

TOWARDS ANTI-RACIST POLITICS AND PRACTICE: A RACIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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This narrative explores the anti-racist political development of a young activist in Orange County, California, in the early 1990s. Through leftist social justice work and efforts to protest in favor of an Ethnic Studies program, the author comes to a higher level of consciousness as a white person in a white supremacist society, and as an anti-racist working for democracy and justice.

“Don’t You Know What Color You Are?”

I was walking a picket line in front of the administration office at the college I attended, and I could feel the anxiety and tension growing. I knew that it would be unpopular to protest for Chicano Studies at Fullerton College in Orange County, California, but I didn’t know just what to expect. I had been to countless protests and actions over the years. Politicized at age 15, I went to protests against McDonald’s and factory farming, Shell Oil and apartheid, the Gulf War and militarism. But I knew this was different, though I wasn’t entirely sure why. That picket line, that experience of struggling for Ethnic Studies, of struggling for racial justice in a white supremacist society, was a catalyst that changed my life.

The protest for Chicano Studies was part of a series of actions initiated by a student coalition that had formed a semester earlier in 1993. When the coalition first formed, the main priority was fighting back against student fee increases. The State of California was cutting the budget for higher education while the prison budget swelled, and the costs that the cuts were no longer covering were being transferred to students as fee increases. The coalition was largely made up of Chicano/a nationalists from Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA, or *Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán*) along with the Black Student Union and white anarchists from the United Anarchist Front (UAF) – a part of the national Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation. Our

strategy was to link the fee hikes and the cuts in education to the growing prison budget. California was ranked number one in prison spending, and close to last in education spending. We did outreach using flyers to initiate conversations and led a couple of small actions to activate our members, generate publicity, and build energy on campus for a mass rally. We mobilized several hundred students to come to the rally (the largest rally the commuter school had seen in years), and our speakers represented a broad range of student organizations based in many different campus communities. The rally demonstrated—in who spoke and what we spoke about—the multiracial alliances we had built and the larger vision of a democratic social justice campus from which we operated. In fact, the rally was so successful it prompted retaliation from the administration. The majority of speakers at the rally were people of color, which reflected who was in the coalition. I was one of two white people who spoke at the rally and actively participated in the coalition. A week later, the other white student and I were called into the office of the Dean of Students.

I walked into the office, completely unaware of the reason for which I was summoned. When I sat down, a security guard was sitting on each side of me. A secretary took verbatim notes of the meeting, making me feel as if I were on trial. The Dean of Students informed me that I had been spotted vandalizing the school late at night with another white student from the coalition. The other

student was part of MEChA, but didn't come to coalition meetings and I had never met her before. A custodian identified us from pictures taken during the rally. We had supposedly been seen wheat-pasting huge posters of Governor Pete Wilson wearing Mickey Mouse ears. While I liked the poster, I would have chosen something more clearly related to our campaign. While we both, individually denied participation in this wheat-pasting, the Dean told me that we would be fined and expelled, our class units would be made non-transferable, and we would be arrested at some point during the week while in class. I couldn't believe it. I left that meeting full of fear. I was scared and felt alone. David Rojas, the lead organizer in the coalition and my mentor found me and adamantly declared that we were going to fight this. "They are trying to divide us," he said. He went on to explain that the administration targeted us for two reasons. First, they assumed that it was the two white people who were leading the coalition, and second, they were afraid of multiracial organizing. It took me a while to understand why the administration would think that it was the white people in the lead.

We put flyers out everywhere. Each time we explained what the administration was doing, we felt more confident, more powerful. We were defining the debate and going on the offensive. We started an underground newspaper called *The Molotov Cocktail* ("serving one up for authority everywhere" was our tagline). The school newspaper, *The Hornet*, loved us and every week printed articles quoting from *The Molotov Cocktail*, and they ran guest editorials and letters to the editor written by members of the coalition and the UAF. Our demand to stop all fee hikes was widely supported by the student body. The Dean of Students eventually apologized for his accusations, and nothing happened to me or the other student. This was not the last time the administration would try to divide our multiracial alliance, but for now we were stronger and more united than ever.¹ The semester was coming to an end. We had done some great work.

