

## workshop 1 :origin of race

### **Focusing Question**

- Who benefits from the separation of races?

**Give participants time to re-read the articles and explanations. Maybe 20 mins to skim.**

Break into small groups of no larger than 10. Really important that this happens quickly.

Small Group Discussion

Questions to consider...

- General comments
- Do you think all men are responsible for creating sexism?
- Do you think all white people are responsible for creating racism?
- Can sorting people into identity groups lead a society we want?
- What elements of a “white privilege” analysis are understandably attractive to workers?
- Why is “white privilege” analysis reactionary and anti-communist?
- Stephanie Wildman says...p16. If this is true, how do we fight racism?
- What is our most effective counter-argument to an identity politics position?
- Why does racism exist?
- What is the primary goal of fighting racism?

**Facilitators should wrap up by saying why we must smash capitalism to destroy racism.**

### **Closing statements with large group**

We have been taught racism and sexism. It's tough to break out of it.

Why white privilege is BS. Focus on racism instead and fighting that.

\*Bring MLK speech on Selma with us.

## Workshop on Identity Politics

### INTRO

#### ACTIVITY: STAND -

- We're going to do a warm up that will help burn off some of lunch. We're going to ask you to stand when you identify with the statement we read. For example, "Stand, if you live in New York".
- Be sure to people time to see whose standing. (Make sure someone counts the number of unanimous stands)

- 1) Have you ever been in love?
- 2) Have you ever not been able to buy anything you wanted?
- 3) Have you ever not been able to afford something you needed?
- 4) Have you ever been in a car accident?
- 5) Have you or anyone in your family have had to worry about medical bills?
- 6) Have you been in debt?
- 7) Do you own a home?
- 8) Have you ever had a job you hated?
- 9) We're you born in this country?
- 10) Your parents?
- 11) Your grandparents?
- 12) Do you have any strong friendships?
- 13) Have you ever voted?
- 14) Have you disagreed with an elected official?
- 15) Have you or anyone you know been a victim of a crime?
- 16) Have you ever been arrested by the police?
- 17) Have you been afraid of the police before?

The point of this exercise is...

- People act like we have so many differences especially based on race and gender, but we have a ton in common.
- A lot of the political conversations around racism have been about identity, white privilege and white allies.
- Faf will talk about his experiences in Cleveland.

## Frame the conversation and articles.

- We're going to be talking about identity politics.
- Explain identity politics
  - Identity politics are political argument that focus upon the interest and perspectives of groups with which people identify. IE. Nationalism, Patriotism, Politics based in Gender identity...
- Introduce three articles

### **\*Discussing the origins of the term white privilege.**

First article suggests white privilege being the primary lens people look through these days. It says all white people benefit from racism. All men benefit from sexism. Personal work is primary - i.e. Mayday space conversation with white dude feeling he needs to admit his own privilege.

Then we will read two things to challenge that article - to challenge the idea of racism on a personal level as being primary. The last one offers a solution to the question about identity politics.

- When introducing, state that these are meant to be used to spark a discussion. We're going to be talking about how to fight back against racism. Here are a few arguments.
- **Dear White America** - A recent article by George Yancy that was published in the New York Times this past December. Yancy is writing a letter aimed at white Americans, telling them that they are racist. He makes the point that white people must admit their own inherent racism, and that is how we can move forward to combat racism as a country. Yancy's outlook on racism in America is a popular one, and we've all probably heard some version of it.
- **Identity Politics is Neoliberalism** - is a recent article by University of Pennsylvania professor, Adolf Reed. This can be read as a counter to the approach taken in Dear White America. It's a really tough one to get through and is written in academic language that was challenging for all of us. So we've written brief points explaining his arguments. Tell people to try and get through it, but don't stress about not understanding some of it.
- **Excerpt from The Problems w/ White Privilege and Allies** - Is an article written by Tanya Golash-Boza, a Professor at UC Merced. She argues against privilege theory and makes the case that racist Ideologies are harmful to all workers.

## Excerpt from King's Speech After 1965 March from Selma to Montgomery

Our whole campaign in Alabama has been centered around the right to vote. In focusing the attention of the nation and the world today on the flagrant denial of the right to vote, we are exposing the very origin, the root cause, of racial segregation in the Southland. Racial segregation as a way of life did not come about as a natural result of hatred between the races immediately after the Civil War. There were no laws segregating the races then. And as the noted historian, C. Vann Woodward, in his book, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, clearly points out, the segregation of the races was really a political stratagem employed by the emerging Bourbon interests in the South to keep the southern masses divided and southern labor the cheapest in the land. You see, it was a simple thing to keep the poor white masses working for near-starvation wages in the years that followed the Civil War. Why, if the poor white plantation or mill worker became dissatisfied with his low wages, the plantation or mill owner would merely threaten to fire him and hire former Negro slaves and pay him even less. Thus, the southern wage level was kept almost unbearably low.

Toward the end of the Reconstruction era, something very significant happened. (*Listen to him*) That is what was known as the Populist Movement. (*Speak, sir*) The leaders of this movement began awakening the poor white masses (*Yes, sir*) and the former Negro slaves to the fact that they were being fleeced by the emerging Bourbon interests. Not only that, but they began uniting the Negro and white masses (*Yeah*) into a voting bloc that threatened to drive the Bourbon interests from the command posts of political power in the South.

To meet this threat, the southern aristocracy began immediately to engineer this development of a segregated society. (*Right*) I want you to follow me through here because this is very important to see the roots of racism and the denial of the right to vote. Through their control of mass media, they revised the doctrine of white supremacy. They saturated the thinking of the poor white masses with it, (*Yes*) thus clouding their minds to the real issue involved in the Populist Movement. They then directed the placement on the books of the South of laws that made it a crime for Negroes and whites to come together as equals at any level. (*Yes, sir*) And that did it. That crippled and eventually destroyed the Populist Movement of the nineteenth century.

