TELLING OUR STORIES
ACT ON OUR PRINCIPLES
CREATE A CULTURE OF RESISTANCE

Telling Our Stories

The purposes of this exercise are to:

-- Deepen our own awareness of the processes by which we are becoming anti-racist activists, including how we developed and deepened an anti-racist consciousness;

-- Share these stories to create group wisdom and mutual personal/political support;

-- Learn how to discern the common themes in our stories; and

-- Use these common themes as bases for creating new strategies for doing anti-racist organizing, especially the strategy called Each One Teach One.

Preparation:

Please prepare the steps of this exercise at home so that your story telling will be succinct. Here are some suggested guidelines:

(1) Who influenced, motivated and/or inspired your developing activism and consciousness? (women or men of color; white women or men?)

(2) What experiences influenced, motivated and/or inspired your activism and consciousness? (Concerts, political activities, cultural events, readings, classrooms, friends, etc.)

(3) When did these people and experiences happen? Your age? Over a short or long time period?

(4) Where did they happen? (Cities, states; specific kinds of locales in different communities such as cafes, streets, homes, schools, cultural centers, etc.)

(5) How did they happen? Describe the processes by which you were influenced, inspired, motivated. Be very very specific. What were the blocks and barriers that you encountered? How did you overcome them? Give details. This is the data for organizing strategies and tactics.

(6) Why do you think you were open to being influenced, motivated, inspired at the time you were? What was going on in your external and internal life that specifically created this openness?

Please remember that this is an exercise that focuses on your paths to anti-racist activism. It is not primarily a consciousness-raising exercise, nor is it intended to recount how you (if you are white) were socialized to become a racist. We who are white are all socialized to be racists. That is an assumption of this workshop. If this exercise is effective, it will help you to develop a beginning sense of anti-racist solidarity with other participants in your small group. It should also generate ideas for organizing strategies.

Each story teller will have only 10 minutes. Therefore, mention only the critical people and events which influenced you. (If you do not consider yourself to be an anti-racist activist yet, focus on how you are developing an anti-racist consciousness.) Be specific. Give lots of details.
Exercise: This is an AROC group exercise, with two groups of Pair 'n Shares (4 people total). People of color have the option to meet in separate groups.

PART ONE:
(1) Choose a small group organizer, timekeeper, and rotating scribes.

(2) Scribes should record racial/national origins, class background and present class position, gender, sexuality; age and any other self-identifiers requested by each story teller, but no names.

(3) Scribes should record details of stories as much as possible. Details will be key in developing common themes.

PART TWO: (45 minutes to one hour):

Each person will have 10 minutes to tell your story of how you are becoming an anti-racist activist, including the deepening of your anti-racist consciousness.

People of color may want to include paths by which you acted to combat internalized racism and inter-racial or inter-ethnic hostilities.

PART THREE: (30 minutes)

(1) Review all stories for common themes of Who, what, when, where, how and why?
(2) List those common themes on newsprint.
(3) What do these common themes tell you that may be useful in helping to motivate or inspire someone you know to become an anti-racist activist? Again, be very specific.

Example: Many of us (who are mostly young white lesbians) developed our anti-racist consciousness after we heard or read about the stories and struggles of women of color. We therefore suggest that we might be able to motivate a friend’s anti-racist consciousness by inviting her to an event at which a woman of color activist was speaking, going with our friend to the event, and discussing it with her afterward.

Example: Many of us (who are mostly women of color) developed our commitment as anti-racist activists from our families. Each of us had at least one adult mentor. Therefore, we would suggest that anti-racist events for our community should be family-oriented activities.

(4) Scribe, please type up ALL your group’s data. Give to workshop organizer next session.

(5) Gather your group’s wisdom:
  -- What insights did you gain from doing the exercise?
  -- In what ways did the exercise empower you?
    (Strengthen your creative capacity to act)
  -- What skills did you learn to enable you to challenge some aspect of the white supremacy system?
  -- How can you share this experience with someone who was not in your small group? (Each One Teach One)
  -- What suggestions do you have for improving the exercise?

PART FOUR: WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION (Time permitting: 45 minutes)

-- Share some of your stories with the whole group.
-- Gather the whole group’s wisdom.