989/90) working in the group. Many women from the Coalition decided not to participate in the group and consequently this document may not adequately reflect their concerns. We tried to work by consensus and broke into smaller committees to work on different sections of the Kit. Constraints such as working through the summer and our other commitments made it difficult for us to carry on the work at times. The process of working on this Kit, on the heels of the

problems of last years' Coalition, was indeed a challenge. We shared a sense of commitment to the project and the process of finding new ways of working together and renegotiating power relations was a learning experience.

The Anti-Racism Kit includes three main sections. First, a 'Tools Section' provides concrete strategies for this year's Coalition to use in order to address issues of systemic racism as well as individual racism within the Coalition. This section includes descriptions of recommendations from the evaluation process of March 8th, 1998/90 and suggestions for addressing and challenging racism and the integration of an anti-racist perspective into all aspects of the Coalition. Second, an 'Anti-Racism Readings' section is included. This section includes excerpts and articles from a variety of perspectives. Third, we had set out to develop a history of racism and anti-racist work in the March 8th Coalition; however, this process still continues. An explanation of this process is included. In addition, letters and oral submissions during the evaluation process have been included as noted above.

In short, this Kit should be seen as a tool, one that is not by any means perfect or complete. It should be seen as a initial attempt at developing strategies for all March 8th members to integrate an anti-racist perspective into their work and should be adapted to meet the changing needs of the group. This kit is only a tool and it requires the political commitment that you, the March 8th Coalition, put into truly building an anti-racist Coalition which represents the participation of all women's struggle for liberation.

March 8th Coalition Basis of Unity

The goal of the March 8th Coalition is to organize and carry out events celebrating International Women's Day.

The coalition is made up of women from many different backgrounds participating as individuals or as representatives of organizations.

The coalition will not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, age, class, education, language, sexual orientation or spirituality/religion, and will take an active role against oppression.

The meetings and events will be held in accessible locations. Meetings and events will be held at times and with a format as accessible as possible to all women. Childcare will be provided.

Discussion will be held in a circle and decisions made by consensus. The task of facilitation will be rotated among coalition members.

The tool of group and caucus will be used to ensure that the actions of the coalition are truly representative of its members and take into account our many different oppressions and privileges.

The coalition has no existence separate and apart from its member individuals and organizations. All coalition members share the collective responsibility for discussion, decision-making, implementation of decisions and work.

Through sharing, cooperation, and acknowledging each others uniqueness, we can work as a committed and unified body towards eliminating the roots of oppression for all women.

"TOOLS SECTION"

Acknowledging that the personal manifestations of institutionalized racism shape the interactions of the March 8th Coalition is not enough. Concrete strategies for addressing the structures, processes, and individual racism is required to challenge and transform the Coalition. The "tools section" of this Anti-Racist Kit is designed to provide suggestions and aids that can be used to address and challenge racism in the Coalition and the integration of an anti-racist perspective into all aspects of the group.

During the evaluation meetings of the 1989/90 March 8th Coalition, it was acknowledged that structures and processes traditionally used in the meetings set up barriers that exclude full participation and leadership of First Nations, Immigrant and Women of Colour. In order to make the meetings more accessible, it is suggested that they be held in a community centre at earlier hours or on the weekend; that child care be offered; and, that all meetings are accessible to women using wheelchairs. In addition, language should be used that is simple and clear, and, if possible, translations of documents should be produced. The following specific recommendations were made to change the process of meetings and are described in this section:

- Circle Discussion;
- Consensus Decision Making; and,
- Caucus and Group.

In addition, the Coalition should, on an ongoing basis, evaluate all initiatives, work of the committees, and representation in the Coalition to be reflective of the objective of building an anti-racist Coalition with the full participation and leadership of First Nations, Women of Colour and Immigrant Women.

Ongoing anti-racist education is not the responsibility of First Nations, Women of Colour and Immigrant Women. Included in this section are both a proposal for an on-going process of anti-racist education and suggestions for educationals/discussions.

Integrating an anti-racist perspective into all areas of work involves anti-racist work throughout the year and not just during the short period of organizing activities for International Women's Day. A list of organizations is provided and women are encouraged to work in alliance with or directly in organizations struggling against race and gender oppression.

Consensus -- a tool for decision making

Consensus taking in a group is an imperative function in order to incorporate an expression of all members present to carry out an approved agreement in relation to a particular action.

Consensus briefly defined, is to draw together the thinking of the meeting, while building harmony, cooperation, sympathy and group solidarity to reach a collective opinion. Consensus must build towards including unanimity, accord, a mutual understanding and quality or condition of being in complete mutual agreement. Agreement implies being in a relationship that reveals no discrepancies, significant differences, contradictions, conflicts, inequalities or untoward effects.

Consensus is without a hierarchical structure. First, an individual must be designated who would have the responsibility (not to preside in a parliamentary manner) to feel for a sense of the meeting, the objective being to ensure everyone present has a fair voice, in a just way so that there is a sharing of information, power and responsibility. If unanimity is not achieved, no action can be taken. If dissension occurs the dissenter would have a choice of continueing to express their opposition, withdrawing or asking for a straw vote (drawing of straws -- short straw wins). In the first two cases the effectiveness of the group is weakened. If there is an occasion where someone is speaking offensively it will be allowed for individual members to intervene and express their disapproval (e.g., a racist statement or action). Speaking then should serve as a means of ascertaining the diversity of opinions within a group before offering her own and should have a bering on the manner in which consensus could be reached.

All concerns should be laid before the meeting and thoroughly considered; there should be consensus for any corporate action. Because of the diversity of the Coalition members it is imperative to incorporate these important principles as it is the real source of the strength of all Women. All members in the Coalition should take an honest look at each other with respect for contributions, rather then race, class, group membership, articulation, (dis)ability and personality. If all Women as coalition members can support these principles, it will provide a basis for common strength and solidarity towards established goals.

Circle Discussions

Discussions at meetings, prior to any decision-making, will be conducted in a circle. The aim of this method is to encourage the participation of every woman in discussions, by making equally accessible : the opportunity to speak, question, and share.

The Setting:

Ideally the meetings will be held in a room large enough so that the chairs can be set up in ONE big circle. The women will all be facing each other, sitting as equals - as opposed to having a standing speaker facing rows of seated listeners. The purpose of using a circle setting for discussions is to underline the need for all women to see each other as equals and treat each other as such.

The Basis of Unity:

In order for any discussion to be held in this setting, each member of the circle must be aware of and commit herself and/or the group she represents to the Basis of Unity, and be interested in participating in the efforts of all towards achieving solidarity and understanding of each members' distinct oppressions and privileges. This committment is necessary in order for a diverse group to be able to work co-operatively and effectively towards eliminating oppression for all. In achieving the Coalition's goal, members have to begin the work on mutual grounds, and that framework is outlined in the Basis of Unity Statement.

The Discussion:

Whatever time has been given to start the meeting should be sufficient as a signal to begin discussion.

In order to encourage the development of leadership skills of women traditionally discriminated against - a woman from among that group should be the starting point in the circle. She would introduce herself and begin talking. When she has finished talking, she will indicate it to the group and the woman beside her will proceed likewise.

The discussion will flow in a circle to encompass all the members and give everyone an equal opportunity to speak or not to speak. After everyone has been given the ONE EQUAL CHANCE to speak, the floor will open to all who want to add further to the discussion. As much information as is possible and relevant to the discussion should be disclosed,so as to enhance a following decision or decisions by consensus.

A circle has no single leader. No one should attempt to control or monopolize the discussion. There will be no chairperson to guide or sway discussion.

Ideally there should be no interruptions of any kind - positive or negative, while someone is speaking. But as this is a new experience for some, allowances will be made for anyone to interrupt - who feels strongly against something said and wants to challenge or oppose something on the grounds of eradicating prejudice or racism.

CAUCUS AND GROUP

A group of Black, Asian and white women from the 1986 March 8th Coalition developed the following Caucus and Group process which was adopted by the 1987 March 8th Coalition and utilized in subsequent years within the organization. The Caucus and Group decision making process was established to recognize differences in our oppressions and maintain the rights of a minority within a larger group.

A caucus is a vehicle through which a specific group of people, whether they are working-class, people of colour or lesbians, come together to address the effects of a shared oppression. While a caucus does not necessarily bring unity as there are different political perspectives within any group, it has the potential of empowering, giving support and equalizing an unbalanced power relationship within a larger group.

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Preamble

All women in the coalition share an oppression as women. But the differences among us of class, race, sexual orientation, ability and so on divide us into those who share an oppression and those who share the corresponding privilege. Very few women in the coalition will have all oppressions or all privileges. The March 8th Coalition agrees to use Caucus and Group as tools to enable us to deal respectfully and productively with the differences of oppression and privilege.

Caucus

Women are members of caucus on the basis of a common oppression. Caucus provides a place for women sharing an oppression to find and give support to each other. Caucus also exists to empower its members and to address the differences in power which exists between them and the women who share the corresponding privilege (i.e., women who make up group). There may be differences among members of a caucus, and it is the responsibility of caucus members to work them out.

Caucus will attempt to meet outside the regular evening Coalition meetings, although it is recognized that it may be necessary to call caucus during regular coalition meetings. Caucus may meet at any time, but it is expected that when it meets, it will make an attempt to include all its members or be truly representative.

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When necessary, caucus will bring direction on issues back to the entire coalition (caucus and group together) for discussion. While the entire coalition will make all final decisions, the coalition acknowledges that the larger group has the potential to numerically 'outweigh' any caucus and recognizing this, the coalition will look for ways to reach an acceptable decision.

Recommended: Each caucus will determine its own decision-making structures. It is recommended that caucus work internally toward agreement before returning to group with its position. Where necessary, caucus may report the different positions.

Group

Women are members of group on the basis of shared privilege. Group is used as a teaching tool to learn and understand why caucus was called. This process is important to avoid the situation where oppressed women (caucus) have to teach privileged women (group). It also reduces the possibility of outvoting caucus direction. It is the responsibility of privileged women to recognize how they must work to end oppression and can provide a place for women who share privilege to teach each other and pre-empt the situation where oppressed women are having to teach women of privilege.

LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS

Integrating an anti-racist perspective into all our areas of work requires on-going anti-racist work throughout the year and not just during the short period of organizing activities for International Women's Day. The March 8th Coalition should not be the only place where women come to participate in anti-racism work.

With the goal of building a multiracial, anti-racist women's movement, the following list of organizations is provided and women are encouraged to work in alliance with or directly in the following and other groups struggling against race and gender oppression. This is by no means a 'complete listing' and should be seen as, at best, a starting point to be expanded upon. The following listing has focused on activist organizations rather than attempt to include all groupings involved in community services. In recognition that some groupings decide to organize autonomously and others chose to work in mixed organizations, the list attempts to reflect this difference in organizing.

Mixed Organizations

African National Congress
292-A Danforth Ave., Toronto
[P.O. Box 302, Adelaide Postal Stn., Toronto, M5C 2J4

Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native Peoples (CASNP)
245 Lippincott St., Toronto
588-2712

Canadian Palestine Friendship Society
Attn. Rev Cannon Shafik Farah
129 Church Ave., North York, Ont.
Contact: Nahala Abdo-Zubi, 960-0670

Coalition Against Racism and Police Violence
Contact: Barb Taylor (h) 588-8239 or Ausha 539-8275

Centre for Spanish Speaking People
Contact: 533-8545

Intercede
489 College St., Suite 402
Toronto, M6G 1A2
324-8751

Middle East Forum
c/o SAC
University of Toronto, Toronto Ont.
Contact: Dania Shawa, 924-0605

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Multicultural Women in Concert
Contact: 532-6462

Women Working with Immigrant Women
555 Bloor St. W.
Toronto,
Contact: 531-2059

First Nations, Women of Colour and Immigrant Women's Organizations

Black Women's Collective
P.O. Box 44, Station "P"
Toronto, M5S 2S8
Contact: Dionne Faulkner, 588-3025 (?)

Chinese Canadian National Council, Women's Issues Committee
386 Bathurst St., 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON M5T 2S6
868-1777

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
579 St. Clair Ave. W., Suite 20 3
Toronto, ON M6C 1A3
657-8410

Coalition of Visible Minority Women
579 St. Clair Ave. W. Suite 203
Toronto, ON M6C 1A3
651-5071

Congress of Black Women
Contact:

Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation
Contact: Lois Fine / Rachel Epstein (h) 537-8304

Indigenous Women's Coalition
Contact: Maddie Howe-Harper
286-7450

Korean Women's Collective
c/o 700 Spadina Ave., Apt. 2
Toronto, Ontario M5Z 2J2
Contact: Eun-Sook Lee, (h) 967-1324

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Latin American Women's Collective
Contact: Deanna 465-5557

Native Women's Resource Centre
245 Gerrard St. E.
Toronto, M5G 2G1
963-9963

Network of Filipino Canadian Women
468 Camden Circle
Mississauga, ON L4Z 2V6
890-0397

Ontario Immigrant and Visible Minority Women
555 Bloor St. W., 2nd Fl.
Toronto, ON M5S 1Y6

Palestinian Women's Association of Toronto
c/o 35 Charles St. W., Apt. 614
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1R6
Nahala Abdo-Zubi, 960-0670

South Asian Women's Group
973 1/2 Bloor St. W.
Toronto, ON
Contact: 537-2267

Women's Association of El Salvador
Box 341 Stn. 'Z'
Toronto, ON M5N 2Z6

Activities for Coalition Members

What follows are suggestions for discussions, activities, educationals, workshops etc. for this year's coalition members to pursue in order to ensure a focus on anti-racism within the coalition. These can be done during coalition time, at extra meetings, or before or after regular coalition meeting times. Many of these discussions might take more than one session to complete. The activities can be undertaken by the coalition as a whole, or by those who express interest in doing them, or by a white women's group if it becomes clear that (as in year's past) the burden of anti-racist education is falling on the shoulders of Women of Colour in the coalition.

1. Have a discussion about how the best way to ensure the development & continuation of an anti-racist perspective amongst all members of the coalition. For eg., would the establishment of an ongoing anti-racist working group be a good way to ensure an anti-racist focus? This group would NOT take sole responsibility for ensuring anti-racist perspectives/action of the coalition (this is the responsibility of ALL coalition members) but would work to to foreground and facilitate the coalition's anti-racist education and activities. If a working group is not the best strategy, what are other ways to ensure this focus? What are people's experiences in developing an anti-racist politic? This discussion could be planned and facilitated by an ad hoc grouping within the coalition that volunteers to do some work prior to the discussion.

2. Find an appropriate CR exercise around the issue of anti -racism. Try the CR exercise; what do we learn about systemic and individual racism? Discuss what some of the limitations of only doing CR exercises might be.

3. Plan discussions of the articles included in this package, one at a time, with rotating responsibilities for facilitating.

5. Come up with "working definitions" of racism: how do we incorporate questions of individual interaction, systemic racism, and the process of organizing? What are some of the historical and material roots of racism? How do the movements and struggles of People of Colour connect with and intersect with the women's movement and the labour movement? How do we integrate a knowledge of the movements and struggles of the First Nations and other struggles for self-determination into our anti-racist perspective?

6. Suggestion for a white women's group discussion: talk about the "mistakes" made by white women within the coalition in their anti-racist work - white women can educate each other about both the issues and the dynamics. How can white women be critical of each other in a constructive way (ie. non judgemental). Look at various assumptions, generalizations, etc., for instance "No one holds onto misinformation voluntarily". Also look at "rules" for anti-racist behaviour - how do they work? Are they helpful?

7. Discuss/evaluate whatever processes are being used in the coalition to deal with the political differences amongst us : group/caucus, circle, concensus etc. How are these processes working? Are we building an anti-racist politic through using them? Are all members of the coalition enabled to be equal participants?

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9. Non discussion-type activities: Theatre of the Oppressed, films and videos.

10. Look at list of groups from resource section: what anti-racist organizations are coalition members interested in learning about and working in? Would it be appropriate to ask speakers from these organizations to talk to the coalitiontheir organization? Would some of these organizations like to have coalition members attend one of their meetings to discuss the work of the coalition?

11. What do people think of the anti-racist kit developed over the summer of '90 as a whole? Each section? How could it be more useful? What are its shortcomings?

INTRODUCTION – ARTICLES

This part of the anti-racism kit is made up of articles that we hope you will take home and read. They may serve as the basis of discussions within the coalition if many women find they want to discuss the issues raised, or you may want to talk about them informally with coalition members, friends, and others.

When we chose the following articles (and excerpts of articles), we were looking for written materials that we thought would be most useful to the process of working in a coalition from an anti-racist perspective. We wanted to keep the number of pages low and make sure the style of writing was easy to understand. We wanted to include a range of voices and perspectives, and not produce something that would make readers think that simply reading the work would offer an easy solution to anti-racism. We aimed to include work that spoke about both personal and systemic racism; work that expressed the difficult process of developing an anti-racist perspective within a coalition; work that talked about anger and our responses to it; work that would be useful to white women and to Women of Colour; work that would express why it is important to work in coalitions and why an anti-racist perspective is necessary for the building of coalitions, alliances, and movements.

The following does not acheive all of these goals, but it does represent a beginning. We want your critical feedback! These articles are meant to be discussed, argued about, and if possible revised and added to for next year.

Fighting Racism and Sexism Together

We are presenting the keynote speech for International Women's Day, 1987; the day's theme was "FIGHTING RACISM AND SEXISM TOGETHER." Carol Allen, a black woman, and Judy Persad, a south Asian Woman born in Trinidad, were both active members of the March 8th Coalition, and jointly gave the speech on its behalf.

Last year on International Women's Day we said we were going to build a new women's movement in Toronto - a women's movement which will integrate the fight against racism and the fight against sexism. Racism and sexism have to be integrated into the movement because they are already in our lives. The women's movement must represent all women - the fight against racism is everybody's fight.

The women's movement in North America grew out of the tradition of the Civil Rights Movement. It kept its tradition, to take to the streets to fight for justice and for rights. Yet, since its beginning it has been a predominantly white women's movement. Last year women of colour, black women, and native women challenged this structure. And this year we are beginning to see the results of that challenge. We have to continue.

We do not believe that racism is merely a misunderstanding among people, a question of interpersonal relations, or an unchanging [illegible] racism like sexism is an integral part of the political and economic system under which we live. This system uses racism and sexism to divide us and to exploit our labour for super-profits and it gives some women privilege. They must fight this in their daily lives. You cannot just educate racism away, and even legal reforms are not enough. We must change the economic and political structures which maintain the oppressions which we face.

A women's movement which does not represent and include all women cannot be called a true women's movement.

An anti-racist women's movement has to include women of colour, black women and native women.

It has to address issues which affect our lives. The past shows us that issues which affect the lives of women of colour, black women, and native women are not seen as feminist issues - these are seen as "other" issues which the feminist community may or may not pay attention to at any one time. Well these are not to be classified as "other". These are issues which affect us as women and the movement has to pay more than just token attention to them. The movement must focus on racism and its effect in women's lives.

An anti-racist women's movement has to include an anti-racist analysis of each and every issue. Racism has to be seen as an issue - an issue to be added to a list of items. Racism is not an issue.

Racism, as sexism, is part of each issue. For women of colour, black women, and native women racism and sexism are part of every day.

What is using an anti-racist perspective?

Well, it is not paying lip-service to issues concerning women of colour, black women, and native women;

It is not looking for speakers from these communities at the last minute for a conference you're organizing;

It is not going through a speech and putting in the words "women of colour", "black women", "native women", and "immigrant women" where it can fit or where it sounds good;

It is not white women being defensive because racism has been the focus of the 1986 and 1987 International Women's Day.

What it is - is the acknowledgement that racism and sexism are integral parts of every isssue - for example - a conference on gay rights, or on pornography and prostitution, or on sexuality should not need a workshop on racism to address its effects; racism should be integrated into every workshop.

What it is - is the integration of an anti-racist perspective into analysis and practice.

Last year we said it [illegible]

"Fighting Racism and Sexism Together", by Carol Allan and Judy Vashti Persad, keynote speech for International Women's Day 1987 (unpublished).

be easy to build an anti-racist women's movement - well it is not easy. We are now taking the first steps to such a movement. Last year the theme was Women say no to racism from Toronto to South Africa. This was the beginning of building an anti-racist movement. We're still trying to build this movement. That is why we are back on the streets in 1987 Fighting racism and sexism together.

A group of women of colour, black women and white women formed a planning committee and worked through the summer and fall of 1986. It examined the experience of the 1986 Coalition, the day itself, the evaluation and recommendations. These discussions resulted in the Coalition accepting a new basis of unity recognizing the differences among us of class, race, sexuality and ability, and outlining the basis on which we would work together. It developed a clearer, more accessible structure and clarified both decision-making and the group/caucus machanism.

Some black women, native women, and women of colour who were involved last year are not involved this year, while there are some who have returned. There are also quite a few women of colour, black women, and native women who are participating in the coalition for the first time this year.

Some of us choose to work only within our communities and some of us choose to work within the broader women's community. At times this choice has created conflict between us. It is important to see this conflict as a difference in strategy not a difference between us. Some of us do work in both communities. It is important that we see the integration of our work in the overall struggle for the liberation of people of colour, black people, working class people, native people, gays and lesbians, and disabled people.

We must create and strengthen alliances between us and work together.

The distrust women of colour, black women and native women feel towards the women's movement is justified. We have felt continuously excluded from the women's movement. History has shown us this. Although we share a common oppression as women, we must work together to overcome the issues that divide us. This will not be easy because the society we live in continuously tries to highlight the differences between us and make it difficult for us, as women, to come together, acknowledge our differences and find ways to move forward together.

In this year's coalition, we, women of colour, black women, and native women are providing leadership in an atmosphere which demands dialogue and accountability. Those of us who have chosen to work in the coalition have made a political decision to develop a strong anti-racist consciousness in the broader women's movement. We expect white women to fight racism on all levels.- economic, political, and personal. Structures maintain racism in our society and individual racism helps to perpetuate it. White women must deal with their racism in their lives and in their politics, while the women's movement organizes against the racism and sexism of the state and other structures in society.

There are many barriers which divide women and in order to work together we have to recognize these differences. If we don't, we end up with a movement that's representative of only a small number of us.

The question is: Should we work together? The answer is yes!

Well numbers influence change: one stick is easy to break, but five sticks side by side are harder to break.

This year's International Women's Day is an example of how we want to build a new women's movement. The analysis of racism and sexism have been integrated into our subthemes of native self-determination, employment equity, choice, and housing. Next year our theme won't be fighting racism and sexism together, but whatever the focus is of next year's International Women's Day, racism and sexism will be incorporated.

The cost of not doing so would be too high. It would be taking a step backwards. We must move forward.

Today we are here to continue what we started last year▲

"Other Kinds of Dreams" by Pratibha Parmar, in Feminist Review, No. 31, Spring 1989.

EXCERPTS

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the question of identity has taken on colossal weight particularly for those of us who are post-colonial migrants inhabiting histories of diaspora. Being cast into the role of the Other, marginalized, discriminated against, and too often invisible, not only within everyday discourses of affirmation but also within the 'grand narratives' of European thought, black women in particular have fought to assert privately and publicly our sense of self: a self that is rooted in particular histories, cultures and languages. Black feminism has provided a space and a framework for the articulation of our diverse identities as black women from different ethnicities, classes and sexualities, even though at times that space had to be fought for and negotiated.

To assert an individual and collective identity as black women has been a necessary historical process both empowering and strengthening. To organize self-consciously as black women was and continues to be important; that form of organization is not arbitrary, but is based on a political analysis of our common economic, social and cultural oppressions. It is also based on an assumption of shared subjectivities, of the ways in which our experiences of the world 'out there' are shaped by common objective factors such as racism and sexual exploitation.

However, these assumptions have led to a political practice which employs a language of 'authentic subjective experience'. The implications of such a practice are multifold. It has given rise to a self-righteous assertion that if one inhabits a certain identity this gives one the legitimate and moral right to guilt trip others into particular ways of behaving. The women's movement in general has become dominated by such tendencies. There has been an emphasis on accumulating a collection of oppressed identities which in turn have given rise to a hierarchy of oppression. Such scaling has not only been destructive, but divisive and immobilizing. Unwilling to work across all our differences, many women have retreated into ghettoized lifestyle 'politics' and find themselves unable to move beyond personal and individual experience.

Identity politics or a political practice which takes as its starting point only the personal and experiential modes of being has led to a closure which is both retrogressive and sometimes spine chilling. Take for instance, the example of an article that appeared in *Spare Rib* entitled 'Ten Points for White Women to Feel Guilty About'. The title alone made some of us cringe in despair and consternation. There is an inherent essentialism in such articulations which has become pervasive within the women's movement in general and has led to political and essentialist thinking which has begun to dominate much feminist analysis and practice in the 1980s and I would agree with her conclusion that 'Whereas the problem for women's liberation was once how to assert personal issues as political, the problem has now reversed to one where feminists need to argue that the political does not reduce to the personal' (Segal, 1987: 242).

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Pratibha: One of the most interesting and challenging things I have found in your writings is the way in which your radicalism refuses to suppress the complexity of our identities as women and as black people. In Britain there has been a tendency in the women's movement, both black and white, to organise around the assumptions of our shared identities but in the process of political organising many of these assumptions have fallen apart. Can you talk about some of the issues raised around identity politics and what you think it means to define oneself as a political person.

June Jordan: We have been organising on the basis of identity, around immutable attributes of gender, race and class for a long time and it doesn't seem to have worked. There are obvious reasons for getting together with other people because someone else is black or she is a woman but I think we have to try to develop habits of evaluation in whatever we attempt politically. People get set into certain ways of doing things and they don't evaluate whether it's working or not. Or if they do evaluate then it's to say it's not working but it's not our fault, there couldn't possibly be anything wrong with our thinking on this subject or this issue. The problem invariably is that the enemy is simply inflexible or impregnable. This is a doomed modus operandi. We have to find out what works and some things may work to a certain extent and not beyond that.

I don't think that gender politics or that race politics per se are isolated from other ways of organising for change, whether reformist change or revolutionary change. I don't think that they will take us where we want to go. I think that's abundantly clear if we look at our history as black people. We as black people have enormous problems everywhere in the world and we women have colossal problems everywhere in the world. I think there is something deficient in the thinking on the part of anybody who proposes either gender identity politics or race identity politics as sufficient, because every single one of us is more than whatever race we represent or embody and more than whatever gender category we fall into. We have other kinds of allegiances, other kinds of dreams that have nothing to do with whether we are white or not white.

A lot of awareness of ourselves as women, as black people and third world people really comes out of our involuntary forced relationships with people who despise us on the basis of what we are rather than what we do. In other words our political awareness of ourselves derives more often than not from a necessity to find out why it is that this particular kind of persecution continues either for my people, or myself or my kind. Once you try to answer that question you find yourself in the territory of people who despise you, people who are responsible for the invention of the term racism or sexism. I think it's important to understand that each one of us is more than what cannot be changed about us. That seems self-evident and accordingly our politics should reflect that understanding.

This is not at all to disparage or dismiss the necessity for what I would call issue oriented unity among different kinds of people, women, black people, or black women. I am not dismissing it but just saying that it's probably not enough. It may be enough to get started on something but I doubt very much whether it's enough to get anything finished.

Pratibha: So you are saying that in order to move forward, a crucial part of the political process is to go beyond the personal and experiential ways of organising? You have written, 'It occurs to me that much organisational grief could be avoided if people understood that partnership in misery does not necessarily provide for partnership for change: *when we get the monsters off our backs all of us may want to run in very different directions.*'

June Jordan: Yes, for example, I think that for any woman who has ever been raped, the existence of feminist or all female rape counselling centres is absolutely necessary, the recourse to a refuge where a woman can retire to repair herself without fear. But the problem is more than an individual problem. She didn't rape herself. In order to eliminate the possibility of rape or even the likelihood of rape for women generally we have to go beyond ourselves. We have to sit down with and/or stand up to and finally in some way impact upon men. I don't think it's ever enough on your own. And I would say the same thing about race identity politics. I didn't, nor did my people or my parents, invent the problems that we as black people have to solve. We black people, the victims of racism are not the ones that have to learn new ways of thinking about things so that we can stop racist habits of thought. Neither do we have the power to be placed in appropriate situations to abolish the social and economic arrangements that have assured the continuity of racism in our lives. That's for white people. What we really need to do is pass the taking of succour from each other, so to speak and build on our collective confidence and pride.

Pratibha: In the last few years there has been much talk about the need for coalitions and alliances between different groups of women not only nationally but internationally. What is your assessment of this form of political organising?