If it may be said of the slavery era that the white man took the world and gave the Negro Jesus, then it may be said of the Reconstruction era that the southern aristocracy took the world and gave the poor white man Jim Crow. (*Yes, sir*) He gave him Jim Crow. (*Uh huh*) And when his wrinkled stomach cried out for the food that his empty pockets could not provide, (*Yes, sir*) he ate Jim Crow, a psychological bird that told him that no matter how bad off he was, at least he was a white man, better than the black man. (*Right sir*) And he ate Jim Crow. (*Uh huh*) And when his undernourished children cried out for the necessities that his low wages could not provide, he showed them the Jim Crow signs on the buses and in the stores, on the streets and in the public buildings. (*Yes, sir*) And his children, too, learned to feed upon Jim Crow, (*Speak*) their last outpost of psychological oblivion. (*Yes, sir*)



## Excerpts from "The Road Not Taken"

Lerone Bennett

Ebony Magazine, 1970

### 1. How did racism begin?

#### They chose it!

America or, to be more precise, the men who spoke in the name of America decided that it was going to be a white place defined negatively by the bodies and the blood of the reds and the blacks. And that decision, which was made in the 1660s and elaborated over a two-hundred-year period, foreclosed certain possibilities in America -- perhaps forever -- and set off depth charges that are still echoing and re-echoing in the commonwealth. What makes this all the more mournful is that it didn't have to happen that way. There was another road -- but that road wasn't taken. In the beginning, as we have seen, there was no race problem in America. *The race problem in America was a deliberate invention of men who systematically separated blacks and whites in order to make money.* This was, as Kenneth Stampp so cogently (**clearly**) observed, a deliberate choice among several alternatives. Slavery, he said, "cannot be attributed to some deadly atmospheric miasma (**mist**) or some irresistible force in the South's economic evolution. The use of slaves in southern agriculture was a deliberate choice (among several alternatives) made by men who sought greater returns than they could obtain from their own labor alone, and who found other types of labor more expensive. ...

#### There wasn't always racism!

Back there, before Jim Crow, before the invention of the Negro or the white man or the words and concepts to describe them, the Colonial population consisted largely of a great mass of white and black bondsmen, who occupied roughly the same economic category and were treated with equal contempt by the lords of the plantations and legislatures. Curiously unconcerned about their color, these people worked together and relaxed together. They had essentially the same interests, the same aspirations, aired the same grievances. They conspired together and waged a common struggle against their common enemy -- the big planter apparatus and a social system that legalized terror against black and white bondsmen. No one says and no one believes that there was a Garden of Eden in Colonial America. But the available evidence, slight though it is, suggests that there were widening bonds of solidarity between the first generation of blacks and whites. And the same evidence indicates that it proved very difficult indeed to teach white people to worship their skin...

#### They used terror and the law to create racism

(See "Laws that drew the color line" handout on page 8)

By these words and acts, and in these stages, the masters of Colonial America committed themselves and America to the institution of human slavery. Having made that decision, the masters had to make another decision, for neither the masters nor the servants had been prepared for the new script of roles in the statutes. Nature does not create masters or slaves. Nor does it create blacks or whites. In order to make masters and slaves, in order to make blacks and whites, it is necessary to kill them -- it is necessary to separate them by rivers of blood. But terror alone is not enough. One must condition the mind and the eye and the heart. And the conditioning of one generation must be repeated in the next generation and on and on ad infinitum. The men who ran Colonial America did not shrink from these exigencies (**requirements**). Moving swiftly and ruthlessly, they began in the middle of the seventeenth century to separate blacks and whites and to create a race problem in America.

Blacks and whites had to be taught the meaning of blackness and whiteness. This is not to deny "differences" in color and hair formation, etc. It is only to say that perceptions had to be organized to recognize the differences and that men had to be organized to take advantage of them. The so-called differences were not the cause of racism; on the contrary, men seized on the differences and interpreted them in a certain way in order to create racism. Not only did they exploit "differences," but they also created "differences" and preserved them by force and violence. The differences, in other words, were rationalizations and excuses, not the causes of racism. Once established, however, the ideology of rationalizations assumed a calamitous autonomy (**disastrous life of their own**) and influenced the interests from which they derived.

**2. Is Bennett's assessment of choice that lie in America's past accurate? Do you believe racism was a choice made by the founding fathers of America?**

**Who was responsible for this policy?**

The white founding fathers, the Byrds, the Mathers, and Winthrops, the Jeffersons, the Washingtons, *the heroes of all the Fourth of July*: they divided blacks and whites, they sowed the seeds of division and hate and blood...

**How was all this done?**

It was done by the creation of a total system of domination, a system that penetrated every corner of Colonial life and made use of every Colonial institution. Nothing was left to chance. The assemblies, the courts, the churches, and the press were thrown into the breach. A massive propaganda campaign confused and demoralized the public, and private vigilante groups supplemented the official campaign of hate and terror.

It was all done deliberately and consciously. To mold the minds of whites, to teach them the new ideas, and to let them know who was to be loved and who was to be despised, the planter-merchant aristocracy used every instrument of persuasion and control. In every colony, from New York to South Carolina, the same mechanisms of separation and subordination were elaborated and imposed. From New York to South Carolina, the same penalties were used to keep blacks and whites apart, the same rewards were developed to make poor whites support a system that penalized them, the same statutes were elaborated to crush and diabolify (**show as evil**) blacks.

And it can be said, that the laws were also passed to leave a mark on whites, who were instructed, under pain of punishment, how to act in relation to blacks. Under these laws whites of all classes were penalized for expressing human impulses. It therefore became very expensive for a white person to like black people or to love them. This was not, it should be emphasized, a matter of hints and vague threats. The laws were quite explicit. Symptomatic of this were the laws passed to punish whites who befriended blacks or ran away with them.

Masters were also disciplined. The right of the master to free his slave was curbed and finally eliminated. The master was also forbidden to teach his slaves or to permit them to gather in large assemblies.

The whole system of separation and subordination rested on official state terror. The exigencies (**demands**) of the situation required men to kill some white people to keep them white and to kill many blacks to keep them black. In the North and South, men and women were maimed, tortured, and murdered in a comprehensive campaign of mass conditioning. The severed heads of black and white rebels were impaled on poles along the road as warnings to black people and white people, and opponents of the status quo were starved to death in chains and roasted slowly over open fires. Some rebels were branded; others were castrated. This exemplary cruelty, which was carried out as a deliberate process of mass education, was an inherent part of the new system.



**3. Do you think it's accurate to say that these choices have created our current day divisions between the "races"?**

**They fought back!**

Despite this fact, there was widespread opposition to the new order in the white community, particularly among poor whites, many of whom were still indentured servants or former indentured servants. What is amazing here and worthy of detailed examination is that so many whites openly flouted the new laws and conspired with blacks to evade them. How explain this? The explanation is simple: whites, in general, had not been prepared for the new departure. In the words of one white historian, opinion had not "hardened sufficiently" against black people. In the words of another, many whites "had not learned to hold the attitude toward the Negro" that the new script demanded. In addition to these purely passive considerations, there were positive and active links between blacks and white indentured servants, who continued to run away together and to conspire together. A point of considerable importance here is that slavery did not immediately displace white servitude. For more than one hundred years, the two systems existed side by side, mutually influencing one another. For almost as long a period, the white servant and the black slave continued to interact, threatening the stability of this dual system of servitude.

