

WHAT IS SOLIDARITY?

Racism divides us. Solidarity bonds us.
Racism creates hierarchies of humanity. Solidarity creates equality and reciprocity.
Racism constricts hope. Solidarity inspires vision.
Racism wounds. Solidarity heals and transforms.

I define "solidarity" as an act of bonding with people struggling for their liberation.
Liberation struggles take many forms. Some people struggle to *liberate their lands* from colonial or imperialist domination: the Zapatistas against the Mexican government; Western Shoshone and other indigenous nations within the geographical borders of the United States; the Alianza under Reies Tijerina in New Mexico, 1960's; the Republic of New Africa in the Black Belt South, in the 1960's and 70's; or Puerto Rico from the 1890's to the present.

Many peoples of color struggle to *liberate their minds* from the culture of white supremacy: from the 1960's through the present, students demand Black Studies, Afrocentric curriculum; La Raza, Asian American and Native American studies; multi-cultural curriculum for children, teachers trained to respect the cultures of their students.

People of color, white women, and queers all struggle in different capacities to liberate themselves from violence that stalks their daily lives, in the home and on the street. Youth of color struggle in particular to be free of police violence.

Solidarity is not charity. Charity may relieve the momentary effects of oppression, but it does nothing to change the causes, nor to empower the oppressed to liberate themselves.

Solidarity is not an act of surrender or subordination to liberation fighters. Solidarity is an act of respect between two independent parties, both of whom derive benefits from the bonding act.

Solidarity is not the same as acting as an ally. As I understand the concept of "acting as an ally," it is a personal, one-on-one relationship. Solidarity is essentially a political and spiritual relationship, often to a group of people, or someone you do not know personally (though long term solidarity relationships often develop deep personal bonds).

Solidarity is not the same as acting against oppression. What we are standing in solidarity with is the *resistance struggle against oppression as embodied in the liberation fighters*. The resister initiates the struggle. We respond with our solidarity. For example: demanding an end to the death penalty is an act against oppression. Organizing for the freedom of a political prisoner is an act of solidarity.

Testimonies

(Pair 'n Share or Small Group Exercise)

Share a story of a time when standing in solidarity transformed your life as an anti-racist activist. Try to describe the processes of transformation you went through.

Costs and Benefits

Solidarity work can be very high risk. What are the costs (moral, political, economic, physical, time, social; short term and long term)? What are the benefits (spiritual, moral, political, social, short term and long term)? Weigh the benefits and costs of standing in solidarity with a particular liberation struggle, and make a decision.

How do you experience this very deliberative and meditative way of making this decision.?

SOLIDARITY WITHOUT BORDERS

The goal of this exercise is to use the workshop as a laboratory to prepare us for the task of getting 300 postcards and letters signed and mailed to the Governor of Pennsylvania. The postcard campaign is part of a national effort to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal by pressuring the governor NOT to sign an order to execute Mumia.

Please make a commitment to get 10 postcards or letters signed, stamped and returned to the workshop by Sunday, April 30 at the latest.

Purposes of Exercise

1. To *experience the links* between yourself as a human being, struggling for justice and liberation, and another person struggling for justice and liberation-- a person of color with whom you want to stand in solidarity;
2. To *understand the links* between the liberation struggle of an activist of color and the struggles for justice and liberation of the community of color from which the activist comes;
3. To *express these links* --experiential, political, cultural, spiritual --in your Each One Teach One organizing conversation in clear language that invites a new activist to join you in this anti-racist solidarity work; and
4. To *envision, create and express* the links between your organization's struggles for justice and liberation, and the struggles for justice and liberation of the community of color with which you are standing in solidarity.

Exercise

Divide into small groups of 6 people according to common issues or interests. People of color have options to meet separately or with any of the predominantly white groups.

1. *Linking issues:*
 - a. What are some links between the struggle of Mumia Abu-Jamal for justice and the struggles of your group for justice?
 - b. Think of one or two effective arguments to express these links.
2. What are the *benefits to me* of doing this specific organizing task?
3. *Potential barrers to organizing:*
 - a. Anticipate resistance to your organizing efforts.
 - b. Brainstorm ways to overcome this resistance, or lower these barriers.
4. *Role play your Each One Teach One organizing conversation to get a post card signed, and perhaps, a new activist into the anti-racist struggle:*
 - a. do your role plays in Pair 'n Shares; Reverse roles. (3 minutes each role play)
 - b. do your role play in front of the whole small group.
5. Critique each other's role plays: What worked? What problems did you have? What help do you need to do this organizing task more effectively? How could you act more effectively?
6. Gather the Group's Wisdom: (*Leave plenty of time for this part of exercise.*)
 - What *insights* did you gain from doing this *Each One Teach One* organizing exercise?
 - In what ways did doing the exercise *empower* you? (strengthen your creative capacity to act)
 - What *skills* did you learn to enable you to be a more effective anti-racist organizer?
 - How would you *improve* this exercise so it is more *effective in reaching its purposes?*

SOLIDARITY WITHOUT BORDERS

(Alternate Version: Same Goals)

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Purposes of Exercise

1. To *experience the links* between yourself as a human being, struggling for justice and liberation, and another person struggling for justice and liberation-- a person of color with whom you want to stand in solidarity;
2. To *understand the links* between the liberation struggle of an activist of color and the struggles for justice and liberation of the community of color from which the activist comes;
3. To *express these links* --experiential, political, cultural, spiritual --in your Each One Teach One organizing conversation in clear language that invites your organization to join you in this anti-racist solidarity work; and
4. To *envision, create and express* the links between your organization's struggles for justice and liberation, and the struggles for justice and liberation of the community of color with which you are standing in solidarity.

Exercise

Divide into small groups of 6 people according to common issues or interests. People of color have options to meet separately or with any of the predominantly white groups.

1. *Linking issues:*
 - a. What are some links between the struggle of Mumia Abu-Jamal for justice and the struggles of your group for justice?
 - b. Think of one or two effective arguments to express these links.
2. What are the *benefits to our organization* of doing this specific organizing task?
3. *Potential barrers to organizing:*
 - a. Anticipate resistance to your organizing efforts.
 - b. Brainstorm ways to overcome this resistance, or lower these barriers.
4. Each person: Create a five minute organizing rap to present to your organization to convince them to participate actively in the postcard campaign; and to come to the next scheduled demonstration for Mumia. *Give your rap to your small group.*
 - a. the rest of the group would play different roles in the organization: supporters, those with some reservation, those opposed.
5. Critique each rap after it is given. What worked? What problems did you have? What help do you need to do this organizing task more effectively? How could you act more effectively?
6. Gather the Group's Wisdom: (*Leave plenty of time for this part of exercise.*)
 - What *insights* did you gain from doing this *Each One Teach One* organizing exercise?
 - In what ways did doing the exercise *empower* you? (strengthen your creative capacity to act)
 - What *skills* did you learn to enable you to be a more effective anti-racist organizer?
 - How would you *improve* this exercise so it is more *effective in reaching its purposes*?