June: I would say about coalitions what I said about unity, which is what for? The issue should determine the social configuration of politics. I am not going to sit in a room with other people just to demonstrate black unity, we have got to have some reason for unity. Why should I coalesce with you and why do you coalesce with me, there has to be a reason why we need each other. It seems to me that an awareness of the necessity for international coalition should not be hard to come by in many spheres of feminist discourse because so many of our problems, apparently have universal currency. I think that never having been to London, for example, I can still be quite sure that most women here, whatever class or colour, are going to feel shy about walking out at night just as I do. I just assume that. That's about safety in the street. There is a universal experience for women, which is that physical mobility is circumscribed by our gender and by the enemies of our gender. This is one of the ways they seek to make us know their hatred and respect it. This holds throughout the world for women and literally we are not to move about in the world freely. If we do then we have to understand that we may have to pay for it with our bodies. That is the threat. They don't ask you what you are doing on the street, they rape you and mutilate you bodily to let you remember your place. You have no rightful place in public.

Everywhere in the world we have the least amount of income, everywhere in the world the intensity of the bond between women is seen to be subversive and it seems to me there would be good reasons to attempt international work against some of these common conditions. We cannot eliminate the problems unless we see them in their global dimensions. We should not fear the enlargement of our deliberate connections in this way. We should understand that this is a source of strength. It also makes it more difficult for anyone to destroy our movement. Okay, they can do whatever they want to in London, but there is Bangladesh, it's hydra headed, it's happening everywhere, you can't destroy it. That's not to negate the necessity or obviate the need to work where you live but this is only part of a greater environment. I am talking against short sightedness.

I also think it's a good idea not to have any fixed notions in one's head I don't want any one to tell me where I should put my attention first. If down the line we can try to respect each other according to the principle of self determination then we can begin to move forward. There are enough of us to go around and you don't have to do what I do and vice versa. I do this and you do that, there is plenty of room.

"Coalition Politics: Turning the Century", by Bernice Johnson Reagon in Home Girls, ed. Barbara Smith, Kitchen Table, 1983.

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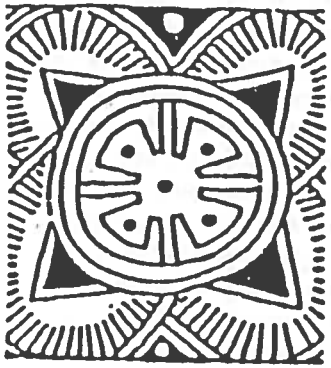

Coalition Politics: Turning the Century*

BY

BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON

I've never been this high before. I'm talking about the altitude. There is a lesson in bringing people together where they can't get enough oxygen, then having them try to figure out what they're going to do when they can't think properly. I'm serious about that. There probably are some people here who can breathe, because you were born in high altitudes and you have big lung cavities. But when you bring people in who have not had the environmental conditioning, you got one group of people who are in a strain—and the group of people who are feeling fine are trying to figure out why you're staggering around, and that's what this workshop is about this morning.

I wish there had been another way to graphically make me feel it because I belong to the group of people who are having a very difficult time being here. I feel as if I'm gonna keel over any minute and die. That is often what it feels like if you're *really* doing coalition work. Most of the time you feel threatened to the core and if you don't, you're not really doing no coalescing.

I'm Bernice Reagon. I was born in Georgia, and I'd like to talk about the fact that in about twenty years we'll turn up another century. I believe that we are positioned to have the opportunity to have something to do with what makes it into the next century. And the principles of coalition are directly related to that. You don't go into coalition because you just *like* it. The only reason you would consider trying to team up with somebody who could possibly kill you, is because that's the only way you can figure you can stay alive.

* Based upon a presentation at the West Coast Women's Music Festival 1981, Yosemite National Forest, California.

* * *

We've pretty much come to the end of a time when you can have a space that is "yours only"—just for the people you want to be there. Even when we have our "women-only" festivals, there is no such thing. The fault is not necessarily with the organizers of the gathering. To a large extent it's because we have just finished with that kind of isolating. There is no hiding place. There is nowhere you can go and only be with people who are like you. It's over. Give it up.

Now every once in awhile there is a need for people to try to clean out corners and bar the doors and check everybody who comes in the door, and check what they carry in and say, "Humph, inside this place the only thing we are going to deal with is X or Y or Z." And so only the X's or Y's or Z's get to come in. That place can then become a nurturing place or a very destructive place. Most of the time when people do that, they do it because of the heat of trying to live in this society where being an X or Y or Z is very difficult, to say the least. The people running the society call the shots as if they're still living in one of those little villages, where they kill the ones they don't like or put them in the forest to die. (There are some societies where babies are born and if they are not wanted for some reason they are put over in a corner. They do that here too, you know, put them in garbage cans.) When somebody else

is running a society like that, and you are the one who would be put out to die, it gets too hard to stay out in that society all the time. And that's when you find a place, and you try to bar the door and check all the people who come in. You come together to see what you can do about shouldering up all of your energies so that you and your kind can survive.

There is no chance that you can survive by staying *inside* the barred room. (Applause) That will not be tolerated. The door of the room will just be painted red and then when those who call the shots get ready to clean house, they have easy access to you.

But that space while it lasts should be a nurturing space where you sift out what people are saying about you and decide who you really are. And you take the time to try to construct within yourself and within your community who you would be if you were running society. In fact, in that little barred room where you check everybody at the door, you act out community. You pretend that your room is a world. It's almost like a play, and in some cases you actually grow food, you learn to have clean water, and all of that stuff, you just try to do it all. It's like, "If *I* was really running it, this is the way it would be."

Of course the problem with the experiment is that there ain't nobody in there but folk like you, which by implication means you wouldn't know what to do if you were running it with all of the other people who are out there in the world. Now that's nationalism. I mean it's nurturing, but it is also nationalism. At a certain stage nationalism is crucial to a people if you are going to ever impact as a group in your own interest. Nationalism at another point becomes reactionary because it is totally inadequate for surviving in the world with many peoples. (Applause).

Sometimes you get comfortable in your little barred room, and you decide you in fact are going to live there and carry out all of your stuff in there. And you gonna take care of everything that needs to be taken care of in the barred room. If you're white and in the barred room and if everybody's white, one of the first things you try to take care of is making sure that people don't think that the barred room is a racist barred room. So you begin to talk about racism and the first thing you do is say, "Well, maybe we better open the door and let some Black folks in the barred room." Then you think, "Well, how we gonna figure out whether they're X's or not?" Because there's

nothing in the room but X's. (Laughter) You go down checklist. You been working a while to sort out who you all right? So you go down the checklist and say, "If we can find Black folk like that we'll let them in the room." You don't really want Black folks, you are just looking for yourself with a little color to it.

And there are those of us Black folk who are like that. So if you're lucky you can open the door and get one or two. Right? And everything's wonderful. But no matter what, there will be one or two of us who have not bothered to be like you and you know it. We come knocking on your door and say, "Well, you let them in, you let me in too." And we will break your door down trying to get in. (Laughter) As far as we can see we are also X's. Cause you didn't say, "THIS BARRED ROOM IS FOR WHITE X'S ONLY." You just said it was for X's. So everybody who thinks they're an X comes running to get into the room. And because you trying to take care of everything in this room, and you know you're not racist, you get pressed to let us all in.

The first thing that happens is that the room don't feel like the room anymore. (Laughter) And it ain't home no more. It is not a womb no more. And you can't feel comfortable no more. And what happens at that point has to do with trying to do too much in it. You don't do no coalition building in a womb. It's just like trying to get a baby used to taking a drink when they're in your womb. It just don't work too well. Inside the womb you generally are very soft and unshelled. You have no covering. And you have no ability to handle what happens if you start to let folks in who are not like you.

Coalition work is not work done in your home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do. And you shouldn't look for comfort. Some people will come to a coalition and they rate the success of the coalition on whether or not they feel good when they get there. They're not looking for a coalition; they're looking for a home! They're looking for a bottle with some milk in it and a nipple, which does not happen in a coalition. You don't get a lot of food in a coalition. You don't get fed a lot in a coalition. In a coalition you have to give, and it is different from your home. You can't stay there all the time. You go to the coalition for a few hours and then you go back and take your bottle wherever it is, and then you go back and coalesce some more.

It is very important not to confuse them—home and coalition. Now when it comes to women—the organized women's movement—this recent thrust—we all have had the opportunity to have some kind of relationship with it. The women's movement has perpetuated a myth that there is some common experience that comes just cause you're women. And they're throwing all these festivals and this music and these concerts happen. If you're the same kind of women like the folk in that little barred room, it works. But as soon as some other folk check the definition of "women", that's in the dictionary (which you didn't write, right?) they decide that they can come because they are women, but when they do, they don't see or hear nothing that is like them. Then they charge, "This ain't no women's thing!" (Applause) Then if you try to address that and bring them in, they start to play music that ain't even women's music! (Laughter and hoots) And you try to figure out what happened to your wonderful barred room. It comes from taking a word like "women" and using it as a code. There is an in-house definition so that when you say "women only" most of the time that means you had better be able—if you come to this place—to handle lesbianism and a lot of folks running around with no clothes on. And I'm being too harsh this morning as I talk to you, but I don't want you to miss what I'm trying to say. Now if you come and you can't handle that, there's another term that's called "woman-identified." They say you might be a woman but you're not woman-identified, and we only want women who are "woman-identified." That's a good way to leave a lot of women out of your room.

So here you are and you grew up and you speak English and you know about this word "woman" and you know you one, and you walk into this "woman-only" space and you ain't there. (Laughter) Because "woman" in that space does not mean "woman" from your world. It's a code word and it traps, and the people that use the word are not prepared to deal with the fact that if you put it out, everybody that thinks they're a woman may one day want to seek refuge. And it ain't no refuge place! And it's not safe! It should be a coalition! It may have been that in its first year the Michigan National "Women-Only" festival was a refuge place. By the fourth year it was a place of coalition, and it's not safe anymore. (Applause) It ain't safe for nobody who comes. When you walk in there you in trouble—and everybody who comes is trying to get to their home there.

At this festival [Yosemite] they said: whatever you drink, bring it with you—tea, honey, you know, whatever it is—and we will provide hot water. Now I understand that you got here and there was no hot water. Can't get nothing! That is the nature of coalition. (Laughter) You have to give it all. It is not to feed you; you have to feed it. And it's a monster. It never gets enough. It always wants more. So you better be sure you got your home someplace for you to go to so that you will not become a martyr to the coalition. Coalition *can* kill people; however, it is not by nature fatal. You do not have to die because you are committed to coalition. I'm not so old, and I don't know nothing else. But you do have to know how to pull back, and you do have to have an old-age perspective. You have to be beyond the womb stage.

I'm not gonna be suicidal, if I can help it. Sometimes you don't even know you just took a step that could take your head off cause you can't know everything when you start to coalesce with these people who sorta look like you in just one aspect but really they belong to another group. That is really the nature of women. It does not matter at all that biologically we have being women in common. We have been organized to have our primary cultural signals come from some other factors than that we are women. We are not from our base acculturated to be women people, capable of crossing our first people boundaries—Black, White, Indian, etc.

Now if we are the same women from the same people in this barred room, we never notice it. That stuff stays wherever it is. It does not show up until somebody walks into the room who

happens to be a woman but really is also somebody else. And then out comes who we really are. And at that point you are not a woman. You are Black or you are Chicana or you are Disabled or you are Racist or you are White. The fact that you are a woman is not important at all and it is not the governing factor to your existence at that moment. I am now talking about bigotry and everybody's got it. I am talking about turning the century with some principles intact. Today wherever women gather together it is not necessarily nurturing. It is coalition building. And if you feel the strain, you may be doing some good work. (Applause) So don't come to no women's festival looking for comfort unless you brought it in your little tent. (Laughter) And then if you bring it in your tent don't be inviting everybody in because everybody ain't your company, and then you won't be able to stand the festival. Am I confusing you? Yes, I am. If coalition is so bad, and so terrible, and so uncomfortable, why is it necessary? That's what you're asking. Because the barred rooms will not be allowed to exist. They will all be wiped out. That is the plan that we now have in front of us.

Now these little rooms were created by some of the most powerful movements we have seen in this country. I'm going to start with the Civil Rights movement because of course I think that that was the first one in the era we're in. Black folks started it, Black folks did it, so everything you've done politically rests on the efforts of my people—that's my arrogance! Yes, and it's the truth; it's my truth. You can take it or leave it, but that's the way I see it. So once we did what we did, then you've got women, you've got Chicanos, you've got the Native Americans, and you've got homosexuals, and you got all of these people who also got sick of somebody being on their neck. And maybe if they come together, they can do something about it. And I claim all of you as coming from something that made me who I am. You can't tell me that you ain't in the Civil Rights movement. You are in the Civil Rights movement that we created that just rolled up to your door. But it could not stay the same, because if it was gonna stay the same it wouldn't have done you no good. Some of you would not have caught yourself dead near no Black folks walking around talking about freeing themselves from racism and lynching. So by the time our movement got to you it had to sound like something you knew about. Like if I find out you're gay, you gonna lose your job.

There were people who came South to work in the movement who were not Black. Most of them were white when they came. Before it was over, that category broke up—you know, some of them were Jewish, not simply white, and some others even changed their names. Say if it was Mary when they came South, by the time they were finished it was Maria, right? It's called finding yourself. At some point, you cannot be fighting oppression and be oppressed yourself and not feel it. Within the Black movement there was also all of the evils of the society, so that anything that was happening to you in New York or the West Coast probably also happened to you in another way, within the movement. And as you became aware of that you tried to talk to these movement people about how you felt. And they say, "Well let's take that up next week. Because the most important thing now is that Black people are being oppressed and we must work with that." Watch these mono-issue people. They ain't gonna do you no good. I don't care who they are. And there are people who prioritize the cutting line of the struggle. And they say the cutting line is this issue, and more than anything we must move on this issue and that's automatically saying that whatever's bothering you will be put down if you bring it up. You have to watch these folks. Watch these groups that can only deal with one thing at a time. On the other hand, learn about space within coalition. You can't have everybody sitting up there talking about everything that concerns you at the same time or you won't get no place.

There is not going to be the space to continue as we are or as we were. There was a time when folks saw the major movement force coming out of the Black community. Then, the hottest thing became the Native Americans and the next, students' rights and the next, the anti-war movement or whatever. The movement force just rolled around hitting various issues. Now, there were a few people who kept up with many of those issues. *They are very rare.* Anytime you find a person showing up at all of those struggles, and they have some sense of sanity by your definition, not theirs (cause almost everybody thinks they're sane), one, study with them, and two, protect them. They're gonna be in trouble shortly because they are the most visible ones. They hold the key to turning the century with our principles and ideals intact. They can teach you how to cross cultures and not kill yourself. And you need to begin to make a checklist—it's not long, you can probably count on your two

hands. When it comes to political organizing, and when it comes to your basic survival there are a few people who took the sweep from the 60's to the 80's and they didn't miss a step. They could stand it all. If they're painters, there's a picture about everything as best they can do it. And if they're singers, there's a song showing that they were awake through all the struggles.

* * *

So all of these people who hit every issue did not get it right, but if they took a stand, at least you know where their shit is.

* * *

It must become necessary for all of us to feel that this is our world. And that we are here to stay and that anything that is here is ours to take and to use in our image. And watch that "our"—make it as big as you can—it ain't got nothing to do with that barred room. The "our" must include everybody you have to include in order for you to survive. You must be sure you understand that you ain't gonna be able to have an "our" that don't include Bernice Johnson Reagon, cause I don't plan to go nowhere! That's why we have to have coalitions. Cause I ain't gonna let you live unless you let me live. Now there's danger in that, but there's also the possibility that we can both live—if you can stand it.

* * *

Most of us think that the space we live in is the most important space there is, and that the condition that we find ourselves in is the condition that must be changed or else. That is only partially the case. If you analyze the situation properly, you will know that there might be a few things you can do in your personal, individual interest so that you can experience and enjoy the change. But most of the things that you do, if you do them right, are for people who live long after you are long forgotten.

* * *

I am concerned that we are very shortsighted, and we think that the issue we have at this moment has to be addressed at this moment or we will die. It is not true. It is only a minor skirmish. It must be waged guerrilla-warfare style. You shoot it out, get behind the tree so you don't get killed, because they ain't gonna give you what you asked for. You must be ready to go out again tomorrow and while you're behind the tree you must be training the people who will be carrying the message forward

* * *

I had never left Georgia until after the Civil Rights movement, so I didn't know nothing about all of these people in the world. I knew two people. White people and Black people When I went to New York, the white people were not the same white people. I was being very sensible at this time. They were too dark. I tried to make them become Black. They didn't like that at all. I would try to ask them: Who are you and where are you from? They say: Well, what do you mean? And I say: Well you don't look white. And they say: Well, we're white. And say: But you don't look white-white. If you all had let me run it, we would all be colored. Because I grew up in Albany, Georgia, and I knew what white people looked like, and they looked like none of them dark-skinned white folks I saw up in New York who got mad at me when I tried to bring them over. Respect means when somebody joins you and they need to be white, you give it to them. You turn it over and you say: Okay you got it—you are white. I could save your life, but okay you got it—you are white. That's called allowing people to name themselves. And dealing with them from that perspective. Shaking your head in your little barred room about it, or if somebody's crazy enough to let you sit on the stage for a little while will not help the situation. It won't stretch your perimeter

I didn't have anything to do with being alive at this time, but if I had been running it I couldn't haye picked a better time. I have lived through the brilliant heat of the Civil Rights struggle I have lived through a war that was stopped.

* * *

And we did it. We did that. Any of you who have jobs that your mama didn't have, we did that. Nobody else did that!! It is a very good time to be alive—to be in this place, complete with its racism, and its classism, and its garbage trucks running through.

People who think that the only "women-only" there are are lesbian women give me a big problem, cause I would have to leave too many of my folk out cause they ain't gonna take that for one second. *And if they came in they would be homophobic.* And you'll have to challenge them about it. Can you handle it? This ain't no nurturing place no more. Cause we're taking over. Anything that says "Women," we're gonna come. Ye

then you might be able to have it—but we might storm *that* if we don't think it should exist. Cause like it is, it is our world, and we are here to stay. And we are not on the defensive. We are not on the defensive.

There is an offensive movement that started in this country in the 60's that is continuing. The reason we are stumbling is that we are at the point where in order to take the next step we've got to do it with some folk we don't care too much about. And we got to vomit over that for a little while. We must just keep going. The media says that the Civil Rights movement was a dream. The media says that nothing happened in the 70's, and most of us get up on stage and we talk as if that in fact is the case, and it's a lie. The only way it will be true is if you believe them and do not take the next step. Everybody who is in this space at this time belongs here. And it's a good thing if you came. I don't care what you went through or what somebody did to you. Go for yourself. *You* give this weekend everything you can. Because no matter how much of a coalition space this is, it ain't nothing like the coalescing you've got to do tomorrow, and Tuesday and Wednesday, when you really get out there, back into the world: that is ours too.

Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave, eds. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, The Feminist Press, 1982.

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A Black Feminist Statement

THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE

We are a collective of Black feminists who have been meeting together since 1974.[1] During that time we have been involved in the process of defining and clarifying our politics, while at the same time doing political work within our own group and in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements. The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face.

We will discuss four major topics in the paper that follows: (1) the genesis of contemporary Black feminism; (2) what we believe, i.e., the specific province of our politics; (3) the problems in organizing Black feminists, including a brief herstory of our collective; and (4) Black feminist issues and practice.

1. The Genesis of Contemporary Black Feminism

Before looking at the recent development of Black feminism, we would like to affirm that we find our origins in the historical reality of

Afro-American women's continuous life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation. Black women's extremely negative relationship to the American political system (a system of white male rule) has always been determined by our membership in two oppressed racial and sexual castes. As Angela Davis points out in "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," Black women have always embodied, if only in their physical manifestation, an adversary stance to white male rule and have actively resisted its inroads upon them and their communities in both dramatic and subtle ways. There have always been Black women activists—some known, like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frances E. W. Harper, Ida B. Wells Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, and thousands upon thousands unknown—who had a shared awareness of how their sexual identity combined with their racial identity to make their whole life situation and the focus of their political struggles unique. Contemporary Black feminism is the outgrowth of countless generations of personal sacrifice, militancy, and work by our mothers and sisters.

A Black feminist presence has evolved most obviously in connection with the second wave of the American women's movement beginning in the late 1960s. Black, other Third World, and working women have been involved in the feminist movement from its start, but both outside reactionary forces and racism and elitism within the movement itself have served to obscure our participation. In 1973 Black feminists, primarily located in New York, felt the necessity of forming a separate Black feminist group. This became the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO).

Black feminist politics also have an obvious connection to movements for Black liberation, particularly those of the 1960s and 1970s. Many of us were active in those movements (civil rights, Black nationalism, the Black Panthers), and all of our lives were greatly affected and changed by their ideology, their goals, and the tactics used to achieve their goals. It was our experience and disillusionment within these liberation movements, as well as experience on the periphery of the white male left, that led to the need to develop a politics that was antiracist, unlike those of white women, and antisexist, unlike those of Black and white men.

There is also undeniably a personal genesis for Black feminism, that is, the political realization that comes from the seemingly personal experiences of individual Black women's lives. Black feminists and many more Black women who do not define themselves as feminists have all experienced sexual oppression as a constant factor in our day-to-day existence. As children we realized that we were different from boys and

that we were treated differently—for example, when we were told in the same breath to be quiet both for the sake of being "ladylike" and to make us less objectionable in the eyes of white people. As we grew older we became aware of the threat of physical and sexual abuse by men. However, we had no way of conceptualizing what was so apparent to us, what we *knew* was really happening.

Black feminists often talk about their feelings of craziness before becoming conscious of the concepts of sexual politics, patriarchal rule, and, most importantly, feminism, the political analysis and practice that we women use to struggle against our oppression. The fact that racial politics and indeed racism are pervasive factors in our lives did not allow us, and still does not allow most Black women, to look more deeply into our own experiences and define those things that make our lives what they are and our oppression specific to us. In the process of consciousness-raising, actually life-sharing, we began to recognize the commonality of our experiences and, from the sharing and growing consciousness, to build a politics that will change our lives and inevitably end our oppression.

Our development also must be tied to the contemporary economic and political position of Black people. The post-World War II generation of Black youth was the first to be able to minimally partake of certain educational and employment options, previously closed completely to Black people. Although our economic position is still at the very bottom of the American capitalist economy, a handful of us have been able to gain certain tools as a result of tokenism in education and employment which potentially enable us to more effectively fight our oppression.

A combined antiracist and antisexist position drew us together initially and as we developed politically we addressed ourselves to heterosexism and economic oppression under capitalism.

2. What We Believe

Above all else, our politics initially sprang from the shared belief that Black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because of our need as human persons for autonomy. This may seem so obvious as to sound simplistic, but it is apparent that no other ostensibly progressive movement has ever considered our specific oppression a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression. Merely naming the pejorative stereotypes attributed to Black women (e.g., mammy, matriarch, Sap

phile, whore, bulldagger), let alone cataloguing the cruel, often murderous, treatment we receive, indicates how little value has been placed upon our lives during four centuries of bondage in the Western hemisphere. We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation is us. Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters, and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work.

This focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially the most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression. In the case of Black women this is a particularly repugnant, dangerous, threatening, and therefore revolutionary concept because it is obvious from looking at all the political movements that have preceded us that anyone is more worthy of liberation than ourselves. We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough.

We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual, e.g., the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression.

Although we are feminists and lesbians, we feel solidarity with progressive Black men and do not advocate the fractionalization that white women who are separatists demand. Our situation as Black people necessitates that we have solidarity around the fact of race, which white women of course do not need to have with white men, unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors. We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism.

We realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy. We are socialists because we believe that work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products and not for the profit of the bosses. Material resources must be equally distributed among those who create these resources. We are not convinced, however, that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and antiracist revolution will guarantee our liberation. We have arrived at the necessity for developing an understanding of class relationships that takes into account the specific class position of Black women who are generally marginal in the labor force, while at this particular time some of us are temporarily viewed as doubly desirable

tokens at white-collar and professional levels. We need to articulate the real class situation of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers, but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working economic lives. Although we are in essential agreement with Marx's theory as it applied to the very specific economic relationships he analyzed, we know that this analysis must be extended further in order for us to understand our specific economic situation as Black women.

A political contribution which we feel we have already made is the expansion of the feminist principle that the personal is political. In our consciousness-raising sessions, for example, we have in many ways gone beyond white women's revelations because we are dealing with the implications of race and class as well as sex. Even our Black women's style of talking, testifying in Black language about what we have experienced, has a resonance that is both cultural and political. We have spent a great deal of energy delving into the cultural and experiential nature of our oppression out of necessity because none of these matters have ever been looked at before. No one before has ever examined the multilayered texture of Black women's lives.

An example of the kind of revelation/conceptualization achieved through consciousness-raising occurred at a meeting when we discussed the ways in which our early intellectual interests had been attacked by our peers, particularly Black men. We discovered that all of us, because we were "smart," had also been considered "ugly," i.e., "smart-ugly." "Smart-ugly" crystallized the way in which most of us had been forced to develop our intellects at great cost to our "social" lives. The sanctions in the Black and white communities against Black women thinkers are comparatively much higher than those against white women, particularly ones from the educated middle and upper classes.

As we have already stated, we reject the stance of lesbian separatism because it is not a viable political analysis or strategy for us. It leaves out far too much and far too many people, particularly Black men, women, and children. We have a great deal of criticism and loathing for what men have been socialized to be in this society: what they support, how they act, and how they oppress. But we do not have the misguided notion that it is their maleness, per se—i.e., their biological maleness—that makes them what they are. As Black women we find any type of biological determinism a particularly dangerous and reactionary basis upon which to build a politic. We must also question whether lesbian separatism is an adequate and progressive political analysis and strategy, even for those who practice it, since it so completely denies any but the sexual sources of women's oppression, negating the facts of class and race.

3. Problems in Organizing Black Feminists

During our years together as a Black feminist collective we have experienced success and defeat, joy and pain, victory and failure. We have found that it is very difficult to organize around Black feminist issues, difficult even to announce in certain contexts that we *are* Black feminists. We have tried to think about the reasons for our difficulties, particularly since the white women's movement continues to be strong and to grow in many directions. In this section we will discuss some of the general reasons for the organizing problems we face and also talk specifically about the stages in organizing our own collective.

The major source of difficulty in our political work is that we are not just trying to fight oppression on one front or even two, but instead to address a whole range of oppressions. We do not have racial, sexual, heterosexual, or class privilege to rely upon, nor do we have even the minimal access to resources and power that groups who possess any one of these types of privilege have.

The psychological toll of being a Black woman and the difficulties this presents in reaching political consciousness and doing political work can never be underestimated. There is a very low value placed upon Black women's psyches in this society, which is both racist and sexist. As an early group member once said, "We are all damaged people merely by virtue of being Black women." We are dispossessed psychologically and on every other level, and yet we feel the necessity to struggle to change our condition and the condition of all Black women. In "A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood," Michele Wallace arrives at this conclusion:

> We exist as women who are Black who are feminists, each stranded for the moment, working independently because there is not yet an environment in this society remotely congenial to our struggle—because, being on the bottom, we would have to do what no one else has done: we would have to fight the world.[2]

Wallace is not pessimistic but realistic in her assessment of Black feminists' position, particularly in her allusion to the nearly classic isolation most of us face. We might use our position at the bottom, however, to make a clear leap into revolutionary action. If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression.

Feminism is, nevertheless, very threatening to the majority of Black people because it calls into question some of the most basic assumptions about our existence, i.e., that gender should be a determinant of power

relationships. Here is the way male and female roles were defined in a Black nationalist pamphlet from the early 1970s:

> We understand that it is and has been traditional that the man is the head of the house. He is the leader of the house/nation because his knowledge of the world is broader, his awareness is greater, his understanding is fuller and his application of this information is wiser.... After all, it is only reasonable that the man be the head of the house because he is able to defend and protect the development of his home.... Women cannot do the same things as men—they are made by nature to function differently. Equality of men and women is something that cannot happen even in the abstract world. Men are not equal to other men, i.e., ability, experience, or even understanding. The value of men and women can be seen as in the value of gold and silver—they are not equal but both have great value. We must realize that men and women are a complement to each other because there is no house/family without a man and his wife. Both are essential to the development of any life.[3]

The material conditions of most Black women would hardly lead them to upset both economic and sexual arrangements that seem to represent some stability in their lives. Many Black women have a good understanding of both sexism and racism, but because of the everyday constrictions of their lives cannot risk struggling against them both.

The reaction of Black men to feminism has been notoriously negative. They are, of course, even more threatened than Black women by the possibility that Black feminists might organize around our own needs. They realize that they might not only lose valuable and hard-working allies in their struggles but that they might also be forced to change their habitually sexist ways of interacting with and oppressing Black women. Accusations that Black feminism divides the Black struggle are powerful deterrents to the growth of an autonomous Black women's movement.

Still, hundreds of women have been active at different times during the three-year existence of our group. And every Black woman who came came out of a strongly felt need for some level of possibility that did not previously exist in her life.