In order to preserve domestic tranquility, the leading groups in the colonies made it a matter of public policy to destroy the solidarity of the laborers. Laws were passed requiring different groups to keep to themselves, and the seeds of dissension were artfully and systematically sown.

Indians were offered bounties for betraying black runaways; blacks were given minor rewards for fighting Indians; and poor whites were used as fodder in the disciplining of both reds and blacks.

**4. This reading blames the rich for racism, what would it mean if it were true that racism primarily benefitted the rich and was actually hurting whites?**

**The creation of a common white front**

The planters needed the silence and/ or support of the poor whites. To get this support, they manipulated symbols and sanctions in such a way as to persuade poor whites to identify with masters instead of their fellow workers. The designation of poor whites as a buffer class was a particular expression of this general policy. In some colonies, "Deficiency acts" were passed to increase the number of poor whites. These acts usually offered bounties to encourage white immigration and required planters to employ a certain number of poor whites. A 1698 law of South Carolina offered the captains of ships thirteen pounds for each white servant imported and required every owner of six black slaves to buy one white servant. This and similar acts said frankly that poor whites were needed not only for labor but also for protection.

As this language makes clear, poor whites were deliberately used to insure the social system against black rebellion. Poor whites were eventually employed on plantations as a "defense against the Negro menace." This was, to a great extent, a ruse (**trick**) of the planters, who bought the cooperation of poor whites by throwing them crumbs from the table. But many, perhaps most, poor whites had neither the space nor the consciousness to look gift horses in the mouth. And so, many accepted the bait, never noticing, perhaps not even caring, that it was bait and that it covered a sharp steel hook. One of the by-products of this was that most poor whites were persuaded that they had a stake in the system and that it was working to their advantage. Steadily and inescapably, a new rhythm was imposed on them, and by the middle of the eighteenth century a solid white front was developing. A curious and crucial point here is that concerted action by blacks and whites virtually ceased after the creation of the white front. What is even more interesting is that white revolt against the system also disappeared. "Significantly," Winthrop Jordan said, "the only rebellions by white servants in the continental colonies came before the firm entrenchment of slavery."

The impact of all this on blacks and whites was disastrous. The development of the slave system and the systematic separation of blacks and whites created a race problem in America, divided the working force, made it impossible to create a single American community, and laid the foundation for an anti-democratic, hierarchical police state, taut (**tense**) with tensions and fears.

As it turned out, the emerging slave system had an immediate and disastrous impact on poor whites. Unable to compete with the large planters, poor whites retreated to the marginal land in the hills, where they eked out a hand-to-mouth existence. To the untutored mind of the poor whites, it seemed that blacks were the cause of their misery. They therefore began to hate black people with a passion. The poor white was wrong: slavery, not the slave, was his enemy. But it would take time -- and blood -- to see this.

It was against this background that the white identity in America was forged. American whites developed a sense of personality and nationality in response to the presence of blacks and Indians. They were not black, they were not red, they were white. Black and red, as Jordan has pointed out, "rapidly came to serve as two fixed points from which English settlers could triangulate their own position in America: the separate meanings of Indian and Negro helped define the meaning of living in America." What Jordan fails to mention and what is equally supported by the evidence is that the white sense of identity developed in response to the forced degradation of blacks. "When the Negro slave had supplanted (**taken over**) the indentured servant upon the plantations of the colony," Wertenbaker wrote, "a vast change took place in the pride of the middle class. Every white man, no matter how poor he was, no matter how degraded, could now feel a pride in his race. Around him on all sides were those whom he felt to be beneath him, and this alone instilled into him a certain self-respect. Moreover, the immediate control of the Negroes fell almost entirely into the hands of white men of humble means, for it was they, acting as overseers upon the large plantations, that directed their labors in the tobacco fields. This also tended to give them an arrogance that was entirely foreign to their nature in the seventeenth." What this means, if it means anything, is that white character structure underwent a fundamental transformation in the crucible of slavery.

As the seventeenth century ended and the eighteenth century began, white arrogance increased, and a yawning chasm opened up between blacks and whites.

One more decision in the history of black and white had passed, never to be called back, never to be erased, never to be forgotten.

Responding to this situation, blacks began to define themselves in opposition to whites, who were viewed as enemies and oppressors. Nothing shows this more clearly than the remarkable ferment that began with the imposition of slavery and continued for more than a century. In 1672, 1687, 1694, 1709, 1710, 1722, 1730, and 1741, blacks conspired or staged revolts. They also committed suicide, established maroon camps, poisoned masters, and fled to the Indians.

##### **5. Why is Bennett's vision of an early, multi-racial and united lower class a hopeful one?**



## Laws that Drew the Color Line Virginia House of Burgesses, 1640-1705

Source—Virtual Jamestown, <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/vcdh/jamestown/laws1.html#1>

### **A.** July 9, 1640-Punishment for Runaway Servants.

Whereas Hugh Gwyn hath by order from this Board Brought back from Maryland three servants formerly run away from the said Gwyn, the court doth therefore order that the said three servants shall receive the punishment of whipping and to have thirty stripes apiece one called Victor, a dutchman, the other a Scotchman called James Gregory, shall first serve out their times with their master according to their Indentures, and one whole year apiece after the time of their service is Expired...and after that service is Expired to serve the colony for three whole years apiece, and that the third being a negro named John Punch shall serve his said master or his assigns *for the time of his natural Life* here or elsewhere.

1. Where were Victor and James the same as John?
2. How were they different?
3. How were they punished differently?

### **B.** March 1661/2-ACT CXXXVIII. Concerning Indians.

And be it further enacted that what Englishman, trader, or other shall bring in any Indians as servants and shall assign them over to any other, *shall not sell them for slaves* nor for any longer time than English of the like ages should serve by act of assembly.

1. What status are Indians given in this law?

### **C.** December 1662-ACT XII. Negro womens children to serve according to the condition of the mother.

WHEREAS some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free, Be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assembly, that all children borne in this country shall be held bond or free only *according to the condition of the mother*, And that if any Christian shall commit fornication with a negro man or woman, he or she so offending shall pay double the fines imposed by the former act.

1. Why would "doubts have arisen" about the status of a child born to a white man and a black woman?
2. How did this law make slavery a potentially permanent condition?

