

Mission Statement of European Dissent, New Orleans

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

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

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

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

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

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

Accountability of anti-racist whites

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I. Accountability of Whites to European Dissent Organization

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

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

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

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

4. We agree to be honest with each other.

5. We agree to respect each other.

6. We will support group decisions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. Accountability of Whites to Other Whites

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

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

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