When we first started meeting early in 1974 after the NBFO's first eastern regional conference, we did not have a strategy for organizing, or even a focus. We just wanted to see what we had. After a period of months

of not meeting, we began to meet again late in the year and started doing an intense variety of consciousness-raising. The overwhelming feeling that we had is that after years and years we had finally found each other. Although we were not doing political work as a group, individuals continued their involvement in lesbian politics, sterilization abuse and abortion rights work, Third World Women's International Women's Day activities, and support activity for the trials of Dr. Kenneth Edelin, Joanne Little, and Inez Garcia. During our first summer, when membership had dropped off considerably, those of us remaining devoted serious discussion to the possibility of opening a refuge for battered women in a Black community. (There was no refuge in Boston at that time.) We also decided around that time to become an independent collective since we had serious disagreements with NBFO's bourgeois-feminist stance and their lack of a clear political focus.

We also were contacted at that time by socialist feminists, with whom we had worked on abortion rights activities, who wanted to encourage us to attend the National Socialist Feminist Conference in Yellow Springs. One of our members did attend and despite the narrowness of the ideology that was promoted at that particular conference, we became more aware of the need for us to understand our own economic situation and to make our own economic analysis.

In the fall, when some members returned, we experienced several months of comparative inactivity and internal disagreements which were first conceptualized as a lesbian-straight split but which were also the result of class and political differences. During the summer those of us who were still meeting had determined the need to do political work and to move beyond consciousness-raising and serving exclusively as an emotional support group. At the beginning of 1976, when some of the women who had not wanted to do political work and who also had voiced disagreements stopped attending of their own accord, we again looked for a focus. We decided at that time, with the addition of new members, to become a study group. We had always shared our reading with each other, and some of us had written papers on Black feminism for group discussion a few months before this decision was made. We began functioning as a study group and also began discussing the possibility of starting a Black feminist publication. We had a retreat in the late spring which provided a time for both political discussion and working out interpersonal issues. Currently we are planning to gather a collection of Black feminist writing. We feel that it is absolutely essential to demonstrate the reality of our politics to other Black women and believe that we can do this through writing and distributing our work. The fact that individual Black feminists are living in isolation all over the country, that our own numbers are small, and that we have some skills in writing, printing, and publishing makes us want to carry out these kinds of projects as a means of organizing Black feminists as we continue to do political work in coalition with other groups.

4. Black Feminist Issues and Practice

During our time together we have identified and worked on many issues of particular relevance to Black women. The inclusiveness of our politics makes us concerned with any situation that impinges upon the lives of women and those of Third World and working people in general. We are of course particularly committed to working on those struggles in which race, sex, and class are simultaneous factors in oppression. We might, for example, become involved in workplace organizing at a factory that employs Third World women or picket a hospital that is cutting back on already inadequate health care to a Third World community, or set up a rape crisis center in a Black neighborhood. Organizing around welfare or daycare concerns might also be a focus. The work to be done and the countless issues that this work represents merely reflect the pervasiveness of our oppression.

Issues and projects that collective members have actually worked on are sterilization abuse, abortion rights, battered women, rape, and health care. We have also done many workshops on Black feminism on college campuses, at women's conferences, and most recently for high school women.

One issue that is of major concern to us and that we have begun to publicly address is racism in the white women's movement. As Black feminists we are made constantly and painfully aware of how little effort white women have made to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial comprehension of race, color, and Black history and culture. Eliminating racism in the white women's movement is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue.

In the practice of our politics we do not believe that the end always justifies the means. Many reactionary and destructive acts have been done in the name of achieving "correct" political goals. As feminists we do not want to mess over people in the name of politics. We believe in collective process and a nonhierarchical distribution of power within our own group and in our vision of a revolutionary society. We are committed to a continual examination of our politics as they develop through

and self-criticism as an essential aspect of our practice. In her introduction to *Sisterhood Is Powerful* Robin Morgan writes: "I haven't the faintest notion what possible revolutionary role white heterosexual men could fulfill, since they are the very embodiment of reactionary-vested-interest-power."

As Black feminists and lesbians we know that we have a very definite revolutionary task to perform and we are ready for the lifetime of work and struggle before us.

NOTES

[1]This statement is dated April 1977.

[2]Michele Wallace. "A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood," *The Village Voice*, 28 July 1975, pp. 6-7; reprinted above, pp. 5-12.

[3]Mumininas of Committee for Unified Newark, *Mwanamke Mwanachi (The Nationalist Woman)*. Newark, N.J., c. 1971, pp. 4-5.

"Racism-- A White Issue", by Ellen Pence, in All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave, eds. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, the Feminist Press, 1982.

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Racism—A White Issue

ELLEN PENCE

I've written and rewritten this article only to find that because I am still only in the early stages of seriously examining my own racism and the racism in the battered women's movement. I am unable to articulate much of what I think needs to be said. I grew up in a home where my father believed and preached the natural superiority of whites. Because his racism was so blatant, it was easy for me to reject his ideas during the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Marching with Father Groppi for open housing in Milwaukee, sending my babysitting money to Martin Luther King, and making sure that I always went to confession to the Black priest in our lily-white parish were all signs to me that I had rejected the racist philosophy my father taught and had joined with the Third World people in their struggle for liberation.

As I began to get involved in neighborhood organizing and especially in the battered women's program, I watched Blacks and Indians accuse white feminist women of racism. Certainly, they didn't mean me—I had marched in Milwaukee. I too was oppressed by the white male. So when I heard women of color speaking of white privileges, I mentally inserted the word "male": "white male privileges."

I viewed the anger of women of color toward my white sisters as a cop out. We are the most vulnerable to this anger, we listened and tried to adjust. It seemed to me that because it is much easier for them to confront us than the racist system or the men in their communities who give no support to their participation in women's issues, we are the most aggressively confronted.

I also defended the decision-making process we used in developing grassroots organizations as totally open to all women. In response to complaints of exclusionary practices, special care is always taken to notify minority organizations and women of color of conferences, planning meetings, job openings, and workshops.

Gradually, I began to realize the tremendous gap between my rhetoric about solidarity with Third World women and my gut feelings.

I began talking to a Black friend of mine, Ella Gross, about how sick I was getting of the whole issue. Ella, in her normal blunt, direct way, told me that I was sick of it because I didn't want to go past adjusting my behavior to recognizing my racism. In the many, many hours I spent talking to Ella, I began to see how white women ignored the need to reexamine the traditional white rigid methods of decision making, priority setting, and implementing decisions. Our idea of including women of color was to send out notices. We never came to the business table as equals. Women of color joined us on our terms.

I started seeing the similarities with how men have excluded the participation of women in their work through Roberts Rules of Order, encouraging us to set up subcommittees to discuss *our* problems but never seeing sexism as their problem. It became clear that in many ways I act the same way toward women of color, supporting them in dealing with *their* issues. As with liberal men's recognition of the oppression of women, I recognized the oppression of Third World people but never understood that I personally had anything to gain by the elimination of racism. While I fully understand how sexism dehumanizes men, it never crossed my mind that my racism must somehow dehumanize me.

As white women, we continually expect women of color to bring us to an understanding of our racism. White women rarely meet to examine collectively our attitudes, our actions, and, most importantly, our resistance to change. The oppression of men toward women is in so many ways parallel to the oppression of white women toward women of color. Asking a Black, Indian, or Chicana woman to define racism for us or to lay the historical background of Third World people's experience in this country is what allows us to continue our resistance to change. The history of racism in this country is white history, we know it, it is the story of our parents, grandparents, and ourselves. Why do we call upon those who have suffered the injustice of that history to explain it to us?

Knowing that we grew up in a society permeated with the belief that white values, culture, and lifestyle are superior, we can assume that regardless of our rejection of the concept we still act out of that socialization. The same anger and frustration that we have as women in dealing with men whose sexism is subtle, not blatant, are the frustration

and anger women of color must feel toward us. The same helpless feelings we have in trying to expose that subtle sexism must be the feelings of women of color in working with us. I have sat through hundreds of meetings with men, constantly raising issues about women's involvement or the effects of decisions on women, and felt totally frustrated knowing that to them I'm being petty, my issues are relatively unimportant to the business at hand, my comments resented. I always end up feeling either crazy or absolutely enraged at the thought that they are deliberately acting dumb. I'm now beginning to realize that in many cases men do not understand because they have never committed themselves to understanding and by understanding, choosing to share their power. The lessons we've learned so well as women must be the basis for our understanding of ourselves as oppressive to the Third World women we work with.

We must acknowledge what we think we have to lose by this understanding and find what we have to gain by eliminating our racism. We must believe that racism causes us to be less human and work toward humanizing ourselves.

It seems that much of our resistance to change comes from being angry at women of color. There are many times that white women are put in a real bind so that no matter what we do we are accused of being racists. There are times when racism is inappropriately used as an issue when the disagreements are clearly philosophical. But those, often very legitimate, resentments we have cannot become a justification for perpetuating our racism. The confusion we feel about when and how this movement is racist will not be cleared up until we understand racism as our issue and our responsibility and begin addressing it among ourselves rather than depending totally on Third World women to raise and clarify the issue for us.

"Ongoing Anti-Racist Education", by Deanna Geddo, member of the Latin American Women's Collective and of March 8th Coalition in '89-'90 (unpublished).

ONGOING ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION

By Deanna Geddo

There are innumerable volumes to be read on the matter of racism, there are workshops to be taken, discussion groups to participate in, and exercises to practice.

But the only definitive and comprehensive way to tackle the very complex question of racial discrimination is to admit that, without exceptions, we are all racists, and to proceed from then on to analyze with meticulous attention to detail the nature of our own prejudices.

Prejudices are such an inherent component of the existential experience that it is almost impossible to dissect them and separate them completely. We need prejudices to protect our feelings, to guide our decisions, to help our judgements. None of us are able to subject to rigorous scientific scrutiny each and every aspect of the many situations we face in our lives. So we use prejudices: one experience we had, one story we heard, one article we read, one person we knew, and we quickly generalize and establish "rules" which we will shamelessly use over and over again until they become, by virtue of repetition, grounded in our psyche with the same solid legitimacy as the laws of physics or chemistry.

To uproot these very deeply buried convictions we need no small amount of courage and committment. The shedding of long held beliefs, which were developed in the first place to shelter us from the fear of the unknown, is a painful process often accompanied by irrational bouts of terror. The sudden discovery that most of what we consider normal is pure fantasy and all that we take for granted may disappear at any moment can be a scary experience. Not to get discouraged by the ebbs and flows of our committment and to forgive our weaknesses and irritation, are essential components of an ongoing antiracist education.

To observe carefully what appears to be "spontaneous" or "natural", to listen impartially to statements which make us feel defensive, to ask the advice of others, regardless of our preconceived notions about them, on themes we think we know very well, to imagine ourselves as tourists in our own country looking at things for the first time, and to question everything we say or hear (or write or read) from every angle we can think of, are some of the methods we may use to challenge ourselves.

In spite of all this, integrating an anti-racist perspective in all aspects of our lives is an imperfect process, fraught with errors and approximations, and permanently changing. What was "politically correct" last year becomes an absolute no-no over night. What felt very uncomfortable the first time is now second nature. We live in constant fear of offending someone and we also get offended often as our awareness and sensitivity become heightened.

All in all, the process of changing our prejudices is as unscientific as the process of developing them. So we need some new prejudices to help us travel this rocky road. These are some of them.

(1) Assume that people who have been historically discriminated against know what they are talking about when they describe their experience and listen carefully and never argue.

../2

(2) Never, ever blame the victim.

(3) If you are white, try not to say to a Black or Native person "I know how you feel". That's just tactless.

(4) Avoid "gentlemanly" behaviour like getting offended by the accusations of racism and leaving with a slam of the door.

(5) Accept that, no matter how enlightened you are, if you come from the ranks of the oppressor you will never belong to the ranks of the oppressed. The best you can aspire to is to be seen as an ally, sometimes.

(6) To make matters more interesting, each of us is a member of a wide variety of oppressor and oppressed groups, which makes ongoing anti-racist education infinitely more complicated.

(7) Don't give up. It's worth it.

A VISION OF THE SACRED

Editorial by Pauline Shirt

This summer, we saw that the women gave strong leadership, and their voices were listened to. There is another prophecy that says all women must stand united on our two feet to crush the monster under our feet. This is our work and it is happening now, all across the country.

Here at the Native Womens Resource Centre, we began to hold Womens' Circles two years ago. We have begun our own healing for these circles are healing and teaching circles. This summer, the situation at Kahnesatake and Kahnawake reinforced our belief that there is a need for healing; not only in Native Communities but within the communities of all four colors of people.

Many times over, while our brothers and sisters were under siege this summer, we heard the phrase "Oka is all of us." As far as I'm concerned, only when people recognize women on an equal basis will there be peace and justice, not only for Aboriginal people but all four races. Various womens' groups of all colors, all quarters, have taken the initiative in regards to supporting the people of Kahnesatake and Kahnawake with prayer vigils, demonstrations, peace marches and food drives. Their efforts were supported by men from the four quarters. It is important this support is continued because peoples' homes have been destroyed and their communities crippled.

In this struggle, the women showed strong leadership. Throughout history, in times of great struggle, women have shown strength. We have been silenced for a long time, but we must be heard again. Women must pick up their sacred Medicine Bundles and heal their nations. And how will women heal their nations in this 8th Fire? They will show leadership, they will work to unify and heal the family unit, they will pick up their Medicine Bundles seeking out and living by the sacred teachings of the Four Directions.

All across the country, Native people have been asked "What do you want?" That is a legitimate question. It is a question we can answer. We want our sovereign rights and these include social rights, our political rights, our economic rights and our spiritual rights. But in order to attain these rights, we must do our spiritual healing. Our spiritual health and healing is our own responsibility. No one can give that to us.

The struggle at Kahnesatake and Kahnawake has brought the First Nations of Canada closer together. Now we must unite with the other colors to heal our Mother the Earth. The Earth is a living, growing being, and we are all responsible for her healing. The end of the siege at Kahnesatake and Kahnawake is only the end of a chapter in our struggle. We must remember "Our Own Vision of the Sacred," for it is prophesized that all quarters must come together to heal our Mother.

Any person who is still questioning whose leadership to follow will know whose teachings to live by, when they observe how that person is living the Truth. As the Hopi say, we can "show the world's children the true way of life by setting an example.... by working and communicating in a way that reaches the minds and hearts of all people who are truly seeking the methods of a simple and spiritual life which is the only life that will survive."

"Sisters in the Movement", by Mutriba Din and Ravida Din in Awakening Thunder: Asian Canadian Women, Fireweed, Issue 30, Spring 1990.

:g the retreat where we have come together to
: our lives.
in the ways we are forever coming out to the
:ch other as lesbians, Asian women, singles,
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n one workshop. For current information on safer sex,
community group.

Sisters in the Movement

Mutriba Din and Ravida Din

We have worked with the women's movement for over six years. For the most part this has meant challenging white feminists to be accountable for their racism. We continue our involvement with the hopes of forging links between women of colour and white feminists. Our commitment lies with building a movement with and for women of colour. "Nothing short of a revolution" (Cherie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, introduction to This Bridge Called My Back).

Identifying as Feminists

Mutriba: I've always been a feminist . . . however, I never sought it out.

Ravida: I never "looked" for feminism either, I fell into it. I was in my second year of university and Women's Studies classes were just being introduced. The student newspaper started a "Women's Page" . . . we were both involved immediately . . . there was no questioning it. Later, I became involved with the Calgary Status of Women Action Committee (SWAC) . . . it was such a natural progression. I saw SWAC as a forum to continue writing on and for women. I was never conscious of joining "the women's movement."

M: My work at SWAC was mostly done in isolation. I used to go in during the days and read, file, catalogue books, etc. . . . There were always meetings and CR groups going on. I didn't know what they

involved and the thought of talking with more than one woman terrified me because I was so shy. As well, I didn't think I had anything to say.

R: I remember when we first articulated that we were feminists. I was seventeen and you were eighteen years old. Both of us were working with SWAC, the "Women's Page," taking Women's Studies courses and therefore reading the "classics" (de Beauvoir, Greer, Friedan). . . . I asked you if you were a feminist and you very matter of factly said, "Yes, of course I am." I mumbled and fumbled thinking, "Well—if you are, so am I."

Identifying as Women of Colour . . . as Asians

M: Again . . . the terms colour, immigrant, Asian were not part of my vocabulary. I've never identified as Asian because it always meant you were Chinese, Japanese, etc. I prefer to identify as a woman of colour.

R: Yet, we did refer to the Muslim population, which included us, as Asian.

M: Yes, it was a term the British used to identify anyone who wasn't Black and, of course, white.

R: Why did you want to write for this issue then?

M: I've been involved with the Women of Colour Collective for almost three years now. When I saw the notice, I thought, "I want to be part of this too . . . these women are like me."

R: I've only recently been able to call myself Asian. In the past, I never thought the word included me. I've been reading and seeing anthologies on Black women, Latin American women, Arab women, etc., and in each I find a part of myself. But, as a woman born in Nairobi, raised in a Muslim family, and having lived in Canada for over ten years, I still have to glean information from these anthologies. When I saw the notice for this issue, I thought perhaps I'll read chapters and who knows, maybe the whole book, and I'll say, "Yes, this is me. . . ."

M: It's difficult finding that niche, one that speaks to us in totality. In fact, its been an annoyance for me to have to define or identify myself as anything other than a woman of colour. But I also know that I am immediately drawn to anything that mentions Asian or Muslim.

R: It would be interesting to examine how we are constantly changing and adding to the ways in which we self-define. I use woman of colour, lesbian of colour, feminist, Asian, all interchangeably, always depending on the context.

M: I first called myself a woman of colour after you returned from Nairobi.* You specifically used the term woman of colour and it felt absolutely right and it felt good. I felt for the first time a sense of pride in my colour.

R: I went to Nairobi as a youth delegate.

M: You fit all the criteria in the selection process—young, from the West and a "visible minority."

R: I had never thought I'd get marks for being a woman of colour. Nairobi was a turning point for me. The Canadian delegation itself was about forty percent women of colour. Things started "clicking" even before arriving in Nairobi. In an orientation meeting in Toronto, the women of colour came together, separate from the white women. We talked about our lives, our work and what it meant for us individually and as a group to be going to Nairobi. We were aghast at the questions white women asked. For example, "How do you say sisterhood in Swahili?", or, "How do I know when a Kenyan man is coming on to me?" . . . Arriving in Nairobi . . . WOW! Not only was it my birthplace but here were 13,000 women and two-thirds were women of colour. Nairobi was a coming home for me in more ways than one. Many white women have said feminism or the women's movement is "coming home." I was amongst women who thought and felt just like I did. There were finally names for all those feelings of being "other," of being "separate" and most of those feelings had to do with acknowledging the fact that racism existed in the women's movement.

M: We knew racism outside of the women's movement and it went as far as slurs and being called "Paki."

R: Before Nairobi, it didn't make sense to talk about racism in the context of the women's movement just as it didn't make sense to identify as anything other than woman. Nairobi was very empowering . . . I was in a community of women who listened and understood me and suddenly so much was spilling out of me . . . I never realized I had been so silent.

M: It was exciting to call myself a woman of colour . . . finally something that's positive.

R: Yes. We've grown up hating our colour because everyone else did. In the Muslim community as well, the lighter your skin colour, the more "attractive" you are thought to be.

M: That desire to be white . . . it brings with it powerlessness.

R: Of course . . . wanting something we could never have.

M: How did you feel as a woman of colour in Nairobi as compared to Canada?

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* The End of the United Nations Decade for Women Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, 1985.

R: Nairobi was probably the ideal setting . . . we were so many, the majority. It was also ideal because we came together in a political setting and so many of us were women of colour living in "white" countries. The biggest difference . . . I never felt silenced.

M: So true . . . I often still feel silenced and I can hear some white women saying, "You've been involved in the women's movement for a long time, you always speak up" . . . but when they are being racist, I find myself going through that whole process of building strength, taking a few deep breaths . . . and I often don't end up challenging a racist remark.

R: I find myself reacting the same way many times. Whether I challenge or ignore a racist remark, I'm left feeling sickened. What thought process do you go through?

M: It's the same thing . . . I don't want to create conflict or I don't want to do the educating . . . *and* . . . it's the SHOCK! It's not about offending anyone . . . it stuns me, the ignorance. I think, "Don't these women know me?"

R: So we remain silent and that leaves us feeling, once again, powerless, and I often feel defeated.

M: That's where the support from the women of colour group is so important for me . . . that we don't internalize this.

R: It's becoming increasingly difficult for me to work with the women's movement . . . it comes back to what you said . . . "I thought they knew me." It's a movement that doesn't understand us . . . what's worse is that it now knows all the appropriate rhetoric and uses it!

M: What angers me is that white women often think they are fooling us by using the rhetoric . . . and we continue to be polite. Perhaps I'm generalizing and should say, "I continue to be polite."

R: I think it's safe to assume that a lot of us continue to be polite because we don't want to spend any more energy on educating white women. For some of us, we have no alternatives. With all its problems, it's still a community of women that I need to live and work with. In an anthology by Pacific/Asian lesbians, one woman writes, "I find myself the only lesbian in a group of Asians, and the only Asian in a group of lesbians." I understand that feeling, and so my search for community continues.

M: I continue to work in the women's movement because the goal for me, still, is to have an all-inclusive women's movement. I don't want to leave the movement; I want to change it. Each women has to decide for herself how much she can give and maybe one day both or one of us will renounce feminism entirely . . . maybe never. . . . Right now, there are white women I can work with. I also think there are many white women who don't realize that one of the goals of the Women of Colour Collective is to work towards an all-inclusive feminism. We have not "left" the women's movement.

R: It is vital for me to work with women of colour because it's the "safest" space for me. Just recently I went to a workshop on lesbian feminism. In a room of thirty I was the only lesbian of colour. I felt silenced and remember thinking I don't want to identify as a lesbian—there's no community for me.

M: That's a problem . . . even in the Women of Colour Collective, we are all middle-class, heterosexual women of colour.

R: Is it a problem?

M: For me, yet it is. My vision is of an all-inclusive women's movement. That has to begin with our collective.

R: That heterosexual, middle-class collective is still "safer" for me than the all white lesbian group. It's a constant trading off—homophobia or racism. I've always believed there are no hierarchies of oppression but I have to say at this point in my life I have more energy to deal with the homophobia from my sisters of colour than with racism. I can deal with the anger and fear that arises from hearing homophobic comments but when I hear racist remarks from women/lesbians, the feeling of pain and powerlessness is incomparable.

M: White people don't acknowledge or recognize how sensitive we are to racism . . . the hurt.

R: I have to constantly remind white women that there are no degrees . . . racism is racism is racism.

"Women's Movement" by Lee Maracle in I Am a Woman.

Women's Movement

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A good number of non-white women have addressed the women's movement and decried the fact that we are outside the women's movement. I have never felt outside of that movement, except when I denied my own womanhood during my mis-guided youth. White women can hardly be expected to take responsibility for that. But then, I have never felt that the women's movement was centered or defined by the women, here, in North America.

That the white women of North America are racist and that they define the movement in accordance with their own narrow perspective should not surprise us. White people define all of their own people and then, very magnanimously open the door to a select number of us. They let us in the door as we prove our selves to be civilized. This is the nature of racism. If we don't escape - can we expect that they should?

We are part of a global movement of women in the world, struggling for emancipation. The world will define the movement. We are part of the women who will define it. Until white women can come to us on our own terms, we ought to leave the door closed. Do we really want to be a part of a movement that sees the majority as the periphery and the minority as the center? This does not exclude us from the women's movement.

I heard a white woman the other day, talk about herself as a lesbian, and non-white women as minorities. That is the madness of racism; the psychosis, when the mistress accords herself distinction as a certain type of woman while erasing the womanhood of other peoples. For me, Audre Lorde most properly represents the women's movement in North America. The women's movement is all about the liberation of humanity from the yoke of domination. It is all about the fight against racism and sexism and its effects on our consciousness, no matter what color you are. It is all about the struggle for unity between oppressed women and men.

There are some white women that truly wish to struggle with the effect that racism has had on their consciousness. That puts them at my doorstep, around my kitchen table. It does not inspire me to enter the master's wife's home, thank you very much. I do not have to urge white women to deal with their racism. The emancipation of non-white women of the world is taking care of that. The red-necked practices of the so-called feminist movement is already becoming history in some circles.

Some women accuse me of being angry and bitterly resentful about the life that this

society handed me. You missed the real point. I write about racism to free my mind. Racism is the poison that crippled my tree. It also bent yours in all kinds of crazy directions. A talk, an intimate talk, between an ex-racist and an ex-victim of racism is not apt to be pretty.

Sojourner Truth told you already, "ain't I a woman?" She asked the white feminist movement on our behalf, a hundred years ago, and the white women of North America have yet to face the answer. She served up the question; we need do no more.

The world is a dark world. It is an impoverished world. It is a world fighting for its survival. It is not concerned about North America's definition of 'women's issues'. It is a world at war. Sojourner Truth properly reflects the world of today.

The women of the world are re-writing history with their bodies. White women of America are a footnote to it all. I am not in the habit of concerning myself with footnotes. I am concerned about us though. White women figure too large in our minds. Let us stop chasing them about and challenging their humanity at every turn. Let us begin by talking to each other about ourselves. Let us cleanse the dirty shack that racism left us. Let us deal with our menfolk and the refuse of patriarcy they borrowed from white men.

I represent the future of the women in North America, just as any other women does. That white women only want to hear from me as a Native and not as a voice in the women's movement is their loss. Embodied in my truth is the brilliance of hundreds of Native women who faced

the worst that CanAmerica had to offer and dealt with it. Embodied in my brilliance is the great sea of knowledge that it took to overcome the paralysis of a colonized mind. I did not come to this clearing alone. Hundreds walked alongside of me. Black, Asian and Native women whose tide of knowledge was bestowed upon me, are the key to every Canadian's emancipation.

Audre Lorde and I are destined to be close. It is more useful for us to talk to each other. The combined knowledge of African ex-slaves and colonized Natives in North America is going to tear assunder the holy citadel of patriarchy. Who can understand the pain of this land better than a Native woman. Who can understand the oppression that capital metes out to working people better than a Black woman. White women may have the word, but we have the use of it.

The road to freedom is paved with the intimate knowledge of the oppressed.

"Notes on Racism Among the Women", by Donna Allegra, in Out the Other Side, eds. Christine McEwen and Sue O'Sullivan, Virago Press, 1988.

Notes on Racism Among the Women

Donna Allegra

In some circuits, Black women have become valuable commodities on the social scale. As feminism has become respectable and Black women criticize white women on their racism, a lot of whites want to prove it's just not so. They invite us to submit articles, perform, read, or speak on panels. This has brought about a relatively new situation in my life – whites coming to me, asking for input.

Once I welcomed being in this position; often I went for it. I consciously figured on getting across as a token. That position would be my point of entry to places where white racism would ordinarily have left me out of the program. Now, with a Black women's community to live and work in, white structures are not so appealing. I look back with bitterness at whites whose dealings with me were not based on who I am, but on what I look like: a Black woman to fit into their program.

It was a real disservice when white women looked at me, saw the Black, and greeted me with eagerness because of a hidden agenda. It took a while before I realized it wasn't my charm and personal magnetism that was operating – I've got a big ego and I'm a slow learner. How bitterly I remember the white women who took me in as a token and how bitterly I remember myself going for the bait – hook, line, and sinker. I want to be treated as an individual, not seen with awe and fear as someone's dream nightmare. I want to be seen as a person who wants to do a job for reasons not unlike their own: a person subject to pride, fear, greed, anger, ambition, high ideals, willingness, trust, and love, like themselves. Instead, many see me as a 'Third World' woman to be used to make a project look good if I act right.

I feel a personal shame for having been willing to be that statistic or chocolate chip in the sea of white cookie. From that token's position, I tried to take myself somewhere, but doubted underneath that I could have gotten in on my own merit, not being sure of my place in the structure. That's the legacy I inherited from the perverted relationship where some whites looked good practicing tokenism and I was willing to let them get over through me. I was left not knowing where I really stood with them, trying to figure out what they thought I was, and then trying to be that so I could do what I wanted to do in service of who I really was.

Once I looked with trust to the feminist option. It was the minority viewpoint I would read and hunger after and identify with. I appreciate that there is a women's community with networks and publications, and that we do share a general point of view. With feminism established as a part of the current order, some things are easier for me, but elements of the old ways do continue to take on new forms. Now that a feminist angle is being targeted into cigarette commercials, I feel ripped off all over again. In a like manner, Black is 'hip' – well, not so hip anymore. More accurately, now white women are supremely sensitive to being accused of racism and try to avoid the word like the plague; it makes their shit turn to water if anyone even thinks the word in their direction. Now that they are conscious of Black women who come out with such very hip analysis and delivery, many of them want to hold onto us.