**D.** September 1667-ACT III. An act declaring that baptism of slaves doth not exempt them from bondage.  
WHEREAS some doubts have risen whether children that are slaves by birth, and by the charity and piety of their owners made partakers of the blessed sacrament of baptism, should by virtue of their baptism be made free; It is enacted and declared by this grand assembly, and the authority thereof, that *the conferring of baptism doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom*; that diverse masters, freed from this doubt, may more carefully endeavor the propagation of Christianity by permitting children, though slaves, or those of greater growth if capable to be admitted to that sacrament.

1. Who first taught African people to be Christians?
2. What rights did this law strip from the newly baptized African Christians?

### **E.** October 1670-ACT IV. No Negroes nor Indians to buy Christian servants.

WHEREAS it hath been questioned whither Indians or negroes manumitted, or otherwise free, could be capable of purchasing Christian servants, It is enacted that *no negro or Indian though baptized and enjoined their own freedom shall be capable of any such purchase of Christians, but yet not debarred from buying any of their own nation.*

1. Does this law mean that some Africans or Indians were rich enough to buy a white servant?
2. Why does the law allow Africans or Indians to buy one "of their own nation" but not a white servant?



**F. 1678-Andrew James Secures his Freedom.**

Whereas Mr. John Griggs did by his deed under his hand & seal dated 23 Dec 1673 agree with Andrew James his Negro that when Griggs death should come said Negro should be a freeman (at his own dispose & not subject to claim by Griggs heirs) & said Griggs being deceased & said Negro by virtue of said deed petitioning for his freedom it is courts opinion that *he is thereby free & therefore ordered that he be & is hereby discharged from all manner & service any ways due to the descendants estate in the future.*

1. What did Andrew James win from the court?
2. Did the justice system work for Andrew James?

**G. June 1680-ACT X. An act for preventing Negroes Insurrections.**

WHEREAS the frequent meeting of considerable numbers of negro slaves under pretence of feasts and burials is judged of dangerous consequence; for prevention whereof for the future, Bee it enacted...that from and after the publication of this law, *it shall not be lawful for any negro or other slave to carry or arm himself with any club, staff, gun, sword or any other weapon* of defense or offence, nor to go or depart from of his masters ground without a certificate from his master...and that this law be once every six months published at the respective county courts and parish churches within this colony.

1. How does this law reveal the fear the slave owners had for the slaves?
2. Why would this law need to be re-publicized every six months?

**H. November 1682-ACT III. An additional act for the better preventing insurrections by Negroes.**

And forasmuch as *great inconveniences may happen to this country by the setting of negroes and mulattoes free*, by their either entertaining negro slaves from their masters service, or receiving stolen goods, or being grown old bringing a charge upon the country; for prevention thereof, Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted, That no negro or mulatto be after the end of this present session of assembly set free by any person or persons whatsoever, unless such person or persons, their heirs, executors or administrators pay for the transportation of such negro or negroes out of the country within six months after such

setting them free, upon penalty of paying of ten pounds sterling to the Church wardens of the parish where such person shall dwell with, which money, or so much thereof as shall be necessary, the said Church wardens are to cause the said negro or mulatto to be transported out of the country, and the remainder of the said money to employ to the use of the poor of the parish.

1. How might free blacks in the area be an "inconvenience" for the Virginia slave owners?
2. Do you think more or less slaves were freed after this law was passed? Explain.

**I. October 1705-CHAP. XXII. An act declaring the Negro, Mulatto, and Indian slaves within this dominion, to be real estate.**

I. FOR the better settling and preservation of estates within this dominion,  
II. Be it enacted, by the governor, council and burgesses of this present general assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That from and after the passing of this act, *all negro, mulatto, and Indian slaves, in all courts and other places within this dominion, shall be held, taken, and adjudged, to be real estate* (and not chattels;) and shall descend unto the heirs and widows of persons departing this life, according to the manner and custom of land of inheritance, held in fee simple.  
IV. Provided also, That all such slaves shall be liable to the payment of debts, and may be taken by execution, for that end, as other chattels or personal estate may be.

1. According to this law, what is the legal difference between owning a slave and owning land?
2. How might this law have contributed to the breaking up of black families?

**J. October 1705-CHAP. XLIX. An act concerning Servants and Slaves.**

XXXIV. And if any slave resist his master, or owner, or other person, by his or her order, correcting such slave, and shall happen to be killed in such correction, it shall not be accounted felony; but the master, owner, and every such other person so giving correction, shall be free and acquit of all punishment and accusation for the same, as if such incident had never happened.

1. What does this law establish?
2. Do you think slaves were killed often by their owners?



# Dear White America

By George Yancy    December 24, 2015 3:40 am

The Stone is a forum for contemporary philosophers and other thinkers on issues both timely and timeless.

*In 2015, I conducted a series of 19 interviews with philosophers and public intellectuals on the issue of race. My aim was to engage, in this very public space, with the often unnamed elephant in the room.*

*These discussions helped me, and I hope many of our readers, to better understand how race continues to function in painful ways within our country. That was one part of a gift that I wanted to give to readers of The Stone, the larger philosophical community, and the world.*

*The interviewees themselves — bell hooks, Cornel West, Judith Butler, Peter Singer, David H. Kim, Molefi Kete Asante among them — came from a variety of racial backgrounds, and their concerns and positions were even more diverse. But on the whole I came to see these interviews as linked by a common thread: They were messages to white America — because they often directly expressed the experience of those who live and have lived as people of color in a white-run world, and that is something no white person could ever truly know firsthand.*

*That is how I want to deliver my own message now.*

•

Dear White America,

I have a weighty request. As you read this letter, I want you to listen with love, a sort of love that demands that you look at parts of yourself that might cause pain and terror, as James Baldwin would say. Did you hear that? You may have missed it. I repeat: *I want you to listen with love*. Well, at least try.

We don't talk much about the urgency of love these days, especially within the public sphere. Much of our discourse these days is about revenge, name calling, hate, and divisiveness. I have yet to hear it from our presidential hopefuls, or our political pundits. I don't mean the Hollywood type of love, but the scary kind, the kind that risks not being reciprocated, the kind that refuses to flee in the face of danger. To make it a bit easier for you, I've decided to model, as best as I can, what I'm asking of you. Let me demonstrate the vulnerability that I wish you to show. As a child of Socrates, James Baldwin and Audre Lorde, let me speak the truth, refuse to err on the side of caution.

This letter is a gift for you. Bear in mind, though, that some gifts can be heavy to bear. You don't have to accept it; there is no obligation. I give it freely, believing that many of you will throw the gift back in my face, saying that I wrongly accuse you, that I am too sensitive, that I'm a race hustler, and that I blame white people (you) for everything.

