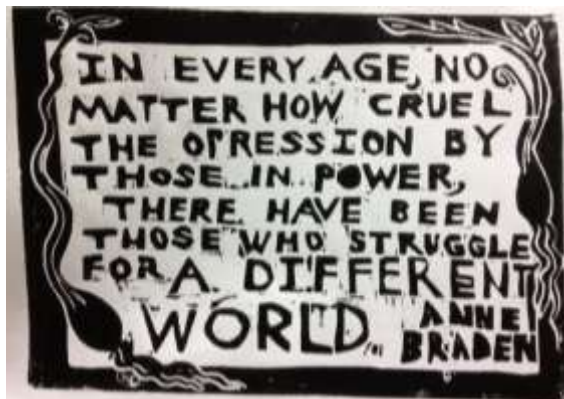


## Reflections on my time as a participant in the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training for White Social Justice Activists 2013

by Annie Banks



*I made this linocut of a quote by Anne Braden during the Idle No More movement and while thinking of Indigenous people and communities who have long resisted oppression and colonialism. I feel very honoured to have had many people share with me the incredible stories of struggle, resistance and*

*transformation that they and others have participated in. This linocut is also part of the project, "What if We Speak – Words for Idle No More – December 2012", which you can read here: [http://issuu.com/kathrynglynnon/docs/what\\_if\\_we\\_speak\\_-\\_idlenomore-december\\_2012](http://issuu.com/kathrynglynnon/docs/what_if_we_speak_-_idlenomore-december_2012)*

*I made this linocut after the program ended, with words that other Braden participants gave me to describe the program. The words include "trust", "learning", "deep love", "inspiration", "deepening", "hope", "growth" and "transformation". It is in the shape of a heart as love was a word mentioned numerous times.*



This zine is a compilation of blog posts, journal entries and reflections from my time as a participant in the 2013 Anne Braden\* Anti-Racist Training

for White Social Justice Activists. The program is described as this: "This 4 month political education and leadership development program is designed to support the vision, strategy, and organizing skills of white activists in becoming accountable, principled anti-racist organizers building multiracial movements for justice." Also, for anyone who doesn't know who Anne Braden is (I didn't when I first heard about the program), the Catalyst Project (the organization/collective that puts on the Anne Braden Program) offers this description of Anne and their reasons for naming the program after her:

*"Anne Braden was a white anti-racist organizer and leader in racial justice movements in the U.S. South, including the Civil Rights Movement. She brought a working-class based socialist analysis and community-organizing model to the struggle against white supremacy and all forms of inequality. She believed in the need to root out racism in the hearts and minds of white people, and worked from the perspective that white people have a collective interest in dismantling white supremacy. Anne Braden's legacy has deeply inspired Catalyst Project and many others. In naming our program after her, we honor her memory and the movements of which she was a part. We've heard from many anti-racist organizers in the South about being personally mentored by Anne and her commitment to developing more and more leaders, and we hope the Program will contribute towards those goals she dedicated her life to." (from <http://collectiveliberation.org>)*

I heard about the program from my friend Trish, who posted about it on Facebook. I remember clicking the link and thinking, "I would love to do this training, if only it was possible." It felt impossible at the time to leave my responsibilities, take a huge financial leap and go live in san francisco, Ohlone territories, for four months. Quickly after seeing the link, a number of things shifted in my life that made

this training seem more possible. I had long felt a need to invest concentrated time and energy into some kind of training around anti-racism and the description of the Anne Braden Program felt like what I was looking for. I applied and I was accepted and sent in a deposit, only to receive an email that my check had bounced. I remember putting my head down on the kitchen table and crying, thinking that I would be rejected. Fortunately, Catalyst is an organization that works to adhere to their own vision of social justice and so was understanding about my financial situation. Despite some bumps like this, I have many privileges that make this kind of venture much more possible for me than for others, including dual citizenship with “canada” and the “united states” (I use quotation marks and lower case instead of capitals here because I do not believe in the legitimacy of either country, as they were formed through the theft of land from Indigenous people and the genocide and slavery that followed; where I can in this zine, I will refer to places with the name of the Indigenous territory as well as community/neighborhood names), which means I could expect to be able to look for on-the-books paid work in addition to making my border crossing experience easier. I also have a parent who, along with his partner, were generous in helping me with a loan to pay my rent when I first arrived in the city, once I realized that the job prospects were bleak. In addition, my white skin privilege most often ensures that I am not profiled or discriminated against, I have a wide variety of work experience, and I have a college diploma. I am also so blessed to have a loving and supportive community of people who encouraged me to attend the training and literally *drove me there*. My amazing friend Sarah took time off from her studies and work to drive me to san francisco, encouraging me every step of the way. She and others pointed out that this was an example of how I could use my privileges to gain training to bring back to the community and share with other people. I could really feel the love! Clearly this kind of program is very difficult for most

anyone to be able to attend, but especially so for folks with little class privilege and citizenship privilege and little or no community support.

My first blog post, describing why I wanted to do the Anne Braden Program (ABP):

*My name is Annie and I am a white settler woman just about to start the the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Organizing Training Program For White Social Justice Activists in San Francisco, on what I believe are Ohlone Territories (i.e. the homelands of the Indigenous peoples whose lands are now called San Francisco); I am very new however and could be completely wrong about this. More on this soon.*

*I wanted to attend this training as I have long wondered about how to effectively participate in anti-racist organizing as a white settler, without participating solely as “moves to innocence” (check out this great article, “Decolonization is not a metaphor” by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang for more on this) and without co-opting or taking over. I feel I have so much to learn about how to create meaningful change towards justice.*

*Right now with Idle No More taking place all across what is now called “Canada”, it seems a strange time to be leaving where I have been living (on both Treaty 6 Territories in Edmonton, Alberta, and on Lekwungen, Esquimalt and WSANEC territories in Victoria, British Columbia) but it is my hope that this program will contribute to my capacity to contribute to long-term efforts to address and confront racism and colonialism in myself and among others and in our communities.*

*That leads me to the creation of this blog: I wish to share what I learn (and am most definitely encouraged to do so by the folks at*

*the Anne Braden Program) and create a space for lasting resources, dialogues, and information. Please check back for updates, resources, information, pictures, artwork and more.*

*In solidarity,  
Annie*

In starting the program, I thought a lot about how I could share information with people in the places that I had previously been living and so I started a blog (“Noisy and Quiet”, <http://noisyandquiet.wordpress.com>, called this because when I think about my role often as a white person, it’s important for me to think about when it’s a time to be noisy (such as raising my voice when I know that because of my privilege/position in society I will likely be listened to, and when to be quiet, such as when I need to listen and learn from people of color and Indigenous people that I live, learn, organize and interact with)) to share readings and reflections. I also began writing on a collaborative blog with two friends, Sarah and Morgan, called the Becoming Collective, where I tried to write longer and more in-depth posts. Catalyst also really encouraged us to think about this and periodically checked in with me and challenged me to think about how I could share information, beyond just posting readings.

## WEEK 1

The first week in the bay was full. I moved into my sublet (found through Craigslist and amazingly included ABP alum, in the *(as I would later find out, massively gentrifying)* Mission district of san francisco, Ohlone territories; said goodbye to Sarah; had a brief but wonderful visit with my penpal Kat who was passing through; and started the program. We had a very full first orientation weekend, 7 hours a day both Saturday and Sunday. To be honest, I drank too

much the night before the program started and I felt pretty awful walking to the Eric Quezada Center for Culture and Politics @ 518 Valencia St (the space where our weekly sessions were held, a community space on a hyper-gentrified street, Valencia, in san francisco). I was nervous that I wouldn’t be as present because of it or something like that. I did find, however, that I felt very humbled and so entered with my guard down. It felt serendipitous when the first ABP leadership team member I spoke with was a white settler woman who had done solidarity work with Indigenous folks in Black Mesa and was eager to talk about anti-colonialism.

We were introduced to the staff and leadership team. Catalyst has a very small paid and unpaid staff (in addition to an amazing advisory board comprised of movement scholars, community members and long-time activists) and the leadership team for the program was comprised of about 12 volunteers who are mostly previous participants who have come back to support this year’s training. All of the leadership team (or BLT (“Braden Leadership Team”, as we called them) had different roles (fundraising, volunteer coordination, mentor coordination, etc.) and also rotated with staff members to facilitate our weekly sessions.

I was really nervous to meet the other participants. There were 25 of us total and people were coming from various parts of Turtle Island\* (Turtle Island is a name for North America used by some Indigenous people/nations and to me is a way to move away from reinforcing the current acknowledgment of illegitimate states who occupy these lands), from Seminole territories to Ohlone territories and many places in between. Participants had a wide range of organizing and political experience, from environmental justice work to labor organizing to cultural production to anti-militarism to migrant justice work. I felt excited and also intimidated, like “who am I to be here?” “What do I have to offer?” I questioned my

“activist credentials” and wondered about my very different experiences, living mostly in the north, in “canada” for the previous 20-odd years of my life. I came into the program wondering what the program’s engagement with acknowledging the violent processes by which the governments and settler people of both the “united states” and “canada” have systematically stolen all of “their” land from Indigenous people and have committed many forms of genocide, which continues today, would be. In some discussions and conversations about anti-racism, I have seen a lack of engagement with colonialism\* and the genocide of Indigenous people. I was glad to connect right away with the BLT member who eagerly engaged about this as well as to see an upcoming open session\*\* scheduled, called “Indigenous Resilience & Resistance to Colonization in North America”.

*\*\*Colonization refers to both the formal and informal methods (behaviors, ideologies, institutions, policies, and economies) that maintain the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands and resources”. – Waziyatiwin and Michael Yellow Bird, For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook (Santa Fe: School of Advanced Research Press, 2005)*

*\*\*Of the 17 sessions total in the program, three were made to be open to the public so that community members could join all of the ABP 2013 participants, staff and BLT and the speakers/presenters at the open sessions, to learn together.*

Some of our homework for our first week was to write down instances of white privilege that we noticed. I wrote in my journal: *Flirting – risky for brown men – lynching. Also, white racist beauty standards – impacts psychologically. Friend-racism-physical illness – me-white-saviour complex, also poverty and health (i.e. fear of going to hospital) – lack of help/sanctuary.*

*Jobs – I am read as many things due to whiteness, no one surprised I’m canadian or american (“no accent”), got both jobs I interviewed for, white comraderie, “trustworthiness”, whole different box for “are you latino?”, why? NGOs (non-governmental organizations) largely young white men – focus is often communities of color (or parks instead). In applying for different kinds of work, I didn’t worry about my race as a factor. Don’t feel competitive with other white people (e.g. that the company is going to only hire one POC (person of color)), I am automatically assumed to be “nice”, I do not suffer the same health impacts of environmental racism\* (\*“Environmental racism is the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color. Environmental justice is the movement’s response to environmental racism.” (from *Earth First! Journal*, “what do you know about environmental justice?” quiz) ), racial dynamics of staff at restaurants vs. patrons and managerial class.*

**[Blog Post]** *This week we have had some incredible readings that I’d like to share here. Each week, I will post all of our readings so that anyone who is interested in reading them can. If you cannot find some of these online or elsewhere, please contact me and we can figure out a way to get a copy to you\*.*

\* At the beginning of the program, we received a huge stack of **incredible** readings, which I was excited and somewhat daunted to begin. It proved to be something I needed to create a lot of intentional time to not just read through but actually take in the information. I am planning on re-reading the readings as soon as I catch up with the box that they are in, waiting for me. The readings are **all** available online, thanks to the hardwork of Catalyst staff and

volunteers. I won't list all of the readings in this zine but you can find them online at: <http://collectiveliberation.org/the-2013-anne-braden-anti-racist-organizing-training-program/>. There are links and pdf's of these readings available here with this accompanying note:

*Readings are provided free for use by participants studying in the Anne Braden Training Program for Anti-Racist Organizers, a noncommercial, nonprofit educational program. We encourage everyone to buy the works from which excerpts have been taken – please support these authors and publishers.*

[“What is White Supremacy?” by Elizabeth “Betita” Martinez](#) *“White Supremacy is an historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege.” (Definition by the Challenging White Supremacy Workshop, San Francisco, CA)*

[“Love as the practice of freedom” by bell hooks](#)  
*“In this society, there is no powerful discourse on love emerging either from politically progressive radicals or from the Left. The absence of a sustained focus on love in progressive circles arises from a collective failure to acknowledge the needs of the spirit and an overdetermined emphasis on material concerns. Without love, our efforts to liberate ourselves and our world community from oppression and exploitation are doomed. As long as we refuse to address fully the place of love in struggles for liberation we will not be able to create a culture of conversion where there is a mass turning away from an ethic of domination.” – bell hooks*

And, three essays from [“The Truth That Never Hurts” by Barbara Smith](#): *“Racism and Women’s Studies”, “The Tip of the Iceberg” and “The Rodney King Verdict”.*

**[Longer Blog Post on the Becoming Collective blog]** *A Responsibility of Talking to Each Other (Part 1)*

Posted on [February 1, 2013](#) by [anniembanks](#)

*I am writing this as I travel to San Francisco to start the four and a half month [Anne Braden Anti-Racist Organizing Training Program For White Social Justice Activists](#).*

*I decided to do this program to put a focus on my own work as a white settler person dedicated to supporting anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles. I have been involved in a variety of different kinds of social justice organizing since I was a teen. With the guidance and encouragement of many people, I began to grow more of a focus on anti-racism and anti-colonialism in the past few years. For me, the course of action to take has not always been clear but as I have been reading and listening, I have heard it said many times that there is a need for white people to talk and work with other white people about and against racism and colonialism, with and under the leadership of the people most impacted.*

*With the [Idle No More](#) movement taking place currently, there have been incredibly powerful discussions of how people who are not Indigenous to these lands can act in support of ongoing Indigenous resistance and long-standing movements towards justice. With all that is happening within this movement right now, it seems a strange time for me to be leaving the places that I have previously been living, where the Idle No More movement has been taken up by local organizers in a variety of creative, meaningful and continually inspiring ways. I hope that what I learn in this program can*

contribute positively long-term to movements against racism and colonialism.

*Talking to myself*

*I had the privilege of taking the Indigenous Studies program at Camosun College and I was, in the program, often reminded of the importance of people like me (white settler) talking to other people like me. All too often, when I would tell other white settler people that I was taking an Indigenous Studies program, they would respond with a paternalistic answer about “helping Natives”. Soon I was quick to correct them, that it was actually me and my community in need of a lot of help.*

*Already the readings from the Anne Braden program are reaffirming my thoughts on why I am doing this program. Anne Braden, for whom the program is named, writes in [“A Time to Organize”](#) about her work to bring white people into the struggle against white supremacy. And, in her essay, [“The Tip of the Iceberg”](#), Barbara Smith talks about the importance of white would-be allies engaging in political organizing. The readings are further encouraging me to explore where my role lies and what it means to take responsibility for not just myself.*

*Talking to each other*

*A friend once asked me, “Do you love your own people?”\*... I wasn’t even sure what she meant. I could only think of Nazis, White Pride and other hateful, dominating forms of “love” for other white people. Until that point, I had not thought of other white people as people that I needed to love or take responsibility for. There are so many histories, actions and attitudes that I didn’t want to accept as*

*my responsibility to acknowledge, own or begin to work towards changing.*

*But who, if not me, if not us? Who can take responsibility for this and, under the leadership of the people most impacted by racism and colonialism, join the struggle against [white supremacy](#) rather than hide beneath its comfortable (for most white folks) form?*

*To be continued...*

*\*Carol Bilson, thank you for asking good questions always.*

## SESSIONS 1 AND 2

[Blog Post] *Part of our commitment through the Anne Braden Program is to volunteer weekly with a local organization doing work towards collective liberation. I am so fortunate to have been placed with the [California Coalition for Women Prisoners](#) or CCWP.*

*CCWP’s Mission reads as follows: “CCWP is a grassroots social justice organization, with members inside and outside prison, that challenges the institutional violence imposed on women, transgender people, and communities of color by the prison industrial complex (PIC). We see the struggle for racial and gender justice as central to dismantling the PIC and we prioritize the leadership of the people, families, and communities most impacted in building this movement.*

*CCWP es una organización que lucha para el cambio de las condiciones de violencia impuestas en las mujeres, las personas transexuales y las comunidades de color por las prisiones y el sistema criminal de justicia. Estamos construyendo un movimiento con mujeres en prisión, familiares de las prisioneras y la comunidad*

*amplia a través de la organización, el desarrollo del liderazgo y la educación política.”*

You can read more about the work that CCWP does at their website, <http://www.womenprisoners.org>.

We got to choose our top 3-4 volunteer placement sites and then Catalyst staff members matched us up, according to what the organizations are looking for and the skills and experience that we bring. My first choice was Communities for a Better Environment, whose mission is to *“build people’s power in California’s communities of color and low income communities to achieve environmental health and justice by preventing and reducing pollution and building green, healthy and sustainable communities and environments.”* (<http://www.cbecal.org>)

My second choice was CCWP, as I had previously volunteered with young people inside the Victoria Youth Custody Services (VYCS) walls and wanted to continue working with people inside prisons and learning more about fighting the prison industrial complex\*.