I resent feeling that they want us around for the power of our image: picture a handsome, angry Black woman on the cover of many a magazine that ever so rarely deals with a Black viewpoint. So many women who are talking about racism are more concerned about public relations than they are with gut-level sisterhood. They want us so that they don't have to feel uncomfortable should any Blacks call them on the question, or should any other whites get into the game of reminding their sisters that there are no women of color in evidence. Real reconstruction is bypassed. It's easier to opt for the cosmetic treatment. This is like being a nice girl. You smile at anyone who smiles at you and you don't dislike anyone because that's the way you've been brought up. But the truth of it all is that only by trading honest viewpoints can people negotiate and work out frank differences.

White women deny that they seek out women of color because pressure has been put on them. These white women are almost trained to respond with a politically correct manner when they're questioned. If some of them would acknowledge resentment or that they are bewildered that they can't seem to do anything right by Black women anymore, some truth could emerge that'd free us on all sides. But so many are afraid to come from anything other than masks of good behaviour.

Yet I know now when whites are running from me, trying to deflect any confrontations they fear I will want to bring into play. I can tell by their aggression on the subjects of race and racism – as though it were outside of them somehow, or as if by giving an appropriate nod to guilt, blame, and responsibility in a politically correct stance, they'll be safe from the anger they seem to expect from me. They are ill at ease and run from a feeling of discomfort that they project onto me. When whites beat their breasts and talk about what's being done to the poor darkies, they are still taking the missionary position and fucking Black people.

I have yet to hear white women talk about Black women as people, as individuals they like or dislike. In the conversations I have heard, we are either 'heroic,' 'surviving,' or 'triply oppressed.' They'll urge sympathy on us for Black men's purported sexism or condemn white men as a class group, but never voice a criticism of Black women. It makes me wonder. When a white woman assumes I'd be interested in something just because I'm a Black person, I withdraw one giant step inside. I'm dismayed when I see women at concerts or poetry readings knowing how to clap in all the right places and saying a nervous 'yeah' – as if by verbal affirmation of Black women's performance their guilt can be discharged and penance done so blame is deflected from them.

Today, white women see a lot of Black women who want to give their energy solely to Black women rather than deal with whites. I imagine white women often don't know what to do and feel perplexed.

A good number of Black women don't want to be bothered teaching or working with them because whites aren't as innocent in their racism as they put out. Others get mad at whites for trying to include Black people. It seems like you're damned if you do and damned if you don't—so what's a poor little white girl to do?

This thinking is, of course, not leading to the real truth. I think the answer to the seeming paradox is for the white women to do their own consciousness-raising and examine what they come up with among themselves. The working out of racist attitudes is process work for white women to do for themselves, with one another. Once they can see themselves through the rough stuff, they will actually be freer and truer to themselves. I appreciate that kind of honesty in an individual more than a correct line. Honesty is something I sense, can open up to and trust. Race differences are real, but they're not everything. We work out our real differences from honesty.

But after they've done their own CR, I hope these whites don't come to me for a stamp of approval. I'm having a hard enough time dealing with my own stuff and hoping my women will given me the pats on the back I crave. I don't think many Black women are going to credit whites for doing their own homework. Whites seem to want this at some level and when it doesn't come, they feel pissed and neglected. Well, that's not enough for Black women who have other concerns and don't want to play nanny in any mode. I've been brought up to feel I should be grateful for every little bit of progress, but I frankly do get angry at white women who are actively trying to deal with their racism and the new trips they lay on me in their growth process. Those white women who aren't so anxious and eager to clean up their acts and attitudes around race are the ones I can have friendships with. It's a tricky balance to find, but I think the important personal quality I respond to is honesty.

What is going on with all our concerns about racism is, indeed, change. There is a willingness among some white women to do some work, but the transformation isn't complete yet. Racist attitudes linger because the job isn't all the way done. People who haven't seen that change is possible can't wholeheartedly believe in it. If they haven't lived it in their personal lives, it's hard to see change in political terms. It won't all come together in one fell swoop. After the major reconstruction, there will be corners to straighten out and the maintenance work will be a day-to-day job. But this is Life Work. Any attempt to make it better can only work to good.

"The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism", by Audre Lorde in Sister Outsider, the Crossing Press, 1984.

The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism*

[EXCERPTS ***]

Racism. The belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance, manifest and implied.

Women respond to racism. My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight. My fear of anger taught me nothing. Your fear of that anger will teach you nothing, also.

Women responding to racism means women responding to anger; the anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation.

My anger is a response to racist attitudes and to the actions and presumptions that arise out of those attitudes. If your dealings with other women reflect those attitudes, then my anger and your attendant fears are spotlights that can be used for growth in the same way I have used learning to express anger for my growth. But for corrective surgery, not guilt. Guilt and defensiveness are bricks in a wall against which we all flounder; they serve none of our futures.

Because I do not want this to become a theoretical discussion, I am going to give a few examples of interchanges between

* Keynote presentation at the National Women's Studies Association Conference, Storrs, Connecticut, June 1981.

women that illustrate these points. In the interest of time, I am going to cut them short. I want you to know there were many more.

For example:

• I speak out of direct and particular anger at an academic conference, and a white woman says, "Tell me how you feel but don't say it too harshly or I cannot hear you." But is it my manner that keeps her from hearing, or the threat of a message that her life may change?

• The Women's Studies Program of a southern university invites a Black woman to read following a week-long forum on Black and white women. "What has this week given to you?" I ask. The most vocal white woman says, "I think I've gotten a lot. I feel Black women really understand me a lot better now; they have a better idea of where I'm coming from." As if understanding her lay at the core of the racist problem.

• After fifteen years of a women's movement which professes to address the life concerns and possible futures of all women, I still hear, on campus after campus, "How can we address the issues of racism? No women of Color attended." Or, the other side of that statement, "We have no one in our department equipped to teach their work." In other words, racism is a Black women's problem, a problem of women of Color, and only we can discuss it.

• After I read from my work entitled "Poems for Women in Rage,"* a white woman asks me: "Are you going to do anything with how we can deal directly with *our* anger? I feel it's so important." I ask, "How do you use *your* rage?" And then I have to turn away from the blank look in her eyes, before she can invite me to participate in her own annihilation. I do not exist to feel her anger for her.

• White women are beginning to examine their relationships to Black women, yet often I hear them wanting only to deal with little colored children across the roads of childhood, the beloved nursemaid, the occasional second-grade classmate — those tender memories of what was once mysterious and intri-

* One poem from this series is included in *Chosen Poems: Old and New* (W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1978), pp. 105-108.

guing or neutral. You avoid the childhood assumptions formed by the raucous laughter at Rastus and Alfalfa, the acute message of your mommy's handerkerchief spread upon the park bench because I had just been sitting there, the indelible and dehumanizing portraits of Amos 'n Andy and your daddy's humorous bedtime stories.

* * *

To the white women present who recognize these attitudes as familiar, but most of all, to all my sisters of Color who live and survive thousands of such encounters – to my sisters of Color who like me still tremble their rage under harness, or who sometimes question the expression of our rage as useless and disruptive (the two most popular accusations) – I want to speak about anger, my anger, and what I have learned from my travels through its dominions.

*Everything can be used / except what is wasteful / (you will need / to remember this when you are accused of destruction.)**

Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change. And when I speak of change, I do not mean a simple switch of positions or a temporary lessening of tensions, nor the ability to smile or feel good. I am speaking of a basic and radical alteration in those assumptions underlining our lives.

I have seen situations where white women hear a racist remark, resent what has been said, become filled with fury, and remain silent because they are afraid. That unexpressed anger lies within them like an undetonated device, usually to be hurled at the first woman of Color who talks about racism.

But anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification, for it is in the painful process of this translation that we identify who are our allies with whom we have grave differences, and who are our genuine enemies.

Anger is loaded with information and energy. When I speak of women of Color, I do not only mean Black women. The woman of Color who is not Black and who charges me with rendering her invisible by assuming that her struggles with

* From "For Each of You," first published in *From A Land Where Other People Live* (Broadside Press, Detroit, 1973), and collected in *Chosen Poems: Old and New* (W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1982), p. 42.

racism are identical with my own has something to tell me that I had better learn from, lest we both waste ourselves fighting the truths between us. If I participate, knowingly or otherwise, in my sister's oppression and she calls me on it, to answer her anger with my own only blankets the substance of our exchange with reaction. It wastes energy. And yes, it is very difficult to stand still and to listen to another woman's voice delineate an agony I do not share, or one to which I myself have contributed.

In this place we speak removed from the more blatant reminders of our embattlement as women. This need not blind us to the size and complexities of the forces mounting against us and all that is most human within our environment. We are not here as women examining racism in a political and social vacuum. We operate in the teeth of a system for which racism and sexism are primary, established, and necessary props of profit. Women responding to racism is a topic so dangerous that when the local media attempt to discredit this conference they choose to focus upon the provision of lesbian housing as a diversionary device – as if the Hartford *Courant* dare not mention the topic chosen for discussion here, racism, lest it become apparent that women are in fact attempting to examine and to alter all the repressive conditions of our lives.

Mainstream communication does not want women, particularly white women, responding to racism. It wants racism to be accepted as an immutable given in the fabric of your existence, like eveningtime or the common cold.

So we are working in a context of opposition and threat, the cause of which is certainly not the angers which lie between us, but rather that virulent hatred leveled against all women, people of Color, lesbians and gay men, poor people – against all of us who are seeking to examine the particulars of our lives as we resist our oppressions, moving toward coalition and effective action.

Any discussion among women about racism must include the recognition and the use of anger. This discussion must be direct and creative because it is crucial. We cannot allow our fear of anger to deflect us nor seduce us into settling for anything less than the hard work of excavating honesty; we must be quite

serious about the choice of this topic and the angers entwined within it because, rest assured, our opponents are quite serious about their hatred of us and of what we are trying to do here.

And while we scrutinize the often painful face of each other's anger, please remember that it is not our anger which makes me caution you to lock your doors at night and not to wander the streets of Hartford alone. It is the hatred which lurks in those streets, that urge to destroy us all if we truly work for change rather than merely indulge in academic rhetoric.

This hatred and our anger are very different. Hatred is the fury of those who do not share our goals, and its object is death and destruction. Anger is a grief of distortions between peers, and its object is change. But our time is getting shorter. We have been raised to view any difference other than sex as a reason for destruction, and for Black women and white women to face each other's angers without denial or immobility or silence or guilt is in itself a heretical and generative idea. It implies peers meeting upon a common basis to examine difference, and to alter those distortions which history has created around our difference. For it is those distortions which separate us. And we must ask ourselves: Who profits from all this?

Women of Color in america have grown up within a symphony of anger, at being silenced, at being unchosen, at knowing that when we survive, it is in spite of a world that takes for granted our lack of humanness, and which hates our very existence outside of its service. And I say *symphony* rather than *cacophony* because we have had to learn to orchestrate those furies so that they do not tear us apart. We have had to learn to move through them and use them for strength and force and insight within our daily lives. Those of us who did not learn this difficult lesson did not survive. And part of my anger is always libation for my fallen sisters.

Anger is an appropriate reaction to racist attitudes, as is fury when the actions arising from those attitudes do not change. To those women here who fear the anger of women of Color more than their own unscrutinized racist attitudes, I ask: Is the anger of women of Color more threatening than the woman-hatred that tinges all aspects of our lives?

It is not the anger of other women that will destroy us but our refusals to stand still, to listen to its rhythms, to learn within it, to move beyond the manner of presentation to the substance, to tap that anger as an important source of empowerment.

I cannot hide my anger to spare you guilt, nor hurt feelings, nor answering anger; for to do so insults and trivializes all our efforts. Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness.

Most women have not developed tools for facing anger constructively. CR groups in the past, largely white, dealt with how to express anger, usually at the world of men. And these groups were made up of white women who shared the terms of their oppressions. There was usually little attempt to articulate the genuine differences between women, such as those of race, color, age, class, and sexual identity. There was no apparent need at that time to examine the contradictions of self, woman as oppressor. There was work on expressing anger, but very little on anger directed against each other. No tools were developed to deal with other women's anger except to avoid it, deflect it, or flee from it under a blanket of guilt.

I have no creative use for guilt, yours or my own. Guilt is only another way of avoiding informed action, of buying time out of the pressing need to make clear choices, out of the approaching storm that can feed the earth as well as bend the trees. If I speak to you in anger, at least I have spoken to you: I have not put a gun to your head and shot you down in the street; I have not looked at your bleeding sister's body and asked, "What did she do to deserve it?" This was the reaction of two white women to Mary Church Terrell's telling of the lynching of a pregnant Black woman whose baby was then torn from her body. That was in 1921, and Alice Paul had just refused to publicly endorse the enforcement of the Nineteenth Amendment for all women

– by refusing to endorse the inclusion of women of Color, although we had worked to help bring about that amendment.

The angers between women will not kill us if we can articulate them with precision, if we listen to the content of what is said with at least as much intensity as we defend ourselves against the manner of saying. When we turn from anger we turn from insight, saying we will accept only the designs already known, deadly and safely familiar. I have tried to learn my anger's usefulness to me, as well as its limitations.

the strength of women lies in recognizing differences between us as creative, and in standing to those distortions which we inherited without blame, but which are now ours to alter. The angers of women can transform difference through insight into power. For anger between peers births change, not destruction, and the discomfort and sense of loss it often causes is not fatal, but a sign of growth.

My response to racism is anger. That anger has eaten clefts into my living only when it remained unspoken, useless to anyone. It has also served me in classrooms without light or learning, where the work and history of Black women was less than a vapor. It has served me as fire in the ice zone of uncomprehending eyes of white women who see in my experience and the experience of my people only new reasons for fear or guilt. And my anger is no excuse for not dealing with your blindness, no reason to withdraw from the results of your own actions.

When women of Color speak out of the anger that laces so many of our contacts with white women, we are often told that we are "creating a mood of hopelessness," "preventing white women from getting past guilt," or "standing in the way of trusting communication and action." All these quotes come directly from letters to me from members of this organization within the last two years. One woman wrote, "Because you are Black and Lesbian, you seem to speak with the moral authority of suffering." Yes, I am Black and Lesbian, and what you hear in my voice is fury, not suffering. Anger, not moral authority. There is a difference.

To turn aside from the anger of Black women with excuses or the pretexts of intimidation is to award no one power – it is merely another way of preserving racial blindness, the power of unaddressed privilege, unbreached, intact. Guilt is only another form of objectification. Oppressed peoples are always being asked to stretch a little more, to bridge the gap between blindness and humanity. Black women are expected to use our anger [illegible] that time is over. My anger has meant pain to me but it has also meant survival, and before I give it up I'm going to be sure that there is something at least as powerful to replace it on the road to clarity.

What woman here is so enamoured of her own oppression that she cannot see her heelprint upon another woman's face? What woman's terms of oppression have become precious and necessary to her as a ticket into the fold of the righteous, away from the cold winds of self-scrutiny?

I am a lesbian woman of Color whose children eat regularly because I work in a university. If their full bellies make me fail to recognize my commonality with a woman of Color whose children do not eat because she cannot find work, or who has no children because her insides are rotted from home abortions and sterilization; if I fail to recognize the lesbian who chooses not to have children, the woman who remains closeted because her homophobic community is her only life support, the woman who chooses silence instead of another death, the woman who is terrified lest my anger trigger the explosion of hers; if I fail to recognize them as other faces of myself, then I am contributing not only to each of their oppressions but also to my own, and the anger which stands between us then must be used for clarity and mutual empowerment, not for evasion by guilt or for further separation. I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own. And I am not free as long as one person of Color remains chained. Nor is any one of you.

I speak here as a woman of Color who is not bent upon destruction, but upon survival. No woman is responsible for altering the psyche of her oppressor, even when that psyche is embodied in another woman. I have suckled the wolf's lip of anger and I have used it for illumination, laughter, protection, fire in places where there was no light, no food, no sisters, no quarter. We are not goddesses or matriarchs or edifices of divine forgiveness; we are not fiery fingers of judgment or instruments of flagellation; we are women forced back always upon our

woman's power. We have learned to use anger as we have learned to use the dead flesh of animals, and bruised, battered, and changing, we have survived and grown and, in Angela Wilson's words, we *are* moving on. With or without uncolored women. We use whatever strengths we have fought for, including anger, to help define and fashion a world where all our sisters can grow, where our children can love, and where the power of touching and meeting another woman's difference and wonder will eventually transcend the need for destruction.

For it is not the anger of Black women which is dripping down over this globe like a diseased liquid. It is not my anger that launches rockets, spends over sixty thousand dollars a second on missiles and other agents of war and death, slaughters children in cities, stockpiles nerve gas and chemical bombs, sodomizes our daughters and our earth. It is not the anger of Black women which corrodes into blind, dehumanizing power, bent upon the annihilation of us all unless we meet it with what we have, our power to examine and to redefine the terms upon which we will live and work; our power to envision and to reconstruct, anger by painful anger, stone upon heavy stone, a future of pollinating difference and the earth to support our choices.

* * *

EXCERPTS FROM:

To Be a Radical Jew in the Late Twentieth Century

Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz

1980. I recognized in Reagan's election that the liberalism I had for years seen as the real danger was being superceded, that the right was gaining power, with all its Jew-hating, racist, sexist, homophobic capitalist thrust. At the same time the anti-Semitism I was encountering in the women's movement and on the left hurt me more, not because it was more threatening but because the feminist left was where I needed to be: this added to my sense of isolation as a Jew.

I was also reading analyses of racism and discussions of identity, mostly by Black women, and my proximity to Chicana and Native American cultures allowed me tangible lessons in diversity and in non-mainstream survival. Cultures, people were being defined as Third World or white; where I lived it was Chicana, Indian or Anglo. But none of these categories, none of the descriptive analyses fit me or my culture. I was an English-speaker, my people came from Europe, but we were not Anglo and neither was our culture.

There are many more details, scenes, some I remember and some which still elude me. What is clear to me is this: the more outside of a Jewish ambiance I was, the more conscious I became of Jewishness. For me, it was like Marshall McLuhan's perhaps apocryphal remark: I don't know who discovered water, but I'm sure it wasn't a fish. Inside a Jewish environment, where I could take for granted a somewhat shared culture, an expectation about Jewish survival, where my body type and appearance were familiar, my voice ordinary, my laughter not too loud but hearty and normal, above all, normal . . . in this environment, I did not know what it meant to be a Jew, only what it meant to be a *mentsh*. I did not know that *mentsh* was a Jewish word in a Jewish language.

As I lived longer outside Jewish culture, as I became more fully aware of anti-Semitism, internal as well as external, as I understood my own hunger for home, kin, for *my people*, I was walking further and further along a mostly unconscious, gradual, zig-zag and retrospectively inevitable path.

I. If I am not for myself . . .

There were many of us on distinct but similarly inevitable paths. What happened as Jewish women began raising Jewish issues inside the women's movement?

Even at the beginning, some of the issues we were raising seemed almost mundane, obvious: issues of direct insult, stereotypes, omission, exclusion, indifference, discrimination, assumptions of sameness, [illegible] cultural difference, concern for cultural survival . . . had been laid, that the heroic and tedious labor undertaken by women of color, with some white and Jewish support, to raise everyone's consciousness about racism would carry over somewhat to inform response to Jewish women.

Not that I thought white – or Jewish – women had always been adequate in their commitment to fight racism. Not that I assumed experience and issues for Jewish women and for gentile women of color were the same; nor did I expect identical experience and issues for all women of color, including Jewish women of color. But I did expect some analogy to be apprehended. I expected that the movement would continue building on general principles, as well as differentiate what was unique.

And this did not happen. I saw resistance, overt rejection, ridicule, a willful ignorance. Not from everyone. From some I saw respect, support and desire to extend themselves. From many I saw hypocritical silence masquerading as respect. From some, hostility. And – most often – I saw a bewilderment, an inability to grasp what was being said about anti-Semitism or Jewish identity, an incapacity to recognize why it mattered. And, of course, the too-polite silence, the bewilderment, the hostility intensified my self-consciousness as a Jew.

Examples are not hard to find. The policy statement that doesn't mention opposition to anti-Semitism.[3] The many courses that include readings by women from a variety of cultures but, somehow, no Jews. The decision that to have a Jew as keynote speaker is too particular, too specialized.[4] The 1984 Women & the Law conference, with its theme *Bread and Roses*, which offered, out of nearly 200 workshops, none on Jews or Jewish issues. (Let me honor those Jewish women who ensured that the 1985 conference would have several Jewish workshops and events.[5]) The flyer for an anti-militarist protest which voiced opposition to misogyny, racism, homophobia, ableism, a number of other -isms, but not anti-Semitism; named a string of identities including 'Black, Latina, Asian, Palestinian . . .' but not Jewish.[6] A flyer soliciting material for a feminist journal on issues such as:

> Imperialist Intervention
> Racism, Sexism, Heterosexism, Ageism . . .
> Hunger Education Reproductive Rights
> Disarmament Health Self-Determination Housing[7]

I guess the '. . .' after 'Ageism' is supposed to leave room for the inclusion of anti-Semitism, but the general effect is to make Jews feel invisible, unwelcome, or worse.

Why? Why have the basic points been so hard to get? Why have so many radicals been impermeable to a pro-Jewish analysis and activity? Why are we getting the message that many of our erstwhile political comrades and sisters – including some Jews – think it contradictory to be a radical Jew?

The explanation, as I have tried to track it down, is as tangled as the nature of anti-Semitism; as unconscious, as willfully ignorant as an ordinary American's relationship to the rest of the world; as inadequately grasped and developed as the women's movement understanding of race and class and why the movement should oppose racism

nti-Semitism, Race and Class

am not one who believes anti-Semitism is inevitable, yet I confess ıy heart sinks when I consider how resilient this hatred is: Jew as nti-Christ, embodying materialism, money, Shylock's pound of flesh; Marx's analysis of the Jew as irrelevant parasite; shameful victims, who vent like sheep to the slaughter; the UN General Assembly's proclamaions on Zionism; killer Israelis.

Nor does Jewish oppression fit into previously established analyses. If capitalism is your primary contradiction, the Jewish people is not a class category. If racism, many Jews have light skin, pass as gentile if they wish. If sexism, why should Jewish women identify with Jewish men? If Jewish is an ethnicity, a peoplehood, why don't you live in Israel, or call yourself Israeli? If it's a religion, how are you Jewish if you don't observe?

But not only does Jewish oppression elude conventional categories, Jewish stereotypes prove that anti-Semitism does not exist. Jews are rich, powerful, privileged, control the media, the schools, the business world, international banking: the Zionist conspiracy rides again. How could such powerhouses ever be in trouble These stereotypes, I've realized, prevent recognition of how we are threatened or demeaned as Jews.

* * * * *

By speaking about anti-Semitism, Jewish women unsettle an unspoken equation in the radical women's movement: in a society like ours, deeply racist and absurdly pretending to classlessness, class comes to be seen as identical to race. People of color are considered the same as working and poor people. Other aspects of racism – cultural erasure, assimilation, self-hate, just to name a few – are simply not heeded, nor are – god forbid – strengths of ethnic or racial minorities acknowledged unless – in a wash of white self-hate – people of color are romanticized as stronger, more authentic, somehow better than whites; but better because they are seen as such victims that mere survival is a miracle.

Meanwhile, these same analyses which ignore class as an independent category, related to but separate from race, ignore the variety of class experience and location of Jews: Jews, you remember, are all rich or at least middle class. Why, then, are we complaining?

Such a non-analysis not only belies the experience of middle-class people of color – the upper middle-class Black families, for example, whose LA neighborhood was firebombed in June, 1985; the middle-class Japanese home-land-and-business-owners on the West Coast who had everything confiscated and were imprisoned in camps during the second World War. This perspective also erases the existence of Jews of color and working-class Jews, and the entire white poor and working class; a very substantial group of women.

* * *

Instead of being characterized by polarization, in which anti-Semitism is treated as a phenomenon different *in nature* from racism, anti-Semitism can be clearly seen as a *a form of racism.*

The World According to America

There are other factors blocking recognition of the weight of anti-Semitism on Jews. Jewish experience in the US, isolated from the experience of Jews around the world, seems fairly rosy. But Jews are an international people, and the nature of Jewish identity, oppression, fear and danger derive from and connect to experiences outside this country.

* * *

From this vantage point, Jews seem ridiculous when we talk about Jewish danger. We are up against a failure of Americans to take seriously the pitch Jewhating attained so quickly in Europe in the thirties, for example, because Americans think Europe and the thirties so far away. They know about evil Germans, sheeplike Jews, and heroic Americans, but are not taught to see the war against the Jews as a culmination to centuries of Jewhating. Americans are told lies about the base of Nazism, so that we imagine Jewhating goes with a lack of education: working-class people are – as with white racism in this country – blamed. We are not told of the doctors and doctorates trained in Europe's finest universities. For most Americans the Holocaust blurs safely, almost pleasantly, with other terrible events of the past, like Bubonic Plague in the Middle Ages.

Nor have most Americans paid much attention to the persecution of Jews in the Soviet Union, or Argentina, or Ethiopia, unless an ideological point is to be scored against these nations. As for the fact that Jews are *not* in danger in some communities around the world because Jews have been exiled or violently excised from those communities – this is not recognized as a legitimate source of grief and suspicion for Jews to reckon with, a loss of our people, our culture. Women in the feminist movement, not necessarily educated on these issues, respond pretty much like other Americans.

The Scarcity Assumption

Then, too, an assumption deeply integral to capitalism has been absorbed by all of us, since it is reflected in so much of what we see. I have called this the Scarcity Theory,[9] not enough to go around: not enough love, not enough time, not enough appointments at the foodstamps office, not enough food stamps, not enough money, not enough seats on the subway. It's pervasive. We learn mistrust of each other, bone deep: everything is skin off somebody's nose.

* * * *

few of us have learned to trust our own instincts, that people
1 fight harder as they also fight for themselves. So when Jews
:in talking about anti-Semitism, it's only 'natural' that even the left,
ıich should welcome a people's coming to consciousness, responds as
we're asking for handouts – and whose pocket will they come out of?
ıoring how much political energy can be generated as groups develop
:ohesive identity and analysis, the left accuses Jews of draining the
ıvement, of competing for status as victims, of ignoring advantages
d options open to us.

Identity politics of all kinds do contain an inherent potential not
ly for victim-competition but for splintering movements into 1000
ıups whose members at last feel sufficiently the same: comfy but not
ıowerful resource.[10] But while the focus of some Jewish women on
ntity as a source of personal discovery and support is hardly unique,
ticism of identity politics has been aimed disproportionately at Jews,
netimes *by* Jews. I'll put this another way: anti-Semitism has some-
ıes masqueraded as a disdain for identity politics.[11]

II. Jewish Diversity, Assimilation and Identity

To observant Jews, a persistent reluctance by others to take Jew-
sh holidays, *shabes*, dietary customs into account means that they –
ıbservant Jews – are not welcome;[14] to others, ignoring these traditions
:mbodies anti-patriarchal struggle. Some Jews are passionately attached
:o Yiddish culture and want to preserve this; others feel alienated by a
Yiddish emphasis: they grew up with Ladino or Arabic, and resent the
assumption that Jewish means Ashkenazi roots; some share the rejection
of much of the New Left for European anything, and, seeing the future
in the Third World and only a moribund or embarrassing past in the
remnants of European Jewry, feel no desire to preserve Ashkenazi culture.
(Though one might question this last position as self-hating, the people
who feel this way do not perceive what they hate as their *selves*.)

Some Jews identify deeply with other Jews; others identify only
with white middle-class privilege; some consider themselves people of
color. Some invalidate, trivialize or otherwise deny Jewish experience,
oppression, and values, say 'I'm a Jew' only as a label or a credential, not
a perspective. With the diversity of our experience unarticulated in a way
that supports all of it, even Jews tend to perceive the needs, complaints,
experience of other Jews as extreme, atypical, threatening, not really or
not necessarily *Jewish*.[15] Given this lack of agreement about even such
basics as the nature of Jewish experience and identity, the parameters of
anti-Semitism, how are Jews supposed to work politically *as Jews*?

These questions need to be answered by Jews talking with one another,
developing political and emotional clarity and cohesion. And this requires
Jewish space in which to piece together a deeply felt Jewish identity and
perspective inch by inch from the various threads of tradition, literature,
ritual, religion, culture, values, politics, language. Some of us will spend
our lives building Jewish identity; others will draw on this work as a
strong foundation from which to live our politics. Particularly for those
of us who are not religiously observant, much confusion attends our
grasping – through anti-Semitism and often prodded by anti-Semitism
– for something beyond common danger. We need to figure out how to
undo assimilation without being nostalgic or xenophobic: how to reach
in and out at the same time.

III. Guilt vs. Solidarity

Most feminist theory on identity was developed by women of color and
focused on fighting racism.[16] I have come to think that had white women
fully grasped the nature of this fight and *their own reasons for joining
it*, they would now be grasping what Jewish women are trying to do.
For the suspicion which greets a developing Jewish identity – from some
Jews as well as gentiles – is only partly explained by anti-Semitism (the
sense that Jewish identity *in particular* has no value) and by scarcity (the
fear that focus on Jews will detract from other pressing issues). The way
Jews have been met with 'not you too,' the way anti-Semitism becomes
the one issue too many, suggest that many white women are angry and
resistant to dealing with racism but are too frightened to express that
anger openly;[17] suggest further how little our movement has taught us
to see struggles against racism as life-giving, nourishing; as our own.