Around this time ads began appearing regularly in the school newspapers about how

fee hikes were the result of "illegal aliens" invading California. Concurrently, student actions on other campuses were taking place to create, defend, or expand Ethnic Studies programs. At UCLA, students had occupied an administration building and then launched a successful hunger strike. David, a working class anti-authoritarian Chicano Nationalist, suggested that members of MEChA and the UAF form a summer study group and read Howard Zinn's (1980) *A People's History of the United States*. Both groups agreed to do it.

We assigned a chapter between each meeting and planned to meet weekly. Our first session was half MEChA, half UAF. We didn't have a plan beyond an open discussion of what we thought of each chapter. We were scattered. Some participants jumped into explaining what they thought about a section, while many others had not read it and had no idea what the conversation was based on. We didn't have a facilitator or an agenda: not because we didn't want them, but because we didn't have a plan. Our interest in a study group exceeded our experience and skill level to run one. Twenty-five people came out for the second session and again, we had no plan beyond open discussion. People there were hungry to learn, but no one stepped into the role of teaching or leading a process by which people could genuinely share what they knew. Without focus, energy dissipated, and the most people never came back. A few of us in the UAF continued reading it and discussed it at the local coffee shop or over the phone.

While the study group didn't last long, reading Zinn was a powerful experience for those of us who finished it. Reading about the histories of race, class, and gender oppression and resistance in the United States was transformative. One of David's goals with the study group was to build energy in the coalition to fight for Ethnic Studies and Women Studies generally, and Chicano Studies in particular, and this goal was met. At that point I had already taken the only Black Studies class and Women Studies class, and was enrolled in Chicano Studies. Many of us in and around the UAF were taking these classes together, and they had a profound impact on us. As the

coalition talked about this change in our campaign, it didn't occur to me that shifting from fee hikes to Chicano Studies was also going to shift how people reacted to us: white people in particular. We were going from one important demand to another, and I thought people would continue supporting us. In retrospect, I was really naïve about the significance of this decision; but I quickly learned.

On September 16, 1993, a rally had been called in support of Chicano Studies. Busloads of high school students and college students from other campuses were going to come to Fullerton College for a march. David Rojas and I created a special issue of *The Molotov Cocktail* in which we wrote:

Last semester, much of our focus was directed on the rights of education for all. While we will continue with this struggle, it is also equally important that we fight for a quality education. We, as students, must remember that this is OUR education and that we must have a role in shaping the education process. Fullerton College does not meet up to the state and federal affirmative action guidelines and this affects us and our education. If there are classes that are not available to us, then we must demand them. We must reclaim our history! We must reclaim our education!

We also included statistics: of the previous 56 people hired by the university only 6 were people of color. The college population was 57% Anglo, 22% Chicano/a, 12% Asian Pacific Islander, 3% African American, and 1% American Indian. There was not one full-time African American professor on the entire campus.

The rally happened, hundreds of students showed up, and the energy was high. There were Mexican flags and speeches in Spanish. The students began to march into the streets of Orange County. It was both energetic and peaceful. Police in full riot gear were everywhere. The police surrounded the students and ordered them to end the march. Shortly thereafter, the police attacked the students with pepper spray and batons. High school and college students, most of whom were Latina/o, were hit and sprayed as they ran back to the campus.

I missed the march. I had left the rally early to go to work. It was a critical mistake on my part to have left, regardless of work. I should have been there. But at the time, I hadn't realized the significance of this march. I thought of it as just one of many marches, and I'd been to dozens. But the reality is this: when Latino/a students take to the streets of Orange County or anywhere in this country it is different from when mostly white activists do it. The threat of communities of color mobilized is enormous and it scares the police to their bones. I had read about white supremacy and called myself an anti-racist, but translating that into a way of understanding and acting in the world was a much longer process.