\*The “prison industrial complex” (aka the PIC from here onwards in this zine) is described by the awesome and badass prison abolitionist\*\* group Critical Resistance (<http://criticalresistance.org/>) as:

*The prison industrial complex (PIC) is a term we use to describe the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems.*

*Through its reach and impact, the PIC helps and maintains the authority of people who get their power through racial, economic and other privileges. There are many ways this power is collected and maintained through the PIC, including creating mass media images that keep alive stereotypes of people of color, poor people, queer people, immigrants, youth, and other oppressed communities as criminal, delinquent, or deviant. This power is also maintained by earning huge profits for private companies that deal with prisons and police forces; helping earn political gains for “tough on crime” politicians; increasing the influence of prison guard and police unions; and eliminating social and political dissent by oppressed communities that make demands for self-determination and reorganization of power in the US.*

\*\*Additionally, Critical Resistance defines the work of PIC abolition as this:

*PIC abolition is a political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment.*

*From where we are now, sometimes we can’t really imagine what abolition is going to look like. Abolition isn’t just about getting rid of buildings full of cages. It’s also about undoing the society we live in because the PIC both feeds on and maintains oppression and inequalities through punishment, violence, and controls millions of people. Because the PIC is not an isolated system, abolition is a broad strategy. An abolitionist vision means that we must build models today that can represent how we want to live in the future. It means developing practical strategies for taking small steps that*

*move us toward making our dreams real and that lead us all to believe that things really could be different. It means living this vision in our daily lives.*

*Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal.*

\*\*\*Please check out Critical Resistance's excellent resources, including their "Abolitionists Toolkit", available here:

<http://criticalresistance.org/resources/the-abolitionist-toolkit/>

I was excited to be paired with CCWP. It also gave me pause to think about how it can be challenging to narrow down one's focus and how important it is to be very intentional with time and energy. I also try to listen to close comrades when they give me feedback about where it seems I am most useful, inspired or energized. My friend Carol had remarked that I seemed grounded in my work with young women at VYCC and I kept her comment in my mind as I thought through where to focus my volunteer time. I also thought about all the connections between the prison industrial complex and environmental racism and resource extraction. A growing trend in many areas, including many places in "canada", is to build prisons after a mill or mine closes down. Additionally, the prison industry funds some of the most destructive acts against the earth, animals and people, such as fracking. Private prison corporation GEO Group invests much of its profits into fracking, which is tearing up the land and poisoning the waters in many communities' territories. In this way, working with either Communities for a Better Environment or CCWP would be a way to look at the intersections of the PIC and environmental justice\*. (**Environmental equity: Poison people equally, Environmental justice: Stop poisoning people, period.** (From: <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/>)).

### SESSION 3

**[Blog Post]** Re: "Free rides" or "reverse racism": Highlight on a reading – "Shining the Light on White" by Sharon Martinas

*One of our readings, "Shining the Light on White" by Sharon Martinas from the Challenging White Supremacy: A Workshop for Activists and Organizer, includes a definition of white privilege, talks about the historical origins of white privilege and includes a list of "300 Years of Affirmative Action for White People".*

*Given the conversations happening everywhere but, in my mind, specifically around white settlers complaining about the supposed "benefits" that Indigenous people get from the state or allegations of "reverse racism", this article is quite useful.*

*Also, to "flip the script" on the racist comments about Indigenous folks getting "free rides" from the state or anything to that tone, check out these excellent articles, "What if Natives Stop Subsidizing Canada?" by Dru Oja Jay and "First Nations Too Generous Funding Canadian State" by Pam Palmater.*

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Another part of our program was our "sea creature groups". We were put into groups randomly, made of 5-6 participants and named after various sea creatures. I was in the Sea Otter group and each group took on one duty per session. The different weekly duties were:

**Snacktivists** – bring food for the group, being mindful of likes/dislikes and allergies.

**Team Tidy** – helping to clean up after each session, often hosted in the communally-used space at 518 Valencia.



**Memory Joggers** – taking notes and then sharing them via the google group listserv created specifically for this Braden group.

**Reading Rainbows** – writing up brief reflections about each of the weekly readings, using guiding questions such as, “Why is the author writing it? How does the content relate to struggles for social justice?”

**Gamers** – preparing a short, energizing game, to keep energy up and bodies engaged.

These small groups were intended to encourage us to practice collective leadership and to hold each other accountable to stepping up to our various responsibilities. It was also a good opportunity for us to get to know each other a bit better.

For Week 3, the Sea Otters got to try out being Reading Rainbows. Below are two of my summaries of readings from the week.

***Summary of “Capitalism and Class” by Cynthia Kaufman, from Ideas for Action: Relevant Theory for Radical Change***

*This chapter begins by outlining the dominant conceptions of wealth and class and individual’s positions within wealth and class, and what the meanings and ideas reinforcing these conceptions are. Kaufman goes on to outline different systems of class exploitation and then elaborates on Marx’s definition of class struggle and outlines some of the labor struggles throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and losses of these labor struggles, a key point is division along racial lines of the working class. Class mobility is looked at, in terms of there being an actual lack of class mobility with inheriting class being more common. Kaufman outlines Marx’s theory of there being an owning class that is always overseeing the working class and maintaining a control of labor. This includes the regimentation of lower and higher wages through the heavy regulation of labor.*

*Kaufman assesses that the owners of capitalist production bond to protect their interests and to do so use the state, the media, education, etc. Additionally, political contributions ensure that legislation is in favor of the owners. The legal system is also a tool – to protect the rights of wealthy though with some concessions so as to maintain the illusion of legitimacy for the legal system.*

*Kaufman expands on the class and race formations within capitalism, stating that settlers did not come to “North America” driven by democracy and freedom as is commonly talked about, but they did so in the name of profit. Columbus came for trade, sponsored by the Spanish monarchy; he sailed at the “beginning of capitalism”. Kaufman also describes that the earliest settlers were African slaves left by Spanish settlers. The Spanish settled much of the “US” before the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth Rock.*

*Race was a formation in capitalism and social life more so in the more racially diverse “US” than in Europe due to their being a mainly white working class in Europe at the time while most people of color being exploited by the capitalist system were living in colonies of the British Empire. People had very different class experiences based on racial group: African Americans went from being slave labor to sharecroppers, Native Americans were “pushed out of the economic order” through extermination and expulsion after an initial time period of being needed by colonizers. Gendered division was also imposed and this impacted the ability of colonizers to dispossess Indigenous people. Kaufman goes on to describe continuing impacts today and the resurgence of Native American culture taking place now. Kaufman states that Asians and Latinos were considered to be at the lower end of the working class, including members of the Mexican ruling class after the annexation of Mexico in 1848. Most*

*racialized workers coming during the 19<sup>th</sup> century were forced to come as single men and remained seen as outsiders.*

*This is a core racist concept (“outsiders”) against which whites consolidated themselves into one racial group. Kaufman describes the binary of “free white labor/unfree non-white labor”, which created a racist labor divide where white workers maintained more dignity and felt superior over workers of color. The hostility of the white working class towards workers of color maintained racist systems of exploitation and legislation.*

*During the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of the white race expanded as Democrats rallied European settlers as “white” which also consolidated class. This “unity” helped keep white people loyal to owning class and capitalism. Kaufman also refers to Roediger’s theory of there being a “social wage” paid to white workers for their whiteness. Roediger also contends that racism must be uprooted from white workers’ consciousness.*

*While many radicals argued that unity among the working class is critical, many said that attention to race is unnecessary. Other radicals have tried to show how racism is bad for everyone, including working class whites as it prevents the white working class from acting in ways that benefit whole working class.*

*Politicians have used racism to mobilize resentment towards “undeserving poor” and undocumented workers, resulting in murderous results such as the anti-Asian hysteria that culminated in the murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit by white men angry about loss of jobs.*

*Kaufman describes the gender separation between public and private as coming from England. Women’s work was invisibilized by*

*men’s labor and both the owning class and husbands benefited from the unpaid labor of women. Much of the work done by women of color and white women is done in the home but is not seen as real labor when unpaid. Women of color have often worked as paid domestic workers but at the “margins of capitalist labor” without pensions, benefits, etc.*

*Kaufman describes the idealized role of the white woman as the homemaker; Marxist feminists assert that the man’s role in capitalism is production and the women’s is reproduction. Kaufman also describes the nuclear family as being more conducive to capitalism than the larger extended family and that the nuclear ideal is generally only realistic for wealthy white people. Two very different strategies emerged for working class women – either equal inclusion in wage labor or attaining a family wage to allow women to stay home as the homemaker.*

*Kaufman describes trade unions as being both used to challenge capitalism and to tame the working class to make things easier for capitalism. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) was an exclusive union while the International Workers of the World (IWW) sought to organize with everyone in hopes of bringing about unity within the working class. Also, Kaufman describes the rise of socialism until World War I when the Espionage Act greatly impacted socialist moves forward at the same time as governmental labor concessions due to the government’s desire for “labor peace and unity”. As the IWW and socialist movements were brought down, the AFL took the center until the Great Depression brought another wave of radical organizing, including the creation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).*

*The Wagner Act saw the creation of the National Labor Relations Board. As well, there was a large increase of people of color within trade unions as the communist party fought against racial exclusion.*

*Executive Order 8802 banned racial discrimination in defense industries after a massive march of African Americans who had previously been excluded. Then the Taft-Hartley Act ended these periods of gains in the Cold War, post-World War II era, and continues to constrain labor organizing still. Kaufman describes the then predominance of business unionism, with little or no challenge to employers or capitalism.*

*In describing the 1990s, Kaufman talks about more shifts towards organizing movements of and with people of color, women and unskilled workers, for democracy and with more radical approaches.*

*While many white male radicals call for focusing on what everyone has in common, members of most impacted groups are calling for a focus on differences in order to create unity. Kaufman asserts that a deep unity can only come with awareness and taking into account of differences. Without this, “unity” will likely only reflect priorities of most privileged groups. Recent victories include when the AFL-CIO reversed their position on immigration and came out in support of improving conditions for all workers, including undocumented workers. Kaufman ends by reaffirming that by broadening the scope of who counts in the working class, this will increase class solidarity and the ability of the working class to advocate for its various needs.*

#### **Summary of “Why Not Capitalism?” By Marta Russell**

*In Russell’s article, Russell begins by describing the perception of disability as a medical matter and society’s emphasis on disability as a so-called “abnormality” rather than the “hard-constructed*

*socioeconomic relations that impose isolation (and poverty) upon disabled people.” Russell asserts that the economic system is responsible for disabling people as a product of capitalism, as the owners of production impose “disability” on bodies that are viewed as not conforming to the standard.*

*Russell describes the opposition by business to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which has meant that the disabled employment rate has not moved. Russell describes that any additional cost to business from employment provisions of the ADA to hire or retain a disabled employee, whether real or perceived, are seen as concerns to employers. Additional assumptions include greater liability and lower productivity from disabled workers. Russell describes the multiple ways that disabled workers experience discrimination in the workplace and reaffirms that it is the rate of exploitation that determines who is “disabled” or not. Russell then asks if it is possible to reform practices in business so that disabled workers are not excluded and suggests ways in which government could support this kind of reform, through subsidies to offset costs or payment of reasonable accommodation costs, but problematizes these possibilities as well, as they are unlikely to make any substantial difference. This is due to the nature, says Russell, of capitalism, which prioritizes productivity, maximizing profit and the incentive to keep a large employed “reserve army of labor”. Russell also critiques the treatment of workers with impairments in socialist countries, as all welfare states have labeled disabled people as “medical defects” and forcing people into poverty. Thus, Russell, concludes, a just new economy requires asking how members of society with impairments will be part of “full participation for all”.*

#### **SESSION 4**

*Introduction to Social Change Organizing*

In my journal, about one of our readings, “Slow and Respectful Work: Organizers and Organizing” from *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* by Charles Payne, I made notes about some things that I drew out as important. Charles Payne writes about the strategy of building relationships and doing so through things like going door-to-door. He also refers to music as a “litany against fear” and upholds the worthiness of humor and satire. In thinking about hosting meetings, his affirmation that they need to be joyful/enjoyable was something that I noted. I know that a lot of these ideas have been talked about by Indigenous organizers and community members that I have worked with. In reflecting on some of my own organizing I don’t think I’ve taken this approach very much. I think there has been an element of white guilt or something to that, that meetings must always be sombre and difficult. I can see now that this kind of orientation can be really alienating and may create a lot of exclusivity, where only the white people who have a certain language or who “get it” can take part. If the idea is to move as many white folks towards collective liberation\*, I think that creating inviting aspects of organizing is very important, while still recognizing the power of discomfort for learning. It’s a fine balance, too, I think.

\*Collective liberation is a term that we used very often and Chris Crass, former Catalyst staff, defined it as this in an interview with Colours of Resistance (a great resource self-described as “a collection of analysis and tools for liberatory organizing and movement-building” ; <http://www.coloursofresistance.org>), “(...) collective liberation is also about wanting to have a positive vision around doing anti-racism work as well as thinking about a vision to help me, not only continue to do this work, but to see how my

*liberation is connected to the liberation of all people, and how my humanity is deformed as a result of racism.”*

These is some of the really powerful learning that we did in the training, around what kind of culture and communities we are trying to support/create and what the end result of our organizing can and will look like. It’s creating a bigger-picture view for me...

As a group, we’ve been having these discussions too, about what kind of community we want to create, even just here while we’re all doing the program. Below is a summary of a mutual aid system that was created by ABP participants this year.

#### ***Mutual Aid System Summary:***

*A couple of weeks into the 2013 Anne Braden Program, a few participants expressed that they didn't have enough money to meet their basic needs while they participated in the program. A few other participants then responded with offers to contribute money to support those folks. It quickly became clear that sharing money in the program would go much more smoothly if we collectively put some time into creating a system for resource sharing: the logistics would be easier, and we'd have a better chance of resisting classist dynamics. Over email, participants started to propose some different possibilities for sharing resources with each other, and at our next Braden session, Catalyst staff facilitated a brief conversation about it.*

*This led to a group of participants getting together for a meeting to talk about developing a mutual aid system. After hashing it out for a while, we ended up with, essentially, two systems:*

- 1. The Spreadsheet: a Google spreadsheet where participants could*

*log non-money resources, including skills, supplies, food, events, and needs related to volunteer placement organizations. In this spreadsheet, people could make notes of their needs and things they had to offer, and then connect with one another to share resources. For example, someone might write that they need help fixing a flat on their bike; someone else might notice that on the spreadsheet and call up their comrade to help them fix their flat.*

*2. The Envelope: The way we shared money during Braden. At the initial planning meeting, we selected two participants to hold onto the envelopes. (We chose someone who lived in San Francisco, and someone who lived in the East Bay.) At every session, people in the program would have a chance to put money in the envelope or take money out. This was done with no questions asked: people would look for one of the envelope-holders and put in what they could contribute or take out what they needed. Sometimes, if unexpected needs came up, the envelope-holders would meet up with folks outside of sessions so folks could use money from the envelope. To the extent possible, using the envelope was confidential, but the small size of our group and logistics meant that we could never guarantee total anonymity.*

*With these two systems together, we hoped to account for a really broad spectrum of resources that could be shared. We were aiming to avoid recreating a charity model where folks with class privilege/extra money were portrayed as having something to offer, while people who used this money were "recipients." We wanted to create a system that would represent a wide variety of skills and material resources that folks were able to share with each other. We made the systems as simple as possible: once they were set up, the envelope and spreadsheet didn't require much maintenance. They relied almost entirely on trust: we assumed that people would contribute when they could (and offered reminders at some sessions*

*when the envelopes got low on cash), and that people would take money when they needed it. Both the envelope and spreadsheet were on an opt-in basis. Some people regularly used the envelopes (by contributing or taking out money) and spreadsheet (by posting requests or offers), and some people never used either.*

*There were many things that this mutual aid project didn't do. In most cases, it was a mechanism for sharing resources within the Braden program. (On a few occasions, the spreadsheet led to resources that were needed for volunteer placement organizations; and of course, many of the resources that were shared allowed folks to continue to support their families and friends outside of the program.) This was an issue that was raised consistently throughout the process: what are the politics/ethics of sharing resources within an all-white group of people? How does this relate to resourcing POC-led organizations and communities of color? Although we asked these questions, we didn't take concrete steps collectively to address them.*

## SESSION 5

*Indigenous Resistance and the Colonization of North America*

**[Online Invite]** *Invitation to Open Session of the Anne Braden Program: Indigenous Resilience & Resistance to Colonization in North America*

*You are invited to the upcoming open session of the Anne Braden Program:*

*We hope you can join us for this panel discussion with Corrina Gould, Sauliloa Niumeitolu and Wahleah Johns. The panelists will discuss the vision, politics and strategies of Indigenous resistance*

*struggles to the historic & current process of European colonization. One of the goals for this panel is to build relationships with and generate support for indigenous-led struggles. Biographies of the panelists are below.*

*Open sessions of the Anne Braden Program provide an opportunity for participants to invite friends and family to join them in their learning process. The open sessions are also an opportunity for Anne Braden Program mentors, site supervisors, volunteers and allies to participate in the program. These sessions are a space for us to come together and learn as a larger community.*

*Due to space restrictions we have to limit the number of people we can invite. Please do not forward this information on to more than one or two other people you'd like to join you.*

This panel was very powerful; speakers Corrina, Loa and Wahleah talked about histories of both colonization and resistance, recent successes of grassroots organizing in Peabody, powerful organizing happening all in Navajo, making choices about who to work with and who not to work with, militarization of the Pacific South, spiritual work in prisons for healing, queerness in Pacific Islander cultures, history of local Chochenyo/Ohlone lands, California's extermination policies towards Indigenous people, A.I.M (American Indian Movement)'s presence in Bay Area, door-knocking by Indian People Organized for Change, and ongoing desecration of Ohlone sacred/burial sites and remains.