But guilt itself, as a motivating factor, is rooted in a way of thinking
which does not promote change. Guilt asks: am I bad or am I good?
guilty or innocent? racist or not? Very different from asking 'is this a
racist *act*?' which allows me not to commit it, or to do the work that
ensures I never commit it again. For in order to change you have to be
willing to expose yourself – and observe and examine and understand.
This takes time, patience, and a respect for process. Guilt prompts a
longing to purge all impure impulses quickly, get it over and done
with once and for all. Impulses which seem impure are not examined or
transformed; they are stifled while you keep busy trying to act as though
you have the right impulses.

We've all seen white women act like corpses around women of color,
so afraid of doing the wrong thing: meaning, anything natural, treating
a person like a person. For guilt is a freeze emotion: you can't think,
you can't feel, you can only knee jerk. This is the infantilizing function
of guilt: you lose faith in your own responses because the risk of their
being wrong is more than you can handle.

In addition to militating against real change, guilt exercises an uneasy influence over the real difference in resources and options which women may enjoy, leading to downward mobility, pretending to have less, gleefully selecting the most oppressed possible identity: *office worker*, not *daughter of a lawyer and dropout from a prestigious college most office workers never get near (as students)*.

Nor can guilt mobilize those who don't feel guilty. Try telling a white working-class woman, for example, to fight racism because of how privileged she is. She may think racism is wrong and may be committed to fight it; she may also think that movement analyses of racism are ridiculous because she is not living the easy life her white skin is supposed to guarantee her. Whatever privilege she may have, she clings to – things are tough – but she hardly feels guilty. Only recognition of a common goal, the possibilities and – I want to say – the joys of solidarity will inspire women who don't feel guilty to join another struggle as their own.

Solidarity: How To Build a Movement

Solidarity requires the bonding together of a people engaged in common struggle. But solidarity also means standing alongside another struggle, not because you feel guilty but because you recognize it as your own; it means using what you have on behalf of the struggle.

Angela Davis notes, for example, Prudence Crandall, a white woman who risked her life in defense of education for Black girls.[19] Or the strategy suggested by Maria Chapman Weston, a white leader of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society; when a white pro-slavery mob burst into a meeting chaired by Weston, she realized that the mob sought to isolate and perhaps violently attack the Black women in attendance, and thus insisted that each white woman leave the building with a Black woman at her side.[20] Or, at the world anti-slavery convention in London, at which the notorious decision was made to bar women from the floor, there were a few men who refused to join the floor but stood with the women in the gallery, silent. Among them was the Black abolitionist Charles Remond, and the white abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Nathaniel Rogers,[21] Black leader Frederick A. Douglass, too, at least initially supported the then-radical demand of women's suffrage and used his male privilege on behalf of the emerging women's rights movement.[22] Or, the women workers in the stockyards (mostly Irish and Poles) and in the garment industry (mostly Jews and Italians) who deliberately – and contrary to the practice of the AFL and most of their peers – sought to include and organize with Black women.[23] Or the Women's Trade Union League, upper middle-class college-educated white suffragists who worked in support of immigrant women's unions.[24] Or the Black and white college students – including many Jews – who went south to challenge segregation.

All these actions are examples of informed coalition work. None is a passive giving something up; they are all an aggressive wrapping of two peoples in a cloak only one has. These are acts which build trust between peoples.

IV. Some Strategies for Action

As we come into our Jewish identity, we feel somehow that to be justified in asserting it, in opposing anti-Semitism, we must be innocent victims, trying to make our oppression palpable to those who don't understand it. My beginning search for Jewish identity focused on the Holocaust and on the immigrant experience only partly because such a search must.

We need our history/herstory, and these are our handles, what we know. These are also all images of greater persecution than most American Jews are subject to today. As Jews, afraid of the myth of Jewish power; as (white?) feminists, guilty about our skin privilege, we are so hungry for innocence that images of oppression come almost as a relief. Innocence, even suffering, seems the only alternative to guilt.

But innocence has its price: while it relieves us of responsibility, it also denies us our strength. The assumption is: since we have been victims, we cannot ever be anything else. Witness Begin, involving the Holocaust to justify the invasion of Lebanon. *How could Jews be oppressive after all we've suffered?* From this perspective, class hostility, for example, has no basis in class distinctions but is only a front for Jewhating. We have to recognize that Jews are relatively well-off economically compared with most people of color in this country, as with the rural white poor; and that Jews endure about the same level of poverty as other ethnic groups who immigrated around the same time. Our job is to untangle class hostility from anti-Semitism, not to pretend the Jewish people still work in the sweatshop.

* * *

How this need for innocence translates politically is a disaster. The attitude that claims we – of any group – are essentially victims and so can't be charged with our behavior is destructive to all of us. If we can't do anything wrong, the fact is we can't do *anything* at all – and how in that state of powerlessness are we to build a vast movement sufficient to transform the exceedingly powerful state we live in? Defensive, protective of that dubious privilege of having our suffering acknowledged, we are at something of a standstill. Can't we look at each other and begin to see what we might build? Can't we extend towards each other so that we can draw on each other's strengths, learn to trust that we can use our power in positive ways?

Working Alone/Working Together

True coalition is not a smattering of tokens. True coalition forms between groups; the premise is that each group has a strong base in a larger community. Thus Jews who want to work in coalition need not only to know who we are but to be bonded with other Jews.

* * *

Those of us who choose to work in coalitions can assert that identity and consciousness to others. I know many Jewish women, myself among them, have participated in anti-racist, anti-apartheid, anti-intervention work, but not visibly as Jews. It is time we became visible as Jews, as some are doing.

Yet we need at the same time strategies for combatting anti-Semitism, for Jewish visibility fans the coals of indifference and passive contempt. An individual visible as a Jew simply attracts, like a magnet, all available anti-Jewish prejudice, or gets written off as an exception. And sometimes we even need strategies to ensure visibility. A Jew who travelled to Nicaragua recently tells of her attempts to be visible as a Jew to the Nicaraguan Press, attempts frustrated by her travel group's leader, whose job it was to inform the press about the group members and who kept 'forgetting' to mention the Jewish member. Just as women, as lesbians, need our own groups – for support and as bases for coalitions, a Jewish group travelling to Nicaragua might have had the desired impact, built Jewish pride *and* Jewish-Nicaraguan solidarity. To reach in and out at the same time.

* * *

Fears

But there are fears. Mine are that non-Jews won't care about working with us. Who are *we* that they should bother? Our numbers so small, we are so disposable, a liability almost; dislike of us a point of unity among everyone else. And as women, as lesbians, as underemployed professionals or workers at traditional women's jobs, most of us don't even have money to contribute. Sometimes I am simply afraid that radical Jews are on the wrong side of history, trapped between self-respect, love for our people and culture and what we, politically, ideologically would support were it not tangled with Jewhating. I know I am not the only radical Jew whose stomach ties in knots reading the radical press or attending a rally.

* * * *

James Baldwin, in 1967, wrote: 'A genuinely candid confrontation between Negroes and American Jews would certainly prove of inestimable value. But the aspirations of the country are wretchedly middle-class and the middle class can never afford candor.'[27] A genuinely candid confrontation amongst all of us – a genuinely *specific* and candid confrontation – is much needed; and Baldwin is precise, as ever, in indicating that we must be prepared to go further than liberal acceptance, further than maneuvering for our own (larger) slice of the pie. The theme re-emerges: we must *want* equality, and we must grasp that equality does not coexist with class structure.

As a feminist and a Jew, I am asking women of color not to abandon us as we assert our Jewishness, not to hear this assertion as a lowered vigilance against racism.

And I am asking Jews not to withdraw into self-righteousness, not to insist that gentiles understand everything immediately, yesterday. We are not without dignity if we explain our issues. I am also asking Jews not to be so afraid of being trapped with other Jews – including, perhaps, some

* * *

If we could start working together *before* we trust, understand, or like each other, we might learn to. Black activist and performer Bernice Reagon says we are stumbling because we have to take the next step.[31] We have gotten entirely too theoretical about these issues, expecting that with words, with ideas, we can work it all out in advance. Perhaps we need to engage, even in uncertainty, and work out issues as they arise. Maulana Karenga, a theorist for the Black movement, has pointed out that a coalition on a specific issue does not create reliable allies: he is critical of what he calls the reliance of middle-class Black movement leaders on alliances with Jews.[32]

But the positive side to Karenga's depressing analysis is that you don't need to be reliable allies to form a coalition. Having formed one, it may be possible to overcome mistrust and establish a larger common ground. It is impossible to do this without some concrete basis of unity, and focusing on the task at hand can help reveal commonality.

The problem is not a lack of common issues, not a lack of desperate need. The problem for us, as Jews, is that we are often afraid, afraid to gather with other Jews, afraid to be visibly Jewish, afraid – too often with reason – to know the extent of anti-Semitism in our comrades, neighbors, co-workers, friends. We are afraid of being or of seeming racist; afraid of our own ignorance of Jewish culture and tradition.

And because, as radicals, we have been taught to see dignity in resistance, in the struggle against oppression, we must remember not to idealize oppression, but to respect the struggles Jews have waged on behalf of their children, who are, sometimes, us. We must remember: what is beautiful is the resistance, and that people can – and must – resist from their own authentic place in the world.

* * *

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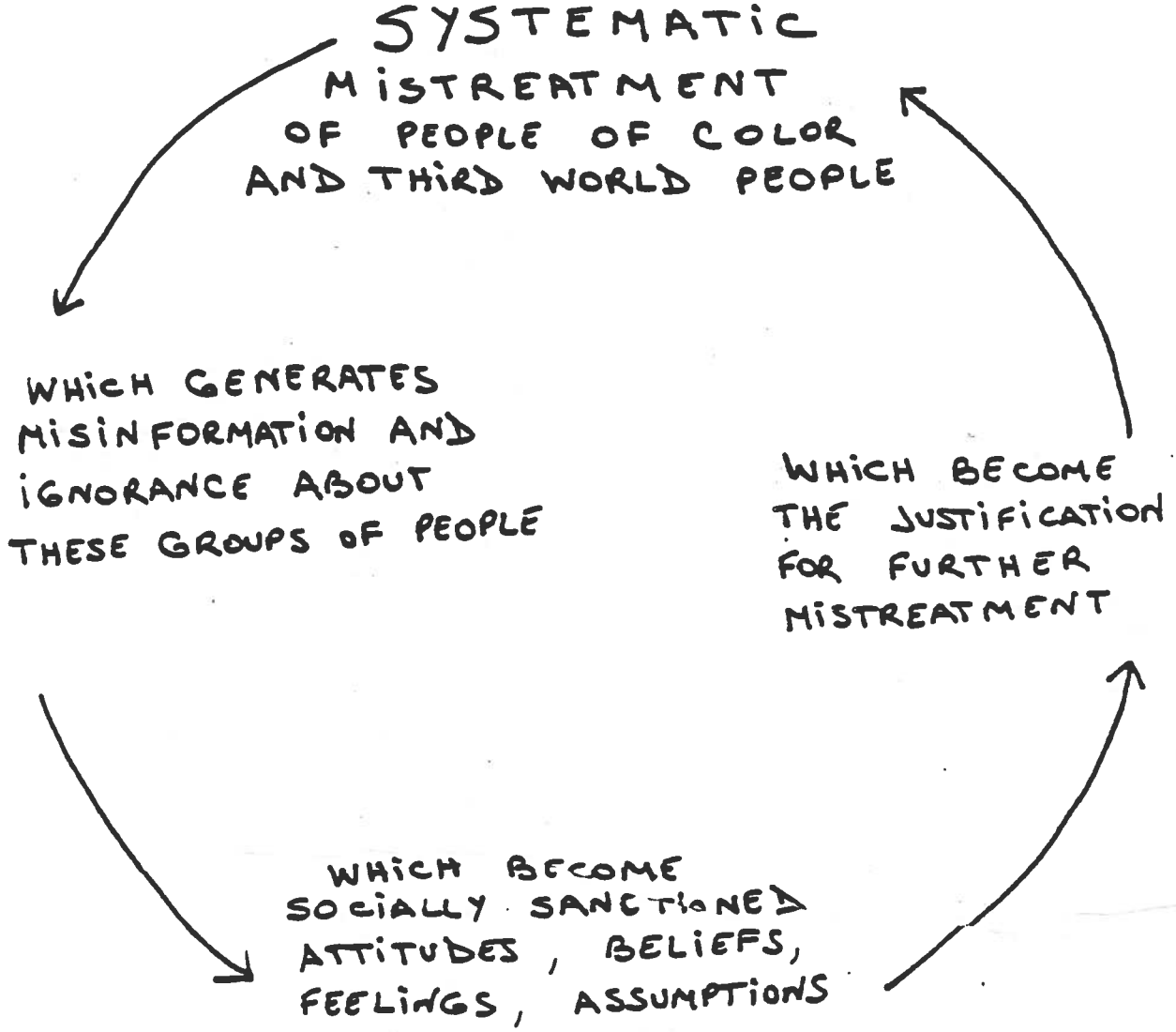
RACISM



- RACISM IS ONE CONSEQUENCE OF A SELF-PERPETUATING IMBALANCE IN ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL POWER.

- RACISM HURTS ALL OF US, WHETHER OR NOT WE ARE MEMBERS OF THE TARGETED GROUP.

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A WORKING DEFINITION OF RACISM

1. Human beings are members of the same species. The term "racism" is useful as a shorthand way of categorizing the systematic mistreatment experienced by people of color and Third world people both in the United States and in many other parts of the world. But this term should not mislead us into supposing that human beings belong to biologically different species. In this sense we all belong to one race, the human race.

2. The systematic nature of the mistreatment experienced by people of color is a result of institutionalized inequalities in the social structure. Racism is one consequence of a self-perpetuating imbalance in economic, political and social power. This imbalance consistantly favors members of some ethnic and cultural groups at the expense of other groups. The consequences of this imbalance pervade all aspects of the social system and affect all facets of people's lives.

3. At its most extreme, systematic mistreatment takes the form of physical violence but it occurs in many other forms as well. Pervasive invalidation, the denial or non-recognition of the full humanity of persons of color also constitutes the mistreatment catagorized as racism. Putting the matter in these terms may clear up the confusion which is generated by thinking of racism as a matter of treating people of color "differently". If we examine the facts, we will see that what is often called "different treatment" is in reality "inhuman treatment", i.e., treatment which denies the humanity of the individual person.

4. The systematic mistreatment of any group of people generates misinformation about them which in turn becomes the "explanation" of or justification for continued mistreatment. Racism exists as a whole series of attitudes, assumptions, feelings and beliefs about people of color and their cultures which are a mixture of misinformation and ignorance. Just as "the systematic mistreatment of people of color" means "inhuman treatment", so "misinformation about people of color" designates beliefs and assumptions that in any way imply that people of color are less than fully human. I will call these beliefs and attitudes "impacted misinformation" - by which I mean that these ideas are glued together with painful emotion and held in place by frozen memories of distressing experiences.

5. Because misinformation about people of color functions as the justification for their continued mistreatment it becomes socially empowered or sanctioned misinformation. It is recycled through the society as a form of conditioning that affects everyone. In this way misinformation about people of color becomes a part of everyone's "ordinary" assumptions.

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6. For purposes of clarity it is helpful to use the term "internalized racism" or "internalized oppression" to designate the misinformation that people of color may have about themselves and their cultures. The purpose of this term is to point out that this misinformation is a consequence of the mistreatment experienced by people of color. It is not an inherent feature or product of their culture.

7. The term "reverse racism" is often used to characterize either the negative attitudes or misinformation that peoples of color may have about individuals from white ethnic groups. This term is less than helpful because it tends to obscure the difference between socially empowered misinformation (see point 5) and other sorts of misinformation.

8. Racism operates as a strategy of divide and conquer. It helps to perpetuate a social system in which some people are consistently "haves" and others are consistantly "have nots". While the "haves" receive certain material benefits from this situation, the long range effects of racism short change everyone. Racism sets groups of people against each other and makes it difficult for us to perceive our common interests as human beings. Racism makes us forget that we all need and are entitled to good health care, stimulating education, and challenging work. Racism limits our horizons to what presently exists; it makes us suppose that current injustices are "natural" or at best inevitable. "Someone has to be unemployed; someone has to go hungry." Most importantly, racism distorts our perceptions of the possibilities for change; it makes us abandon our visions of solidarity; it robs us of our dreams of community.

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Liberation Theory: A Working Framework

1. Liberation is both the undoing of the effects and the elimination of the causes of social oppression. The achievement of human liberation on a global scale will require far-reaching changes at the institutional level and at the level of group and individual interactions. These changes will involve transforming oppressive behavioral patterns and "unlearning" oppressive attitudes and assumptions.
2. No one is naturally or genetically oppressive; no human being is born as an oppressor. No one is naturally or genetically destined to be oppressed; no one is born to be oppressed.
3. Oppression is the systematic and pervasive mistreatment of individuals on the basis of their membership in various groups which are disadvantaged by the institutionalized imbalances in social power in a particular society. Oppression includes both institutionalized or "normalized" mistreatment as well as instances of violence. It includes the invalidation, denial, or the non-recognition of the complete humanness (the goodness, uniqueness, smartness, powerfulness,etc.) of those who are members of the mistreated group.
4. Biological/cultural/ethnic/sexual/religious/age differences between human beings are never the cause of oppression. The use of these differences to explain either why certain groups of people are oppressed or why certain groups of people behave oppressively functions as a justification of oppression.
5. Differences in class, in social and economic power, in educational opportunity and achievement, in health and physical well being, are the expression and result of institutionalized inequalities in opportunity. Such differences perpetuate and increase the social imbalances in power and thereby serve to maintain all forms of oppression.
6. The perpetuation of oppression is made possible by the conditioning of new generations of human beings into the role of being oppressed and the role of being oppressive. In a society in which there is oppression everyone (at one time or another) is socialized into both of these roles. People who are the target group of a particular form of mistreatment are socialized to become victims; people who are the non-target group of a particular form of mistreatment are socialized to become perpetrators- either in a direct, active form or in an indirect, passive form. Neither of these roles serves our best interests as human beings.
7. The conditioning of both groups, the target group and the non-target group of any given oppression takes place through a specific form of oppression, the oppression of young people. In a society in which there is oppression, all young people will be the targets of this systematic mistreatment, i.e. all young people will be oppressed.
8. In addition to force and the threat of force, oppression is perpetuated through the generation and recycling of systematic misinformation about the

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nature, history, and the abilities of the target group. Because this misinformation is socially empowered and sanctioned, it functions as the justification for the continued mistreatment of the target group.
9. Each group targeted by oppression inevitably "internalizes" the mistreatment and the misinformation about itself. The target group thus "mis-believes" about itself the same misinformation which pervades the social system. This "mis-believing" expresses itself in behavior and interactions between individual members of the target group which repeat the content of their oppression. Internalized oppression is always an involuntary reaction to the experience of oppression on the part of the target group. To blame the target group in any way for having internalized the consequences of their oppression is itself an act of oppression.
10. The "positive re-enforcements" and social rewards that people in a non-target group receive for going along with their conditioning would not in themselves be sufficient to secure their acceptance of the social role of the perpetrator. The "acceptance" of this role is first made possible as a result of the individual's own experience of oppression, originally as a young person.
11. People who are the targets of any particular form of oppression have resisted and attempted to resist their oppression in any way they could. The fact that their resistance is not generally recognized is itself a feature of the oppression.
12. People who are the non-targets of any particular oppression have resisted and attempted to resist their socialization into the oppressive role. The fact that this resistance is not generally recognized is also a feature of the oppression.
13. Being socialized into the oppressed role is a painful experience for all people of the target group. Being socialized into the oppressor role is a painful experience for all people of the non-target group — in spite of the positive re-enforcements and material benefits that go along with this role.
14. Part of the conditioning experience is the misinformation that socialization into these roles is not painful. In some cases the pain of the conditioning is recognized for people in the target group. It is seldom recognized for people of the non-target group. The conditioning experiences are portrayed as "a normal part of growing up". For the most part the original awareness that this socialization was painful is obscured, or forgotten.
15. The perpetuation of any particular oppression requires that the pain of being socialized into either the oppressed or the oppressor role be forgotten, or discounted. The discounting or "normalizing" of the painful aspects of the conditioning process thus becomes a means of perpetuating all forms of oppression.
16. Liberation is possible. It is possible to recover the buried memories of our socialization, to share our stories and heal the hurts imposed by the conditioning, to act in the present in a humane and caring manner, to rebuild our human connections and to change our world.

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TOWARDS A PERSPECTIVE ON ELIMINATING RACISM:

12 WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

Because racism is both institutional and attitudinal, effective strategies against it must recognize this dual character. The elimination of institutionalized racism requires a conscious project of attitudinal transformation. The deliberate attempt to transform racist patterns of thought and action must guide the practice of political and social change. The following assumptions offer a perspective for the work of attitudinal change.

* * * * *

1. The systematic mistreatment of any group of people isolates and divides human beings from each other. This practice is a hurt to all people. The division and isolation produced by racism is a hurt to people from all ethnic groups.

2. Racism is not a genetic disease. No human being is born with racist attitudes and beliefs. Physical and cultural differences between people are not the cause of racism; these differences are used as the excuse to justify racism. (Analogy with sexism: anatomical differences between human males and females are not the cause of sexism; these differences are used to justify the mistreatment of females of all ages.)

3. No young person acquires misinformation by their own free choice. Racist attitudes and beliefs are a mixture of misinformation and ignorance which is imposed upon young people through a painful process of social conditioning. "You have to be taught to hate and fear."

4. Misinformation is harmful to all human beings. Misinformation about peoples of color is harmful to all people. Having racist attitudes and beliefs is like having a clamp on one's mind. It distorts one's perceptions of reality. Two examples: the notion that "flesh color" is several shades of pinkish beige; the use of the term 'minorities' to describe the majority of the world's people.

5. No one holds onto misinformation voluntarily. People hold onto racist beliefs and attitudes because this misinformation represents the best thinking they have been able to do at this time, and because no one has been able to assist them to change their perspective.

6. People will change their minds about deeply held convictions under the following conditions: 1) the new position is presented in a way that makes sense to them; 2) they trust the person who is presenting the new position; 3) they are not blamed for having had misinformation.

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7. People hurt others because they themselves have been hurt. In this society we have all excperienced systematic mistreatment as young people- often through physical violence, but also through the invalidation of our intelligence, the disregard of our feelings, the discounting of our abilities. As a result of these experiences, we tend both to internalize this mistreamtment by accepting as 'the way things are', and to externalize it by mistreating others. Part of the process of undoing racism involves becoming aware of and interrupting this cycle of mistreatment in day to day encounters and interactions.

8. As young people we have often witnessed despair and cynicism in the adults around us, and we have often been made to feel powerless in the face of injustice. Racism continues in part because we feel powerless to do anything about it.

9. There are times when we have failed to act, times when we did not achieve as much as we wanted to in the struggle against racism. Eliminating racism also involves understanding the difficulties we have had and learning to overcome them, without blaming ourselves for having had those difficulties.

10. The situation is not hopeless; people can grow and change; we are not condemned to repeat the past. Racist conditioning need not be a permanent state of affairs. It can be examined, analyzed and dismantled. Because this misinformation is glued together and held in place with painful emotion, the process of dismantling it must take place on the experiential as well as on the theoretical level.

11. We live in a multicultural, multi-ethnic world; everyone is "ethnic." Misinformation about other people's ethnicity is often the flip side of misinformation about one's own ethnicity. For example the notion that some ethnic groups are 'exotic" and 'different' is the flip side of the notion that one's own group is just 'regular' or 'plain'. Thus a crucial part of eliminating racism is the acquiring of accurate information about own's own ethnicity and cultural heritage. Reclaiming this information will show us that we all come from traditions in which we can take justified pride.

12. All people come from traditions which have a history of resistance to injustice, and every person had their own individual history of resistance to oppressive social conditioning. This history deserves to be recalled and celebrated. Reclaiming one's own history of resistance is central to the project of acquiring an accurate account of one's own heritage. When people act from a sense of informed pride in themselves and their traditions, they will be more effective in all struggles for justice.

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WORKING ASSUMPTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR ALLIANCE-BUILDING

Since, under present world conditions, everyone either is now, or has been, or will be at some time a target of social oppression, and since everyone is now, or has been, or will be in a non-target group in relation to some other group's oppression, alliance building is for everyone. Everyone of us needs allies, and everyone of us can take the role of an ally for someone else. The following guidelines are based on this premise. They should be equally applicable from the perspective of the target and the non-target group.

STRATEGIES FOR WINNING ALLIES

1. Assume that your group and that you in particular deserve allies.

2. Assume that your liberation issues are justifiably of concern to all people outside your group:

3. Assume that people in other groups are your natural allies; assume that all people outside your group want to be allies for you and that it is in their interest for them to do so.

4. Assume that it is only other people's own oppression and internalized oppression that prevents them (temporarily) from being effective allies to you at all times.

5. Assume that your allies are doing the best they can at the present time, given their own oppression and internalized oppression. Assume that they can and will do better.

6. Assume that you are the expert on your own experience and that you have information which other people need to hear.

7. Speak from your own experience without comparing your oppression to theirs.

8. Assume that your experience is also an experience of victories; be sure to share these- as well as the stories of how things are hard.

9. Expect perfection from your allies; expect them to be able to deal with the "difficult issues" in your struggle. Assume that allies make mistakes: be prepared to be disappointed, and continue to expect the best from them.

10. Assume that you have a perfect right to assist your allies to become more effective for you. Assume that you can choose to do this at any time. Take full pride in your ability to do this.

STRATEGIES FOR BEING AN EFFECTIVE ALLY.

1. Assume that all people in your own group including yourself want to be allies to people in other groups. Assume that you in particular are good enough and smart enough to be an effective ally. (This does not mean

that you have nothing more to learn- see # 6, below.)

2. Assume that you have a perfect right to be concerned with other people's liberation issues, and that it is in your own interest to do so and to be an ally.

3. Assume that all people in the target group want members of your group and you in particular as an ally. Assume that they recognize you as such- at least potentially.

4. Assume that any appearances to the contrary (any apparent rejections of you as an ally) are the result of target group people's experience of oppression and internalized oppression.

5. Assume that people in the target group are already communicating to you in the best way they can at the present time. Assume that they can and will do better. Think about how to assist them in this without making your support dependent upon their "improving" in any way. (Hint: think about what has been helpful for you when you were in the target group position.)

6. Assume that target group people are experts on their own experience, and that you have much to learn from them. Use your own intelligence and your own experience as a target group member to think about what the target group people might find useful.

7. Recognize that as a non-target person you are an expert on the experience of having been conditioned to take the oppressor role. This means that you know the content of the lies which target group people have internalized. Don't let timidity force you into pretended ignorance.

8. Assume that target group people are survivors and that they have a long history of resistance. Become an expert on this history and assist target group people to take full pride in it.

9. Become an expert on all the issues which are of concern to people in the target group, especially the issues which are most closely tied in to their internalized oppression. Assume that making mistakes is part of the learning process of being an ever more effective ally. Be prepared for flare-ups of disappointment and criticism. Acknowledge and apologize for mistakes; learn from them, but don't retreat.

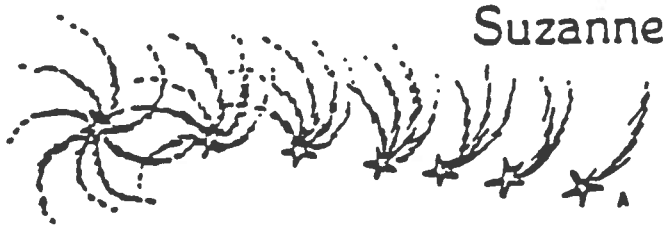
10. Recognize that people in the target group can spot "oppressor-role conditioning"; do not bother with trying to "convince" them that this conditioning did not happen to you. Don't attempt to convince target group people that you "are on their side"; just be there.

11. Do not expect "gratitude" from people in the target group; thoughtfully interrupt if it is offered to you. Remember, being an ally is a matter of your choice. It is not an obligation; it is something you get to do:

12. Be a 100% ally; no deals; no strings attached: "I'll oppose your oppression if you oppose mine." Everyone's oppression needs to be opposed unconditionally.

INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

Suzanne Lipsky



A MAJOR BREAKTHORUGH HAS BEEN ACHIEVED

An important result of the black caucuses and black workshops in Re-evaluation Counseling has been revealing the nature of internalized oppression and the creation of effective techniques for eliminating this major obstacle to our liberation from our midst. Although the ways in which each of us experiences internalized oppression are unique (for each person is individually oppressed), there is no doubt that each one of us has been profoundly hurt by this particular manifestation of oppression. No black person in this society has been spared.