I have read many of your comments. I have even received some hate mail. In this letter, I ask you to look deep, to look into your souls with silence, to quiet that voice that will speak to you of your white "innocence." So, as you read this letter, take a deep breath. Make a space for my voice in the deepest part of your psyche. Try to listen, to practice being silent. There are times when you must quiet your own voice to hear from or about those who suffer in ways that you do not.



What if I told you that I'm sexist? Well, I am. Yes. I said it and I mean just that. I have watched my male students squirm in their seats when I've asked them to identify and talk about their sexism. There are few men, I suspect, who would say that they are sexists, and even fewer would admit that their sexism actually oppresses women. Certainly not publicly, as I've just done. No taking it back now.

To make things worse, I'm an academic, a philosopher. I'm supposed to be one of the "enlightened" ones. Surely, we are beyond being sexists. Some, who may genuinely care about my career, will say that I'm being too risky, that I am jeopardizing my academic livelihood. Some might even say that as a black male, who has already been stereotyped as a "crotch-grabbing, sexual fiend," that I'm at risk of reinforcing that stereotype. (Let's be real, that racist stereotype has been around for centuries; it is already part of white America's imaginary landscape.)

Yet, I refuse to remain a prisoner of the lies that we men like to tell ourselves — that we are beyond the messiness of sexism and male patriarchy, that we don't oppress women. Let me clarify. This doesn't mean that I intentionally hate women or that I desire to oppress them. It means that despite my best intentions, I perpetuate sexism every day of my life. Please don't take this as a confession for which I'm seeking forgiveness. Confessions can be easy, especially when we know that forgiveness is immediately forthcoming.

As a sexist, I have failed women. I have failed to speak out when I should have. I have failed to engage critically and extensively their pain and suffering in my writing. I have failed to transcend the rigidity of gender roles in my own life. I have failed to challenge those poisonous assumptions that women are "inferior" to men or to speak out loudly in the company of male philosophers who believe that feminist philosophy is just a nonphilosophical fad. I have been complicit with, and have allowed myself to be seduced by, a country that makes billions of dollars from sexually objectifying women, from pornography,

commercials, video games, to Hollywood movies. I am not innocent.

I have been fed a poisonous diet of images that fragment women into mere body parts. I have also been complicit with a dominant male narrative that says that women enjoy being treated like sexual toys. In our collective male imagination, women are “things” to be used for our visual and physical titillation. And even as I know how poisonous and false these sexist assumptions are, I am often ambushed by my own hidden sexism. I continue to see women through the male gaze that belies my best intentions not to sexually objectify them. Our collective male erotic feelings and fantasies are complicit in the degradation of women. And we must be mindful that not all women endure sexual degradation in the same way.

I recognize how my being a sexist has a differential impact on black women and women of color who are not only victims of racism, but also sexism, *my sexism*. For example, black women and women of color not only suffer from sexual objectification, but the ways in which they are objectified is linked to how they are racially depicted, some as “exotic” and others as “hypersexual.” You see, the complicity, the responsibility, the pain that I cause runs deep. And, get this. I refuse to seek shelter; I refuse to live a lie. So, every day of my life I fight against the dominant male narrative, choosing to see women as subjects, not objects. But even as I fight, there are moments of failure. Just because I fight against sexism does not give me clean hands, as it were, at the end of the day; I continue to falter, and I continue to oppress. And even though the ways in which I oppress women is unintentional, this does not free me of being responsible.

If you are white, and you are reading this letter, I ask that you don’t run to seek shelter from your own racism. Don’t hide from your responsibility. Rather, begin, right now, to practice being vulnerable. Being neither a “good” white person nor a liberal white person will get you off the proverbial hook. I consider myself to be a decent human being. Yet, I’m sexist. Take another deep breath. I ask that you try to be “un-sutured.” If that term brings to mind a state



of pain, open flesh, it is meant to do so. After all, it is painful to let go of your “white innocence,” to use this letter as a mirror, one that refuses to show you what you want to see, one that demands that you look at the lies that you tell yourself so that you don’t feel the weight of responsibility for those who live under the yoke of whiteness, your whiteness.

I can see your anger. I can see that this letter is being misunderstood. This letter is not asking you to feel bad about yourself, to wallow in guilt. That is too easy. I’m asking for you to tarry, to linger, with the ways in which you perpetuate a racist society, the ways in which you are racist. I’m now daring you to face a racist history which, paraphrasing Baldwin, has placed you where you are and that has formed your own racism. Again, in the spirit of Baldwin, I am asking you to enter into battle with your white self. I’m asking that you open yourself up; to speak to, to admit to, the racist poison that is inside of you.

Again, take a deep breath. Don’t tell me about how many black friends you have. Don’t tell me that you are married to someone of color. Don’t tell me that you voted for Obama. Don’t tell me that *I’m* the racist. Don’t tell me that you don’t see color. Don’t tell me that I’m blaming whites for everything. To do so is to hide yet again. You may have never used the N-word in your life, you may hate the K.K.K., but that does not mean that you don’t harbor racism and benefit from racism. After all, you are part of a system that allows you to walk into stores where you are not followed, where you get to go for a bank loan and your skin does not count against you, where you don’t need to engage in “the talk” that black people and people of color must tell their children when they are confronted by white police officers.

As you reap comfort from being white, we suffer for being black and people of color. But your comfort is linked to our pain and suffering. Just as my comfort in being male is linked to the suffering of women, which makes me sexist, so, too, you are racist. That is the gift that I want you to accept, to embrace. It is a form of knowledge that is taboo. Imagine the impact that the

acceptance of this gift might have on you and the world.

Take another deep breath. I know that there are those who will write to me in the comment section with boiling anger, sarcasm, disbelief, denial. There are those who will say, “Yancy is just an angry black man.” There are others who will say, “Why isn’t Yancy telling black people to be honest about the violence in their own black neighborhoods?” Or, “How can Yancy say that all white people are racists?” If you are saying these things, then you’ve already failed to listen. I come with a gift. You’re already rejecting the gift that I have to offer. This letter is about *you*. Don’t change the conversation. I assure you that so many black people suffering from poverty and joblessness, which is linked to high levels of crime, are painfully aware of the existential toll that they have had to face because they are black and, as Baldwin adds, “*for no other reason.*”

Some of your white brothers and sisters have made this leap. The legal scholar Stephanie M. Wildman, has written, “I simply believe that no matter how hard I work at not being racist, I still am. Because part of racism is systemic, I benefit from the privilege that I am struggling to see.” And the journalism professor Robert Jensen: “I like to think I have changed, even though I routinely trip over the lingering effects of that internalized racism and the institutional racism around me. Every time I walk into a store at the same time as a black man and the security guard follows him and leaves me alone to shop, I am benefiting from white privilege.”