The moderator, a staff member from Catalyst, did something with the question and answer period that I appreciated. They invited people to ask questions and then sort of gathered them up and asked the panelists to respond to whichever questions they wished to. To me this seemed to give power back to the speakers which I

think is important especially in spaces where the majority of the question-askers are non-Indigenous people who may have "well-meaning" but problematic or offensive questions. Then speakers have time to think through an answer or can decide not to answer at all.

After the panel, a donation request was made and over \$600 was raised to support each of the speakers' important work. This is a good thing to remember when hosting speaking events; many people were clearly ready to throw down some support for these powerhouse organizers/organizations' work.

A question that was raised later in discussion was around what **creating anti-racist white culture** would look like, to act as an antithesis to white supremacist/culture-less/appropriative culture\*\*\*

\*\*\* So, to start looking at this question, Catalyst staff members approached participants about starting a Cultural Sharing component of ABP. Three ABP participants, along with a Catalyst staff member, took on coordinating this, where participants could have a few minutes from select sessions to share something that felt represented white anti-racist culture.

**[Email]:** *Remember when we sat together envisioning the culture we'd like to create in the world? Well, we're pretty certain we weren't the only ones who envisioned art, music, performance, poetry and dance as part of the revolutionary process. In fact, we're pretty sure Braden folks already engage in creating a culture of resistance and liberation. Please sign up for an upcoming "cultural sharing" time slot to help nourish your fellow comrades and strengthen our white anti-racist work!*

It was not hard, in the bay area, to feel deeply inspired by all the amazing cultural workers creating incredible works of art to compliment and embolden various struggles. One example was an event I attended early on, called “UnDocunation”:

**[Email]:** *Speaking of art & culture in movement work....there's an event I'm planning on going to on Friday and wanted to invite you all. It's at the International House and it's free! It's called UndocuNation, check out the blurb below.*

*The Center for Race and Gender (CRG), CultureStr/ke and the Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies (TDPS) is thrilled to announce this year's UndocuNation at UC Berkeley. We will be bringing together artists, community members, students, faculty and staff from California and the nation focusing attention on critical issues affecting undocumented immigrant communities. Hosted by Bay Area artist Favianna Rodríguez, UndocuNation is an evening of culture jamming, visual art, and performances addressing the devastating consequences of our country's broken immigration system.*

*Artists from different racial and sexual backgrounds, immigration history and documentation statuses will be sharing artwork and cultural interventions about the current immigration crisis through performances, film excerpts, installations, music and readings. The collaboration of these creative artists attempts to use images and stories to facilitate dialogue that can inspire. UndocuNation, is also part of a series of workshops that have been taking place nationwide has been presented in major U.S. cities, including at our own Bay Area Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, NC.*

*Our list of artists includes:*

- *Favianna Rodriguez, visual artist*
- *Julio Salgado, activist*
- *Aracely Mondragon, Chicana poet*
- *Yosimar Reyes, Two Spirit Poeta*
- *Josh Healey, poet and comic storyteller*
- *Berenice Dimas, Queer Jaranera*
- *Persia, International Glamorous Drag Queen*
- *Hertz Alegrio, visual artist*
- *Alex Bow, transgender surrealist pop artist*
- *Jesús Iñiguez, spoken word activist*
- *Khushboo Kataria Gulati, Kali Desi Artist Storyteller*
- *Melanie Cervantes & Jesus Barraza*

*We will also be accompanied by the delightful presence of El Teatro de Estánfor directed by Cherrie L. Moraga. In addition to a performance by Poetry for the the People directed by Aya de León.*

In addition, another Braden participant organized a “Cultural Production and Organizing breakout session” and also offered to teach Theatre of the Oppressed games and techniques to anyone interested. \*

Here are some resources shared from that breakout session:

***What is cultural organizing and a revolutionary artist practice? (articles, lectures, panels, blogs, etc.)***

Interview with Cultural Organizer Favianna Rodriguez - <http://culturalorganizing.org/?p=993>

Planning the Revolution Over Collards -

<http://artsanddemocracy.org/detail-page/?program=bridge&capID=65>

What is cultural organizing? - [http://culturalorganizing.org/?page\\_id=44](http://culturalorganizing.org/?page_id=44)

Art & Activism interview with Highlander organizer -

<http://highlandercenter.org/art-and-activism-an-interview-with->

[highlanders-cultural-organizer/](#)

Revolutionary Art - [http://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit\\_crit/marxist-aesthetics.htm](http://www.marxists.org/subject/art/lit_crit/marxist-aesthetics.htm)

### **Examples of Revolutionary Art**

Candy Chang - <http://candychang.com/>

Art related to [immigrant justice](#) in the US -

[http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/09/redefining the immigration debate through art.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/09/redefining_the_immigration_debate_through_art.html)

No One Is Illegal: People's History of Kanada - [http://noii-van.resist.ca/?page\\_id=522](http://noii-van.resist.ca/?page_id=522)

Map of One Thousand Waikiki Stories -

<http://www.downwindproductions.com/index.html>

"Buried Voices" film - <http://vimeo.com/43092751>

Melanie Schambach - tar sands mural -

[http://www.melanieschambach.com/galeria - Art with Community.html](http://www.melanieschambach.com/galeria - Art_with_Community.html)

Damali Ayo - Touch Your Own Hair t-shirts:

<http://www.cafepress.com/touchyourownhair>

Aaron Paquette - <http://society6.com/aaronpaquette>

Gord Hill - <http://www.fernwoodpublishing.ca/author/Gord-Hill/>

The Men's Banner Project - <http://celestrya-mensbanner.blogspot.com/>

Erin Kosmo - <http://erinkosmo.blogspot.com/>

No Valentines on Stolen Native Land -

<http://novalentinesonstolenland.blogspot.com/>

Michael Nicoll Yahgulaanas - <http://mny.ca/en/>

Marika Swan - <http://marikaswan.com/>

Jamie Black - Reddress Project -

<http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/8thfire/2011/12/reddress-project.html>

Open letter from artists and cultural producers: End the 'Border Security'

TV Series - <http://rabble.ca/news/2013/04/open-letter-artists-and-cultural-producers-end-border-security-tv-series>

Sticker campaign targets racist BC lieutenant-governor -

<http://warriorpublications.wordpress.com/2012/08/15/sticker-campaign-targets-racist-b-c-lieutenant-governor/>

"We're a culture, not a costume" poster project -

<http://lissawriting.wordpress.com/2011/10/23/racism-think/>

Un-Fair Campaign - Duluth University - <http://unfaircampaign.org/>



Short film by Ruby Smith-Diaz -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Is6k34GLcj4&feature=youtu.be>

What if we speak? Words for Idle No More chapbook -

[http://issuu.com/kathryngylennon/docs/what\\_if\\_we\\_speak\\_-\\_idlenomore- december\\_2012](http://issuu.com/kathryngylennon/docs/what_if_we_speak_-_idlenomore- december_2012)

"My Country" - Rachele Van Zanten -

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAwYIYr-4kk&list=PLW-16OdS4OM-B5\\_1JDGd6XnqDzbZxLfum](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAwYIYr-4kk&list=PLW-16OdS4OM-B5_1JDGd6XnqDzbZxLfum)

Stayceyann Chin - "Feminist or a Womanist?" -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQOmyebFVV8>

Book- Signs of Change: Social Movement Cultures 1960s to Now -

[http://www.justseeds.org/josh\\_macphee/04signsofcha.html](http://www.justseeds.org/josh_macphee/04signsofcha.html)

### **Organizations that Support this Work:**

Arts & Democracy - <http://artsanddemocracy.org/index.php>

Culture/Strike - <http://culturestrike.net/about>

Center for Artistic Activism - <http://artisticactivism.org/>

The Prison Arts Coalition - <http://theprisonartscoalition.com/gallery/>

We Don't Cross Borders, Borders Cross Us -

<http://www.crossbordersydney.org/>

Bread & Puppet Theatre - <http://breadandpuppet.org/>

YouthMADE: Media Arts Diversity Education:

<http://educ.ubc.ca/faculty/shapka/youthmade/index.html>

Purple Thistle Center - <http://www.purplethistle.ca/>

Redwire Magazine -

<http://users.resist.ca/www.redwiremag.com/contact.htm>,

<http://www.redwiremag.com/site/redwire/index>

Brass Liberation Orchestra - <http://brassliberation.org/>

Raptivism - <http://raptivism.tumblr.com/>

Beehive Collective - <http://www.beehivecollective.org/english/front.htm>

SNAG Magazine - <http://www.snagmagazine.com/>

Red Wedge Magazine - <http://www.redwedgemagazine.com/index.html>

Just Seeds Artist Cooperative - <http://justseeds.org/>



And in that spirit, I decided to post some of my artwork on my blog:

**[Blog Post]:** *About the print...*

*This print is about my relationship to the land and to colonization. I have lived on Indigenous peoples' homelands my whole life without knowing the history of all of the places, the Indigenous place names, the languages spoken, or the histories that preceded my standing on those lands. As a settler, the histories that I am implicated in (and that are continuing on right now) are conveniently and purposefully hidden and lied about. Once I started being taught the truth, the feelings I had standing on the land changed as well. This print represents the my realization of some of the actual histories of these lands, which include the genocidal processes of colonization including murder and land theft that contributed to my living here and occupying Indigenous peoples' homelands as part of settler society. It is also a stepping off point to recognizing that there are many histories of these lands that have been here long before I or any other colonizers stepped foot here, as well as histories that have continued on beyond contact with colonizers and into the present time. For me, it is a reflection and a call to action.*

After this week's open session, a member of the BLT and I talked about hosting a break-out meeting or series of meetings, to talk about "What does Indigenous solidarity look like in our work?", as there had been a variety of different responses to the panel and we seemed to have barely scratched the surface of thinking about colonialism, Indigenous resurgence, resistance and sovereignty, and our own journeys to where we currently live and participate in ongoing colonialism.

**[Email]** *Meet-up and potluck, continuing the conversations about "What does Indigenous solidarity look like in our work?"*

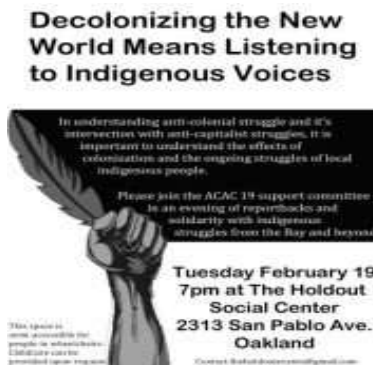
*I recently received a call-out for a Day of Indigenous Rights Teach-ins on George Manuel*

*<<http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/about/george.htm>>'s Birthday (more info below); in this spirit and also as a continuation of the conversations started last Sunday for more space to figure these questions out together since our conversation about it in the session felt so short and that there was so much more to dive into, myself and Dylan would like to put out a meeting time for anyone who would like to talk about "What does Indigenous solidarity look like in our work?". This is for everyone who is interested in continuing this conversation.*

*Also, just another reminder about the event tomorrow night at the Holdout Social Center: "Decolonizing the New World Means Listening to Indigenous Voices" at 7:30pm at the Holdout at 2313 San Pablo Ave, Oakland. Corrina Gould (from Saturday's panel) will be speaking, along with a number of other folks involved in local Indigenous organizing and a Navajo elder from Arizona. If anyone has questions about tomorrow's event or wants to meet up beforehand and go together, please get in touch. More info here is in the attached poster and here:*

<https://supporttheacac19.wordpress.com/>

*See ya'll soon! Annie Morgan*



*Text: "In understanding anti-colonial struggle and its intersection with anti-capitalist struggles, it is important to understand the efforts of colonization and the ongoing struggles of local Indigenous people. Please join the ACAC 19 support committee in an evening of reportbacks and solidarity"*

*with Indigenous struggles from the Bay and beyond.”*

After this powerful event at the Holdout, a follow up meeting was planned, where a group called the Bay Area Indigenous Solidarity (BAIS) was formed. I gratefully accepted an invitation to join the meeting and soon was attending the bi-weekly or monthly BAIS meetings. Through this group, I was able to learn more about local land struggles and more. We functioned mainly as an educational group, with members sharing resources and discussing readings, videos and zines. We also answered a request for some support for an event in April, a celebration of the 2 year long encampment at Sogorea Te, description below by a member of the BLT. After that is a blog post of some of the collected resources we shared in the group:

*About Sogorea Te: Sunday is the 2 year anniversary of the start of a spiritual encampment in Glen Cove (Sogorea Te) in Vallejo, about 30 min north of oakland. Sogorea Te is a 3,500 year old burial ground of the Ohlone that was going to be desecrated. Corrina from the Indigenous Resistance panel talked briefly about Glen Cove, she's Ohlone. For 109 days the encampment successfully prevented the Greater Vallejo Recreation District from desecrating the site. Hundreds of Native folks and supporters came through, and it ended up being a galvanizing moment for indigenous resistance and solidarity struggles in the bay area. The encampment started midway through my year of braden and over half of us got involved, organizing for it, sleeping up there, donating, helping to coordinate different aspects, etc. It was a great way for all of us to learn more about how to be in solidarity with indigenous leadership.*

Additionally, the group of ABP participants who came to the potluck about anti-colonialism and Indigenous solidarity met several times. Our first potluck turned out almost 20 people! I was really thrilled to

see how many people wanted to push themselves and keep learning and engage in conversations with others in the program about what it meant to center anti-colonialism in their work. There were some really encouraging examples, in my opinion, of taking the discussion seriously. For example, one organizer, who works with groups impacted by pesticides, pollution and environmental racism, recognized that she had not reached out to local Indigenous communities very much and so made a goal for herself to attend a community event in the coming week, to start building relationships and hopefully move towards being able to support whatever it is the specific communities are working on.

Here is my sample agenda from our first meeting:

*Intro: 15 minutes (start this by 6:30 after people get food, etc.)*

*Round - everyone says name and answers question, “What encouraged you to come here?” - Big group round share (not popcorn style\* (\*popcorn style is where people just speak whenever they want to, the group share where people go one after another tends to ensure that everyone speaks at least once and makes space for quiet moments)*

*Part 2: 45 minutes (start by 6:45)*

*Question, “Have you done any Indigenous solidarity work in your organizing? Why or why not?” Discuss with small group (small groups of three).*

*Folks will have 15 minutes to discuss in their small groups then we'll do a shareback with the big group.*

*Part 3: Question, “What's possible? What are you thinking about?”*

*Discuss with a partner (pair off with more experienced/less experienced person\*\*) - Report back to the group*

*Close: Suggest/Pair up folks who are interested?*

*\*\*We suggested this as there were some people in the room who had been part of these discussions or who had worked with anti-*

colonial groups or had done Indigenous solidarity work before and some people for who this was all really new. The partners were intended to act as support and a way to both support the newer people and utilize people with more experience.

[Blog Post]: *Sharing links re: Indigenous solidarity, “allyship”, local struggles and more*

Posted on [March 21, 2013](#) by [ANNIEMBANKS](#)

*From a number of folks that I have had the privilege of meeting recently, here are some resources about Indigenous solidarity, “allyship” and local struggles, that have been mentioned, discussed and shared; I put the word “allyship” in quotations as it’s a term that I feel is important to not take on as a title or claim but rather to think about the meaning of being “allied” with someone and/or a struggle without claiming it or focusing on an identity related to this alliance rather than the work itself.*

*Also, a number of these resources I first came across in the **Unsettling Minnesota Sourcebook, “Unsettling Ourselves: Reflections and Resources for Deconstructing Colonial Mentality,”** available online as a .pdf @ [http://unsettlingminnesota.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/um\\_sourcebook\\_jan10\\_revision.pdf](http://unsettlingminnesota.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/um_sourcebook_jan10_revision.pdf) and also available to order as a hardcopy here: <http://unsettlingminnesota.org/> (\*I also have a copy that I’m happy to loan out!)*

*Additional links/resources:*

**“Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy” by Andrea Smith** (article)

**“White Supremacy Culture” by Tema Okun** (article)

**“Understanding Colonizer Status” by WaziyaTiwin** (article)

**“So You Want to be an Ally!”** (zine)

**“Harsha Walia on Anti-Oppression, Decolonization, and Responsible Allyship”** (video)

**“White Shamans and Medicine Men”, Pt. 1 – 3** (video)

**“Decolonization is not a metaphor” by Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang** (article)

*And, here is a film I was fortunate to see recently, about the land struggles happening here in the Bay Area:*

**“Buried Voices”**, which chronicles some of the struggle to protect a local sacred place, led by Ohlone and Miwok people.