The reaction on campus to the student march for Chicano Studies was overwhelmingly negative. The school paper denounced the rally and march as being "anti-white," "angry," "provoking violence," and "counter-productive." The administration, the school paper, and the overwhelming majority of white students blamed the student coalition for the violence. Some called for MEChA's funding to be cut, arguing that it was a "hate group." Others blamed *The Molotov Cocktail*, saying that our encouragement to take the streets had urged young students to use violence. Very few outside of the coalition denounced the police violence.

For weeks there was constant debate on campus about Ethnic Studies. "We're not protesting to have white studies," we were told over and over again. "Chicano Studies is exclusive and narrow," we were informed. As a white student taking Chicano Studies, I tried to talk with other white students about it. I argued that Chicano Studies, like Western Civilization class, was something for all of us to take. A lot of white students responded with things like, "The books I read are written by white people, because that's who writes and that's not my fault." I would argue back that this is how white supremacy operates: whiteness is universalized as the norm. It does not require a conscious decision to have thoughts that are racist, as it is racism that shapes the structure of our thought: "It is not my fault that black people do not write books."

"It is not my fault that most of what is important was done by Europeans and European Americans." "I believe that all people are created equal, but it is not my fault that white people just do more." "We are not studying white people, we are studying the presidents of the United States, and it is not my fault that they all happen to be white." White supremacy is the tide that directs the flow of our thoughts. It does not require us to go out of our way to be racist. It just requires that we go with the flow of dominant ideology. I found it hard to even explain myself. I heard myself saying things that I knew weren't resonating with other white people, but I didn't know how else to say them and I didn't want to remain silent.

David and others in MEChA encouraged me to see my job in the coalition as trying to talk with white students, and in the process build support for our work amongst white people. They gave me support to keep trying and not give up. I wrote articles for both *The Molotov Cocktail* and *The Hornet*, and began identifying myself as white in my writing and when I spoke. I did this because white students who opposed the development of Chicano Studies wanted to say that this was just a bunch of "crazy Mexicans," members of the "hate group" MEChA. Furthermore, they often spoke as though they were raceless, "normal" students. They spoke with an air of authority, as though they represented normal society. I was claiming white identity to counteract those arguments, with the goal of creating a different debate. I wanted to put forward a different voice amongst white people, to break down the idea that this was fight between brown people and white people, and to create a visible alternative position other white people could take.

The coalition called for a picket at the administration building to pressure the president to hire more professors of color and expand Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies. We put out another issue of *The Molotov Cocktail* with articles about the history of white supremacy. I had asked a friend of mine from another school who had taught me a lot about the black liberation movement if he could write something about Ethnic Studies as a black student. I also asked white students who

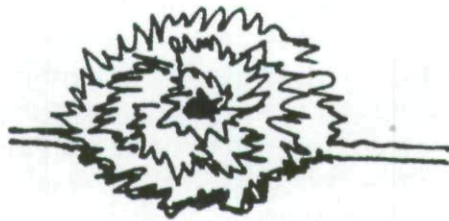
worked alongside the UAF to write articles about why they support Chicano studies. We handed out the new issue and promoted the next demonstration for Ethnic Studies.

By the time I was in the picket line in front of the administration building, I could feel the anxiety and the tension growing. I was the only white person in the picket line. A white friend of mine who had been in Black Studies with me was coming, but when he saw the picket line and all of the angry white students, he left because he was afraid. I was scared too. By this point, our student coalition, which had once enjoyed popular support, was being denounced from all sides. The school paper slammed us for having abandoned "student demands" (fee hikes) and taking on "exclusive and divisive self-interest demands" (Chicano Studies). We had little visible support for our protest. Our picket line was about 30 people who were, aside from myself, all Latina/o. We were quickly surrounded by what seemed like hundreds of white students. They were yelling things at us like "Go home" and "We're not fighting for white studies." It felt like everything was in slow motion. I could hear white students screaming at me: "What are you doing with them?" "Don't you know what color you are?" "You fucking traitor!" It was surreal. I was really scared, but I knew strongly that I was on the right side of this picket line.