What I’m asking is that you first accept the racism within yourself, accept all of the truth about what it means for you to be white in a society that was created for you. I’m asking for you to trace the binds that tie you to forms of domination that you would rather not see. When you walk into the world, you can walk with assurance; you have already signed a contract, so to speak, that guarantees you a certain form of social safety.

Baldwin argues for a form of love that is “a state of being, or state of grace



– not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth.” Most of my days, I’m engaged in a personal and societal battle against sexism. So many times, I fail. And so many times, I’m complicit. But I refuse to hide behind that mirror that lies to me about my “non-sexist nobility.” Baldwin says, “Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within.” In my heart, I’m done with the mask of sexism, though I’m tempted every day to wear it. And, there are times when it still gets the better of me.

White America, are you prepared to be at war with yourself, your white identity, your white power, your white privilege? Are you prepared to show me a white self that love has unmasked? I’m asking for love in return for a gift; in fact, I’m hoping that this gift might help you to see yourself in ways that you have not seen before. Of course, the history of white supremacy in America belies this gesture of black gift-giving, this gesture of non-sentimental love. Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered even as he loved.

Perhaps the language of this letter will encourage a split — not a split between black and white, but a fissure in your understanding, a space for loving a Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Aiyana Jones, Sandra Bland, Laquan McDonald and others. I’m suggesting a form of love that enables you to see the role that you play (even despite your anti-racist actions) in a *system* that continues to value black lives on the cheap.

Take one more deep breath. I have another gift.

If you have young children, before you fall off to sleep tonight, I want you to hold your child. Touch your child’s face. Smell your child’s hair. Count the fingers on your child’s hand. See the miracle that is your child. And then, with as much vision as you can muster, I want you to imagine that your child is black.

In peace,

George Yancy

*George Yancy is a professor of philosophy at Emory University. He has written, edited and co-edited numerous books, including “Black Bodies, White Gazes,” “Look, a White!” and “Pursuing Trayvon Martin,” co-edited with Janine Jones.*

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## Adolf Reed: Identity Politics is Neoliberalism[liberal capitalism]

Political scientist and race theorist Adolph Reed has long maintained that identity politics is a form of neoliberalism. In a June article, [he explains](#):

[Identity] politics is not an alternative to class politics; it is a class politics, the politics of the left-wing of neoliberalism. It is the expression and active agency of a political order and moral economy in which capitalist market forces are treated as unassailable nature.

An integral element of that moral economy is displacement of the critique of the invidious outcomes produced by capitalist class power onto equally naturalized categories of ascriptive identity that sort us into groups supposedly defined by what we essentially are rather than what we do. As I have argued, following Walter Michaels and others, within that moral economy a society in which 1% of the population controlled 90% of the resources could be just, provided that roughly 12% of the 1% were black, 12% were Latino, 50% were women, and whatever the appropriate proportions were LGBT people.

It would be tough to imagine a normative ideal that expresses more unambiguously the social position of people who consider themselves candidates for inclusion in, or at least significant staff positions in service to, the ruling class.

Reed has been arguing this point for years. In his 2009 essay "[The Limits of Anti-Racism](#)," Reed condemns identity politics for, despite its putative good intentions, disguising objectively right-wing, neoliberal ideology with superficially "progressive" rhetorical window dressing. Reed's criticisms of "antiracism" can be taken to be criticisms of identity politics more generally (emphasis mine).

Antiracism is a favorite concept on the American left these days. Of course, all good sorts want to be against racism, but what does the word mean exactly?

**The contemporary discourse of "antiracism" [and identity politics overall] is focused much more on taxonomy than politics. It emphasizes the name by which we should call some strains of inequality—whether they should be broadly recognized as evidence of "racism"—over specifying the mechanisms that produce them or even the steps that can be taken to combat them. And, no, neither "overcoming racism" nor "rejecting whiteness" qualifies as such a step any more than does waiting for the "revolution" or urging God's heavenly intervention.** If organizing a rally against racism seems at present to be a more substantive political act than attending a prayer vigil for world peace, that's only because contemporary antiracist activists understand themselves to be employing the same tactics and pursuing the same ends as their predecessors in the period of high insurgency in the struggle against racial segregation.

This view, however, is mistaken. **The postwar activism that reached its crescendo in the South as the "civil rights movement" wasn't a movement against a generic**



**“racism;” it was specifically and explicitly directed toward full citizenship rights for black Americans and against the system of racial segregation that defined a specific regime of explicitly racial subordination in the South. The 1940s March on Washington Movement was also directed against specific targets, like employment discrimination in defense production. Black Power era and post-Black Power era struggles similarly focused on combating specific inequalities and pursuing specific goals like the effective exercise of voting rights and specific programs of redistribution.**

Whether or not one considers those goals correct or appropriate, **they were clear and strategic in a way that “antiracism” [identity politics] simply is not.** Sure, those earlier struggles relied on a discourse of racial justice, but their targets were concrete and strategic. It is only in a period of political demobilization that the historical specificities of those struggles have become smoothed out of sight in a romantic idealism that homogenizes them into timeless abstractions like “the black liberation movement”—an entity that, like Brigadoon, sporadically appears and returns impelled by its own logic.

**Ironically, as the basis for a politics, antiracism [identity politics] seems to reflect, several generations downstream, the victory of the postwar psychologists in depoliticizing the critique of racial injustice by shifting its focus from the social structures that generate and reproduce racial inequality to an ultimately individual, and ahistorical, domain of “prejudice” or “intolerance.” (No doubt this shift was partly aided by political imperatives associated with the Cold War and domestic anticommunism.)**

...

**I’ve been struck by the level of visceral and vitriolic anti-Marxism I’ve seen from this strain of defenders of antiracism as a politics.** It’s not clear to me what drives it because it takes the form of snide dismissals than direct arguments. Moreover, the dismissals typically include empty acknowledgment that “of course we should oppose capitalism,” whatever that might mean. In any event, the tenor of this anti-Marxism is reminiscent of those right-wing discourses, many of which masqueraded as liberal, in which only invoking the word “Marxism” was sufficient to dismiss an opposing argument or position.

...

**This sort of thing only deepens my suspicions about antiracism’s [identity politics] status within the comfort zone of neoliberalism’s discourses of “reform.” More to the point, I suspect as well that this vitriol toward radicalism is rooted partly in the conviction that a left politics based on class analysis and one focused on racial injustice are Manichean alternatives.**



This should not by any means be interpreted as a blanket condemnation of anti-racism, feminism, or other movements for social equality. Rather, it should be construed as a condemnation of a politics that is centered on social constructs like race or gender, rather than on material conditions.