Further resources from the group’s readings/discussions:

**“Decolonizing Antiracism” by Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua**

**“Decolonizing Resistance, Challenging Colonial States”** by Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright

**Speech by Chief Seattle:**

<http://www.synaptic.bc.ca/ejournal/SeattleSpeechVersion2.htm>

**Andrea Smith, “Interview” on Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide.** (video; starts at 9:25 on Youtube).

**Winona LaDuke, “The Militarization of Indian Country”** (interview on Democracy Now!)

**Andrea Smith - Indigenous Feminism Without Apology:**

<http://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/2011/09/08/indigenous-feminism-without-apology/>

**Everything is Stolen, What Now? by Kenji Liu**

<http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/everything-is-stolen-what-now/>

**Glen Cove website (local history/struggles):**

[www.protectglencove.org](http://www.protectglencove.org)

**Ally Bill of Responsibilities - Lynn Gehl -**

<http://www.lynngehl.com/my-ally-bill-of-responsibilities.html>

**Decolonizing Together by Harsha Walia -**

<http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/decolonizing-together>

Andrea Smith's piece, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy" was read in both the BAIS group and ABP and was often referred back to. Andrea Smith's newer piece, "The Problem with Privilege", was also shared widely after it came out. In addition, two articles that I found myself constantly referring to (and which a friend had sent me together, appropriately enough, a few years ago) are Waziyatiwin's "Understanding Colonizer Status", where Waziyatiwin looks at different theories about colonizers, outlines some of the ways that "self-rejecting colonizers" can act as allies, and some key points around what it means to work in solidarity or alliance with Indigenous people as non-Indigenous/settler/colonizer people. Waziyatiwin addresses cultural appropriation and ends the article with "Points to Remember for Indigenous Solidarity Activists".

The other article is "White Supremacy Culture" where Tema Okun outlines some ways that white supremacy culture shows up in organizations, which when I first read it years ago, I had never thought of as contributing directly to white supremacy culture but now this article has enabled me to see these aspects more clearly. Examples include perfectionism, defensiveness, sense of urgency, competitiveness, either/or thinking and individualism. Tema Okun offers descriptions of each as well as "antidotes" to each.

**SESSION 6**

*The Black Liberation Struggle*

**[Blog Post]** Here are the readings from our Week 6 session, which included an immensely powerful session from guest facilitators Alicia and Juana from POWER (<http://www.peopleorganized.org/>)!

**"Based on POWER's unique approach to organizing, we are successfully building power for low-wage workers, tenants and**

**families. Together, POWER members have waged more than twenty campaigns to improve the living and working conditions for welfare workers, domestic workers, low-income tenants and other working class people of color."**

Alicia and Juana guided our group through a timeline about the Black liberation struggle. This exercise made me aware of how much incredible history there is and that I know very little about it. This session ignited a desire in me to educate myself more about the Black liberation struggle in the "united states".

*Additionally, there were a selection and additional suggestions of books available at Week 6's session that I wanted to share here:*

*Black Reconstruction by W.E.B. Du Bois; Assata: An Autobiography by Assata Shakur, Angela Davis; The Color of Violence: The Incite! Anthology by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence; Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision by Barbara Ransby; Review: Letters from Mississippi: Reports from Civil Rights Volunteers and Freedom School Poetry of the 1964; Freedom Summer edited by Elizabeth Martinez; Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a*



*Continent by Eduardo Galeano; This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa; Transgender Warriors: Making History From Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman by Leslie Feinberg; What Lies Beneath: Katrina, Race, and the State of the Nation edited by South End Press Collective; When the Prisoners Ran Walpole: A True Story in the Movement for Prison Abolition by Jamie Bissonette.*

*Also, another Braden participant shared this interview with the incredible June Jordan from the From the Vault radio archives (<http://fromthevaltradio.org/home/2011/03/30/ftv-255-june-jordan/>).*

Being in the bay area and especially in Oakland meant that I was surrounded by the rich history of Black liberation struggles. On street corners you can see signs acknowledging the Black Panther Party's work to install street signs there. The Panthers' Programs of Survival Pending Revolution really inspire me. Their breakfast programs led to the first government-instituted breakfast programs. While organizing a revolutionary liberation struggle, the Panthers also worked on what was needed in the communities for survival.

Black resistance to white supremacy started as soon as white colonizers stole African people in order to force them into slavery, compounding their original attempted genocide of people Indigenous to Turtle Island with the enslavement of people Indigenous to African countries. In "American Bondage, American Freedom" from *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America*, Vincent Harding describes rebellions, suicides, and captures of vessels by people from Africa, as they resisted being forced into slavery. Harding describes how the "great collections of colonial law (...) shut the door in the face of black freedom". Similarly to the actions of the Canadian government against

Indigenous peoples, cultural practices and languages from Africa were banned by American laws. However, despite intense repression, people still resisted. Harding describes how, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century,

*The "freedom struggles of the black forerunners often followed the patterns of rebellion established earlier. (...) African men and women denied the power and legitimacy of white laws and white enforcers. Some engaged in outward acts of rebellion before breaking free; most simply ran to the wilderness, to the rivers, to the docks. At times the runaways attempted to consolidate their strength and their gains by developing what was essentially small guerilla bands, maintaining a constant opposition to the surrounding white society and its laws. (Occasionally these bands contained white and black members alike). Elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere, where they usually operated in large numbers, these bands were called "maroons." In North America they were most often called "outliers," and the colonial laws of slavery and bondage were filled with persistent concern for runaways and insurrectionists, an early "troublesome presence".*

*Thus in Virginia, as early as the 1650s, there were reports of fugitive Africans attempting "to form small armed groups in various sections of the colony and to harass neighboring plantations, at the same time creating bases to which others might flee." (...) blacks and whites were discovered together in a conspiracy to overpower their masters and make a break for freedom. Joint action of this sort was not exceptional, and helped explain why the wedge had to be driven between blacks and poor whites."*

The histories of slave rebellions inspire me to no end and encouraged me to write a longer blog post, looking at my motivations for doing the Anne Braden Program and some of the

ways that racism and whiteness was used in order to break solidarity between enslaved black people and poor white people, as well as with Indigenous people who also participated in rebellions and had long resisted colonization, genocide and enslavement at the hands of the colonizers.

**[Blog Post]:** *A Responsibility of Talking to Each Other (Part 2)*  
Posted on [March 9, 2013](#) by [anniembanks](#)

*“Why should white settler people oppose and work against racism and colonialism?”*

*In re-reading my previous post, I got to thinking, “do I even really outline my reasons for why I’m doing this program, in the big picture?,” such as why I feel passionate about anti-racism and anti-colonialism? I think that’s an important place to start, or continue, so I am going to write some reflections on that here.*

*These thoughts are incomplete and I wish to balance my desire to post and engage in dialogue with recognition of the weight of what I am writing about and my continual ongoing learning process. I also recognize that it’s all too easy for me to give up and remain silent. These thoughts are all from and influenced by people in my life and authors, scholars and teachers and a wide variety of sources, some of which I have listed [in previous posts], some of which I’ve no doubt not acknowledged or forgotten, but would gladly search for if anyone would like further information, resources or links. This post is also inspired by other Anne Braden Program participants’ writing at the Braden Journal\*. \*A blog started by a Braden participant, with writing from multiple participants and a place to continue our learning collectively! <http://thebradenjournal.blogspot.ca/>*

*Killing in the name*

*“Killing in the name of!/ Some of those that work forces, are the same that burn crosses/Well now you do what they told ya/Those who died are justified, for wearing the badge, they’re the chosen whites.” - Rage Against the Machine*

*In the past, I found it easier to look at racism and colonialism as something that was “bad” but not as something that benefited or privileged myself, my family and other white people. Coming to see and understand white supremacy and white privilege as the flipside of racism has helped me to think differently about larger systems of oppression, both historically and now. White people have long been the beneficiaries of racist violence, invasions, wars, massacres, land grabs, enslavement, policies, laws, organization, and nearly countless atrocities committed in the name of assumed superiority, domination, racism, colonialism, slavery, hatred, profit, greed, often under the guise of words like “development”, “betterment”, “help”, “progress”, “liberation” and “civilization”.*

*A common theme in our readings has been the creation of whiteness in order to solidify groups of people with immense differences, such as working class or poor Europeans and wealthier, ruling class Europeans. “Whiteness” as a concept served to give a new identity to a large group who previously had not been unified under one such title. This enabled people with more power, usually upper-class or ruling class Europeans, to give out privileges such as stolen land, voting rights, better jobs, and freedom from slavery, based on this shared whiteness.*

*So, people who had previously faced persecution, such as people from Ireland and Southern and Eastern Europe, were now being lumped together under “whiteness” to ensure a critical mass of people protecting the rights and interests of the wealthy and privileged white elite – and now the relative privileges accorded to*

*all white people. Fanning the flames of colonialism, racism and anti-immigrant sentiment by white elites ensured that solidarity between poor and working class white people and Indigenous people, slaves, and workers of color did not flourish and that power seized by violence, genocide and theft was maintained.*

#### *Collective stake in liberation*

*“If you’ve come here to help me, you’re wasting your time. But if you’ve come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” – Aboriginal activists’ group, Queensland, 1970s*

*Just as there has been white affirmative action for centuries, there has also been manufactured white solidarity. Has this allegiance benefited all white people? Yes, whether it be from the allotments of “free” land, stolen from Indigenous people, freedom from slavery, or jobs overseeing those who are enslaved and all of the contemporary ways that white settlers continue to prosper due to their position in this racist and colonial society in what is now called “North America”. This also occurs at different degrees as huge gaps divide those in poverty from the wealthy. These privileges also depend on a brutal dehumanization of people of colour and Indigenous people in order to flourish. What are the possibilities if this manufactured solidarity based in white supremacy was replaced instead with solidarity based in interconnected struggles for liberation and a recognition of collective humanity?*

*I can remember a classroom discussion years ago about how colonizers must close off their hearts in order to colonize. This has stuck with me as I go through this work, in remembering the impact that doing and living racism and colonialism has on even those who benefit from it. How much of white peoples’ collective humanity has*

*to be continuously eroded in order for these dehumanizing systems of oppression to remain in place?*

#### *The possibility of different worlds*

*“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.” – Arundhati Roy, from [“Come September”](#)*

*Some of the most meaningful and important relationships that I have in my life are with people of color and Indigenous folks, such as the people acknowledged above as those who have contributed so much to how I think about and understand the world. I can’t adequately describe the importance of these relationships, which racism, colonialism and white supremacy suggest are not important or valuable. In fact, these systems actively work to disrupt possibilities of connection and relationship-building, through various means, including formal or informal segregation, fear-mongering, and a promotion of racist ideologies.*

*Systemic and institutionalized racism and colonialism continues to silence, kill and imprison millions. But as long as there has been oppression, there has been incredible resistance. The resistance to colonialism, racism and oppression that is led by Indigenous communities and communities of color, by individuals and collective groups, has the potential to create or renew worlds that offer entirely different ways of relating to one another, that do not lead to the destruction of all life on this planet and that include the possibility of dignity for all people. This is the kind of vision I want to work and organize in support of and as a person for whom so much of the violent creation of “North America” was designed to benefit, I feel a deep sense of responsibility to work in support of these other possible worlds and the long-standing and on-going struggles led by*

*the people and communities most impacted by racism and colonialism.*

Michelle Alexander recently wrote a book called “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness,” where she describes the “rebirth of a caste-like system in the United States, one that has resulted in millions of African Americans locked behind bars and then relegated to a permanent second-class status—denied the very rights supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement”. Under the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment of the us constitution, slavery was deemed illegal except in the case of people who are incarcerated. It is legal to force imprisoned people to work for nothing (“*Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction***”). Thus, the united states has a massive motivation to keep the machine of the prison industrial complex rolling and prisons full of primarily people of color, especially Black men and now, Black women, who are the fastest growing population targeted by the PIC. Things have and have not changed very much or, as Michelle Alexander quotes, “*The more things change, the more they remain the same.*”

*“Yeah, officer from overseer, you need a little clarity? Check the similarity/The overseer rode around the plantation, the officer is off patrolling the nation/the overseer can stop you what you’re doing, the officer will pull you over just when he’s pursuing/the overseer had the right to get ill and if you fought back, the overseer had the right to kill/the officer has the right to arrest, and if you fight back they put a hole in your chest/woop, they both ride horses, after 400 years I’ve got no choices(...)” – KRS1, “Sound Of Da Police”, YEAR*

When I first arrived, I was alarmed at the gentrification that I saw happening all around me in the Mission district. The Mission district historically was largely a Latino neighborhood but has drastically changed over the last number of years. The tech industry has changed the demographics of who is moving in and large numbers of young white people with disposable incomes are coming to the Mission and raising the rents and changing the markets as they do. I caught myself feeling “catered to” at times, though I certainly did not have the income to eat out or even continue to rent in san francisco past my 3-month sublet. As I biked home from my late night job in north beach, I would count the numerous new bistros springing up, while family businesses owned by mainly people of color had to close and move out. Evictions are very common and a group started up to map all the evictions that are happening all over the city: <http://antievictionmappingproject.wordpress.com/> in addition to several advocacy and direct action groups and organizations including Causa Justa/Just Cause\*.

In my first weeks, I attended a rally in support of Kevin Clark, a young black teenager who was viciously beaten by san francisco police in the mission, just a few weeks before. He bravely spoke to the crowd and before he spoke, a community organizer described the direct link between gentrification and police brutality. The organizer’s words really stayed with me as I walked around “my” new neighborhood. They said “look around you, look at all of these fancy bistros, fancy stores. Don’t shop there. Don’t support them. The police come here and act like private security guards for the white and the wealthy. They intimidate, attack and murder young people of color, poor people, homeless people. To clear the streets for the people who want to spend their money at all these fancy places. Don’t cooperate!” I am paraphrasing, of course, but the reality of what this organizer said really resonated with what I saw



in the bay area, in addition to the obvious housing grab that was going on.

\*One of the organizations that a number of participants were placed with was Causa Justa :: Just Cause (CJJC), which describes its mission as:

*Causa Justa :: Just Cause builds grassroots power and leadership to create strong, equitable communities.*

*Born from a visionary merger between a Black organization and a Latino immigrant organization, we build bridges of solidarity between working class communities of color.*

*Through rights-based services, policy campaigns, civic engagement, and direct action, we improve conditions in our neighborhoods in the San Francisco Bay Area, and contribute to building the larger multi-racial, multi-generational movement needed for fundamental change.*

In our first weeks, a call went out over the ABP listserv, asking for support for one of CJJC's members who had recently had her home stolen from her, because of predatory loans. She needed to replace her roof and so she took out a loan but it was a bad loan. The fees and interest compounded and got out of control. The bank that loaned her the funds sold her loan to a firm who foreclosed her house and the firm she hired to help her lost her case. She was evicted by FAS Realty who changed the locks and gave her a week to move out. Community support and organizing extended her move out date for a month. The stress of the move created immense health problems for her. At 78, she had lived for 40 years in her home in north Oakland, now a hipster hotspot and quickly gentrifying neighborhood where many working class people of color who have lived there for decades and generations are being forced

out of their homes and realtors (like FAS) are buying the foreclosed homes to turn a profit and fatten their pockets. CJJC describes this as the biggest loss of wealth for black and latino communities since slavery. Entire blocks are now occupied by young middle-class white people and even by "activist-y" white people, who cannot afford to live in san francisco anymore. I saw this everywhere and felt very aware of my own participation in the gentrification. While I was there, there were numerous rallies against gentrification where local organizers challenged young activists, especially young wealthy white folks, to think about this reality and to consider what impact they were having on spaces, places and communities in the bay.

One conversation that we were having within ourselves in the program was about gentrification, mobility, "home", settlement, colonization, racism and privilege. Many activists and progressive/radical people move to the bay because it is a political stronghold of radicals. I've heard it described as the "activist black-hole" and I can understand that draw. I struggled with feelings of wanting to stay, of wanting to remain in such a vitally active environment with so many incredible people and histories. But I also listened to a voice inside (and voices outside!) that suggested that I had responsibilities to the places where I have lived for much of my life. Additionally, many of us in the program talked about the need to "take the work home", back to our communities and the places we grew up. I heard a speaker at an anti-gentrification rally suggest that the most radical thing that many of the young white folks who moved to the bay could do, to fight gentrification, would be to move back in with their parents. Conversely, many people also talked about the worthiness of staying in a place for a while that feeds you, that nourishes your activism.

In all, there are realities upon realities that compound – most of us who are not Indigenous to this land are either settlers or people

who were forced to come to these lands and were often forced to live in certain areas\*. The dynamics of moving into an area, stealing peoples' land, and calling it home, are playing out again and again, colonization happening constantly. And it's important to remember that the colonization of Indigenous territories is at the root of what formed "America" and then the theft of labor (and culture and lives and homes) from black and brown people. So again, things have and have not changed...

\*One example of environmental racism is Richmond, a suburb of the bay area, near Oakland. Richmond is on Ohlone territories and has also long been home to many Black families – because during world war II Black families were only allowed to buy homes there. Not surprisingly, this is the area where much of the heavy industry is based out of. Chevron's multiple refineries, the Santa Fe train, and diesel trucks pour pollution, smog and smoke into the air daily and children's asthma rates in Richmond are 5-10 times higher than other nearby counties.