Internalized racism has been the primary means by which we have been forced to perpetuate and "agree" to our own oppression. It has been a major factor preventing us, as black people, from realizing and putting into action the tremendous intelligence and power which in reality we possess. On a personal level it has been a major ingredient in the distressful and unworkable relationships which we so often have with each other. It has proved to be the fatal stumbling block of every promising and potentially powerful black liberation effort that has failed in the past. Patterns of internalized oppression severely limit the effectiveness of every existing black group.

This has been a problem which no one has been able to solve and over which many have despaired. Some patterns of internalized racism have become so familiar that we, ourselves, accept them as part of our "black culture." We attribute them to "the way we are."

It is a breakthrough of major importance that black co-counselors and their allies in RC have come up with a clear theoretical understanding of this phenomenon and, more importantly, dependably effective techniques which can completely rid of us this terrible obstacle to our individual re-emergence and our group liberation. This has never before been achieved. The recognition of the concept of internalized oppression is of tremendous significance and can be effectively communicated to black people in the world outside of Re-evaluation Counseling.

WHAT IS INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION?

We know that every hurt or mistreatment, if not discharged (healed), will create a distress pattern (some form of rigid, destructive or ineffective feeling and behavior) in the victim of this mistreatment. This distress pattern, when re-stimulated, will tend to push the victim through a re-enactment of the original distress experience either with someone else in the victim role or, when this is not possible, with the original victim being the object of her/his own distress pattern.

Racism is a form of oppression that has been systematically initiated, encouraged and powerfully enforced by the distress patterns of individual members of the majority culture and their institutions. Black people have been the victims, the primary victims in the country, of every form of abuse, invalidation, oppression and exploitation.

This mistreatment has installed heavy chronic distress patterns upon us as people and as individuals. We are in no way to blame for the initiation and installation of these patterns. It is clear that historically we have been denied the conditions necessary (for example, the safety) to discharge this distress. It is also evident that from the days of slavery to the present, we have not been in any position to re-enact these patterns upon our oppressors.

The result has been that these distress patterns, created by oppression and racism from the outside, have been played out in the only two places it has seemed "safe" to do so. First, upon members of our own group--particularly upon those over whom we have some degree of power or control, our children. Second, upon ourselves through all manner of self-invalidation, self-doubt, isolation, fear, feelings of powerlessness and despair.

It is important to keep in mind that some of the patterned behaviors that we frequently recognize within black cultures were originally developed to keep us alive. They originally had a definite survival value. They are a testimony to the strength,

inventiveness, and determination of our people–our refusal to give up as a people. Even chronic patterns can have "get-us-by" survival value. Today, many of these responses to mistreatment have become imbedded in our culture, but they no longer serve a useful function. Instead, these so-called "elements of black culture" operate to lock us into our roles as victims of oppression.

Internalized oppression is this turning upon ourselves, upon our families, and upon our own people the distress patterns that result from the racism and oppression of the majority society. As part of our liberation work, we know that we must seek out and direct the attention of ourselves and the world to the strength, intelligence, greatness, power and success of our people and our culture. We must also constantly seek and root out those features of our present cultures that have been imposed by responses to racism and that keep us trapped in that oppression today.

HOW DOES INTERNALIZED RACISM AFFECT US? WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Patterns of internalized racism get played out in dozens of unique ways in each individual. But we have come to recognize that there are certain forms of internalized oppression that are widely experienced by black people in our society. Some forms of these distress patterns are so universal throughout our black sub-culture that they are mistaken for a "true" part of our culture.

These destructive and hurtful behaviors and feelings are not part of our real culture. They are not a part of the nature of black people. They are simply chronic patterns (the kind that play all the time and are mistaken for reality) resulting from systematic and institutionalized mistreatment.

Understanding this gives us the safety to undertake the job of identifying all forms of internalized oppression in ourselves and other oppressed peoples. We recognize these as our enemy, as chronic patterns that prevent our liberation. We subject each example we find to discharge and re-evaluation.

What are some of the ways patterns of internalized racism operate among us?

Individual Relations

***Patterns of internalized oppression cause us to dramatize our feelings of rage, fear, indignation, frustration, and powerlessness at each other–at other black people–often those closest to us.

Our Children

***We invalidate our children with fierce criticism and fault-finding, intending to "straighten them out" but in the process, destroying their self-confidence.

Group Effort

***Patterns of internalized racism cause us adults to find fault, criticize and invalidate each other. This invariably happens when we come together in a group to address some important problem or undertake some liberation project. What follows is divisiveness and disunity leading to despair and abandonment of the effort.

Leadership

***Patterns of internalized oppression cause us to attack, criticize or have unrealistic expectations of any one of us who has the courage to step forward and take on leadership responsibilities. This leads to a lack of the support that is absolutely necessary for effective leadership to emerge and group strength to grow. It also leads directly to the "burn out" phenomenon we have all witnessed in, or experienced as, effective black leaders.

Isolation From Other Blacks

***Patterns of internalized racism have caused us to be deeply hurt by our brothers and sisters. We often develop defensive patterns of fear, mistrust, withdrawal and isolation from other blacks. On top of this we sometimes feel ashamed of our fear of our own people.

The isolation, which results from internalized oppression can become so severe that a black person may feel safer with and more trustful of white people than of black. This is an illusion, a confusion, created by the pattern, but an individual may accept living inside this pattern because it feels "comfortable" and therefore "workable." Clear thinking tells us, however that this is not a good enough solution. No black person's re-emergence will be achieved unless she or he faces and dissolves the isolation from her or his own people.

I can be sure that anytime I feel intolerant of, irritated by, impatient with, embarrassed by, ashamed of, "not as black as", "blacker than", better than, not as good as, fearful of, not safe with, isolated from, mistrustful of, not cared about by, unable to support, or not supported by another black person, some pattern of internalized racism is at work. Any time I take action or do not take action on the basis of any of these feelings, I am giving in to a pattern of internalized oppression, racism and powerlessness. For example, if I do not ask for, demand, and organize support for myself from my black brothers and sisters, I am strengthening the stranglehold of oppression on us all. Similarly, if I do not forcefully persist in offering and giving my support (even risking my own feelings) to another black person in the grip of some distress pattern, I am buying into my own powerlessness and oppression.

Internalized Stereotypes

•••Patterns of internalized racism have caused us to accept many of the stereotypes of blacks created by the oppressive majority society. We have been taught to be angry at, ashamed of, anything that differs too much from a mythical ideal of the middle-class of the majority culture–skin that is "too dark", hair that is "too kinky", dress, talk and music that is "too loud".

Narrowing Of Our Black Culture

•••Internalized oppression leads us to accept a narrow and limiting view of what is "authentic" black culture and behavior. Blacks have been ridiculed, humiliated, attacked, and isolated because they excelled in school; because they did or did not talk in a particular way; because they liked classical or folk music; because they did not dance; because they did not play basketball; and in many other ways have been told that they were not legitimately black or "black enough", or are "trying to be white", etc. All of these hurts were served up and accepted by human beings wearing re-stimualted patterns of internalized racism.

Mistrusting Our Thinking

•••Institutionalized racism and the internalized racism which results from it have given rise to patterns which cause us to mistrust our own thinking. We carry around doubts about our own and other black people's ability to think well. Even when we do have confidence in our own thinking we are often prevented from putting this thinking into action by the racist and oppressive structures and practices of the society.

Needing To Feel Good Right Now

•••The patterns of powerlessness and despair that result from this "impossible" situation give rise to still another pattern common among us which I will call the "feel good now" pattern. The pattern says, "Since I do not know what to do (the 'I can't think good' pattern) or knowing what to do , I am prevented from doing it by the racism around me, and since any black effort is doomed to failure in the long run (patterns of powerlessness and despair), I must settle for making myself feel good right now. At least I deserve that much." Drugs, alcohol, and other addictions; compulsive and hurtful sexual behaviors; flashy consumerism; irrational use of money; all kinds of elaborate street rituals, games, posturing and pretenses that waste our energies; these are all directly related to patterns of internalized racism and oppression.

Learning And Long-Range Goals

•••Learning and thinking are powerfully effected by internalized oppression. Here real, objective racism, internalized racism and deep feelings of powerlessness combine to make it very difficult to commit ourselves to flexible thinking all the time; or to correct action toward long-range goals; or to efforts with delayed rewards. Prevented by society from acting on our correct thinking–and we often do see clearly what is wrong and what needs to be done–we are limited to acting on our feelings. It would be hard to find a more effective way of keeping us powerless and ineffective towards our own liberation.

Survival

•••Internalized oppression is a major factor in the perpetuation of so-called "getting by" or "survival" behaviors. Some of these behaviors were developed in the slavery era of our oppression as a necessary response to acute problems of survival in that situation. Learning to silently withstand humiliation by practicing on one another is an example–e.g. playing "the dozens". The development of "happy" or "clowning" or "shuffling" or "ignorant" patterns are other examples. In order to "survive" we have learned also not to show or share our feelings ("cool" patterns), or to disguise them ("tough" patterns)–particularly feelings of tenderness, love and zest. Because we have been the victims of attack, humiliation, and exploitation, the restimulated patterns draw us to play out these behaviors on others and to feel that we must do so in order to survive, or at least to prevent ourselves from again being the victim of the pattern.

Such patterns no longer serve our interests or our liberation; but just as the pattern of oppression continues to operate even when it no longer serves the exploitative purposes for which it was originally installed, and perpetuated, so too our "pseudo-survival" patterns have a momentum of their own and remain in force long after they have ceased to serve any useful purpose for us.

We can no longer allow ourselves to settle for survival. Survival is not enough. To accept these "pseudo-survival" behaviors or call them part of black culture, is giving in to the worst kind of internalized racism and powerlessness.

Other Oppressions And Divisiveness

The workings of distress patterns have caused us to introduce, tolerate, proliferate and internalize within our black sub-culture other oppressions such as classism, sexism, adultism, anti-Semitism and the oppression of other oppressed groups. This has only created further disunity and divisiveness among black men and women and young persons and persons who appear to be of different classes. (In fact, almost all black people are of the working class, although this reality may be obscured from both themselves and other blacks.) Unity and pooling the power among blacks, and between blacks and other oppressed groups, is thus effectively prevented.

These are some, but by no means all, of the common manifestations of internalized racism among black people. It is probable that each black person in the United States has experienced at least one of these distress patterns but always in some individual, unique way. Each of us has been individually oppressed and participated in internalizing and experiencing this oppression in individual ways.

Although the effects of these patterns have been devastating to our people, we need not despair. We have achieved a major beginning victory against them. We have realized that these terrible feelings and the destructive behaviors that result from them are only patterns–patterns of distress imposed on us from the outside! We know that these can be destroyed by systematic and committed discharge and re-evaluation. These destructive patterns can be replaced by a reality of rationality, love, power and unity among ALL blacks and ALL oppressed peoples.

The perpetuation of internalized distress patterns is the only thing that stands in the way of our coming together and taking the lead in ending all racism, oppression and exploitation. Knowing this can be done, only patterns of despair and powerlessness stand in the way of our acting on this certain knowledge.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

We possess, right now, the knowledge, the tools, and the power to attack and eliminate patterns of internalized racism from among ourselves and in the wide world. I am sure that nothing will contribute more significantly to our individual re-emergence nor to black liberation than our firm commitment to this project.

It appears, in fact, that at some point black co-counselors must address internalized oppression. Those who have begun to address their counseling to these areas have found that profound and positive changes have taken place in many areas of their personal and group life—even areas that do not, at first, seem related to internalized racism. These people have reported success in making significant changes in relationships, parenting, the workplace and in organizations in which they participate.

Where internalized oppression has not been tackled, individual co-counselors have often found themselves blocked or slowed in their counseling; black or Third World classes have been unable to meet the needs of the participants and have dissolved; support groups have floundered and workshops have sometimes "exploded".

We need to refine our theory with regard to internalized oppression. We need to fully commit ourselves to a firm policy against all forms of internalized racism—and we need to further develop effective counseling techniques to discharge all patterns of internalized oppression.

I propose that as black co-counselors we commit ourselves to this project for the coming year and at the end of this time we assess our progress; up-date our theory, policy, and goals; and plan actions appropriate to that point in our liberation effort.

I propose that we commit ourselves to the following six-point program:

Point One

To devote significant effort to understanding, adding to and refining the RC theory of internalized oppression to make this theory as accurate and as workable as possible. We should seek out all information that is relevant to our thinking in this area.

We can do this by devoting sessions to discharging on the theory in its present form and on any patterns that may keep us from thinking about this theory. We can devote time in classes and support groups to "think and listens" and to discussions on the theory of internalized oppresssion.

Point Two

Each individual commit herself or himself to learning to identify and recognize patterns of internalized racism in him or herself and in others. Create ways of reminding ourselves to suspect patterns of internalized racism in all relationships and interactions with others that are not working well and are not characterized by understanding, cooperation, clear thinking and safety.

Point Three

Focus the discharge and re-evaluation process on all experiences or internalized racism in our sessions, in classes, support groups and workshops. Develop increasingly effective ways of counseling on memories of internalized racism, incidents in which we have been victims of the patterns of other blacks, or our own patterns and incidents in which we ourselves have been the vehicle of oppression of other blacks or other oppressed peoples. (Perhaps it is better to work first on the distress itself in sessions and classes and only then try to think about theory and policy and improved techniques.)

We can begin by asking some of these questions in our sessions:

What has been good about being black?

What makes me proud of being black?

What are black people REALLY *like?*

What has been difficult about being black?

What do I want other black people to know about me?

How have I been hurt by my own people? (Be specific.)

When do I remember standing up against the mistreatment of one black person by another?

When do I remember being strongly supported by another black person?

When do I remember that another black person (unrelated) really stood up for me?

When do I remember acting on some feeling of internalized oppression or racism?

When do I remember resisting and refusing to act on this basis?

Point Four

Commit ourselves to setting correct directions against and taking bold actions that forcefully contradict patterns of internalized oppression and powerlessness in all parts of our lives and discharging on the feelings that these directions and actions bring to light.

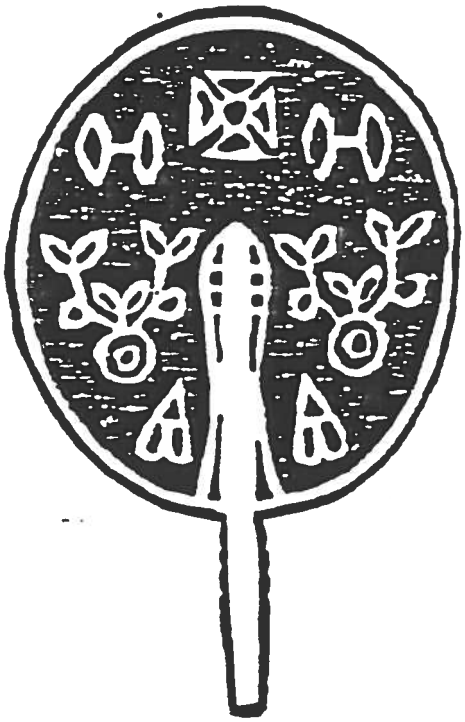
Point Five

Continuously and fully shar the information, knowledge and experie we collect through these actions with ea other through Black Re-emergence and a our various gatherings.

Point Six

Translate our progress into e fective liberation activities in the wide world.

Let us agree to stop being the victims of inter alized racism. Let us see it for what it is—nothing more than a distress pattern worn by a victim wh feels powerless. There is nothing wrong with any human being (including you) except the effects o mistreatment. These can be changed now by you and your allies.



A VOICE THAT TALKS TO ME

So what if you feel a little scared
So what if you feel you'll get shot dead
DID it happen before?

You'll die this time for sure, you say
Well, REALLY, Did you DIE before

Just take charge of that terror
And it becomes so small
that you just laugh it off

Not possible you say
Is it you or the pattern that speaks
Well, You can tuck it neatly away for now
Take action following the right direction
Keeping the key to the terror in plain sight
Then Make time, open the door, and discharge

Again and Again, If it's still there
And sometime soon, ALL gone with ZEST,
Then/just simply do what you have to do for you

Reach out, stretch as far as you have to and then more.

You know what, the universe will just fall into place.

It wouldn't dare do otherwise.

Mary McCullough
Somerville, MA

Children Bearing Rocks

With stones in their hands,
they defy the world
and come to us like good tidings.
They burst with anger and love, and they fall
while we remain a herd of polar bears:
a body armored against weather.

Like mussels we sit in cafes,
one hunts for a business venture
one for another billion
and a fourth wife
and breasts polished by civilization.
One stalks London for a lofty mansion
one traffics in arms
one seeks revenge in nightclubs
one plots for a throne, a private army,
and a princedom.

Ah, generation of betrayal,
of surrogate and indecent men,
generation of leftovers,
we'll be swept away—
never mind the slow pace of history—
by children bearing rocks.

—Nizar Qabbani

Chapter 7

Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict for Beginners

Lisa Hajjar, Mouin Rabbani and Joel Beinin

After World War I, the League of Nations (controlled by the leading colonial powers of the time, Britain and France) carved up the territories of the defeated Ottoman Empire. The territory now comprising Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jordan was granted to Great Britain as a "mandate" (a quasi-colonial form of administration). In 1922, Britain established the principality of Transjordan (east of the Jordan River), still part of its mandate but administratively distinct from Palestine.

When Britain assumed control of Palestine, over 90 percent of its population was Arab. A small indigenous Jewish population had lived there for generations, and a newer, politicized community linked to the Zionist movement had begun to immigrate to Palestine in the 1880s.

During World War I, Britain had made promises to Arab leaders for an independent Arab state that would include Palestine (the Hussein-McMahon correspondence), and to the Zionists for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine (the Balfour Declaration). These commitments conflicted with each other as well as with Britain's intent to retain control over Palestine.

European Jewish immigration increased dramatically after Hitler's rise to power in 1933, leading to accelerated land purchases and new Jewish settlements. Palestinian resistance to British control and Zionist settlement climaxed with the Arab revolt of 1936-39, which was suppressed by the British army with the help of Zionist militias and the complicity of the Arab regimes.

Following World War II, Britain was unable to maintain control over Palestine and turned the problem over to the United Nations. The United Nations decided that the only means of resolving the escalating conflict between Jews and Arabs was to partition the land into two states. Although

Jews constituted only one-third of the population and owned less than 7 percent of the land, the UN partition plan assigned 55 percent of Palestine's territory to the Jewish state. The Palestinian leadership rejected partition as unjust and illegitimate, and civil war broke out between Arabs and Jews. By the time the British withdrawal had been completed, Palestinian resistance had been largely broken. British evacuation and the proclamation by Zionist leaders of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948 prompted military intervention by the neighboring Arab states, precipitating the first Arab-Israeli war.

As a result of the war, historic Palestine was divided into three parts. The 1949 armistice agreements gave Israel control over 77 percent of the territory of mandate Palestine. Jordan occupied and annexed East Jerusalem and the hill country of central Palestine, henceforth known as the "West Bank" of the Jordan River. (The Jordanian government issued a decree in 1950 which made it illegal to use the term "Palestine" to refer to this area. When Israel conquered this territory in 1967, it stopped using the term West Bank and instead refers to the area by its Biblical names, "Judea" and "Samaria.") Egypt took "temporary" control of the coastal plain around the city of Gaza,which has come to be known as the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Arab state provided for in the UN partition plan was never established.

About 700,000 Palestinians—about one-half of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine—were displaced from their homes as a result of the 1948-49 war. During and after the fighting, Israel destroyed over 350 Arab villages inside the "Green Line" (Israel's borders from 1949 until 1967) and refused to allow Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

Zionism

Zionism is a modern political movement based on the proposition that Jews all over the world constitute a single nationality and that the only solution to anti-Semitism is the concentration of as many Jews as possible in Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state there. Zionism gained adherents among Jews and support from Western public opinion as a consequence of the murderous anti-Semitic pogroms of Eastern Europe and later the Nazi holocaust. Not all Jews are Zionists, although today Zionism in one form or another is embraced by a large majority of Jews. Zionism drew on traditional Jewish religious attachment to Jerusalem and parts of Palestine (traditionally referred to as Eretz Yisra'el, or the Land of Israel) but is in essence a modern political ideology, influenced by the nationalist movements of Eastern Europe and by nineteenth-century colonial attitudes.

The Land

The ongoing dispute in the Middle East between Jews and Arabs—more accurately, between Israel and the Palestinians—is not a religious conflict; it is essentially a struggle over land. For the Palestinians, this is their historic homeland, where they have lived for centuries. The Zionists base their claim to Palestine on the Biblical promise to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 17:8), on the historic connection between the land of Israel and the Jewish people, and/or on the desperate need for a Jewish homeland as a haven from European anti-Semitism.

Palestine is a small territory—approximately 10,000 square miles, about the size of Maryland. The competing claims to it are not reconcilable if one or the other party exercises complete sovereignty over the total territory. Partition of the land has therefore been one proposal for resolving the issue. Although few Palestinians accept the justice of the Zionist claim in principle, many now accept the existence of Israel. But they insist that an independent Palestinian state be created alongside Israel, in the West Bank and Gaza, in which they can exercise their right to self-determination. Israeli Jews are divided over the fate of the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinian territories which Israel occupied in 1967. Some favor annexation, while others would be willing to relinquish control over some or all of those territories. At the present time, only a minority of Israeli Jews would agree to an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

The June 1967 War

In June 1967 Israel decisively and quickly defeated the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armies. By the end of the war, Israel had captured the remainder of mandate Palestine, as well as the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria. The newly captured parts of former mandate Palestine, known since 1948 as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, have since 1967 often been referred to as "the occupied territories." The war established Israel as the dominant regional military power. The defeat discredited the Arab regimes, especially the radical Arab nationalism represented by Egyptian President Nasser and the Ba'th parties of Syria and Iraq. By contrast, the Palestinian national movement, which had been relatively quiescent in the post-1948 period, emerged as a major political factor after 1967 in the form of the political and guerrilla groups that make up the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The Occupied Territories

Prior to 1948, neither the West Bank nor the Gaza Strip had constituted separate geographical units. Their distinctness developed as a result of the partition of Palestine that led to the creation of a Jewish state. Since the 1967 war, Israel has continued to occupy the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel withdrew from the Sinai during 1979-82, as required by its peace treaty with Egypt, but annexed the Golan Heights in 1981. In violation of international law, Israel has confiscated over 52 percent of the land in West Bank and 30 percent of the Gaza Strip for military use or for settlement by Jewish civilians.

The Israeli government and various Zionist institutions have spent more than $1.5 billion to settle Jews in the occupied territories. There are today about 65,000 Jewish settlers in some 120 settlements in the West Bank, and a similar number of Jews living in new Jewish neighborhoods in and around East Jerusalem. There are some 2,500 Jewish settlers in Gaza, 0.4 percent of the total Gaza population. These Jewish settlers consume nineteen times more water per capita than the Palestinians in Gaza. The settler-to-land ratio in Gaza averages 2.6 acres of land per capita, as compared to .006 acres per capita for Palestinians. The Gaza Strip, an area just twenty-eight miles long and five miles wide, has a population density of 3,754 people per square mile, among the highest in the world.

Israel spent $240 million on services and development projects for Palestinians in the occupied territories in 1987 but collected $393 million in taxes. In the twenty years of Israeli rule from 1967-87, residents paid Israel a net "occupation tax" of $800 million, two and a half times as much as the entire Israeli government investment directed at Palestinians in the territories over that period.

Before the intifada, some 100,000 Palestinians from the occupied territories worked in Israel, mostly in menial, low-paying jobs. Industrial production in all the occupied territories totaled some $85 million—less than that of one medium-sized Israeli firm.

Jerusalem

According to the UN partition plan, Jerusalem and its environs were to become an international zone, independent of both the proposed Jewish state and the Palestinian Arab state. In the 1948-49 war, Israel took control of the western part of Jerusalem, while Jordan held the eastern part, including the old walled city containing important Jewish, Muslim and Christian religious sites. The 1949 armistice line cut the city in two. In June 1967 Israel captured East Jerusalem and immediately annexed it. Israel reaffirmed its annexation of East Jerusalem in 1981.

Israel regards Jerusalem as its capital and rejects any negotiations over its political future. Arabs consider East Jerusalem part of occupied Palestinian territory and regard its future as an essential component of any negotiated settlement.

Palestinians

This term today refers to the Arabs, both Christian and Muslim, who have lived in Palestine for centuries. The creation of Israel entailed the destruction of Palestinian Arab society, dispersing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to lives of exile. Today there are over five million Palestinians worldwide. About 40 percent of them—nearly 2.2 million Palestinians—still live within historic Palestine, under Israeli control. About 650,000 of them are citizens of Israel, living inside its pre-1967 borders; about 960,000 live in the West Bank (including 125,000 in East Jerusalem) and 550,000 in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli government expects the number of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to reach two million within fifteen years.

Only 15 percent of the West Bank Palestinians are refugees; even fewer live in refugee camps. In contrast, refugees into the Gaza Strip outnumbered inhabitants by three to one in 1948. Almost 70 percent of Gaza's inhabitants have been living in refugee camps ever since.

The largest Palestinian diaspora community, approximately 1.3 million, is in Jordan. Lebanon, Syria and Kuwait also have large Palestinian populations. Jordan is the only Arab state to have granted the Palestinians citizenship. Palestinians living in the other Arab states generally do not have the same rights as the citizens of those states.

Although many Palestinians still live in refugee camps and slums, others have become economically successful. Palestinians now have the highest per capita rate of university graduates in the Arab world. Their diaspora experience has contributed to a high level of politicization among Palestinians, from the camps to the universities.

Since 1948, Israel has consistently refused to acknowledge Palestinian national rights or to accept the Palestinians as an equal and independent party in any negotiations to end the conflict. It unequivocally rejects negotiations with the recognized leadership of the Palestinian people, the PLO, insisting instead on dealing only with Jordan and other Arab states, and rejects outright the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Palestine Liberation Organization

The PLO was established in 1964 by the Arab League in an effort to pre-empt the emergence of an independent Palestinian movement and control Palestinian action. The Arab defeat in the 1967 war enabled the Palestinians to take over the PLO and gain some independence from the Arab regimes.

The PLO is an umbrella organization that includes different political and guerrilla organizations with varying ideological orientations. Yasir Arafat heads Fatah, the largest group, and has been PLO chairman since 1969. The other major PLO groups are the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and, in the occupied territories, the Palestine Communist Party (PCP). Despite continuing rifts between the various components of the PLO, the overwhelming majority of Palestinians regard the PLO as their sole legitimate representative.

Resolution 242

After the conclusion of the 1967 war, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 242, which calls for Israeli withdrawal from the territories seized in the war and the right of all states in the area to peaceful existence within secure and recognized boundaries. There is a difference in the grammatical construction of the French and English texts of Resolution 242, both of which are official according to the United Nations. The French version calls on Israel to withdraw "from the territories" occupied in the 1967 war, whereas the English version says "from territories," which Israel (backed by the United States) interprets to mean *some* but not *all* territories. Hard-line Israelis argue that Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai has already satisfied the stipulation of withdrawal "from territories" and that no further territorial concessions are therefore necessary.

For many years the Palestinians rejected Resolution 242 because it lacks any recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination or of their right to return to their homeland. The only reference to the Palestinians is the call for "a just settlement of the refugee problem." Because it calls for the recognition of "every state in the area," the resolution would entail unilateral Palestinian recognition of Israel without a reciprocal recognition of Palestinian national rights.

Today the leadership of the PLO is clearly prepared to recognize Israel and negotiate with it. As the political weight of Palestinians on the "inside" has grown, especially since the intifada, Palestinian unity around this key point has correspondingly increased. This was reflected in the declaration of independence and the political statement of the November 1988 session of the Palestine National Council, which formally endorsed Resolution 242 while affirming Palestinian national rights, as well as in PLO chairman Yasir Arafat's address to the UN General Assembly in Geneva in December 1988. The PLO has thereby accepted the "two-state solution" to the Palestine question, that is, the partition of Palestine between Israel and an independent Palestinian state.

The October 1973 War

After coming to power in late 1970, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt indicated to the United States that he was willing to negotiate with Israel to resolve the conflict in exchange for Egyptian territory lost in 1967. When these overtures were ignored by Washington and Tel Aviv, Egypt and Syria launched a coordinated attack in October 1973 against Israeli forces occupying the Sinai and the Golan Heights. The crisis prompted US political intervention, along with sharply increased military aid to Israel. US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy brought about limited disengagement agreements in the Sinai and Golan. But by late 1975 these efforts had exhausted their potential, and no comprehensive settlement was in sight.

Due to stalled efforts to convene an international peace conference to which all parties to the dispute would be invited, Sadat decided in late 1977 that Egypt should break the stalemate by dealing separately with Israel under US auspices. His visit to Jerusalem on November 19, 1977 began what came to be known as the "Camp David process."