White supremacy, patriarchy, cisheteronormativity, ableism, and more should specifically be seen as what they are: the social relations that are created by a white supremacist, patriarchal, cisheteronormative, ableist system of production—that is to say created by capitalism.

Race and gender must be analyzed in a true intersectional manner, as inextricably linked to the material (i.e., economic) conditions of which they are constituted.

As Reed writes in his 2013 article "[Marx, Race, and Neoliberalism](#),"

A Marxist perspective can be most helpful for understanding race and racism insofar as it perceives capitalism dialectically, as a social totality that includes modes of production, relations of production, and the pragmatically evolving ensemble of institutions and ideologies that lubricate and propel its reproduction. From this perspective, Marxism's most important contribution to making sense of race and racism in the United States may be demystification. **A historical materialist perspective should stress that "race"—which includes "racism," as one is unthinkable without the other—is a historically specific ideology that emerged, took shape, and has evolved as a constitutive element within a definite set of social relations anchored to a particular system of production.**

In other words, we need anti-racist marxism and feminist marxism (and anti-racist feminist marxism), not identity politics

## Why Reed's argument is important:

While we have disagreements with Adolph Reed, his work is valuable in showing that we're not the only ones with a critique of identity politics.

Reed agrees with us that racism is fundamentally created by capitalism. His main point here is that identity politics cannot effectively confront (much less smash) racism, despite its superficial calls to "anti-racism." The reason: ID politics' goal is a "fairer" sorting of the spoils of capitalism to favor groups that historically have been short-changed by the profit system. In other words: The goal of identity politics, once you strip away its left-sounding veneer, is for women and Black and Latin and queer people to get their fair share of capitalist profits--to be able to exploit other workers to the same proportionate degree as the predominantly white male bosses do today. When Reed says the ID politics movement is focused on "taxonomy over politics," he's saying it is more interested in categorizing (and thereby dividing) people (workers) than in analyzing the (capitalist) mechanisms that create (require) racism and inequality. (Our language in parentheses.)

Some of the confusion with Reed stems from his academic semantics. For example:

When Reed equates "anti-racism" with feminism and other types of identity politics, he is referencing the contemporary use of "anti-racism" in a passive, abstract, non-class context. When we use the term "anti-racism," we are talking about a multiracial, strategic attack on the capitalist rulers and their system.

What Reed calls "neoliberalism," we would call "liberal capitalism." We're both saying that the forces pushing identity politics have a stake in the capitalist system and its anti-dialectical, anti-materialist outlook. Bill Clinton is a neoliberal; so is Barack Obama; so is Hillary Clinton. In the U.S. today, neoliberalism equates with a more muscular, imperialist foreign policy and a sharpened competition with China and Russia; economic policies that favor finance capital, the dominant group within U.S. capitalism; and social policies that attack the working class in the guise of pro-worker reforms, i.e. "welfare reform," "criminal justice reform," "education reform," "immigration reform," and so on.

Reed is on the money when he talks about the identity movement's intense anti-communism. But he is confused when he talks about "feminist Marxism," a contradiction in terms--here is a classic case of an academic getting hemmed in by academic language. Feminism is reactionary and anti-communist because it divides men and women workers. "Anti-racist Marxism," on the other hand, is both logical and essential because it unites workers in attacking the basis of capitalism--namely, racist divisions and super-exploitation.

Finally, we might note that Reed is a Marxist but not a Marxist-Leninist--that is, he fails to address the necessity of a communist party to lead the international working class to seize state power. But that's a discussion for another time.



## Excerpt from Tanya Golash-Boza's *The Problems with White Allies and White Privilege*

### Racist Ideologies Are Harmful to All

The United States is a deeply racist society.

Racism is an ideology and a set of practices. Racist ideologies justify the racist practices that are predominant in our society. For example, the racist ideology that black men are dangerous creates a situation where most people in the United States are not up in arms about mass incarceration of black men.

This racist ideology that black men are violent and are to be feared is linked to the unfortunate fate of [Jonathan Ferrell](#) – 24 year old former football player. Jonathan Ferrell, seeking assistance after crashing his car, knocked on the door of a nearby house. The homeowner called the police when she realised a black man was at her door. When the police arrived, Ferrell, who was unarmed, ran towards them. Police officer Randall Kerrick shot him several times and Ferrell died on the scene.

It is true that a white woman in the same situation as Jonathan Ferrell would almost certainly not have been shot at by the police. Is that white privilege? Perhaps. But, another way to look at it is it not a privilege to not fear police. That is how things should be. No one should be shot when seeking help from the police. That is not something that should be considered a privilege.

The racist ideology that black men are disposed to violence that is behind the death of far too many black men has deep historical roots. Ideas of black male propensities to violence were used to justify Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and slavery. Today, these ideologies justify mass incarceration. These deeply rooted ideologies are not going to disappear because I declare myself an ally or come to terms with my white privilege. It is going to take a lot more than that.

### It Is Not a Privilege to Live in a Racist Society

Racism is also a set of practices that ensures white dominance. For example, in Washington, DC, black men are [eight](#) times more likely than white men to be arrested for marijuana offences, even though blacks and whites use marijuana at similar rates.

High rates of black male incarceration are the current manifestation of a racist system of control that goes back to Jim Crow and slavery, as Michelle Alexander eloquently argues in her book [The New Jim Crow](#). Alexander further points out that the War on Drugs in the United States is largely responsible for the explosion in incarceration rates since 1980. Whereas 41,000 people were behind bars for a drug offence in 1980, the figure in 2010 was about half a million. In 2005, 80 percent of drug arrests were for drug possession.

It is outrageous that millions of people are in prison because of marijuana offences. Many Americans, nevertheless, accept mass incarceration because of deeply embedded racist ideologies. Mass incarceration of minor drug offenders, however, is devastating to our society.

Mass incarceration involves billions of dollars of expenditures that are not going to our schools and our communities. You don't have to be a white ally to see that.

Racial divisions between blacks, whites, Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans are harmful to all of these groups. We all need to develop a better understanding of how racism works and how it harms us all. If you are white, you don't have to worry about how you can be a good ally or how to come to terms with your white privilege. Instead, you can look around you and see how racism is a scourge on our society. And, you can fight against racism by working to change the racist ideologies and racist practices that are omnipresent in our society.

You can fight against mass incarceration, mass [deportation](#), drone warfare, school closings, and predatory lenders. You can fight against the fear and loathing that render these problems so widespread. And, you can fight this fight because winning it will create a better society for all.