*When considering the Chevron refinery in particular, 79% of people within one mile of the refinery are people of color, and over 25% are below the national poverty line (Morello-Frosch, 2008)*

*Richmond residents have been burdened by the impacts of environmental pollution for decades, and have been struggling to achieve a healthy and just environment. In particular, elevated rates of health problems—most notably child and adult asthma—in Richmond have driven Richmond residents' environmental justice struggle. (from Communities for a Better Environment Richmond Health Survey: <http://www.cbecal.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Richmond-Health-Survey.pdf>)*

There are days in Richmond when residents are advised not to leave their homes due to the poor air quality. And two years ago a huge fire erupted at a Chevron refinery which sent 15,000 people to the hospital. At a recent Idle No More rally in Richmond, a community member spoke about her visit to the hospital where she had her vitals checked and was then sent home. She has since suffered a variety of ailments and has tested positive for various types of toxins in her system and organs.

Here are some U.S. stats (from Earth First! Journal, "what do you know about environmental justice?" quiz):

*Approximately 50% of Indigenous people live in communities near uncontrolled toxic waste sites.*

*Migrant farm workers have 69% stomach cancer rates.*

*African Americans are 79% more likely than whites to live in areas of high density industrial pollution.*

*Three of the largest hazardous waste landfills, containing over 40% of the total national permitted commercial capacity, remain in just two African American communities (Emelle, Alabama and Alsen, Louisiana) and one Latino community (Kettleman City, California).*

*Penalties under hazardous waste laws at sites with the highest white population were 500% higher than penalties with the greatest population of people of color, averaging \$335, 566 vs. \$55,318.*

*Approximately 400 Native American miners died due to radiation poisoning, cancers and other illnesses caused by uranium mining and milling on the Rio Puerco in sacred Navajo land.*

[\(http://earthfirstjournal.org/\)](http://earthfirstjournal.org/)

## SESSION 7

### *Imperialism and Global Peoples' Movements for Justice*

The guest speakers that we had were some of the highlights of the program for me. From the start, we were so blessed with incredible speakers – from Grace Lee Boggs (via Skype) to Alicia and Juana from POWER to this session's guest speaker, Gopal Dayaneni, we had the privilege of hearing from long-time organizers, activists, scholars, community members, cultural workers and in general rad people.

Before Gopal came and spoke with us, we looked at the components of imperialism. Some of the larger components that were laid out included: economic exploitation, economic and geographic expansion, racism, militarism and war, values and ideology. Within that, people named the various underlining methods of imperialism, such as paternalism, Orientalism and scapegoating underneath "racism".

We also talked about neoliberalism and put together some of the puzzle pieces of neoliberalism, which included:

- Rule of the market
- Cuts to public services
- Deregulation
- Privatization
- Individualism

- Militarization
- Restriction of peoples' movements

(hum, sounds familiar huh?) In "A Brief History of Neoliberalism", David Harvey defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade."

We also talked about two frameworks that I have come to see as very useful:

Dialectics – tool of understanding the world and how to change it  
We were introduced to three principles of dialectics:

- Contradiction and the unity of opposites
- Transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa
- Change moves in spirals not in circles or straight lines

To be honest, I'm still working on understanding any of this but something I took out of our conversation on dialectics is the critical nature of conflict. That when "opposing" sides or views inevitably clash or come into conflict, it exposes needed truth and new potential (or at least I think that's something that dialectics would help explain...!)

Frederick Engels describes dialectics as, "a very simple process which is taking place everywhere and every day, which any child can understand."

We also looked at the praxis model :



**The Praxis Wheel. Art by Joshua Kahn Russell.**

Gopal works with both the Ruckus Society (*provides environmental, human rights, and social justice organizers with the tools, training, and support needed to achieve their goals through the strategic use of creative, nonviolent direct action.* <http://ruckus.org>) and Movement Generation (*The Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project provides in-depth analysis and information about the global ecological crisis and facilitates strategic planning for action among leading organizers from urban Bay Area organizations working for economic and racial justice in communities of color.* <http://www.movementgeneration.org/>) and gave an amazing presentation, spanning multiple forms of resistance to imperialism globally, starting at 1492 in what Gopal called the “first globalization” to the Independence movement in India to the Cuban revolution. Gopal’s presentation touched on so many movements, ideologies, possibilities and frameworks that I cannot summarize it

all here but instead I will write down some of the questions and statements from his presentation that I made note of in my journal:

- The scale of the problem doesn’t dictate the scale of the solution
- How do we grapple with the end of empire?
- Economies collapse, empires crumble and ecosystems change
- Social inequity is a form of ecological imbalance
- Climate justice has brought people together in a way not seen before
- Globalization is homogenization
- Gentrification as a form of land grab
- We must work to stave off desperation and hopelessness
- How to change not reform?
- Zapatistas – focus on autonomous communities but also engage on national scale
- Small-scale solutions can solve big problems
- Listening to community, not just external solutions
- Relationships as the smallest unit of community
- What is your spiritual connection to place?
- Tom Goldtooth – sacred responsibility to protect place, politicize place, even settlers

Something that was remarkable to me about our guest speakers, besides from all their insights and experience was that they were all very eager and willing to meet, talk further and support us. Some of us met with Gopal and he was more than willing to talk with us about projects and ideas. These connections are very meaningful and I certainly feel very “resourced” through the people that I was able to meet and the different organizing work I got to learn about through ABP.

Speaking of the Ruckus Society and mentorship, we, early on, were matched with mentors and I was thrilled to find out that my mentor

worked for Ruckus and is, in general, a total bad-ass. Each participant in ABP is matched with a mentor, who we were encouraged to meet with at least three times. For me, my mentorship led to a deeper relationship with Ruckus as well as some meaningful reflection with my mentor, who was really generous with her time and support. I also ended up meeting with other mentors as well and was deeply grateful for the relationships I was able to build in my time in the program and after.

*And speaking of global resistance to imperialism...*

Chevron is not a new villain to me – they have recently bought into the plan (*not gonna happen!*) to make an “energy corridor” through unceded Wet’suwet’en territories in northeastern “british columbia”. There is powerful resistance to pipelines driven by the Indigenous communities for who these lands are and always have been home and a call for solidarity actions came at the end of March.

One of the participants in ABP who has been involved with Tar Sands resistance and other forms of resistance to environmental racism and destruction invited me to speak at a teach in and fundraiser, to support resistance happening in oklahoma and texas , where the keystone xl pipeline is currently being built.

I agreed and set to thinking about how to speak about the powerful resistance that I have been privileged to witness and work to support. I felt conflicted about speaking – was it just another example of a white person speaking for and about communities who can speak for themselves? I asked representatives from the various movements of resistance I was planning to talk about and while no one was able to skype in to speak to the crowd, I decided to show videos about the Unist’ot’en action camp and a slideshow by Melina Laboucan-Massimo, detailing the destruction of the tar

sands to her community and focus my words on my/our responsibility as people who are settlers on Indigenous lands. In addition, my comrade from ABP shared back information via video from Ponca people in oklahoma.

[Speaking Notes]*Tar Sands blockade dinner teach in/fundraiser*

*My name is Annie Banks and I am going to try to talk a bit about the Tar Sands operations up in “canada”.*

*I was just recently living in edmonton, alberta on Plains Cree territories for the past 8 months or so. I moved there with someone but also because of the powerful resistance to the tar sands that I witnessed in previous years, mainly through attending the Healing Walk, an annual event that takes place in the belly of the beast – it’s a 14 kilometre walk through Syncrude’s grounds. There I met an incredible array of people, from activists and leaders from local First Nations to people previously or presently employed in the tar sands. The collective spirit of resistance and healing and the heartbreaking reality of what is being done to the land and the people in the north inspired me to move closer and get involved.*

*In some ways I have come to see that the tar sands are a, in some ways, hugely exaggerated version of land struggles happening all over the americas and beyond. It is not so different, in my eyes, than the initial theft and destruction of Indigenous peoples’ land by the first colonizers and the attempted genocide of Indigenous people then. In addition to the impacts to Indigenous communities, people from countries all over are being subject to extremely vulnerable working positions as temporary foreign workers in the tar sands, which mimics in my mind the exploitation faced by workers like the Chinese workers on the railroads, many of whom died before the tracks were completed. I say this to put it in a context that informs*

*how I align myself with communities and forms of resistance – and visions for the future, in terms of following the leadership of most impacted frontline Indigenous communities who have long been resisting colonization in all its forms.*

*I learned a lot in my time in edmonton. I learned about multiple forms of long-standing community resistance to tar sands going on. There is use of the legal system, such as the ACFN (Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation)'s constitutional challenge against Shell Canada's tar sands expansions further into their territories and the Beaver Lake Cree Nation's case about their treaty violations. I also had the privilege of traveling to Wet'suwet'en territories to take part in an environmental action camp put on by the Wet'suwet'en and Unist'ot'en people, where they are actively opposing other pipelines that are attempting to forge an "energy corridor" through their lands. The Wet'suwet'en and Unist'ot'en are choosing to assert their Indigenous laws and not recognize british common law. Their struggles against pipelines are connected to the tar sands with fracking operations providing natural gas to tar sands and a proposed nuclear powered tar sands operation slated to destroy northern saskatchewan, an area already fighting off uranium mining and nuclear waste dumping.*

*I heard from industry and non-Indigenous settler people often that they felt that there is "nothing up north". The idea that there is "nothing up north" is directly connected in my opinion again to early colonizers' attitudes, that there weren't people in what is now called North America before Chris Columbus arrived, which of course is a lie. And it's lies like this that enable attitudes that have no regard for turning northern communities into literal dumping grounds for projects like the tar sands. These communities are also being used as a model for countries seeking similar projects to the tar sands world-*

*wide, with the added provision that the tar sands are supposedly "good" for the frontline communities that are most impacted.*

*I'm sure it's clear to everyone here that these kinds of projects need to be stopped. I want to touch on some of my thoughts around what it means to be a less-affected person seeking to work in solidarity with most-affected communities. I thought that moving to edmonton was going to mean that I was on the frontline, but I was definitely mistaken. edmonton is upstream from the tar sands and has plenty of green space, jogging trails and giant malls and nice library facilities. Further north, however, is where the tar sands actually live, and communities there (mainly of Indigenous people) are feeling the brunt – and actively resisting - the harms of the extraction. Instead of detailing this myself, I am going to show a slide show created by Melina Laboucan-Massimo, describing the impacts to her community of Cree people in Little Buffalo, a community downstream from the tar sands.*

*At the core of this destruction is the ongoing reality of colonization, which is the foundation of both canada and the united states. Colonization has meant the destruction of so much of the land as well as genocide and other deeply violent impacts to Indigenous communities. We don't learn this in school generally and many people are quick to suggest that that it is all in the past. Clearly, it's not. All of us, whether we want to or not, are living in this current colonial relationship. As partners in treaties (except in places where there are no treaties, which is all of british columbia and other places in canada too) and people and especially as settlers such as myself who are living on Indigenous peoples' lands, I feel there is an inherent responsibility for us to address the violations of treaties, the murderous impacts of industries like the tar sands, and to act from a place of solidarity with frontline Indigenous communities who have been resisting colonization and land destruction since it started.*

*The tar sands are illegal (just like Canada and the United States) and in violation of treaties, such as Treaty 8 in the area of the ACFN. Treaty violations have existed as long as the treaties themselves and the tar sands are incurring thousands upon thousands of treaty violations every day. Treaties are supposed to represent an agreement between nations to honor ways of life and to protect life. Clearly the tar sands and other such industries are working around the clock to do exactly the opposite. Beyond treaties, it's critical as people living on Indigenous communities' lands to recognize the impacts that these projects are having on frontline communities and take action in solidarity with the leadership and guidance of Indigenous people and communities fighting colonization, land destruction and ecocide. As a speaker recently said at a panel called "Decolonization means listening to Indigenous Voices", "You made your home here so you have to protect it."*

*In line with the title of that discussion, I'm going to be quiet now and show some videos, including two where Indigenous people from impacted communities will speak to the reality of what they are experiencing. The first film gives a basic outline of what the tar sands extraction process looks like and some of the climate impacts and is from a film called "H2Oil" which I would definitely recommend checking out, as it details the reality faced by the community of Fort Chipewyan, on the territories of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. Then Melina Laboucan-Massimo's film and I'll end with Franklin Lopez's video about the Unist'ot'en Action Camp and the powerful resistance of the Wet'suwet'en and Unist'ot'en people.*

**Mention:**

*Healing Walk, Fort MacMurray, July 5-6, 2013 – [healingwalk.org](http://healingwalk.org)  
Unist'ot'en Camp, can donate online, [unistotencamp.com](http://unistotencamp.com).*

ACFN – <http://acfnchallenge.wordpress.com/>

I also sold artwork there, with all the proceeds going to the Healing Walk and the Unist'ot'en Camp.



Want a copy? Email me and I'll send you one in exchange for a donation to either the Unist'ot'en camp (left) or the Healing Walk (right): [anniebee@riseup.net](mailto:anniebee@riseup.net)

And later in the month, some of us in the bay were excited to show our solidarity for such a powerful force of resistance as the Unist'ot'en camp, when the call came for solidarity actions:

*[Blog Post] Press Release: In solidarity with the Unist'ot'en March 30 Global Day of Action, supporters demonstrate and deliver message to Chevron Global Headquarters in San Ramon, CA*



Posted on [March 30, 2013](#) by [ANNIEMBANKS](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*In solidarity with a global day of actions happening all over North America on March 30, a group called Anti-Colonial Queer Action (ACQA) traveled from San Francisco to San Ramon, CA (Ohlone Territories), where Chevron has its global headquarters, to demonstrate against fracking pipelines on Unist'ot'en and Wet'suwet'en territories and deliver a message from the Unist'ot'en to Chevron.*

*ACQA hoisted a banner that stated "No Fracking Pipelines on Indigenous Territories," to the flagpoles outside of Chevron's compound at 6001 Bollinger Canyon Rd. Afterwards, members of ACQA read out and delivered a letter, written by Unist'ot'en spokesperson Freda Huson.*

*The letter outlines the Unist'ot'en's inalienable rights to their lands and to defend their lands. Chevron Corporation and all associated investors have acquired 50% ownership of the proposed Pacific Trail Pipeline project, a project which has already been evicted from Unist'ot'en lands. The letter is a warning of trespass to anyone who is infringing upon traditional Wet'suwet'en territory.*

*"The Unist'ot'en Camp is a resistance community created to ensure that no pipelines will ever cross Unist'ot'en traditional territory. They act to protect the land and the increasingly unstable climate, to do what is best for future generations." – "Stop Fracking Chevron" flyer*

*Chevron's impacts reach from up north in Unist'ot'en territory down to the Bay Area and around the world. In the Bay Area, Chevron's emissions from their Richmond refinery are responsible for impacting the health of frontline communities, which are primarily communities of color. Impacted communities around the Bay Area have been organizing against the harms from Chevron's toxic emissions.*

###

Read the Unist'ot'en's letter here: <http://calamites.resist.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Chevron-Letter.pdf>

Stop Fracking Chevron Flyer here: <http://calamites.resist.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Chevron-Flyer.pdf>

Unist'ot'en Camp website: <http://unistotencamp.com/>

## SESSION 8

*Deconstructing Class: Building Analysis and Power*

**[Program Handout]** Homework Due Sunday March 10:  
*Deconstructing Class*

*"Our class position influences how we understand the system, and it helps us all if we talk about how class works in our lives. Otherwise, it often becomes a barrier to our living and working together... One way the ruling class keeps us divided and fearful is by the social silence over class differences and the illusion that we are all just middle class." - Paul Kivel*



*We want to talk about class as part of the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Organizing Training Program because the systems of racism and class exploitation are deeply intertwined. We believe the fight against white supremacy and capitalism requires building multiracial, broad-based movements with working class leadership. There is a lot of confusion in the US around class, and who does that benefit? Capitalism keeps us confused about class and scared to talk about it, and part of the invisibility of class is strategic, because it invisibilizes the massive wealth disparity in this country and the systems that keep it in place. If we can't name it, talk about it, understand it, and understand how we fit into the picture and what that means, it will hinder our ability to build the multi-racial cross-class alliances and movements that we need in order to create fabulous, egalitarian social and economic systems.*

*Your homework is to use the "Working Definitions of Class", the "Class Chart" and the questions in "Where are You in the Class System?" to better understand different dimensions of your own class background. We want you to come to the next session prepared, as much as possible, to talk about where your class background fits in the big picture. You won't be asked to share the answers to these questions in the big group, but we will be breaking into class-based caucuses, and you may need to do some research ahead of time to figure out where*

*Note: We know some people might not have access to their families for lots of different reasons. If you don't have access to the people you lived with during most of your childhood, talk to us about some other options to explore your class background.*

*To ask your family BEFORE March 13th if possible:*

- *What was your family's average income over the course of your childhood (through high school age) and what were their primary occupations?*
- *What is your parent's/guardian's average income now and what is their main occupation?*
- *How much formal education did they get?*
- *Was income from accumulated wealth a significant factor in your family's finances during your childhood or now? (Accumulated wealth refers to things like inheritance, stocks, bonds, property, a business, or a farm).*
- *Was your family in debt or constantly worried about paying bills while you were growing up?*
- *How has race affected your family's experience of class?*
- *What is your current income level?*
- *Do you have savings or accumulated wealth like stocks, inheritance, or property?*
- *Do you have debt, and where did it come from? (Education, medical bills, etc).*
- *How much formal education have you had?*
- *How has race affected your experience of class?*
- *How has gender and sexual orientation affected your experience of class?*

*(From the "Catalyzing Liberation Toolkit: Anti-Racist Organizing to Build the 99% Movement" compiled by Catalyst Project and Chris Crass: <http://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/catalyzing%20liberation%20toolkit.pdf>)*

*[Notes from conversation with my dad] Question: How has race affected your experience of class? Benefited hugely. By being white. Had definite advantage in every step. First dibs on everything. The people who [I] worked with who were Black had to work ten times as hard to get something that came to me automatically. Jobs,*

*positions, things that you take for granted. Certain areas of town around Columbus where a Black person/POC couldn't live and that held true throughout the years (in the 40-50-60s while dad growing up and developing, done away with by time I was born). Part of red-lining? Yes.*

Conversations like this one were really powerful. I appreciated the opportunity to talk more with my dad and other members of my family, about race explicitly, and how privilege had played out in our lives. My dad is someone who has always taught me a great deal about social justice and raised me to be who I am.