The picket line has weighed heavy on my mind over the years. It made me realize that being white is significant. It also made me question what being white meant. Why were those students yelling, "Don't you know what color you are?" I began to realize that white supremacy is all about creating and maintaining relationships of power based on skin color. I had read about it, but this was one of my first conscious experiences of it. White privilege is granted to white people on the condition that they maintain loyalty to this system. It doesn't require being an active racist per se, but just going with the flow. For standing in solidarity with Latina/o students, I was being called out as a traitor—I was threatened with physical violence from those white students. Now I wonder about the other people who were in that picket line. I was being denounced for organizing with Latina/o

students, but I have no way of understanding what it was like for them. For me, it was experiencing the reality of racism in my face.

David broke down the situation for me: "This is what happens to us all of the time. You're being yelled at for standing with us. We get this and worse, day in and day out, for being us." He didn't say it explicitly but I was beginning to understand the subtext of our conversation: I could leave this struggle any time I wanted to. They couldn't stop being Latino/a. But David wasn't trying to motivate me by guilt. He was clear that I needed to be in this struggle for my own liberation, and he pushed me to figure out what that meant.



Part Two: Movement Building and Challenging White Supremacy

"We shut down the WTO!" I could hardly believe it when the news was spread via messengers and mobile phones. Our blockades, our creative resistance, and our commitment to the earth and to justice had stopped the World Trade Organization (WTO). November 30th, 1999, was also a day that changed my life. I went to Seattle and joined my peers from the Food Not Bombs organization, most of whom were from San Francisco. After years of using consensus decision making, practicing civil disobedience, and utilizing direct action, it was amazing to see it come together on such a massive scale in Seattle.

Shortly thereafter, I read the essay "Where was the color in Seattle: Looking for reasons why the great battle was so white" (Martinez, 2000) which struck a chord with me. For years I had studied how race, class, and gender have played out in social movements throughout history. Racism and sexism have narrowed and undermined the labor movement. The white suffragettes of the late 1800's utilized racism to secure the vote

for white women. The sexism of the anti-war student movement catalyzed the feminist movement. The history of social movements is full of racism and other forms of oppression that undermined social change. When I read this history, I thought about organizing today and how to actively challenge these barriers and obstacles to movement building. When Martinez (2000) called out the ways that racism operated in Seattle, it was a profound awakening and opening. Her essay helped put Seattle and the global justice movement into a bigger picture and showed how white supremacy and white privilege create divisions within the movement today.

After Seattle, I spent a lot of time trying to figure out where to go next. I had graduated from San Francisco State University the previous May, and was in the process of transitioning out of my role as organizer at Food Not Bombs. For the previous two years, I'd been focusing more on developing as a writer. My overall goal with writing and organizing was to bridge race, class, and gender analysis of power with anarchist theory and practice. I knew that I wanted to focus on political education to create space for activists to study history and theory, and to learn organizing skills. In the middle of trying to make sense of what direction to move in, I had a dream.

It was a dream about power and the effects of internalized superiority on my mind. The effect that white privilege has on white people is a developed sense of internalized superiority over people of color. It need not be conscious, nor spoken of directly. Rather, white supremacy develops a framework of thought. It is related to the way that male privilege generates in men a sense of male superiority over women. In this case, guys can argue that men and women are equal, but still define reality through the perspective of male privilege (i.e., it's not my fault that most of the good books out there are written by men and that men do the most radical activism).

In my dream, I was at a party with some of my friends. I was the only white, middle class, and (mostly) heterosexual male at the party. There were women of color, transgender people, queer folks, older people, working class people, and me. In the dream, there were two

lines of thought going through my head. The first was straight up white supremacy, patriarchy, and heterosexism telling me that my friends were not good enough as people. Every imaginable hateful word flooded my mind. This calm, yet stern voice just repeated, "You know that these people are inferior you just can't admit it".

The other line of thought in this dream was that egalitarian relationships of power and respect were both necessary and right, and that these were my friends, people whom I care about, people who teach me a lot and who I'm lucky to have in my life. When I thought about this, about mutual respect and basic equality, my eyes dulled and my jaw dropped, and in my dream I turned into what looked like a zombie. When my thoughts returned to the "inherent deficiencies" of my friends, my eyes became clear; I heard the voice repeatedly saying, "Now you are facing the truth." I woke up drenched in sweat, trying to catch my breath.