Camp David

In September 1978 President Jimmy Carter invited Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to the Camp David presidential retreat. They worked out two agreements: a framework for peace between Egypt and Israel, and a general framework for resolution of the Middle East conflict—i.e., the Palestinian question. This latter agreement proposed to grant autonomy to the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, to install a local administration for a five-year interim period, and to decide the ultimate status of the territories after that period.

Only the Egyptian-Israeli part of the Camp David agreement was ever implemented. The Palestinians and other Arab states rejected the autonomy concept as contrary to self-determination, and Israel immediately sabotaged negotiations by continuing to confiscate Palestinian lands and build new settlements.

As a result of Camp David, Egypt became estranged from the other Arab nations. Only after Sadat's assassination did Egypt begin gradually to resume ties with the other Arab states. Egypt's separate peace enabled Israel to invade Lebanon in 1982 without fear of Egyptian intervention.

Oppression and Resistance

From 1967 to 1982, Israel's military government demolished 1,338 Palestinian homes on the West Bank. Over this period, more than 300,000 Palestinians were detained without trial for various periods by Israeli security forces. Between 1968 and 1983, according to Israeli government figures, Israeli forces killed ninety-two Palestinians in the West Bank, while West Bank Palestinians killed twenty-two Israeli soldiers and fourteen Israeli civilians. Armed attacks by West Bank Palestinians killed two Israelis between April 1986 and May 1987. During that period, Israeli forces killed twenty-two Palestinians.

In the occupied territories it is illegal to fly the Palestinian flag, publish or possess "subversive" literature, or hold a press conference without permission. One Israeli military order in the West Bank makes it illegal for Palestinians to pick and sell wild thyme, to protect an Israeli family's monopoly over the herb's production.

Although the intifada is unprecedented in scope, duration and intensity, Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation has been a constant feature of political life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967. The number of Palestinian protests in the territories averaged 500 per year during 1977-82. Since 1982, protests have averaged between 3,000 and 4,400 a year. Among the milestones in the development of the Palestinian struggle inside the occupied territories are:

—The National Charter of the West Bank for the Current Phase, October 4, 1967. This document issued by 129 prominent West Bank residents rejected the occupation, particularly the annexation of East Jerusalem, and demanded a return to Arab sovereignty.

—General Strike of June 5, 1969. This strike was held on the second anniversary of the June 1967 war and observed throughout the West Bank; [illegible] strike [illegible]

—Gaza, 1968-71. Armed with weapons left behind by retreating Egyptian troops in 1967, Palestinian guerrilla cells attacked Israeli forces almost daily and controlled the refugee camps by night. General Ariel Sharon's pacification campaign removed thousands of suspects' families to detention camps in the Sinai, deported additional hundreds to Jordan, imposed week-long curfews during house-to-house searches, and demolished entire sections of refugee camps to allow easy access for Israeli armored vehicles.

—Gaza, September-November 1972. Riots in Shati' (Beach) Camp spread throughout the Gaza Strip and continued sporadically throughout the fall.

—Palestine National Front, 1973-78. Formed in August 1973, this clandestine umbrella organization coordinated political activity in its role as an autonomous West Bank and Gaza affiliate of the PLO. Between the end of the 1973 October war and the 1976 West Bank municipal elections, the PNF organized a series of strikes and demonstrations, often around events such as Yasir Arafat's 1974 UN appearance. These engulfed the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip for weeks at a time, sometimes spilling across the Green Line into Israel and acquiring many characteristics of the current uprising. Then Prime Minister Rabin and Defense Minister Peres resorted to harsh repression: shootings (thirty dead and hundreds wounded in the first six months of 1976 alone), deportations, administrative detentions, house demolitions, extended curfews and other forms of collective punishment. The PNF also led the fight against Jordanian and Israeli influence in West Bank and Gaza politics during the PLO's bid for diplomatic recognition in the mid-1970s. By the time it was declared illegal in October 1978, the PNF had largely been absorbed into the National Guidance Committee (NGC).

—Land Day, March 30, 1976. Tens of thousands of Palestinian citizens of Israel took to the streets during a general strike to protest continuing land confiscations. Israeli forces shot and killed six demonstrators. Land Day has since been commemorated annually by Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories.

—Municipal Elections, April 1976. Counting on a nationalist boycott to help install a counterweight to the PLO, Prime Minister Rabin called for municipal elections in the West Bank on April 12, 1976. The PNF fielded candidates in every locality and won a resounding victory. Despite widespread Israeli interference, including the deportation of some nationalist candidates, PNF slates captured eighteen of the twenty-four city councils, most by overwhelming margins, and won in almost all the larger cities. Over the next few years the military government deposed and/or deported the nationalist mayors one after another, put some under town arrest, and dissolved PNF-dominated city councils. On June 2, 1980, bomb attacks by

Jewish extremists maimed Nablus Mayor Bassam Shak'a and Ramallah Mayor Karim Khalaf.

—National Guidance Committee, 1978-82. This successor organization to the PNF grew out of a series of October 1978 public meetings to devise strategies for confronting the Camp David Accords. Headed by a committee of twenty-two leaders of unions and professional associations and municipal officials, the NGC spearheaded Palestinian resistance to Camp David and coordinated opposition to the Israeli-controlled "Village Leagues" and the "Civil Administration" set up during the Begin years. The NGC's role was predominantly a public one, supporting PLO participation in an eventual peace settlement. Israel responded with deportations, arrests and heavy press censorship. The expulsion of the mayors of Hebron and Halhul in May 1980, along with the bomb attacks against the other mayors one month later, dealt a severe blow to the Committee. When the NGC was outlawed in May 1982, it had already lost much of its effectiveness.

—Revolt against the Civil Administration, 1981-82. An intense round of strikes and protests broke out in November 1981 against the Begin/Sharon Civil Administration. After a brief lull, they erupted anew in the spring of 1982 with similar ferocity. Schools and university campuses were key battlegrounds; many students were killed or seriously wounded by army gunfire. This intense repression, which included large numbers of arrests, beatings and house demolitions, partly accounts for the relative quiet in the occupied territories that attended the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

—Resistance to the "Iron Fist," 1985-87. A new round of protest in late 1984 featured spontaneous individual attacks on Israeli soldiers and settlers, especially in Gaza, Hebron and Nablus. Israeli mobs lynched several Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line. On August 4, 1985, Rabin announced the "iron fist" policy. In the next month alone, Israeli forces put sixty-two Palestinians under administrative detention (imprisonment without charges or trial), deported at least a dozen more and killed five. Several newspapers were permanently closed. Over the next two years, the military regime issued hundreds of administrative detention orders, demolished well over 100 homes, and repeatedly closed schools and universities. More than twenty Palestinians were killed and many more wounded in demonstrations, which were frequent and particularly intense during late 1986 and the spring of 1987. Once again university campuses and large towns became the focus of an escalating spiral of resistance culminating in the uprising, which began in December 1987.

Future Prospects

With the intifada, Palestinians in the occupied territories have gone beyond a situation in which political directives came from the Palestinian leadership in exile. A new leadership has emerged, aligned with the PLO but reflecting the experiences and outlook of a new generation of Palestinians who have grown up under Israeli occupation. This shift was reflected in the decisions of the November 1988 Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers, which clearly stated the Palestinian national movement's acceptance of the two-state solution. This in turn opened the way for the establishment of US contacts with the PLO and signals the opening of a new period of efforts to achieve a political settlement.

The ability of the Palestinians in the occupied territories to sustain a state of insurrection while developing new forms of mobilization and organization has demolished the status quo. While the intifada has varied in intensity and gone through different stages during its first year, it has demonstrated that the Palestinians are united, determined and capable of continuing their struggle until they achieve their national rights.

Chapter 8

The Palestinian People: Twenty-two Years After 1967

Rashid Khalidi

However difficult the current situation of the Palestinian people may appear, it is revealing to compare it with the situation that prevailed in the wake of the June War. For while many of the problems the Palestinians face today have remained more or less constant since then, others were undreamed of in 1967. In the interim, there have been a number of fundamental changes whose significance gives us a proper perspective on these twenty-two years. It is, moreover, possible in this light to appraise both the achievements and the setbacks of the Palestinian national movement headed by the PLO.

Many basic problems the Palestinian people face today are essentially similar to those of 1967. The dominant element of the Israeli establishment still rejects the proposition that the Palestinians are a people who have the inalienable right of self-determination in their own homeland and the right to return to it. This rejection is still sustained by the support of the United States, which was limited but significant in 1967 and since then has grown lavish and unstinting. The Palestinians still have major difficulties with their Arab environment also. These difficulties involve both the unwillingness of most Arab regimes to make support for the Palestinians a central element in their relations with the United States and Israel, and bilateral issues having to do with the affairs of the Palestinian diaspora.

The new problems are legion. They include those growing from the 1967 occupation of the remainder of Palestine and the expulsion of additional thousands of Palestinians from their homeland. In a sense, once these territories had been occupied by Israel in 1967 and their former Jordanian and Egyptian administrations thereby terminated, their fate and that of their inhabitants became the responsibility of the Palestinians themselves. This new reality was formally consecrated when Jordan acquiesced in the 1974

Rabat summit's recognition of the PLO as sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It was solidified in practice when the Palestinian uprising finally settled the question of Palestinian representation decisively in favor of the PLO and imposed upon King Hussein the decision to sever links between Jordan and the West Bank in July 1988.

Other new problems, particularly those with Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt, have been largely a function of the PLO's actions in the years after 1967 and the resulting contradictions with the strategies of these states. Before 1974 the PLO paid a price in inter-Arab terms for its opposition to proposals (like the Rogers Plan) which were based on UN Security Council Resolution 242 and its insistence on the total liberation of all of Palestine. After 1974 it paid for its insistence on an independent Palestinian voice in the process of negotiating a settlement and for its willingness to compromise on ultimate Palestinian goals by accepting a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Frequently opposed before 1974 by Egypt and Jordan, the PLO alienated Syria, Iraq and Libya with its new more moderate line after 1974.

Given the existence of these and other problems, what major changes have taken place over the last twenty-two years, and how do they help us to understand the PLO's record during that time? Tempting though it would be to concentrate on the important political changes which have taken place over these two decades, they have been examined elsewhere,[1] and so the main focus will instead be on less well-known structural changes which have affected the Palestinians during this period.

If we look at the core countries of the Middle East, perhaps the most important transformation to be noted is that which has affected the Palestinian people. Today that term sounds normal and natural, and the existence of the Palestinian people is contested only by a lunatic fringe. In 1967, however, it was arguably the case that the adjective Palestinian, if used at all, was utilized primarily as a modifier for "refugees," and that this was the context in which the Palestinians were best known. The importance of this semantic point, and the extent of the change since that time, can be illustrated by Golda Meir's now-infamous 1968 statement that "there are no Palestinians," which set the tone for two decades of ideological warfare against the Palestinian people.

It is not only in daily usage and in the media that the Palestinians have established themselves. In the fields of diplomacy and international law, there now exist alternate views of the core of the problem, and other prescriptions for dealing with it than those consecrated in Resolution 242. This document, which refers to the Palestinians only in terms of "a just resolution of the refugee problem," reflects the balance of power in 1967. Since that time there have been several UN General Assembly resolutions, notably GA 3236, and statements by other multilateral bodies, such as the

European Community's 1982 Venice Declaration, which treat the Palestinians as a people with a legitimate right to national self-determination.

This shift in international attitudes was positively affected by the evolution of Palestinian goals since 1967. These changed from the 1969 aim of a "secular democratic state" in all of Palestine, clearly implying the dissolution of Israel, to the 1974 provisional program's call for a "national authority" in part of Palestine, implying a Palestinian state alongside Israel, to the explicit goal of a Palestinian state alongside Israel emerging from negotiations on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, embraced by the nineteenth Palestine National Council (PNC) meeting in Algiers in November 1988. Although the two states with the most power to affect regional outcomes, the United States and Israel, stubbornly refuse to accept the reality and the significance of such shifts, it is nevertheless noteworthy that while in the wake of the 1967 war they were able to muster widespread international support for their position, they are now almost entirely isolated on this issue.

A precondition for any achievements on the levels of international legality and world public opinion was that the Palestinians themselves change the universally held image of them as refugees. And for this image to change, it was necessary not just for the Palestinians to act but also to mobilize their people and to change their view of themselves. While in the self-contained world of the official US position—as reflected in Shultz's reasoning for his refusal to allow Yasir Arafat to address the UN General Assembly in November 1988—the Palestinians have only exchanged the pitiful image of the refugee for the sinister one of the "terrorist," there has in fact been a wholesale mobilization of Palestinians and a radical change in the Palestinian self-view over the past two decades. In the wake of the uprising which began in December 1987, it appears that this new self-image is beginning to be reflected in the US media.

This transformation of the Palestinian self-view may be the most important change in the contours of the Palestine question since 1967. The only other change in that period with the same fundamental implications for the nature of the conflict has taken place within Israel itself, where profound and sustained questioning of some of the basic ideological tenets of the Zionist enterprise has been growing in intensity, particularly since the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. This has manifested itself in a growing number of Israelis refusing to serve in the occupied territories and in Lebanon, the publication by Israelis of revisionist scholarship which has shattered some of the sanctified myths of Israeli history,[2] and the persistent criticism by respected figures of the policy of holding on to the occupied territories. The changes among the Palestinians have been more far reaching, however, both

because they have been going on for longer and because they have been rooted in a remarkable set of socioeconomic transformations.

One reason the Palestinians have stopped being identified as refugees is that in a technical sense most of them no longer are. Today less than one in five lives in refugee camps, as against more than half in the decades from 1948 to 1967. This is the case even though a large majority of Palestinians still fall into the existential category of exiles, best explored by Edward Said's *After the Last Sky*. This category applies to about two-thirds of the four to five million Palestinians: those in exile from their homeland and those in a sort of "internal exile" from their native homes and villages, living in camps and towns within their homeland. This demographic shift over the past two decades, whereby most Palestinians have ceased to live in refugee camps, has gone largely unnoticed. According to 1986 UNRWA figures, only 800,000 Palestinians, under 20 percent of the total, live in camps (nearly half in the occupied territories and the rest in the diaspora), although many others benefit from educational and other programs run by UNRWA. The rest live outside the camps, in cities, suburbs, towns and villages.

This shift is a function of many things, notably the oil-induced regional economic prosperity of the 1970s which enabled many Palestinians, particularly in Lebanon and Jordan, to move out of the camps. It is also a function of a powerful drive for upward mobility linked to a thirst for education, which has turned the Palestinians into one of the most literate and highly educated of Arab peoples, on a par with the Lebanese. This in turn has enabled them to play a key role in the vast migration of skilled labor which has transformed the Arab world in recent years.

These transformations go back in time well beyond the past two decades. They are rooted in developments of earlier years, such as the expansion of education in Mandatory Palestine: by 1946, 45 percent of the Palestinian Arab school-age population was in school. A further impetus was provided by the spread of universal compulsory education after 1949, thanks in large measure to the free schooling provided by UNRWA, resulting in near-universal literacy.

[illegible] process has helped to make these changes more widespread than might otherwise have been expected. This is what might be described as the melting pot effect, whereby Palestinians from the many lands of the diaspora and the different zones of occupation within Palestine, each with its highly disparate conditions, have met and worked or studied together, and often intermarried, in areas a great distance from their homeland. These include workplaces in the oil-producing, labor-importing states of the Gulf and North Africa, the educational centers of Europe, North America, Cairo, the Gulf and (before 1982) Beirut, and the scattered political, administrative, cultural, financial and military institutions of the PLO, its constituent groups, and the many private Palestinian bodies which have grown up over the past two decades.

The result has been a breakdown of many of the traditional barriers between region and region, village and village, city and countryside, and often between classes and religions. Newer distinctions, such as those which had grown up since 1948 as a result of the different conditions and experiences of Palestinians from different countries of the diaspora and regions of occupation, have been eroded as well. There has not by any means been a homogenization of the Palestinians: Jerusalem or Hebron or Gaza accents still retain their distinctiveness, and vast class differences remain and may even be growing. But it can be argued that something of a unified political culture has been made possible by these processes, which were in a certain sense organic, natural, uncontrolled and unintended. Thus while Palestinians in the diaspora were naturally drawn to one another by their shared experience of dispossession, exile and statelessness, the troubles they faced in their strange and often somewhat hostile new environments and the fact that they had many important things in common further reinforced the existing bonds between them.

These processes, already underway in the 1950s and the 1960s but greatly accelerated by the oil boom of the 1970s and the greater mobility it introduced into the whole region, made it possible for the edifice of Palestinian nationalism to be so swiftly and so successfully reconstructed over the past two decades by the Palestinian politico-military groups which in 1968 took over the PLO and have dominated the Palestinian national movement ever since.

Here we enter into a discussion of another set of underlying changes which have taken place since 1967 but which have perhaps been obscured by day-to-day developments. These are changes relating to the form and content of Palestinian nationalism. Unlike the socioeconomic and demographic transformations just described, these changes were very much subjectively determined, and were by and large the result of active organizational and mobilization efforts by Palestinian leaders and groups. The results can best be appreciated by a comparison of the current situation of the Palestinians on the ideological level with that of 1967.

It can be argued that the Palestinians have never been more at one in terms of their self-view than they are today. It is true that there exist persistent physical divisions among different groups of Palestinians, disparate conditions in each different country of the diaspora, in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and inside Israel, along with the political differences which sundered the PLO for several years after the 1982 war, some of which still persist. In spite of these facts, there exists today a strong sense of national unity, of loyalty to a

unified set of symbols and concepts, and of mutual interdependence, sentiments which were lacking in 1967.

Palestinian patriotism was certainly widespread at that time; indeed, the resistance of this powerful current had already aroused the fears of the Arab regimes, provoking them into the formation of the PLO in 1964 as a means of pre-empting, channelling and ultimately controlling the destabilizing and radical force of Palestinian irredentism. But this current was not only underground but also deeply divided, with many Palestinians still involved in the transnational movements in which they had engaged themselves in the wake of the catastrophe of 1948 as the best means of reversing its results. Thus Palestinians were active in the Ba'th, Communist, and Syrian Social Nationalist parties, in the Arab Nationalist Movement and other Nasirist bodies, in the Muslim Brothers, Islamic Liberation Party and other Islamist groupings, and in other radical, anti-regime formations. All these groups had held out to the Palestinians the promise of revolutionizing the rotten Arab structure which had failed to prevent the defeat of 1948. In time, however, many Palestinians held against the Arab regimes the fact that they either had not tried, or had failed, to reverse the results of that defeat.

In 1967, although Palestinian patriotism was undoubtedly the motivating force of most Palestinian political activists, only a minority of them were involved in purely Palestinian nationalist organizations. This was already changing, as was symbolized by the success of Fatah even before 1967, a success out of all proportion to its numbers or real strength. It was to change even more radically afterwards as Palestinians flocked to small Palestinian nationalist organizations like Fatah in reaction to the devastating 1967 defeat of Arab regimes which had espoused some of the transnational ideologies many Palestinians had been counting on to achieve their national objectives of liberation and return.

But the greatest change came well after 1967. A people who had been powerless, divided and disorganized for decades, who had been the victims of forces far greater than themselves, and who before 1948 had been badly led by an autocratic and traditional elite, had to be convinced that they could affect their situation, that they could take their future into their hands, and that they could not depend on President Nasser or the Arab armies or some other *deus ex machina* to solve their problems. Moreover, they had to develop an entirely new image of themselves, discarding that of the refugee and replacing it with a more dynamic and positive one.

The first step on the long road to a new self-image was the establishment of a measure of self-rule for the Palestinian camp populations in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan after 1967. Although this process was reversed in Jordan in 1970-71 as a result of Black September and was severely limited in Syria following the November 1970 coup there, it had already had an impact,

further intensified by the fact that this self-rule continued in Lebanon. There the issue of the autonomy of the camps continues to be at the core of the ongoing conflict involving the Palestinians. Moreover, the effects of this autonomy, even after it was ended or limited in some places, provided Palestinians for the first time in decades with a sometimes vicarious sense of empowerment and autonomy. Even Palestinians living at a distance from Lebanon were deeply affected as they saw the Palestinian flag, Palestinian fighters and Palestinian institutions resisting overwhelming odds in Lebanon from the early 1970s until the present.

Taking up arms against the Israeli occupation gave a further impetus to these same processes of empowerment and autonomy. In fact, from the perspective of over twenty years, armed struggle can be seen to have had far more impact on the Palestinians themselves than on its intended target, Israel, where the effect has been at best mixed. At an early stage, armed struggle turned the Palestinians nearly overnight into the vanguard of the post-1967 Arab struggle against Israel. It thus helped restore a sense of dignity to a people whose self-respect had been cruelly eroded by their expulsion by Israel and subsequent suppression by the Arab regimes. The heady impact of this change often bred a certain arrogance, for which Palestinians were to pay dearly in Jordan and Lebanon. Nevertheless, a transformation had been effected, in spite of some of its negative side-effects.

Having said this, there has undoubtedly been some exaggeration of the impact of the gun, the symbol of the resistance, and of the empowerment which it was seen as making possible. Important though it has been (and still is in the Hobbesian situation of Lebanon, where only force can hold back the encroaching jungle), the gun is less important in the complex situation of today, whether symbolically or in real terms, than it was in the years after 1967. Moreover, as the uprising has shown, for Palestinians under occupation steadfastness, organization, and ways of enabling people to remain on the land and run their own lives in their villages, towns and cities, free of the occupation, have become the priority. The various forms of resistance, from nonviolent protests to violent demonstrations, are still crucial weapons in the Palestinian arsenal against the powerful occupier and its routine daily violence and brutality. But the practice of resistance in 1967-70, when armed attacks were far more frequent, contrasts strikingly with the situation in 1987-88, where they have been virtually excluded from the arsenal of weapons used against the occupation by the leadership of the uprising.

In real terms, the gun now has primarily symbolic importance for Palestinians in exile, with the important exception of Lebanon. In practice it is only there, in spite of the fearsome restraints on them, that Palestinians can and do carry weapons freely. In the rest of the diaspora this is not possible, and it is primarily political organization and mobilization, the building and

strengthening of cultural bonds, the maintenance of a social and health care safety net, and tireless diplomatic maneuvering among the treacherous shoals of the various Arab regimes which enable Palestinians in exile to maintain and increase their autonomy and the bonds between them and those under occupation. These bonds were reflected in the outcome of the nineteenth PNC, where under the impact of the new sense of self-respect resulting from the uprising, the PLO was able to downplay both the Palestine National Covenant and the old slogan of "armed struggle," neither of which is mentioned in the PNC's political statement.

However, the exception of Lebanon deserves attention, for what goes on in Lebanon has an impact far beyond its effect on the 400,000 or more Palestinians living there, important though that is. Lebanon is significant in the broader arena of Palestinian politics because the center of the modern Palestinian national movement was located there for twelve of the last twenty-two years, and because the names Sabra and Shatila, like Tal al-Za'tar before it, have acquired a powerful resonance in the Palestinian, and indeed the Arab, political vocabulary. No leadership which aspires to direct the fortunes of the Palestinian people can afford to ignore what happens to the Palestinians in Lebanon for this reason alone. The briefest perusal of the covers, editorials and lead articles of the three main Palestinian political weeklies, *Filastin al-Thawra*, *al-Hadaf* and *al-Hurriyya* (representing Fatah, the PFLP and the DFLP respectively), as well as others like *al-Yawm al-Sabi'* or *al-Bayadir al-Siyasi*, during the siege of the camps in Lebanon gives evidence of this. The impact of events in Lebanon on the entire Palestinian national movement is concretely reinforced by the fact that the families and relatives of so many of the leaders, cadres, office workers, bureaucrats and combatants who make up the PLO are still living in Lebanon in the camps and districts which are daily in the headlines as the scenes of continued barbarity aimed at their inhabitants.

The significance of this fact can be gauged from the rapid demise since 1982 of the political challenge posed by the small Palestinian factions controlled by Syria, such as Saiqa, the PFLP-GC and the Abu Nidal group, in spite of the collapse during the same period of the "Jordanian option" to which the PLO leadership committed itself from 1982 to 1986. That demise is arguably a function of the perception among most Palestinians that these factions' alignment with the Syrian regime has proven harmful to the Palestinian population of the camps in Lebanon, besieged as they are by Syrian allies and proxies. Even the obstacles facing the diplomatic approach followed by the PLO leadership since 1982 has not increased the popularity among Palestinians of the leadership's rivals based in Damascus. Seen in this perspective, the "war of the camps" of 1985-87 has an overarching importance, overshadowing the bitter wrangling over the leadership's "Jordanian option" and the resulting 1985 Amman accord, and the Damascus based groups' "Syrian option." Indeed, it has had the effect of forcing the main PLO factions— Fatah, the PFLP and the DFLP—towards national unity in spite of their differences.

The impact of events in Lebanon on the entire Palestinian political arena can also be seen in the effect of the PLO's defense of the besieged camps during the winter of 1986-87. This gave a powerful boost to Palestinian nationalism in the occupied territories, which during this period witnessed intense nationalist agitation in solidarity with the Palestinians in the camps of Lebanon. Similarly, the steadfastness of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon marginally improved the PLO's situation in the Arab world. It had an impact on the successful negotiations in the spring of 1987 between the PLO and the Kuwaiti government on conditions of residence for Palestinians in Kuwait, on the United Arab Emirates agreeing to host the headquarters of the Palestine National Fund, and on the improvement of the PLO's relations with Tunisia, Libya and Algeria in 1987.

Lebanon is also important because it is the last "front" in the hot war with Israel, aside from the occupied territories themselves. However, since 1982 the war on that front has been waged primarily by Lebanese whose main aim is the final elimination of the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory, embodied in the so-called "security zone." It is questionable whether this resistance to Israeli occupation of Lebanese soil, which so far has been remarkably successful, can be seen as more than a tactical ally of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This is particularly the case since many of the most active elements of the Lebanese resistance, such as Hizbullah, are committed at least rhetorically to the liberation of all Palestine and not just the West Bank and Gaza, which have been the PLO's focus since the 1974 provisional program.

The resolution of the issue of South Lebanon has exceedingly important implications, on the Lebanese and regional levels as well as for the Palestinians. In Lebanese terms, it will have an impact on the struggle for supremacy within the Shi'i community, as well as on the conflict over the future nature and orientation of Lebanon. On the regional level it will help to determine many of the actions of Syria and Israel. On the Palestinian level it will strongly influence not only the nature and course of the PLO's leadership but also the extent to which armed struggle remains central to the Palestinian national movement. It is noteworthy that in addition to omitting any reference to "armed struggle," the Political Statement of the nineteenth PNC refrained for the first time in over a decade from calling for freedom of commando action from Lebanon, instead stressing the "right of Palestinian citizens in Lebanon to practice political and informational activities and to enjoy security and protection."[1]

In any case, debate among Palestinians, whether about Lebanon or the uprising, will take place in a much different context than existed in 1967. It will be resolved in forums like the Palestine National Council, and the various unions, such as the influential General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists, whose February 1987 general conference in Algiers brought together writers from all the main Palestinian factions and was a prelude to the reunification of the PLO at the eighteenth PNC in Algiers two months later. It will be debated in the Palestinian press, whether that under occupation or in the diaspora, whether in PLO-run media or in newspapers published in the Gulf which carry columns written by Palestinians. It will be addressed in literature and in literary magazines, whether published in Paris or Jerusalem or the Gulf or elsewhere. And it will be discussed in research institutes, scholarly organizations and professional associations formed by Palestinians both under occupation and in the diaspora.

All these forums enable political debate to take place on the level of the entire Palestinian people, with the same themes, ideas and problems being addressed in spite of the barriers of diaspora, occupation, physical separation and great distance. Thus newspapers under occupation, student groups in Kuwaiti universities, Palestinian-American bodies in the United States and the conferences of organizations like the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists all debate the same issues and are moved by the same crises, whether in the camps in Lebanon or in the occupied territories. That such a thing can take place—something which could not happen on anything like the same scale or with the same universality in 1967—in itself constitutes a remarkable change.

Moreover, the process of extending and strengthening this web of linkages tying the Palestinians together as a people suffered only a slight interruption as a result of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which was intended above all else to permanently disrupt those linkages. The break in the continuity of PLO institutions as a result of the defeat and expulsion of 1982, which was accentuated by the split in the movement which followed, can now be seen as no more than a hiatus in their development. In spite of their manifold failings, their inefficiency, corruption and bureaucratic nature, these institutions have survived dispersion and still function, providing services to Palestinians throughout the region, supporting both the steadfastness of those in the camps in Lebanon and the uprising against the occupation, and playing a sometimes vital coordinating role.

If these have all been achievements of the past two decades, most of them growing naturally out of the socioeconomic, demographic, professional and educational transformations of the Palestinian people and their developing national consciousness, what have been the accompanying

failures? And in which direction can the Palestinian national movement be expected to go in the future?