Our discussions about class in the ABP started early, especially around the mutual aid collective. It was clear from the start that everyone, not just people who were forced due to their class position to have to ask for support, needed to be explicit about their class status, in order for us to have honest conversations about class. There were observations made by many about the nature of money and how it is and isn't talked about. Many of the poor and working class participants remarked that money was a constant subject for them growing up, that the social taboo against talking about money was not observed as it was by the middle- and ruling-class participants.

We split into class caucuses, Poor and Working Class, Middle-Class, and Managerial/Ruling Class caucuses. Within our caucuses we talked about many things, from our experiences growing up and what role money and class played in the various privileges or dis-privileges we experienced, what some of the similarities among us were based on our class background. In my class caucus, the

Middle-Class caucus, we talked about violence behind closed doors, the abuse, substance use and sexual violence that many people grew up with. We also talked about the various ways that our class protected us. One of my examples was of a conversation I had with a friend years previous, about our similar experiences of addiction and mental health in our family but our very different experiences of state surveillance and involvement in our lives. Due to systemic racism and the impoverishment of her family and community, my friend was constantly surveilled by children's services and was eventually taken away from her family and put into foster care. I, on the other hand, never experienced children's services being involved in my home life, despite the various similarities that she and I had. My white skin and wealth privilege ensured that our problems were left as our problems, to be dealt with behind closed doors, not for the state to decide and control.

As evidenced by what I just wrote, it's hard and not so useful to talk about class without talking about race (and gender, and ability on...) and I appreciated that ABP pushed us to think about the connection between class, race, gender, ability and more.

## SESSION 9

### *Developing Anti-Capitalist Feminist Analysis*

Thinking back on this week's session, it was one that raised some interesting realizations for me. As we discussed patriarchy, capitalism, sexual violence and gender, I thought about my own experiences with feminism, internalized patriarchy and the resulting feelings that I had coming out of the session. I have for a number of years worked in the sexual violence prevention field and so have

often been in the role of counseling people or presenting educational workshops about violence. I haven't spent much time processing the violence that I have both experienced and perpetrated in my life, though there have been intense processing periods for me that have come up as I worked alongside people who have caused and experienced harm and their advocates\*. *\*at my last workplace, the anti.violence.project, we worked to challenge the binary of survivor/perpetrator and instead talked about people who caused harm/experienced harm, as a way to talk about the ways that we can be both rather than one or the other.*

I think, in reflection, that being in a counseling space meant that I could detach from my own experiences and focus instead on talking about someone else's experience of violence. It became an identity of sorts and a protection too, as if by counseling others I could somehow escape dealing with or looking at my own history and experiences. In the room with the other participants, I could feel that role melting away and suddenly felt vulnerable in a way I hadn't for a while. it brought up a lot of thoughts for me, about the ways in which I had internalized a great deal of sexism and how that played out in my connecting (or not connecting) with feminism. The powerful words of Audre Lorde stuck with me, however, from my early start in violence prevention work, when my friend and supervisor encouraged myself and my coworker to read "Age, Race, Class and Sex" (one of our readings for this week). At that time, I had been reading Naomi Wolf's "the beauty myth" and was lovingly redirected, like "here, read this instead...". after reading Audre Lorde, bell hooks, and others, I was like "ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh". Things were changing inside me, as I realized that Wolf had been writing about white women, while Lorde and hooks addressed not only gender but race and other intersecting oppressions. It was like being able to see a whole picture finally, after looking at only one spot for too long. This kind of education dramatically changed not

only my thinking but my work in violence prevention, forever. In ABP, I was grateful to read Audre Lorde's brilliance again. Fortunately I've now had the privilege of reading so many incredible feminist authors including the writings of Indigenous authors writing about Indigenous feminisms, such as Jessica Danforth and Andrea Smith, who also challenge the notion of feminism as being a "white women's thing" and instead rightfully put it back in the hands of Indigenous women and women of color. See: "Feminism for Real" by Jessica Yee.

After we talked for a while in the session, we partnered with someone else and went for a walk, to talk about patriarchy in our lives, bodies and histories. As we walked, we discussed the following questions:

- What is the legacy you live with?
- When you wake up and go about your day, what are the ways this legacy plays out?
- How does this connect to white supremacy?

Some of the cis-men\* (\*people who identify as male who were also said to be male at birth, based on someone's opinion of what sex/gender they were) in the group posted to the listserv, processing some of their thoughts on patriarchy. I found myself unable to read their posts, as my own internalized patriarchy felt exposed and I felt unwilling to process both my and their relationship to it. In reflecting back on what feels useful about this experience, I was grateful to the participants who posted some really excellent resources about sexualized violence on our listserv, as it inevitably came up in our conversation on this day. In addition, I appreciated the conversations that started around trans-masculinity and different relationships to patriarchy, sexism and gender.

During the ABP, there was a Challenging Male Supremacy workshop and also a men's group and trans-masculine folks group that formed. There was also a group called Cast-Iron Cunts who began meeting in the bay and developed creative ways to confront and address patriarchy, including intervention cards and theatre of the oppressed exercises. I admit that I declined to be involved in the latter group as I have some deep-seated feelings of inferiority, as if my internalized shit and lack of knowledge of feminisms might make me unable to engage or be a "good feminist". I know this is bullshit but I couldn't deny that these feelings came up for me.

I don't want to draw a false parallel between gender and race when it comes to solidarity, allyship, etc. but I think I often learn about potential pitfalls and possibilities around "allyship" when I think about my own experiences with men and sexism. One thing that really rubs me the wrong way is when men spout feminist theory at me, not so as to engage with me in conversation or to hear my opinions on feminism, sexism or patriarchy, but instead to "one up" me or look like "experts" on feminism. I feel that this helps me to think about my relationship to anti-racism and anti-colonialism as a white person. Is my goal to look like a "good white anti-racist" or to actually chip away at the foundations of white supremacy? Am I claiming credit for ideas that are not mine, and getting "activist cred" for doing so?

My brilliant friends Sarah Hunt and Morgan Clare talk about allyship in their blog post at the Becoming Collective, "[Scales of Activism, Allyship, and the Embodiment of Resistance: a dialogue](http://becomingcollective.wordpress.com/2013/08/03/scales-of-activism-allyship-and-the-embodiment-of-resistance-a-dialogue/)":

*"I also think we need to ask ourselves about the impact of 'Indigenous allies' getting more credit for their activism than the unseen, everyday, uncelebrated work of Indigenous people working*

*to sustain our communities (or any ally getting more props than the groups to whom they're an ally). We might ask ourselves how allies can best work to make visible the groups they're aligning themselves with, rather than reproducing their own privilege. I'm reminded of this every time I go to a loonie twoonie fundraiser or an event to support local youth, where Indigenous people are coming together to better their communities on a local scale. You don't see this broadcast on the news or show up in articles crediting the great work of these parents, grandparents and friends. Yet this is the everyday work of sustaining Indigenous communities and making small scale changes. It is very political, in my mind. How would we have survived without this unseen labor? And where are the allies when we need to make 150 salmon sandwiches?" – Sarah Hunt*

And both authors conclude: *"Part of our responsibility becomes engaging in self-education so that we can better recognize the norms that allow certain bodies and lives to be valued over others, and so that we can engage in embodied resistance and activism in ways that feel good. Colonial power in general depends on normalizing the invisibility of certain people and groups, so by being witnesses for one another, maybe we can begin to challenge that invisibility in these spaces between us."*

- (<http://becomingcollective.wordpress.com/2013/08/03/scales-of-activism-allyship-and-the-embodiment-of-resistance-a-dialogue/>)

### **Midpoint reflections**

**[Draft Becoming Collective Blog Post] Talking to each other Part 3**

*I want to continue this blog post series with some reflections after the first two months of being in the Anne Braden program. The following points are ones that I have recognized as places that I*

*need to do work, among many other places. I am speaking to this specifically as a white person speaking to other white people; this is no way is a commentary on how anyone else should interact with white people, especially when a white person has said something oppressive! This is more about talking to someone in your peer group or someone with whom you share a/some feature(s) of identity (in this instance, whiteness) though of course these also may be relevant across differences but I would say it depends on the context, who is saying what, and what the power dynamics are.*

### *Critiquing from the sidelines*

*Something that we discussed early on in the program is the phenomenon of white people critiquing others from the sidelines, without actually stepping in and addressing the dynamics or behaviours that are happening. I know that I have done this all too often – waited until long after the oppressive behaviour was over to report back to someone who would also roll their eyes. Sometimes this is necessary, when there isn't space or opportunity to intervene or when it isn't safe, but as a white person witnessing another white person, for example, being racist, to critique from the sidelines isn't enough. There are all kinds of ways to intervene, to say something or to shut down oppressive dynamics. I've been thinking that role-playing this would be really useful, as sometimes I freeze up in situations and it's only later that I can fully think through how I would have like to reacted.*

*I think this is also related to another phenomenon that I have seen and enacted myself, that of leaving a situation, group, collective, job, etc. that has difficult or oppressive elements to it (that aren't*

*targeted at the person leaving). Rather than staying and working to transform/challenge the dynamics, it's often most intuitive for me to get myself out of the situation as soon as I can. Unfortunately, I have seen all too often that this then leaves all the work to the people left behind. I have been working on noticing who will be left with all the work if I leave and what benefit there might be if I stayed. Though sometimes it is really important to just get out of there, if there is a way I can take part in transforming the oppressiveness I want to stick around and dig in.*

### *Leaning In*

*Another point we have discussed is “leaning in” or how to engage more deeply with another person, group, collective or organization, rather than opting out, leaving or ignoring it. This relates to the above thoughts on how I can be more accountable and see through something that I am working on, rather than leaving when it gets difficult. Because that's another big part of privilege – the ability to leave when something gets difficult. I didn't see that this was part of privilege for a long time but I am starting to recognize it now. Most folks don't have the option to leave or ignore oppression, only those who can “opt in” to confronting a form of oppression can just turn around and decide that it doesn't matter.*

*I think for me leaning in also refers to the importance of relationship building rather than “distancing”. It's easy, when someone says something messed up, to want to move away from that person or distance myself from them. Instead I'm working to practice leaning in and building stronger ties with that person, so we can hold each other accountable and also have a base of trust and potentially*

*friendship to work from. This creates a different culture, which I have come to see is much-needed, even within so-called radical spaces. I have definitely been part of a culture of distancing previously; I am eager to change this as I have seen its ineffectiveness.*

#### *Inviting conversations*

*The last point is about having “inviting conversations” and how to engage with people in a way that invites more conversation, action and transformation. When I have been working through my own guilt and shame, I have noticed a tendency to want to shift those feelings over onto everyone else in a room. Soon enough, the numbers in the room go down and soon there aren’t many people interested in attending. This can set up a dynamic where it is only the few people willing to engage in this (often very ineffective) guilt and shame-based conversation are the ones meeting. I have come to see this as exclusionary and ineffective and largely based in a need to feel some kind of redemption or confession (see challenging Christian hegemony resources) rather than creating solid plans for action or transformation. This does raise difficult questions. How can conversations about white supremacy and systemic oppression be made to be more inviting without watering them down or making them “palatable” to white people? How to engage in difficult conversations without losing the very people one hopes to be in conversation with?*

### SESSION 10

#### *Grassroots Fundraising as Organizing*

Posted on [April 17, 2013](#) by [ANNIEMBANKS](#)

[Blog Post] (...) *One of these readings, “Are the Cops in Our Heads and Hearts?” by Paula X. Rojas, from INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, eds., The Revolution Will Not Be Funded, Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex, was introduced to me by my dear friend and (then) supervisor at work years ago and stuck with me for a long time, inspiring thoughts about the non-profit industrial complex and just what was the connection between where our funds were coming from and how that influenced our work as an organization. Additionally, it encouraged me to think of the ways that government and foundation funding can be used as a tool of surveillance and control over social justice organizing and as a mechanism to water down and de-radicalize various forms of activism and organizing.*

Within the ABP, we were asked to fundraise to recoup some of the actual costs of the program and to contribute to Catalyst’s ability to continue to offer not only the Anne Braden Program but the other work that they do, which includes intensive organizational development, support and power-sharing with local racial justice groups, and multiple trainings, presentations, panels and events throughout the year.

As we all prepared to fundraise our networks, I reflected on how different this experience would be for different participants, depending on class background. I knew for myself that I had a number of people that I could think of who might be willing to donate, but still struggled to come up with the total amount we were asked to aim for (I am still working on completing my fundraising commitment). A number of participants had already tapped their networks, for support to get to the program at all. On the other hand, a number of participants, due to their class status,

likely had not needed to tap these networks yet and had access to people with more disposable incomes and class privilege. This is oversimplified of course but in talking to other participants, I learned that I was not the only person thinking about these dynamics and how they would play out. Catalyst staff were happy to discuss these concerns with me, as they are very receptive to feedback and eager to grow and support each of us. The fundraising goals were not hard and fast and there was the sense that those who could fundraise for more due to their connections and privilege would be able to compensate for the smaller amounts brought in. In addition, time and time again I have seen and we all talked about the reality that someone's greater amount of wealth does not mean that they are more likely to share it and often it is shown that people with less money are more likely to give and share what they have.

Reading INCITE Women of Color's writings about the NPIC (define) and the pitfalls of foundation funding years ago has long encouraged me to think about ways that we can fund our movements without relying solely on gov't grants, foundation funds and other pools of money. An example that INCITE offered, of their funding from the Ford Foundation being cut when they vocally supported Palestinian liberation struggles, serves as a reminder of the role that funding plays in shifting or downright denying more radical agendas. Despite this, I have found myself writing countless grants and applications, because as we all know, so many important groups and movements are under-resourced. How do we survive? How do we support vital movements without becoming de-radicalized because of our funders? How do we do without grants, funders, and government money? Years ago a presenter in a class in the Indigenous studies program advised students to 'hit 'em in the pocketbook' when it came to being self-sustaining and defying oppressive government surveillance and control. He explained that

he meant not being funded by anyone, not being financially reliant on any outside force. There are innumerable examples of how people and communities manage to do this and the grassroots fundraising portion of ABP inspired me to dig deeper and look at what some of the possibilities are. It also challenged me to ask for money for the things that matter, something I have long believed in and practiced but not to the full extent of my ability.