I spent several days trying to make sense of that nightmare. I kept thinking about consciousness, and about how race, class, and gender oppression create both internalized inferiority and internalized superiority. It was hitting home that it's not just politically opposing racism, but that you have to work to undermine the impact racism has on your way of seeing and being in the world. White privilege functions in this way to both conceal and perpetuate racism: "It is not that you are worse than me, it's just that I'm better than you." My dream was about facing the truth of how domination distorts and disfigures one's humanity in a complex web of relationship based on oppression, privilege, and power. It led me to start writing about and thinking much more about the process of decolonization for those who have been socialized to be in positions of privilege.

For years I've looked to the writings of women of color feminists like Barbara Smith, bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, Patricia Hill Collins, Elizabeth "Betita" Martinez, M. Annette Jaimes, Karin Aguilar-San Juan, Chinosole, Minoo Moallem, Audre Lorde, Cherríe Moraga, and Angela Davis for wisdom, inspiration, and guidance. I began

struggling analytically to use the concepts, tools, insights, analysis, and perspectives of women of color feminism to undermine internalized white superiority, unmask white privilege, and recognize possible paths for people with systemic privilege to work toward a healing and healthy humanity. The question on my mind was: "What does anti-racist work look like for white people and how do we do it?"

I had been going to an anti-racism study group for about six months. Sharon Martinas, of the Challenging White Supremacy (CWS) workshop, put the study group together. It was a mostly white study group looking at anti-racism organizing in predominately white communities. My favorite things about it were that it was multigenerational, and that we were of multiple political perspectives: feminist, Marxist, anti-imperialist, and/or anarchist.

Sharon Martinas had been doing anti-racism workshops and trainings in the Bay Area for over six years. The CWS workshop was designed as two 15-week sessions: CWS for activists, and then CWS for organizers. One day on the way back from a study group session, Sharon asked if I would be interested in developing a workshop series together specifically for organizers in the anti-global capitalism movement. Both Sharon and I were deeply inspired by the Martinez (2000) essay and we began putting together a workshop called "Beyond the Whiteness in Seattle: Challenging white supremacy in the movements against global capitalism."

The workshop spanned four sessions. We met on Tuesday nights during the summer leading up to the 2000 Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Los Angeles. We used role-plays, small group exercises, presentations, and discussions to look at how white supremacy impacts our work, and we studied assigned readings between sessions. We broke white supremacy down into racial oppression against communities of color and white privilege for white communities. We analyzed white privilege and racial oppression as two sides of the same coin, both maintaining systematic inequality that punishes the majority of the planet and its inhabitants in the service of profit and power. We stressed the importance of overcoming feelings of guilt

around racism, and the need for action based on the analysis that non-ruling class whites are both privileged and oppressed.

I was really nervous doing this first series of workshops. Having been one of the few white people in Ethnic Studies courses, and often one of the only men in Women's Studies classes, I was used to having people question my motivations and intentions. I was used to people wondering, "What the hell is that white guy doing here?" This time, my nervousness stemmed in part from fearing that people would wonder, "What the hell is this white guy doing co-training a course on anti-racism?" In fact, people *were* thinking this, and frankly I'd have been worried if no one did. I believe facing contradictions and difficult situations that make you feel awkward and vulnerable is necessary in doing this work.

It was critical to go through this experience with a mentor, and I was fortunate to have two. Sharon Martinas, whom I co-trained with and who is an incredible educator and organizer, and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, who was hosting the workshop in her home.² Roxanne is a long time radical historian, author and activist who has spent years doing anti-racist and feminist work. She grew up poor working class in Oklahoma, the daughter of a landless white farmer and a half-Indian mother. She started a group called Cell 16 in the late sixties that helped launch the women's liberation movement. Roxanne was also active in the anti-war movement and worked with the American Indian Movement. She continues doing solidarity work with indigenous groups around the world fighting for self-determination. She has also been researching and writing about the impact of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism on white people, and wrote the memoir *Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie*. I was glad we were meeting at Roxanne's house, as she was the one who convinced me to go to Seattle and actually bought me a plane ticket to make sure I went.³ She told me that it would change my life, that all of the years of day-to-day organizing with Food Not Bombs would manifest on the streets, and that I needed to be there. She was right, and that experience led directly to the anti-racism training we had

organized at her house, preparing for the DNC in Los Angeles.