## Excerpt from King's Speech After 1965 March from Selma to Montgomery

Our whole campaign in Alabama has been centered around the right to vote. In focusing the attention of the nation and the world today on the flagrant denial of the right to vote, we are exposing the very origin, the root cause, of racial segregation in the Southland. Racial segregation as a way of life did not come about as a natural result of hatred between the races immediately after the Civil War. There were no laws segregating the races then. And as the noted historian, C. Vann Woodward, in his book, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, clearly points out, the segregation of the races was really a political stratagem employed by the emerging Bourbon interests in the South to keep the southern masses divided and southern labor the cheapest in the land. You see, it was a simple thing to keep the poor white masses working for near-starvation wages in the years that followed the Civil War. Why, if the poor white plantation or mill worker became dissatisfied with his low wages, the plantation or mill owner would merely threaten to fire him and hire former Negro slaves and pay him even less. Thus, the southern wage level was kept almost unbearably low.

Toward the end of the Reconstruction era, something very significant happened. (*Listen to him*) That is what was known as the Populist Movement. (*Speak, sir*) The leaders of this movement began awakening the poor white masses (*Yes, sir*) and the former Negro slaves to the fact that they were being fleeced by the emerging Bourbon interests. Not only that, but they began uniting the Negro and white masses (*Yeah*) into a voting bloc that threatened to drive the Bourbon interests from the command posts of political power in the South.

To meet this threat, the southern aristocracy began immediately to engineer this development of a segregated society. (*Right*) I want you to follow me through here because this is very important to see the roots of racism and the denial of the right to vote. Through their control of mass media, they revised the doctrine of white supremacy. They saturated the thinking of the poor white masses with it, (*Yes*) thus clouding their minds to the real issue involved in the Populist Movement. They then directed the placement on the books of the South of laws that made it a crime for Negroes and whites to come together as equals at any level. (*Yes, sir*) And that did it. That crippled and eventually destroyed the Populist Movement of the nineteenth century.

If it may be said of the slavery era that the white man took the world and gave the Negro Jesus, then it may be said of the Reconstruction era that the southern aristocracy took the world and gave the poor white man Jim Crow. (*Yes, sir*) He gave him Jim Crow. (*Uh huh*) And when his wrinkled stomach cried out for the food that his empty pockets could not provide, (*Yes, sir*) he ate Jim Crow, a psychological bird that told him that no matter how bad off he was, at least he was a white man, better than the black man. (*Right sir*) And he ate Jim Crow. (*Uh huh*) And when his undernourished children cried out for the necessities that his low wages could not provide, he showed them the Jim Crow signs on the buses and in the stores, on the streets and in the public buildings. (*Yes, sir*) And his children, too, learned to feed upon Jim Crow, (*Speak*) their last outpost of psychological oblivion. (*Yes, sir*)

## Workshop on Identity Politics

### INTRO

#### ACTIVITY: STAND -

- We're going to do a warm up that will help burn off some of lunch. We're going to ask you to stand when you identify with the statement we read. For example, "Stand, if you live in New York".
- Be sure to people time to see whose standing. (Make sure someone counts the number of unanimous stands)

- 1) Have you ever been in love?
- 2) Have you ever not been able to buy anything you wanted?
- 3) Have you ever not been able to afford something you needed?
- 4) Have you ever been in a car accident?
- 5) Have you or anyone in your family have had to worry about medical bills?
- 6) Have you been in debt?
- 7) Do you own a home?
- 8) Have you ever had a job you hated?
- 9) We're you born in this country?
- 10) Your parents?
- 11) Your grandparents?
- 12) Do you have any strong friendships?
- 13) Have you ever voted?
- 14) Have you disagreed with an elected official?
- 15) Have you or anyone you know been a victim of a crime?
- 16) Have you ever been arrested by the police?
- 17) Have you been afraid of the police before?

The point of this exercise is...

- People act like we have so many differences especially based on race and gender, but we have a ton in common.
- A lot of the political conversations around racism have been about identity, white privilege and white allies.
- Faf will talk about his experiences in Cleveland.



## Frame the conversation and articles.

- We're going to be talking about identity politics.
- Explain identity politics
  - Identity politics are political argument that focus upon the interest and perspectives of groups with which people identify. IE. Nationalism, Patriotism, Politics based in Gender identity...
- Introduce three articles

### **\*Discussing the origins of the term white privilege.**

First article suggests white privilege being the primary lens people look through these days. It says all white people benefit from racism. All men benefit from sexism. Personal work is primary - i.e. Mayday space conversation with white dude feeling he needs to admit his own privilege.

Then we will read two things to challenge that article - to challenge the idea of racism on a personal level as being primary. The last one offers a solution to the question about identity politics.

- When introducing, state that these are meant to be used to spark a discussion. We're going to be talking about how to fight back against racism. Here are a few arguments.
- **Dear White America** - A recent article by George Yancy that was published in the New York Times this past December. Yancy is writing a letter aimed at white Americans, telling them that they are racist. He makes the point that white people must admit their own inherent racism, and that is how we can move forward to combat racism as a country. Yancy's outlook on racism in America is a popular one, and we've all probably heard some version of it.
- **Identity Politics is Neoliberalism** - is a recent article by University of Pennsylvania professor, Adolf Reed. This can be read as a counter to the approach taken in Dear White America. It's a really tough one to get through and is written in academic language that was challenging for all of us. So we've written brief points explaining his arguments. Tell people to try and get through it, but don't stress about not understanding some of it.
- **Excerpt from The Problems w/ White Privilege and Allies** - Is an article written by Tanya Golash-Boza, a Professor at UC Merced. She argues against privilege theory and makes the case that racist Ideologies are harmful to all workers.

### **Focusing Question**

- Who benefits from the separation of races?

**Give participants time to re-read the articles and explanations. Maybe 20 mins to skim.**

Break into small groups of no larger than 10. Really important that this happens quickly.

Small Group Discussion

Questions to consider...

- General comments
- Do you think all men are responsible for creating sexism?
- Do you think all white people are responsible for creating racism?
- Can sorting people into identity groups lead a society we want?
- What elements of a “white privilege” analysis are understandably attractive to workers?
- Why is “white privilege” analysis reactionary and anti-communist?
- Stephanie Wildman says...p16. If this is true, how do we fight racism?
- What is our most effective counter-argument to an identity politics position?
- Why does racism exist?
- What is the primary goal of fighting racism?

**Facilitators should wrap up by saying why we must smash capitalism to destroy racism.**

### **Closing statements with large group**

We have been taught racism and sexism. It's tough to break out of it.

Why white privilege is BS. Focus on racism instead and fighting that.

\*Bring MLK speech on Selma with us.