[Exerpts from my fundraising letter to family and friends]: *As you know, I am in San Francisco on Chochenyo/Ohlone territories (Indigenous nations on whose land San Francisco is now located), participating in the Anne Braden Program.*

*When I think back to the beginning, I came to the program because I felt that my previous organizing was not coming from an entirely effective place. Braden has given me tools to work through my own barriers to realizing a vision for organizing, and frameworks with which to understand my role and more broadly, the role of white people in anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles. After the program, I feel like entire new worlds of possibility will be unfolding where previously I feel that I lacked perhaps a vision of my own, as I felt that most of the work I was doing was "in solidarity". Now I can more clearly articulate my stake in collective liberation and feel better-prepared to enter into organizing spaces where I can share this vision and work to create anti-racist culture collectively. It's been life-changing, extremely inspiring and incredibly enriching for me to do this program.*

*Here is a description of what the Catalyst Project does: Catalyst Project is a center for political education and movement-building based in the San Francisco Bay Area. We work to create a world where all people are free from oppression and exploitation. Catalyst Project works in majority white communities with the goal*

*of deepening anti-racist commitment and building multiracial movements for liberation. We create spaces for organizers to develop and share analysis, visions and strategies to build movements for racial, economic, gender and ecological justice. Catalyst programs prioritize leadership development, supporting grassroots organizations and multiracial alliance building. There are two paid staff at Catalyst and a large number of unpaid, volunteer staff. They work extremely hard to put on the Anne Braden Program and to support the numerous other programs that they run. I have witnessed first-hand how much work goes into the Anne Braden Program and it has been really inspiring to see so many people, most of whom have themselves done the Anne Braden Program, step up and put so much love, time and energy into making it happen. The staff and volunteers are overseen by a multiracial advisory board of super-power-house organizers, scholars, community members, activists, and long-time social justice advocates. It is with their guidance and support that the Catalyst staff decide what becomes curriculum and how the program will be as transformative as possible.*

*I have been really inspired by the program and the work that they do. I feel that training like this is really important, especially for white people on racism because if white people do not actively engage in dismantling racism, how will it end? Racism is still woven into every part of the agendas in all of the institutions that most of us have to interact with every day. Having programs like the Anne Braden Program and organizations like Catalyst are critical to a reimagining of society and culture where racism is seen as something that we all have a collective stake in ending. I would like to be involved for my whole life in working towards this material and cultural shift and so taking part in this program and continuing to support the Catalyst Project and the Anne Braden Program has been extremely empowering and resourceful.*

*The Catalyst Project does not receive any formal foundation funding or governmental monies. They rely on grassroots fundraising efforts to survive. I want to ask you, as someone who I think of as committed to social justice, if you would consider supporting this organization and the work they are doing.*

*Here is a link to where you can donate online: <https://npo1.networkforgood.org/Donate/Donate.aspx?npoSubscriptionId=4508>. I will also call you in the next little while to follow up about this and to answer any questions you have! With LOVE, deep commitment, fiery passion, excitement and gratitude,  
Annie*

## SESSION 11

*Visionary Politics: Another World is Possible; Open Session:*

Posted on [April 26, 2013](#) by [ANNIEMBANKS](#)

*[Blog Post] (...) For this session, we were fortunate enough to have an amazing panel of speakers that was open to the community. The speakers on the panel were (intros abbreviated by me):*

*Loubna Qutami is most known for being a founder, member and central organizer in the [Palestinian Youth Movement \(PYM\)](#), an international body of young Palestinians spanning across thirty three countries, who have come together to re-vitalize a grassroots movement for the full liberation of and return to their homeland and more.*

*Carla Perez is a dedicated mother and community organizer of Native/Latin American heritage residing in Oakland, California.*



*Today Carla coordinates Movement Generation (MG)'s community eco-justice training program, manages the MG Trainers Network and leads MG's Resiliency and Permaculture work.*

*Patty Berne is a Co-Founder and Director of [Sins Invalid](#).*

*Rachel Herzing is a long-time organizer with [Critical Resistance](#), a national organization dedicated to abolishing the prison industrial complex.*

*I definitely recommend clicking on these links to some really amazing local and international community organizations, some of which members of this year's Anne Braden Program have the privilege of volunteering and working with!*

*The panel on visionary politics and our conversations within Braden have been really powerful and transformative for me, especially since I have found that I have struggled in the past to articulate my own vision and goals in organizing, especially when I have focused solely on what *\*isn't\** working or what it is I/we are working against. Now I feel that I can more clearly articulate my own stake in collective liberation and feel better-prepared to enter into organizing spaces where I can share this vision and work to create anti-racist culture collectively.*

Some of the key points from the panel that I wrote about in my journal included Rachel's comments on the PIC and description of Critical Resistance's work. Critical Resistance's motto is "dismantle, change and build" and Rachel spoke about finding a balance between denouncing what we don't want and promoting what we do want and described the work begin done around art, gardens, programming for community health, collective practices and ways to respond to harm without the PIC\*.

\*A great resource that is a model of learning about what it means to, as a community, respond to harm without the PIC, is Generation Five. My roommate lent me their workbook and I am really inspired by their visionary work, to end child sexual abuse within five generations "through survivor leadership, community organization and public action". Check 'em out!  
<http://www.generationfive.org/>

Carla from Movement Generation described MG's 4 R's – resistance, resilience, restoration and reimagining. Some of the key points that I wrote down from Carla's words are:

- Taking our labor back – creative, solution-based, shared work
- Long-term community-based control and governance
- Neighborhood-scale models of organizing; importance of being place-based
- "it it's right, you have the right to do it"
- Organizing conflict resolution so we don't have to call the cops
- 

An overarching question that was posed to us was: **How are visionary politics implemented or how could it be more a part of your work?**

And here were some of my scattered thoughts and take-aways from this powerful panel:

*Visionary, beauty, clarity, clear vision, messy, asking, listening to people, holding up positive examples, not be afraid to be wrong, being strategic, valuing different ways of doing things, recognizing our own shortcomings, not getting hung up on "doing it right", coming from a moral place, not leaving or quitting because*

*something isn't right, collective processes, praxis, delegation, love, not policing our own imagination, solidarity...*

And a couple more questions that the panelists and participants asked:

- How do we know what it looks like to have active confrontations with power?
- How are we creating something rather than dropping out?

## SESSION 12

*Making the Path: Exploring Our Family Histories*

Posted on [May 8, 2013](#) by [ANNIEMBANKS](#)

**[Blog Post]** *This was a really powerful session and the exercise of calling my dad and talking to him about our family history and the impacts of white supremacy on our family. For my family the questions mainly pointed to all of the ways that white supremacy has benefited my family and how much it has enabled my family to gain and keep unfair advantage. The English part of my family did not struggle to assimilate, largely because the colonizing culture was their own and so all was readily accessible to them – and made for them. The parts of my family that were not English, the Welsh and the Prussian, Irish and French, carried enough white privilege to be deemed acceptable, if not downright desirable (by both the racist immigration practices and the communities that they entered) and quickly formed communities of their own.*

*Many elements of our conversation also pointed to the dysfunction that white supremacy, Christian hegemony and the process of giving up the parts of our cultures that were not Anglo-Saxon Protestant have caused. My dad talked about the impact of his father believing strongly in the nuclear family, to the exclusion of any other*

*understanding of family. He [my grandfather] didn't take an interest in our ancestry or history and my dad didn't have many conversations with him about this until he was on his deathbed. Because of this, we have little information about those who came before us, aside from memories of a raucous family gathering where two great-uncles took pens and corrected the family tree, adding names and telling stories. My dad still says, "I wish I'd had a tape recorder there". I'm especially grateful for the opportunity to talk to my dad and other family members now, long before my dad is on his deathbed and we are scrambling to make sense of centuries of family, of imperial relations, of colonialism, of white privilege.*

*Paul Kivel opened his home and shared with us in Braden about his work on Christian Hegemony. You can see more about this here, at his website Challenging Christian Hegemony (<http://christianhegemony.org/>). It became very clear to me in talking to my dad that Christian hegemony and white supremacy are both ways in which my family experienced privilege throughout their migration from their homelands to the Indigenous territories that they then occupied and profited off of. Churches were hubs of their community life and ensured that my family had some sense of community and home, such as the German Lutheran churches in Ohio that my family joined upon immigrating from Prussia.*

*Additionally, my family's involvement in the military started early and became an economic (and ideological) mainstay in my family, from my grandfather's work building planes to my cousin's active service now. Last week I saw the incredible Winona LaDuke speaking powerful truths about the impact of the military on Indigenous people on Turtle Island; her book "The Militarization of Indian Country" is a very important read, spelling out the military's leading role in colonialism, globally and at home. Definitely recommend*

reading this short, popular education-style book! Check it out and order it here: <http://www.honorearth.org/militarization>.

*These conversations about family have me thinking about things now...it's so easy for people to dismiss histories as just that, history, but there's truly nothing "past" about the impacts of white supremacy and Christian hegemony on my family. It all is entirely part of who I am and how I came to be where I am. It also informs the work that I do and the imperative for me to be part of a rising tide of people who are not willing to ignore that their "good fortune" (i.e. unearned privilege) comes at such a high cost for the rest of the world and who are willing to join those who are already organizing against imperialism, colonialism and racism and for collective liberation.*

### SESSION 13

#### *Personal Transformation for Collective Liberation*

**[Blog Post]:** *Today, even though I am writing through a stomach flu-induced haze, I feel it's appropriate to be posting these readings. The Anne Braden Program 2013 officially ended yesterday and I spent last night throwing up every last thing in my system until I finally fell asleep, exhausted.*

*Today, despite feeling still unwell, I am grateful for the quietness that at times comes with being sick to reflect on the past incredible almost-four-months.*

*The Anne Braden Program has challenged me in brilliant ways, pushed me beyond what I felt I was capable of, and has brought into my life so, so many learnings, incredible people and networks of people, and a deeper conviction and commitment towards collective*

*liberation. It truly has been, and will continue to be, deeply transformative.*

At a certain point in the program, I was working at CCWP and came across this poem, which I have long been inspired by. I sent it out over the listserv and people responded that it resonated for them:

**[Email]** *"Our worst fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are we not to be? You are a child of God; your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are born to make manifest the glory of God. It is not just in some of us, it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."*  
- Nelson Mandela\*  
*(personally when reading I choose to replace God with my own form of a higher power and thought about our conversation in the Christian hegemony workshop re: the lightness/darkness binary :))*

\*from poem written by Marianne Williamson

In this session, something we talked about was our "Idealized Self-Image" – this required us to do some reflection on how we picture ourselves and what impact that has on the work that we do. Some of the questions we were asked were:

- What is my idealized self-image about being a white anti-racist? How do I want others to see me?
- What is under my idealized self-image? What is it protecting or covering up?
- What is your core commitment and your deepest intention and motivation for working against racism?
- What is the impact of your idealized self-image on your relationships? \*a very valuable insight for me from this question was a point around the difficulty in holding people with low self-worth accountable. For example, I have struggled to take constructive feedback in the past because I was so quick to internalize it as failure, or proof that I was a “horrible person”. Rather, if I could see it as potential for growth and show gratitude to the person who generously gave their time and emotional labor to help me understand something I needed to work on (which would require me to feel myself worthy of growth, investment from others and being part of a movement), I could much more effectively both hear feedback and integrate it into my work.

*“Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word ‘love’ here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a 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.” – James Baldwin*

Some more questions that I wrote down around the time of this session:

Questions:

*What is going to help us “win”?*

*What is the best approach?*



*How can I be most useful in the struggle? What skills do I need to be useful?*

#### SESSION 14

*Reflections and Lessons from Volunteer Placements*

*A linocut that I made for CCWP; the hands represent both a bird flying free of bars and the hands-on collective*

*care that is such a huge part of CCWP’s work.*

**[Blog Post]** *Our Session 14 readings are in reference to our volunteer placements. I did my volunteer placement during the Anne Braden Program with the California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), an incredible group organizing against the prison industrial complex and towards a vision of a world with less bars and more collective care and love.*

*Some of what I do at CCWP includes letter writing, as letter writing is a large part of what CCWP does. Many folks on the inside, including people in both women’s and men’s prisons (which I have been taught is a much better description than “women/men in prison” as many people who identify as trans or who may not identify as the sex with which they were assigned at birth but are now assigned as in the prison system, are put in either a women’s or men’s prison based on their assigned “sex”, not based on the gender*

that they identify with, which is really problematic and violent for many reasons), and families, supporters, friends and loved ones, contact CCWP with ideas, questions, requests, submissions to the newsletter [The Fire Inside](#) (<http://womenprisoners.org/?p=57#more-57>), and more. Letter writing enables CCWP to communicate with folks on the inside, which is where a large portion of leadership and CCWP's vision comes from; CCWP was started by folks on the inside and their commitment is to continually center and amplify the voices of people on the inside of prison walls, instead of those on the outside always speaking for people currently or formerly incarcerated.

Parole advocacy was one of my favorite areas in which to do letter writing. Parole advocacy requires that CCWP provide a letter of support to people on the inside with whom we have a relationship, to encourage the Board of Parole Hearings to take seriously this person's request for parole. Reading people's descriptions of their hopes and dreams for once they were outside of prison walls felt like a gift every time I worked on a parole letter. Hearing of people being paroled was incredible; one less human being in a cell is a victory for all of humanity!

This last sentence might not sit well with everyone. Many people might ask, "But what about people who can't be rehabilitated? Who are violent murderers or child abusers?". This is a really common response to the idea of prison abolition and one that I felt a lot less able to respond to before I started volunteering at CCWP. After reading through case after case of women and trans people spending many years to life in cages for defending themselves against the violence of abusive partners, the state or others, I have never felt more sure that the "criminal injustice system" is something that needs to be abolished. There is no justice there.

For every person on the inside who waited for decades for someone to do something to end the violence they lived with and finally had to take steps to end the violence themselves, only to be charged and imprisoned, there is no justice. For every person who was arrested in a falsified sweep by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or as part of the "War on Drugs", there is no justice. For all of the communities of color who are experiencing the theft of people of all ages but especially young people, from their communities, there is no justice. At least, there is no justice except for the incredible work that many communities, groups, organizations, and collectives are practicing in their work and commitment towards a world without the prison industrial complex.

In response to the question of "what to do" with people who are violent, I feel it's much deeper than just how do we isolate one person from society when their behavior is deemed violent or harmful. The society we live in is based on so much violence (genocide of Indigenous people, land theft, slavery of African people, theft of labor from people of color, the imposition of white supremacy and European imperialism on the "Americas", murder, rape, and so on) that what I feel is required is a massive transformation of our society rather than a focus on punitive punishment of individuals.

Additionally, as stated above, the majority of people serving time in prisons and jails are there as a result of racial profiling, racist assertions of "gang involvement", contrived non-violent drug charges that nonetheless carry multiple life sentences (please see the book, ["The Tallahassee Project: A glimpse inside the shattered lives of 100 non-violent women prisoners of the war on drugs"](#) (<http://www.drugwarprisoners.org/tallproj.htm>), for detailed stories from people inside women's prisons, serving enormous sentences for minor and made-up drug charges), political repression, and the

*criminalization of poor people, people of color, women, and non-gender conforming people.*

*Working with CCWP over the past 4 months has offered me the opportunity to think about what kinds of possibilities exist beyond this inhumane and cruel system that attempts to tear apart families, communities and movements. Despite all of the barriers imposed by the prison industrial complex, CCWP creates and maintains powerful and deeply loving relationships between people on the inside and the outside.*

*They also work with numerous other groups in order to build strong coalitions, including [Critical Resistance](http://criticalresistance.org/) (<http://criticalresistance.org/>), [All of Us or None](http://www.prisonerswithchildren.org/our-projects/allofus-or-none/) (<http://www.prisonerswithchildren.org/our-projects/allofus-or-none/>), [Legal Services for Prisoners with Children](http://www.prisonerswithchildren.org/) (<http://www.prisonerswithchildren.org/>), [TGI Justice](http://www.tgijp.org/) (<http://www.tgijp.org/>), and [Californians United for a Responsible Budget \(CURB\)](http://curbprisonspending.org/) (<http://curbprisonspending.org/>). CURB is a group that works to cut prison spending in California with whom I decided to take a summer internship which started at the beginning of June. I will still be writing letters with CCWP over the summer as well and there will soon be a letter writing night with CCWP, so if you are interested in taking part, please email me at [anniembanks at gmail dot com](mailto:anniembanks@gmail.com)!*

*CCWP is also supporting the hunger strikers as part of the [Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition](http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/) (<http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/>) in anticipation of the July 8th hunger strike that people on the inside of the Segregated Housing Units (SHU) at Pelican Bay State Prison are planning in opposition to the torturous conditions in the SHU. They are striking in order to have their 5 core demands met and to show*

*unity “across prison-manufactured racial and geographical lines”. Please consider reading more about the hunger strike, and supporting by signing on to the Pledge of Resistance to Stop Torture in the SHU*

*([http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/51040/p/salsa/web/common/public/signup?signup\\_page\\_KEY=8133](http://salsa3.salsalabs.com/o/51040/p/salsa/web/common/public/signup?signup_page_KEY=8133)).*

*Additionally, if you would like a copy of the above print, please get in touch and I will send you/bring you one, for a donation to CCWP of your choosing. They are an incredible group doing critical work and donations are appreciated and needed; if you can, please support the important work that CCWP does. You can donate online here: [http://womenprisoners.org/?page\\_id=18](http://womenprisoners.org/?page_id=18).*

## SESSION 15

### *Strategic Anti-Racist Organizing*

Posted on [June 21, 2013](#) by [ANNIEMBANKS](#)

**[Blog Post]:** *I really appreciate all of the solid examples of anti-racist organizing strategies and tools that are included in this list as well as the readings and tools from Session 4, “Introduction to Social Change Organizing”. For example, utilizing the Catalyst Project’s SWOT (strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats) analyzing tool would prove beneficial to most organizations and collectives, in my opinion. It is critical for any organization, group or collective to reflect on and strategically assess their work and the direction that their future work will potentially take them. And how often is this kind of space difficult to make, amid many “urgent matters”? Yes, all of those matters are urgent, but it is critical to ensure that any group that seeks to be doing anti-racist work be actually taking the time to reflect on what this looks like and where work needs to be done.*