Going to the DNC was a powerful experience, and it reconfirmed for me the importance of white people doing anti-racist work. The workshops that Sharon and I organized were directed primarily at other white activists, though activists of color were always welcome to participate. We did this out of a belief that white radicals have a responsibility to talk about and work on racism with white people, and that it is not the responsibility of activists of color to school white people. In Los Angeles, well-thought out organizing was happening that actively combined international issues of global capitalism with local struggles for justice. Many of the local struggles were led by organizations of color. There was a lot of confusion and debate among activists from other parts of the country about how the actions in L.A. went down. Why were there legally permitted marches? Why weren't people doing massive civil disobedience? This brought me back to thinking about the protests for Ethnic Studies in Orange County: specifically, that action taken by people of color is different than action taken by white activists. The stakes are higher and calls for justice in communities of color fundamentally challenge the logic of white supremacy that people of color do not deserve justice. I saw how important it was for white anti-racists to talk with other white activists about this in L.A.

After the four-part workshop series, Sharon and I put together a six-part series called *Beyond the Whiteness*. I began doing one-time workshops for activist groups and conferences around the country. The workshops were really successful at getting people excited about this work and developing useful skills and analysis. Out of the last workshop series, an ongoing discussion group formed. The group's goals were to form a community of learning; to have a peer group of organizers to look at how to incorporate anti-racism into our projects, groups, and campaigns; and to train people to do workshops themselves (including skills like creating agendas and exercises, timing discussions, and creating empowering group dynamics). The

discussion group also helped to develop a community of anti-racist activists.

One of the tactics utilized in the workshop that was extremely useful for all of us was the "Each One, Teach One" model. Sharon and I met with people one-on-one and talked about anti-racism and people's organizing projects, and offered feedback and help when useful. It was used extensively in the Southern Civil Rights Movement as a way to not only teach people and bring them into the movement, but also as a process of developing relationships, trust, and respect. For me, this is an extremely helpful way for us to grow as a movement and for us to deepen the work that we do. Mass actions and mass mobilizations are necessary, but we also need to do the day-to-day work of sharing skills and building our capacities as organizers and radicals. That's one of the biggest lessons of Seattle for me: that it's not just about large numbers of people - we can all be active participants in the movement.

Our strategy, as CWS, was to do anti-racist training and organizing specifically with predominately white grassroots social justice activists. We also worked from the belief that multiracial, anti-racist alliance building is at the core of doing this work. Our focus on anti-racism with other white people was part of a long strategy of working towards a multiracial, anti-racist movement to oppose capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and heterosexism.

To further this long-term strategy in the global justice movement, several of us in the movement started up a grassroots network called Colours of Resistance (COR). Helen Luu, a working class anarchist immigrant organizer, initiated a conversation with Pauline Hwang, a middle class student organizer, and myself about our shared goals for a stronger anti-racist commitment and practice in the mostly white anti-global capitalism movement. We also wanted to see a higher level of mostly white groups working towards multiracial alliances with community-based organizations. Helen worked in Toronto and Pauline in Montreal. We exchanged emails about our backgrounds, politics, experiences, and visions, and developed goals for a project to help amplify

the anti-racist voices in the global justice movement and help connect people with a shared analysis. We drafted a vision statement, launched a webpage, we started up an email discussion group and recruited people to join it, and we are all involved in local work that reflects our politics.

We conceived of COR as a network for organizers of color working in communities of color around these issues who wanted to be in relationship with white anti-racists doing anti-racism work with predominately white groups. COR is intended to facilitate people supporting one another, sharing experiences and lessons, learning about work in other areas, and developing strategy together. We intended this framework to provide a way for radicals of color and white radicals to build relationships based on respect, trust, and friendship.