The clearest failure is embodied in the fact that no part of Palestine has been liberated yet in spite of more than two decades of efforts and the sacrifice of tens of thousands of lives. Moreover, the Palestinian national movement has become deeply embroiled in distracting conflicts with parties other than Israel, whether Lebanese factions or Arab regimes. While these failures are easy to see, it is somewhat harder to see precisely how they could have been avoided, given the iron intransigence of Israel regarding evacuation of occupied Palestinian territory and Palestinian self-determination, the descent into decadence of the Arab world over the past decade and a half, and the relative immaturity of the modern Palestinian national movement, particularly during its Jordanian and Lebanese phases.

A less obvious but perhaps more avoidable failure has been the PLO's inability to decide on the basic strategy for changing the unfavorable balance of forces it confronts. Is this to be done by diplomatic maneuvering, by waiting or working for another war or a change in the Arab environment, or by attempting to affect the situation within Israel and the occupied territories? And if the situation inside Israel is to be changed, is this to be accomplished by conciliation, pressure or a combination of the two? While all of these have at different times been perceived as possible avenues to liberation, it is hard to see which is the primary avenue chosen by the PLO to achieve its objectives.

While diplomacy is always necessary and sometimes vital, it cannot by itself change an unfavorable balance of forces. Yet this was the means relied upon by the PLO leadership after the 1982 war when, from a relatively weak position, it entered into the now-defunct understanding with Jordan aimed at involving the PLO in the process of achieving a settlement. And while a change in the Arab world is devoutly to be wished for by Palestinians and others, their ability to accelerate such a change is limited at best. Even the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which in the 1960s used to preach Arab revolution as the means of liberating Palestine, seems grudgingly reconciled to the stability of the Arab status quo, as evidenced by George Habash's successful 1987 tour of several Gulf states, where he met with their rulers and was generally treated as an honored guest.

This question has in fact become moot since December 1987, when the uprising in effect determined that Israel and the occupied territories would be the primary arena for Palestinian action and in some measure imposed on the entire Palestinian national movement a strategy of pressure on the occupier combined with a conciliatory political stance. This was reflected in the resolutions of the nineteenth PNC.

To some extent the Palestinians have achieved a limited form of one of their objectives, self-determination, in that in some places, albeit subject to brutal restraint and often at fearful cost, they have managed to make themselves masters of their own fate. But this has either occurred outside their own homeland, creating the kind of difficulties engendered by the PLO's "state within a state" in Lebanon, or else takes place within the stifling confines of the repression, racism and hostility of the Israeli occupation. The uprising shows both the extent and the limitations of this form of auto-emancipation. Moreover, other objectives such as the return to Palestine of Palestinians in the diaspora and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in even a fraction of Palestine still seem far off.

Given this situation, the future is likely to see a continuation of the processes of reuniting the divided segments of the Palestinian people and further efforts to strengthen the position of those living under occupation and protect them against the threat of expulsion, whether gradual and partial, or sudden and massive. These processes will continue irrespective of whatever strategy is adopted by the Palestinian national movement, or who leads it, or even whether a clear strategy is adopted or not. If such a strategy is in fact articulated, it will be determined mainly by two unpredictable factors. The first is a takeover of the leadership by a new generation, which has already begun to happen in the occupied territories. This same process can happen in the diaspora, which for the foreseeable future will continue to be the locus of leadership of the Palestinian national movement, only when a new generation is in place and can offer a new approach, and when the Arab circumstances from which the current leaders emerged and to which they are most adept at responding disappear. This in turn will be a function of the second unpredictable factor: major changes in the Arab world. This would have to be on the order of the two earthquakes which changed the Palestinian and Arab political maps in modern times. The first, that of 1948, shattered the traditional Palestinian leadership finally and irrevocably, while starting the old Arab ruling classes down the slope to their overthrow. The second, that of 1967, crippled and delegitimized the radical Arab nationalist regimes and seemed to vindicate Palestinian nationalism, providing the opportunity for the current generation of Palestinian leaders to dominate Palestinian politics. Any major change in the Arab world, even if not quite so dramatic as these, would probably stimulate similarly major shifts in Palestinian politics.

Part of any new generation of Palestinian leadership which does emerge will probably come from occupied Palestine, where new forms of organization are already appearing. It will be more sensitive to potential allies within Israeli society and to the vulnerabilities and strengths of a foe it knows at first hand, and it can thus be expected to be more subtle in its approach and strategy. Indeed, some of this subtlety has already been reflected in the

tactics and strategy of the uprising. In this sense it will be unlike the current leadership, which is located entirely in exile and knows its enemy primarily from being on the receiving end of Israeli bombing raids and assassination attempts. It should be noted that Israel has the capacity to retard this process by continuing to expel prominent Palestinian figures in the occupied territories, as if trying to ensure that the entire leadership of the Palestinian national movement will remain in exile. And the difficulties of carrying on freely under occupation with some of the key political, organizational and diplomatic tasks necessary for management of this movement will ensure that most of them will continue to be done by leaders in exile. Nevertheless, the growth of the relative importance of Palestinians under occupation in the national movement as a whole, already underway, is probably inexorable and has the potential for introducing qualitative changes into Palestinian politics.

In spite of the medium- and long-term benefits to be expected from such changes, there remain grave short-term problems for the current generation of leaders and their successors. These include the prickly task of coordinating the sometimes disparate agendas of different segments of the Palestinian people, under occupation and in the diaspora, in the camps and in the cities, from the working class and the big bourgeoisie; changing the grossly unfavorable balance of forces, notably as regards the intransigence of Israel and the United States but also insofar as many of the Arab "brethren" are concerned; ensuring that the Palestinians are not dealt out of any new round of the negotiating process, and that their basic national desiderata are taken into account; and imparting a new sense of direction to a movement which has suffered from drift for many years. Even a simple enumeration such as this shows how daunting these issues are.

In any case, it is clear that the processes which have already transformed the Palestinians since 1967 will have an even greater effect in the future, in spite of the setbacks of the movement and its occasional failure to learn from some of the mistakes of the past. The reason for this is that some of these transformations have simply been the natural result of the development of Palestinian society, which has gone from being comprised mainly of poor, rural, illiterate refugees in 1949 to today's much more complex and advanced social, economic, demographic and educational profile. Other transformations which have already occurred, however, have been the fruit of the efforts of a now greying generation of Palestinian leaders, some of them prominent and others less so. Their prime is surely past, but their contributions over this period in the face of what were always daunting odds should not be forgotten after they have been superseded by the new generation.

Even now the leaders of tomorrow are waiting quietly in the wings, in the ranks of the militias in the camps of Lebanon, led by twenty-five-year-old veterans with fifteen years of combat experience; among the young intellectuals and white-collar workers in Kuwait and the Gulf who have never seen their homeland; and in the student bodies of the universities and among the inmates of the Israeli prisons in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, who have known nothing but occupation for their entire lives.

Chapter 9

What the Uprising Means

Salim Tamari

This chapter is adapted from a talk Salim Tamari gave at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC on February 25, 1988.

1988 is the end of the second decade of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. It's also the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. This means we have two generations who grew up under Israeli control inside the Green Line and one generation which grew up under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. Demographically, roughly 60 percent of the people of the West Bank and Gaza are today under seventeen years of age. These are the core of the people you watch every day confronting Israeli soldiers. Age is significant here: it suggests the context in which young people begin to lose fear in facing death or mutilation of their bodies.

When Israel entered the occupied territories after defeating the armies of Jordan, Syria and Egypt in June 1967, it was not very clear what it wanted to do with the territories. There was a vigorous debate between the two branches of the National Unity Government of that time, very similar to the unity government that ruled Israel from 1984 to 1988. Then it comprised the rightwing Gahal bloc made up of the Herut and Liberal Parties, the core of today's Likud, and the Labor-led Alignment. In that period the perspective of former Defense Minister Moshe Dayan determined Israeli strategy. Perhaps the best way to summarize Dayan's perspective is that Israeli rule should be felt but not seen. Arabs should be able to administer their own affairs and go through the cycle of life—birth registration, marriage, school, receiving services—without having to encounter Israeli officials. At the same time, Israel should keep a firm grip on all matters relating to security and the resources of the region.

The contesting perspective was expressed recently by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir: that Israel should establish a fear of the Jews in the hearts of the Arabs. It was Dayan's strategy of control through indirect means that triumphed. Dayan cleverly charted the integration of the occupied territories

IX. OPENINGS

In the year and nine months I have been working on this article—intermittently, sometimes taking time to do paid work, too often taking time to be sick—I have felt driven. Early on I had dreams of concentration camps. Later I dreamed of the Middle East. The work did not stay neatly contained in the hours I had allotted to it. I thought of it as I jogged through the park, sat on the subway, observed a high school math class. Even when I caught some virus, my ready excuse to crawl into bed and away from my typewriter, I could not escape. Across the room from my bed, next to my desk, a makeshift edifice had arisen—four milk crates, two cinderblocks, three boards from an old bookshelf. It reached the maximum safe height, a bit shorter than me, and began to expand horizontally, milk crates stacked above the adjoining dresser and atop the single properly-constructed bookshelf I had begun with. Books, pamphlets, newspapers, overflow onto the floor, into and on top of cartons. The process of writing has not been tidy.

Perhaps the mess is inevitable. Racism and anti-Semitism are not neat subjects. They do not lend themselves to simple emotions or pat answers. But, as long as they exist, we must work toward solutions. So I come back always to strategies, to strategies and activism. I return to the questions: What to do? How to do it? And whom to do it with?

The recent growth of a Jewish feminist movement has, for many of us, opened up possible responses to these questions which we would never have thought of a few years ago. And, as I consider these questions, I am impelled to consider what influences us to select one strategy rather than another, what makes a particular approach harder to consider than it might be; to consider how the recent growth of a Jewish feminist movement has both opened up and hampered certain kinds of

activism.

Many Jewish feminists come from backgrounds of assimilation which continue to be a source of pain and potential tension. It can be tempting, especially for those of us who have emerged from years of silence and self-denial, to distance ourselves from our histories, particularly when we see them reflected in someone else's process of coming to self-awareness. The distancing, the failure to acknowledge the relative newness of an insight or political identification, can prevent constructive interaction. A white Jewish woman responds to the criticism of a non-Jewish woman of color by asking whether she has *always* shown sufficient concern for Jewish oppression in her anti-racist work, when the Jewish woman herself had begun to speak out against anti-Semitism only a few years before (and had not always spoken out against racism). A Jewish woman calls another one "self-hating" because the second woman doesn't agree with a political position which the first woman had arrived at recently.

In part, these responses may be the growing pains of a movement, but they also reflect a long-standing tendency in the Jewish community to separate the "real Jews" from those who are not. At one point, I considered using as an epigraph to part of this article a remark by an elderly Jewish man quoted in *Number Our Days*: "If you don't put out your hand against injustice, I don't care if you pray all day. You may be religious, but by me this isn't a Jew."[1] It was only my realization that he too was determining who was and was not a "real Jew" that made me decide to leave it out.

This problem also takes the form of distinguishing Good Jews from Bad Jews. A Jewish woman angrily characterizes Jewish women working in one racially mixed group as "Good" Jews, supposedly currying favor with women of color and insufficiently concerned with Jewish oppression; she numbers herself among the "Bad" Jews, because of her membership in a feminist group which has made opposition to Jewish oppression its priority. From this perspective, a Good Jew is actually a *bad* Jew.

Within the Jewish feminist movement, the proponents of the Good Jew/Bad Jew formulation often attempt to define others' motivations —as do those who employ such slashing characterizations as "self-hating" or (for women of color) "white-minded." Motivation is, of course, an easy target, sometimes attractive when the substance of the disagreement has been exhausted and a closing personal swipe seems irresistible. What we need are ways in which we can disagree with the substance of what a woman says, with the emphasis she has chosen, with the analysis and strategy she has outlined, without calling into question

her political and personal integrity or attacking her sense of positive Jewish identification.

I believe that my work stems from my politics and sense of ethics. I know too that, faced with a huge number of possible politcal projects, equally deserving of time and energy, I choose in part because of what *I* will gain, not simply what I will give back; I choose in part because my connection with the people involved serves as its own motivating force. But this does not constitute all of what motivates my political work. I am not immune to feeling "the old competitiveness, the wanting recognition, 'success'," which Mab Segrest pinpoints as one dynamic in "a movement working on liberation."[2] The desire for approval from any number of quarters—Jewish and non-Jewish, white and Third World—might also serve as a motivation for political work. Since I cannot even swear to the absolute purity of my own motivation, I think it is much more useful to focus on what someone *does* and how she does it. Maintaining this perspective is part of the work of politics. It keeps the emphasis where it belongs—on actions intended to move toward a specific goal.

If we choose the work of politics, we need to figure out how differences, sometimes relating to Jewish oppression, sometimes to racism, sometimes to both, can be discussed without inhibiting dialogue. Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz describes one attempt to do this in a meeting with part of the hiring committee at a university where she was denied reappointment:

> I raised the issue of antisemitism, of cultural clash; and was again ridiculed. One woman, L., a Chicana, said that to many Chicanas, Jewish people were just white; just *landlords;* that Jewish people came here and took land from the Indians. I said that to many Jews, Chicanos were just Catholics, and she knew what Catholics had done to the Jews. I said that the few Jews who came here—to the Southwest—had been kicked out of Spain. I should have said that all non-natives took the Indians' land, though in truth I don't know if Jews took land or not. One condition of the American Jews is ignorance of our history, and an absorption of this history into the history of white people, so that whatever is said of white people is said of Jews as well—and sometimes blamed on Jews. *Anyway, this woman and I looked at each other with some understanding.* "Hear other people's prejudice—and our own?"
>
> At one point the wasp coordinator left the room. L. talked about her anger at white lesbians from a white community, ignorant of the experiences of lesbians of color. I said my community in the Southwest wasn't an all-white community. L. said she'd assumed it was. L. and P., a Black lesbian, said they wanted a woman of color to teach the Heterosexism class. I was upset that they had no interest in representing Jewish women in

> the program, but I understood their feeings; I said this. *At least we were talking.* (my emphasis)[3]

In this exchange, Kaye/Kantrowitz appears to have made some difficult decisions, the first of which was not to respond simply by labeling the ridicule as anti-Jewish. She chooses instead to engage, replying with information that might undercut stereotypes of Jews, and with statements highlighting the similarities between biased assumptions about Jews and biased assumptions about (Chicano) Catholics. She recognizes that, regardless of her individual actions, the women she is talking to might see her as typical of and responsible for the white lesbian community; she may be seen—and cannot help but operate—as both oppressor and oppressed. As a result of their willingness to keep talking, Kaye/Kantrowitz and L. and P. begin, however tentatively, to reach "some understanding" of each other's situations. Each paragraph concludes with the acknowledgment that some advance, however, slight, has been made; "at least," as Kaye/Kantrowitz writes, they "were talking."

Doing such work involves not confusing our emotional community with our political arena, or, as Bernice Johnson Reagon says, our home with our coalition. In each place, the expectations are quite different. As Reagon writes:

> Coalition work is not work done in your home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do. And you shouldn't look for comfort. Some people will come to a coalition and they rate the success of the coalition on whether or not they feel good when they get there. They're not looking for a coalition; they're looking for a home! They're looking for a bottle with some milk in it and a nipple, which does not happen in a coalition. You don't get a lot of food in a coalition. You don't get fed in a coalition. In a coalition you have to give, and it is different from your home. You can't stay there all the time. You go to the coalition for a few hours and then you go back and take your bottle wherever it is, and then you go back and coalesce some more.[4]

Reagon assumes, as I do, that politics involves working in coalitions and having a "home" to go back to. In her way, she is positing a "We/They" framework of home vs. coalition. The critical issue is to find the home, to find the base from which to do political work. This is neither a purely personal dilemma nor one faced only by those who, like me, are Jewish feminists. Audre Lorde expresses the same yearning as she writes of the time before she was generally known to be a lesbian when, as she entered the room, her

. . . eyes would seek out the one or two black faces
for contact or reassurance or a sign
I was not alone
now walking into rooms full of black faces
that would destroy me for any difference
where shall my eyes look?
Once it was easy to know
who were my people.[5]

Having worked at different times in organizations of "my people"—all women, all lesbians, all Jews, all Jewish feminists—I know well the attraction and uses of such groups. They have—and do—provide me with a ground from which to move out into the larger world. When they have offered me the greatest support, it has been the combination of shared identities *and* compatible politics, rather than the simple fact of shared identities, which has made communication possible. While we often think of coalitions as *crossing* lines of identity—women of color and white women working together, Jews and non-Jews, lesbians and non-lesbians—the interactions Reagon describes as typifying "coalition politics" do, in fact, exist within each identity group. Certainly this is true in those situations where the politics of those involved differ sharply. Working with non-Jews also involves identifying those areas where we can work together and those in which we cannot. For efforts arising from our common politics to be successful, I need to decide which points to raise, which to push, and which to leave in the background. My ability to do effective political work depends both on finding allies and on keeping a sense of home. Out of the larger "lesbian community" or "women's community" or "Jewish feminist community," we carve a smaller, more personally and politically compatible one made up of "those among whom we can sit down and weep, and still be counted as warriors."[6]

As I have thought increasingly about the issues of home and community, I have found myself coming up with questions, not with answers.[7] So I made a list of questions (included in the Appendix) which might provide a framework for each of us to analyze how we see ourselves in relation to the Jewish feminist movement, to the women's movement as a whole, to other progressive movements; and then to look at how we interrupt—or might interrupt—racism and Jewish oppression, at how we do—or could do—political work on both issues; at how we work in coalitions.

I begin with many assumptions. I believe, for instance, that our choices both of political priorities and of strategies are influenced by our definitions of our community and our home, by the people we can trust are beside us and those we see only across the room or down the block. Our analysis and activities will necessarily be affected by our lack of

contact with other Jewish women, with non-Jewish women of color and with those who share our general political perspective. When I ask myself who *I* define as my most immediate community, I come up with answers which are not nearly as broad as they might be. I am aware, for instance, that, when my personal connections to women of various identities are extrenely limited, these limitations are reflected in my thinking, my words, and my activism. On the other hand, my links with some Jewish women, almost all Ashkenazi, all themselves struggling with the issues of racism and Jewish oppression, have informed my work, even when we do not fully agree with each other; in the absence of these women, I would have ceased writing this piece long ago. Taking stock can show us the parameters of our most immediate community. It can also show us how our individual political work has, over the years, both focused within these boundaries and transcended them; how we have both stayed with what we know best and stretched ourselves to learn about—and connect with—women whose paths do not necessarily cross our own.

We might explore a host of questions about how we have confronted either racism or anti-Semitism; how we would like to have done so; what kind of support we have gotten, or failed to get, from others present; how the identity of the person we confront and the circumstances in which the interaction takes place affect what we do. We make choices. And sometimes we are not all that happy with them. At a workshop on anti-Semitism, for example, the Jewish participants discussed various responses to Jewish oppression: rage, rationality, reasoned explanation that acknowledges anger, silence. A week later, when one woman described the workshop to members of our anti-Semitism and racism task-force, she mentioned that, though everyone at the workshop agreed that silence was unacceptable, it had also been the most common response. Everyone laughed, recognizing in that statement our own failures, our own political frailty. Each of us has been silent in response to racism and Jewish oppression, each of us has tried to confront them in non-constructive ways; rarely can any of us look back without feeling that she might have done it better. When we consider our experiences of confronting anti-Semitism and racism, we do so primarily to learn how to do it better.

Within a broader organizational framework, we need to ask questions about who confronts Jewish oppression or racism or who argues that these issues need to be discussed; about the response of other group or coalition members to such discussions and confrontations; about what is "acceptable" to raise in a given setting; about how a group's attitudes toward racism and anti-Semitism affect politics vis à vis the Middle East; about how a group or coalition achieves unity and works out compro-

mises, as well as about what to do when unity and compromise prove impossible. In each setting we might consider further questions about whom we identify as our constituency; which goals are essential, which most realistic; what allies exist for us to seek out for coalitions. At every step along the way, as we join a group, form a coalition, or put our names on a flyer, we also ask whom we are prepared to work with: Jewish lesbians, Jewish feminists, progressive Jews, feminists or radicals from different backgrounds. The answers to these questions, different from group to group, from year to year within a group, can tell us something useful for our work.

The questions I ask are not comprehensive, and are not meant to be. If we apply them broadly, they may help define both individual and group analyses of a range of issues–militarism, economics, imperialism–which I have touched on only in passing. They may help us judge ways in which these major forces intersect with institutional racism and anti-Semitism. These questions are not a standard way of ending a piece of this length. Yet they seem to me the right way to end. They emphasize how slow personal and political change is–how hard, and how necessary. They underscore the fact that political work is more complicated than we often think. More complicated, no doubt, than I have made it out to be.

So I resist the temptation to end with a closing burst of optimism, a reference to sisterhood, unity, or revolution. I am neither a visionary nor an optimist. I have sat in too many meetings and been in too many groups to be either. But I do believe in the absolute necessity of fighting anti-Semitism and racism and in the possibility of political change. And I do know that there is much work to be done.

August 1982-May 1984

APPENDIX: QUESTIONS

Since my primary focus in writing has been on ways for Jewish women to confront Jewish oppression and racism, I assume here a reader who is herself Jewish; at the same time, I hope that the following questions will be used by—and, where necessary, adapted to—non-Jewish women, Third World and white. I assume as well that there are no correct answers to these questions. Rather, they are intended to challenge, to reveal changes in attitudes and strategies over time, to underscore how much each of us still has to learn.

Since many Jewish women have engaged in consciousness-raising about Jewish identity and anti-Semitism and many white women have done so about racism, I have skipped over a basic avenue of inquiry: essential CR questions about one's earliest recollections of racism and anti-Semitism; about parental attitudes toward people of color and Jews; about the ways in which economic issues affected what each of us was taught about Jewish oppression and racism. Yet, responding fully to some of the questions I *do* ask might also require considering these other questions, so that the lessons of childhood and growing up which remain part of us can illuminate the work we do in the present.

I have divided the questions into three sets: 1) Communities; 2) Confrontations; and 3) Groups and Coalitions. I recommend that each be used in a different fashion. The "Communities" questions lend themselves to being considered by one's self, as a means of self-clarification, or perhaps with one or two friends. The "Confrontations" questions can be used as exercises in workshops or as focuses for discussion in any small-group setting. The "Groups/Coalitions" questions can be used by ongoing groups, whether or not their primary focus involves racism and/or anti-Semitism, as well as by individuals who work in such groups.

COMMUNITIES

A. List five Jewish women, five women of color, and five non-Jewish white women whose politics you respect, and consider what it is about their view of Jewish identity, racism, and anti-Semitism that made you select them.

   Do any of them have significant differences from each other?

   If so, what made you list them all?

   If not, what common aspects of their perspective do you feel positively about?

B. List five Jewish women, five women of color, and five non-Jewish white women whose views of Jewish identity, racism, and anti-

Semitism you regard negatively, and consider what it is about their views that impelled you to select them.

Do any of them have significant differences from each other?

If so, what made you list them all?

If not, what common aspects of their perspectives do you dislike?

C. What kind of activist work against Jewish oppression and/or racism have these women done?

Consider both lists in terms of the following: age, racial/ethnic identities, class background and current economic lifestyle, region, sexual preference/orientation, religion and religious upbringing, nationality.

Are any of those on the women of color lists Jewish and/or Arab?

Are any of those on the Jewish lists women of color?

How do the Jewish women on the lists fit into the entity you see as "the Jewish feminist movement"?

How do the women of color on the lists fit into the entity you see as "the Third World feminist movement"?

Do you know the women on each list personally or only by reputation?

Do you know some of the women well and others only slightly?

How do you think the women listed whom you know personally feel about your own political perspective and work?

How is your own political activism regarding racism and/or anti-Semitism affected by your relationship (or lack of relationship) to these women?

Consider both lists in terms of how you think each woman would define her political perspective.

How would these lists have been different if you had made them one, two, five, ten years ago?

Do you see these women as peers, as women you want to emulate, as women from whom you want to disassociate yourself?

For each group, consider how your lists would differ if you were to list women you respected/did not respect regarding racism *or* anti-Semitism instead of racism *and* anti-Semitism.

CONFRONTATIONS

A. For each of the following situations, consider these questions:

How did you feel?

What did you do?

Would you like to have acted differently?

What was the response of the individual(s) you confronted?

What were the responses of the other people present—Jewish and

non-Jewish, white people and people of color, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, Arabs and non-Arabs, working-class people and non-working-class people, lesbians and non-lesbians, women and men?

How was the interaction affected by the sex, class, or sexual preference/orientation of the person you confronted?

How did what happened relate to your expectations of what was going to happen?

1. Recall a situation in which you confronted the anti-Semitism of a non-Jewish white person.

   Were there any differences between your response and action in this situation compared to one in which a non-Jewish person of color said or did something anti-Jewish?

2. Recall a situation in which you confronted the anti-Semitism of a non-Jewish person of color.

   Were there any differences between your response and action in this situation compared to one in which a non-Jewish white person said or did something anti-Jewish?

3. Recall a situation in which you confronted the internalized anti-Semitism of another Jew.

   Were there any differences between your response and action in this situation compared to one in which a non-Jew said or did something anti-Jewish?

4. Recall a situation in which you confronted the racism of a white Jew.

   Were there any differences between your response and actions in this situation compared to one in which a non-Jewish white person said or did something racist?

5. Recall a situation in which you confronted the anti-Arab racism of a Jewish person.

   Were there any differences between your response and action in this situation compared to one in which a non-Jewish white person or a non-Arabic person of color said or did something anti-Arab?

6. Recall a situation that you participated in or observed in which a person of color was anti-Jewish in response to the racism of a white Jew.

7. Recall a situation that you participated in or observed in which a white Jew was racist in response to the anti-Semitism of a person of color.

B. For situations 1-7, recall an instance in which:

   1. you identified the racism or anti-Semitism but said nothing;

2. you only later became aware of it;
3. you were present when someone else confronted it.

C. For situations 3-5, recall an instance when you have been the person confronted and consider both your responses and those of others present.

GROUPS/COALITIONS

The following questions can apply to groups/coalitions whose focus is racism and/or anti-Semitism and groups/coalitions doing Middle East organizing, as well as those whose focus is *not* Jewish oppression and racism (e.g., groups working on abortion rights, tenant organizing, conference planning). Some questions may be more relevant to one type of group than to another. While questions are addressed specifically to group interactions and politics, many are applicable to coalitions.

A. To what extent have racism and/or Jewish oppression been discussed/confronted in the group?
What pressures or values have increased the difficulty of raising/confronting anti-Semitism and/or racism?
What members have initiated those discussions/confrontations?
What effect has it had on the group and on its members if one or two individuals have always been the ones to raise/confront these issues?
How have the issues been raised? How was a member's racism or anti-Semitism confronted?
What kinds of responses, supportive or not, have been made by other group members?
How have these interactions been resolved?
When you have initiated such a discussion/confrontation, what kinds of expectations, fears, concerns did you bring?
To what extent have these been realized?
What has been the effect of such discussions/confrontations on the ongoing work of the group? on group membership? on coalition efforts?
What has been the effect of any lack of discussion/confrontation on the ongoing work of the group? on group membership? on coalition efforts?

B. To what extent has raising and exploring the issues of anti-Semitism and/or racism been affected by the members':
religious/ethnic and racial identification?
class background and current economic lifestyle?
political affiliations or affinities?
identification as Zionist, non-Zionist, anti-Zionist?

C. When racism and/or anti-Semitism have been discussed, to what extent have they been analyzed in relation to:
interactions among group members?
coalition work?
economic factors?
institutions?
international events?

D. When Jewish oppression and/or racism have been raised in a group, to what extent have they been dealt with in relation to the Middle East conflict?
What effect has raising this issue had in groups whose focus is not Middle East organizing?

E. How has the group dealt with situations in which it felt it necessary to choose between opposing anti-Semitism or opposing racism, between supporting a Third World concern or supporting a Jewish one?
To what extent has the group been prepared to deal with such situations?
How have the decision(s) made affected the workings of the group?

F. To what extent has the group achieved unity in its analysis of racism and/or anti-Semitism?
What kinds of compromises have been made in relation to these issues which have facilitated ongoing work?
What kinds of compromises could not be worked out?
If a group has achieved some level of unity, how has it been attained?
Have members who disagreed left or been discouraged from participating?
Are shared politics stated explicitly in a position paper?
Have you or anyone else felt pressure to adhere to these positions?
If so, how has that been addressed?

G. How has the group's unity—or lack of unity—in its analysis of anti-Semitism and/or racism affected decisions about which groups to work with in coalition?
Are there specific analyses which the group—or individuals within it—feel must be shared by other members of a coalition?
How have these expectations affected coalition work?

H. What have you gained from working in a group or coalition in which participants had similar backgrounds and politics?
What have you gained from working in a group or coalition in which participants had backgrounds and politics different from your own?