While COR started as a relatively small group of people (a couple dozen), our goal was not related to numbers, but rather publicizing our strategy and putting anti-racist, multiracial alliance building politics out into the broader movement. So while I was doing workshops and trainings, others were working with local groups doing teach-ins and educational work on the impacts of global capitalism on communities of color, and on resistance from communities of color to global capitalism. Doing alliance-building work with radicals of color with whom we have political affinity is critical for white anti-racists, as white activists cannot and should not do this work alone.



So why do I do anti-racist work, and why is it such a priority? Well, let me tell you one more story. When I was in high school I worked with the United Anarchist Front, which was a group of close friends (mostly white) who did political work together. We put out dozens of informational flyers, published an underground newspaper, and held protests against everything from apartheid in South Africa to the Gulf War. We did good work and it was fun. But we would always complain

about how apathetic the school was and how great it would be to work with other people. Years later, I was looking at a copy of our high school newspaper for which I wrote a regular column called "Love and Rage" (named after the anarchist network we were part of and the newspaper it produced) about activism and politics. Right next to my column was a guest editorial written by three Latina women protesting the lack of coverage of the Latino student population. They also called attention to the lack of coverage in the yearbooks and the school videos, and the overall disinterest shown by white students in activities organized by the Spanish language club, Expanded Horizons. Here were students who were angry and ready to take action about issues impacting them on the campus.

I found their column years later going through old papers. I don't remember reading it at the time, and was totally surprised to see it. I wondered how we'd missed it. In retrospect, I think that the issues of language, culture, and representation they raised didn't register for me. Their issues weren't "radical" as I would have defined them in high school. This is an example of how white privilege shaped my worldview and hurts the ability of white radicals to see other people and struggles. I remember once that the UAF thought about translating one of our flyers into Spanish, but we certainly didn't think that we might have something to learn from those students about conditions in the school, about racism on campus, or about what issues to organize around on a campus of which over one-third of the students were Latino/a. How radical would it have been if a group of white high school students worked in solidarity with a group of Latina/o high school students to demand an end to racism on campus! In a state like California, where a majority of voters have passed anti-immigrant rights and anti-bilingual education measures, such solidarity and anti-racist activism is critical.

Doing anti-racist work as a white person doesn't mean no longer making mistakes, but rather that I am committed to doing this work, even though I make mistakes. I'm continuing to do anti-racist organizing because I have hope for our abilities to make history and transform

this society. I have hope because there is a radical vision of love at the heart of our movement and it is growing. There is a long history of white supremacy undermining many social movements, but together, I believe, we can make anti-racism a catalyst for building ours. Our movement is built day-by-day with visions of the world we want seven generations down the line.

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Chris Crass is the coordinator of the Catalyst Project, a center for political education and movement building based in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Catalyst Project is committed to anti-racist work in majority white sections of left social movements, with the goal of deepening anti-racist commitment in white communities and building multiracial left movements for liberation. Catalyst creates spaces for activists and organizers to collectively develop relevant theory vision, and strategy to build our movements. Catalyst programs prioritize leadership development, supporting grassroots fighting organizations and multiracial alliance building. Comments regarding this article can be sent to: chris@collectiveliberation.org

(Footnotes)

¹The following semester the administration again tried to break the multiracial alliance in the coalition. The President of the school called MEChA leaders to a meeting. The President, who is white, had never called a meeting with MEChA before and stood against all the demands of the coalition. He served them lunch and said he wanted to warn them that MEChA's future funding might be jeopardized by working with anarchists. Furthermore he warned that MEChA's reputation was at risk, as word was spreading that they were being led by white anarchists. The MEChA members immediately came laughing to us with the news. The next issue of *The Molotov Cocktail* covered this story, and included the line, "The anarchists want to meet next, they're vegetarian, and they want beer."

² I met both Sharon and Roxanne at the movie rental store I worked at.

³ This was during the time when San Francisco Food Not Bombs (FNB) was facing arrest from the Brown administration, and several of us committed to stay behind and keep things together. With Roxanne's encouragement, we covered our bases at home and joined with FNBBers in Seattle.

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