*I myself have certainly been guilty of claiming to be dedicated to something and then barely making any time to do the work. Why is that? Is it because, when I am tired and feeling slightly burnt out, I would rather shut off than continue to educate myself? Is it because, with all of the tasks that feel urgent, overdue or neglected, I can't seem to carve out the time it takes to properly reflect? I came to a point in my learning journey a few years ago when I realized that I was struggling with a lot of feelings of guilt and fear when attempting to educate myself around white supremacy, racism and colonialism. This meant that I was creating a negative association with learning about anti-racist organizing and activism for myself and would then find ways to avoid doing the work. Clearly this is a show of privilege, that I have the luxury to choose when and how I interact with and learn about the very systems that uphold my own privileges. Nonetheless, I was not learning much and was spending a lot of time processing my own feelings about attempting to learn. I came to see that I had created my own short-circuit, that it was not possible to be open to learning if I stayed in a place of guilt and fear whenever I learned something new. I found it effective to create sayings for myself that encouraged me to keep learning, even when it felt hard, painful or challenging. Reminding myself that some of the best learning comes from discomfort helps me to stay present and not run away when something is challenging. My immediate response can feel like, "Get Out NOW!" when conflict, challenges or painful conversations arise, but responding first in my mind with reminders about the importance of growing my ability to remain present, listen and take action have helped to shift my responses. During the Anne Braden Program, we had a chart on the wall of the "Growth Zone". This is a visual that outlines the various places that we, as white people engaging in an anti-racist training, can inhabit and what the impacts of those spaces are. The center space represents the comfort zone, where we are not actively pushing*

*ourselves or are limiting our interactions to those that feel comfortable or safe. In the outer circle of the diagram, the "Panic Zone" represents the place where we are panicking and not necessarily able to create sustainable growth or learning. This may represent a space where one needs to set boundaries or find a different way to engage, process or understand what is going on. In the middle of these two is the Growth Zone, where it is quite possibly very uncomfortable, but not panicky necessarily, and where deep learning, growth and transformation is possible.*

*This weekend, I had a change of plans that created more time than I expected in my usually-hectic schedule. Sometimes when I find myself with this kind of time, I feel overwhelmed, like years of to-do lists will suddenly resurface and I will dramatically remember that I have forgotten to do so many things I committed myself to. So, I have a tendency to attempt to busy myself with other things, just in case I have these moments of quiet that are uncomfortable or challenging. I'm currently staying away from jumping into attempting to answer the emails in my inbox or creating 'busywork' to distract from the new found time I have. Instead, I am sitting with the quiet and reflecting on the lessons I have learned over the past few months and attempting to feel out what I need to be reflecting on and thinking about.*

*The Anne Braden Program was an incredible opportunity for me to do some intensive reflection and learning, that otherwise may have been very difficult for me to access and maintain. I wish I could say that I am disciplined enough to create a comparably rigorous schedule of learning myself but there is something so powerful about making a commitment to a program like this and having a cohort of people who are similarly committed to learn with.*

*Additionally, for me books, readings and information in general are only a few of the ways that I learn. I learn a great deal through relationships, conversations, creating, watching, listening, interacting, role-playing, feeling, and practicing. The Anne Braden Program allowed for a lot of these mediums to be present during our collective learning and I can feel the shifts in my analysis, consciousness and work already. I started noticing significant shifts early on in my time in the program and I can truly say it has been transformative.*

This session was our last open session and the following speakers came and shared their knowledge and time with us:

Carla Wallace (Fairness Campaign, KY)  
Caitlin Breedlove (Southerners on New Ground, NC)  
Linda Burnham (National Domestic Worker's Alliance)  
Organizers from Stop the Injunctions Coalition

Community members were invited to join us and then there was also a break-out conversation at another location afterwards, so that people from the community could continue the discussion, just as Braden participants would be continuing our discussion.

There were some big and important questions that came out of this panel, like:

Are you willing to be transformed in the service of this work?  
What is it about us that's moving the work forward or holding it back?  
What struggles am I already complicit in?  
How is genocide being pushed and how are we coming against that?  
Who do I really want to work with?

What does the "we" mean and how do we figure out what we have to do?

How do we come together for this work?

How do we make this work transformative?

At the end, Caitlin Breedlove stayed behind to work with us and guide us through some additional questions. She asked us to think about the following statements:

1. I am willing to do \_\_\_\_\_ for our collective liberation.
2. I am not willing to do \_\_\_\_\_ for our collective liberation.

Caitlin also spoke about something that really resonated with me. She shared an experience of working with on-the-ground organizers and a number of students. The students came to many of the meetings with skills to deconstruct but without suggestions of how to incorporate these critiques into the on-the-ground organizing. The organizers soon felt frustrated and so it was suggested that students could only air their criticism if they also had a suggestion to offer up. This meant that sometimes they did not speak for weeks. Caitlin reflected on all of the implications of this scenario – how academia reinforces a culture of hyper-criticism and how students are rewarded for being the most critical. It also points to class and academic privilege, which also means that for students who are not able to easily access academic spaces, the need to be overly-critical (in order to gain the highest grades and receive scholarships, etc.) is even greater. This really resonated with my own experiences in academia and reminded me of the first place that I saw such a critique of the deconstructive nature of academia, which was in Shawn Wilson's book, "Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods" (<http://fernwoodpublishing.ca/Research-Is-Ceremony->



[Shawn-Wilson/](#)) in which Wilson speaks to the difference in Indigenous ontologies (ontologies are described by Wikipedia as “philosophical study of the nature of being, becoming, existence, or reality, as well as the basic categories of being and their relations”) and the Western tendency towards deconstruction. Highly recommended read!

**CONTINUING REFLECTIONS AFTER ABP:**

**[Blog Post]:** *White Supremacy print, in response to Zimmerman verdict and hunger strike*

Posted on [July 22, 2013](#) by [ANNIEMBANKS](#)



*It's been over a week since, on the way back to the Bay area from the Corcoran mobilization in support of the hunger strikers, a table of friends told myself and the people I'd driven up with that Zimmerman had been found not guilty, in the trial about his murder of Black teenager Trayvon Martin. That night people began gathering and continued throughout the week, to protest this deeply racist verdict, that essentially sends the message that racist murders like this will go unpunished and will actually be defended and protected by many. On the Sunday following the verdict, I marched*

*with 1,000 people in the street and felt the collective power of people saying no, this is injustice, and this kind of message is wrong. With this print, I wanted to draw out the ways in which white supremacy kills specific to this case and others like it, where racial profiling turned a teenager walking with candy into a “suspicious” or dangerous threat, an idea that was replicated in the courtroom, a place clearly already rigged, being a part of the “Just-us” system that immensely and disproportionately targets, arrests, incarcerates and kills people of color and Indigenous people. As Aura Bogado writes in [“White Supremacy Acquits George Zimmerman”](#), “It’s because he abides by the logic of white supremacy, and was supported by a defense team—and a swath of society—that supports the lingering idea that some black men must occasionally be killed with impunity in order to keep society-at-large safe.” So, the question I ask myself is, in light of the ongoing violence and death caused by white supremacy, what can myself and other white people do, in response and in multiracial coalition with the people and communities who have been resisting this violence all along? One place to find some ideas is at the Catalyst Project’s website, where they have posted a list of suggestions [here](#).(LINK)*

**[Blog Post on the Becoming Collective]:** *Different spaces: whiteness and some pitfalls and possibilities of settler solidarity work*

Posted on [July 26, 2013](#) by [anniembanks](#)

*To follow along on our thread here about allyship, this post is a reflection inspired by many conversations, interactions, workshops, other blogs, and words shared by many people over the years (thank you) and also in part by my experiences and conversations started and had at last year’s Unist’ot’en Action Camp, where I was very*

*privileged to be visiting Wet'suwet'en territories and spending time with people and families who are protecting their lands from encroaching, neocolonial corporations and industry. I am deeply grateful to everyone who has shared their knowledge with me and the Unist'ot'en and the guests at camp who shared their land and/or their knowledge with myself and with the other visitors during the week we spent there. The 4th Annual Unist'ot'en Action Camp just wrapped; please check out the Unist'ot'en's website here: <http://unistotencamp.com/>*

*I write this as a person who identifies as a white settler. This to me means that I am a person with European ancestry who benefits from white skin privilege and who is also a settler on Indigenous territories. The combination of these parts of my identity means that I hold a great deal of privileges. I also have places where I experience oppression. Here I strive to make clear some of the pitfalls and possibilities that I and other people who share my social location are likely to encounter, especially when attempting to be "in solidarity" with Indigenous people and people of colour.*

*I am writing this not only to provide critiques of the possibilities for white people in working against colonialism and racism, but in order to reflect on the work that I am currently doing in my own life in order to do that work better. I recognize the trap of ineffective critiquing, whereby any movement or action is frozen through the fear of "doing it wrong". I write this with hope that these issues are things that can be addressed and discussed. Clearly, not all settlers are white and there are multiple ways that people came to live on the Indigenous territories currently occupied by "Canada". My writing here is focused around white settlers because that is what I identify as, while recognizing the tendency towards a binary white-Indigenous conversation that does not acknowledge that there are racialized and mixed-race settlers as*

*well as people who came to "Canada" by way of slavery, indentured servitude, in exile, or as refugees. This writing is only one part of a much larger conversation about all people living in "Canada", with a wide variety of identities, though hopefully some parts may be relevant to not only white settlers.*

*The following are examples of ways that I have, and have seen other white settlers, take up space in ways that are harmful or that recreate oppressive dynamics.\**

*\*I would like to acknowledge and thank Sarah Hunt here as she has inspired me to think about place, space and geography (among many other things!) in much deeper ways, in following her work and talking with her about the work she does around legal and spatial violence, colonialism, centering the voices of Indigenous women and girls, and resistance, agency and transformation. Please see more of her work here: <http://sfu.academia.edu/SarahHunt>*

*Taking up space*

*a). Taking up of cultural space*

*There are certain things that for me to do or perform as a white settler are not acts of solidarity but instead of appropriations of cultural acts or space. Ceremonial spaces are all too often assumed to be open to anyone and there is a tendency of white people that I have myself enacted, that of expecting to be able to access any space that I wish to be in, without any thought of what my being there might feel like for other people. It is important to take into account the very recent and still-lasting impacts of the legacies of the banning of ceremony and language and the abuse that was perpetrated by white people at residential schools against Indigenous children for speaking their language.*

*Additionally, there are many spaces made for someone like myself, who identifies as someone seeking to work as an “ally” in many struggles. This can include being asked to participate in panels, conferences or to write about my work. Many times, my voice may be elevated above those who I strive to work in alliance with. It is a constant practice to think about who is being centered and why. Is it easier for other white people to hear what I have to say, rather than an Indigenous or racialized presenter or speaker? Sometimes it is my place to do the speaking, like when the topic at hand is white people or white supremacy, but when I am receiving cultural kudos for being an “Indigenous ally”, this can be a dangerous example of taking up of cultural space, space that is more appropriate for someone who is directly impacted by the issues that I claim to work in solidarity with to speak, receive acknowledgment and be considered an expert on their own experience. [I’ve had a few conversations about this with Sarah, who is currently working on another blog post on allyship with Morgan - check back again for more thoughts on this from her perspective as an Indigenous person.]*

*b). Taking up of literal space*

*“How can you miss our brown & golden in this sea of pink. We’re not as many as you. But we’re here.” – Chrystos, “Maybe We Shouldn’t Meet if there are no Third World Women Here”*

*Due to the impacts of genocide, white supremacy, racist immigration policies and continued racism and colonialism, white people numerically are often the largest group in towns, cities and provinces in “Canada”. In the city where I grew up, so-called “Victoria, BC” on Lekwungen, WSANEC and Esquimalt homelands, despite these lands being historically home to Lekwungen, WSANEC*

*and Esquimalt people since time immemorial as well as the early communities of Chinese, South Asian and black settlers, white settlers’ numbers exceed these and other communities’ numbers. Some of the reasons for this include the ongoing genocide committed against Indigenous people by white people (in the forms of smallpox, environmental destruction, residential schools, the prison industrial complex, and the list goes on) and the enforcement of racist immigration laws such as the Chinese head tax by the Canadian governments and supported by many white citizens. This numerical majority of white people in many places in Canada means that people of colour and Indigenous people are often outnumbered. Even in spaces deemed “progressive” or “radical”, the over-representation of white people can mean that they are heard most often, that the focus of the speaker or facilitator will turn towards the interests or understanding of white people (i.e. “translating” certain ideas so that they can be understood by white settlers), or that the questions, comments and ideas shared will come mostly from white settlers or will concern mostly white settlers. Additionally, and perhaps the most fundamental of settler dilemmas, is that of ongoing occupation. As much as white settlers may want to “act in solidarity” with Indigenous people, there still remains the fundamental issue of invasion and ongoing colonial occupation and settlement, which all of us who are settlers are still participating in, despite our desire to act as allies.*

*c). Taking up of experiential space*

*“But I have had it hard, too!” is a common refrain amongst white people, especially when confronted with discussions of white supremacy and privilege. I know that I personally have done this; I can remember clinging strongly to my identity as a queer person, as it helped to assuage some of the white guilt that I felt. I was not able to accept the full responsibility of white privilege and so it comforted*

me to find that I too had an “oppressed status” to revert to. For me, it created a barrier between myself and my white skin and settler privileges, because I felt I had almost a “pass” due to my being queer. While it is true that understanding the forms of oppression that I experience can absolutely contribute to my ability to act in alliance with others experiencing different forms of oppression that my own, when I was using queerness as a shield from acknowledging the oppressions that people around me experience, I was not able to access the transformative potential of joint struggle.

Additionally, it is deeply dismissive to immediately have to respond to another person’s sharing of their experiences of oppression by attempting to prove that I “have had it hard, too”. We all have places where we experience privilege and oppression and just because someone is sharing their experience of oppression does not mean that I must immediately “prove” that I too experience oppression or that I cannot possibly be part of the oppressor group. Instead of responding immediately or allowing my own guilt or fear of being part of the systems that have created this oppression for the person describing it, it’s critical to first listen to what the person who is speaking is saying to me and to let their truth sit with me a while before responding, especially if my response is coming from a place of guilt, fear or defense.

It is critical to recognize what having forms of privilege, like white, class or male privilege, means. White privilege is a huge determinant of many things, including health, wealth, and life chances and is not something that can be ignored. Additionally, white settlers have long been beneficiaries of racist and colonial policies and practices (such as the Indian Act, the Canadian government’s interpretations of the treaties, resource extraction on Indigenous territories, the scooping up and adopting out of Indigenous children, and on), and have access to education, health care, and other resources that are

underfunded or not provided at all to Indigenous people and communities or racialized immigrants and refugees.

Space for reflection

This conversation, as I mentioned earlier, is part of a much larger conversation and one I know I will be engaged in throughout my life, so there is no definite end or answers here. However, I do want to provide links to several statements that scholars, authors and activists have put forward as things to think about and keep at the forefront of any supposed “solidarity” or “decolonization” work, from three articles that have greatly influenced my thinking and actions.

In [“Listen, take action and stick around: a roundtable on relationship-building in indigenous solidarity work”](#), Zainab Amadahy compiles thoughts from a table of people doing anti-colonial work. An activist involved speaks to the foundational importance of looking at decolonization; “[p]retending that the indigenous struggle is just one of many struggles is a problem. It’s fundamental to any efforts to achieve justice in this country.”

And in [“Decolonizing together: Moving beyond a politics of solidarity toward a practice of decolonization”](#), author Harsha Walia suggests that the notion of leadership is a key principle in Indigenous solidarity organizing. Accordingly, settlers must be “accountable and responsive to the experiences, voices, needs and political perspectives of Indigenous people themselves.”

In the same article, contributor Jaggi Singh states that the only way to oppose complicity with settlement is to actively oppose it. This only happens in the “context of on-the-ground, day-to-day

organizing, and creating and cultivating the spaces where we can begin dialogues and discussions as natives and non-natives.” In this struggle, often the questions of what will happen to settlers and what will decolonization look like for settlers are centered.

In [“Decolonization is not a metaphor”](#), Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang suggest that instead of focusing on “what will happen to settlers”, it is critical that decolonization struggle be accountable to Indigenous people and communities.

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**After the program, Catalyst staff members and volunteers had questions for us as participants and below are the answers I sent back:**

- 1) What has been the impact of the Anne Braden program on your political work?
- 2) In what ways are you applying the lessons you learned during our 4 months in the program?

*I could see the impact of Anne Braden on my political work right away. I think the biggest shifts for me have been around coming from a different place in my work. Previously, I came to the work I did with love and also with a great deal of anxiety, fear and a lot of ingrained messages about myself that limited my ability to do the work. Continuously reflecting on the importance of collective liberation, instead of individualized absolution or something like that, has enabled me to feel a lot more at ease with my own imperfections, the messy and at times rough nature of organizing, and has given me more empathy, patience and love in working with other people. I find myself asking genuine questions out of curiosity and compassion, rather than waiting to push my opinions on*

*someone else. I feel like my passion and spirit has been reignited in a healthy way, where I have more energy and clarity around what I am working towards.*

*I also have felt more able to take feedback and incorporate it into my work. I feel less fear and shame and a lot more ability to practice what, in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy I remember calling “distress tolerance”. I used to get so stressed when facing hard feedback that I would sometimes blank out and forget what had been said, missing valuable lessons. Now I feel a lot more capable of hanging in there, even when the going gets rough and working through things, because of the above-mentioned renewed focus and clarity.*

*Additionally, I have learned from so many incredible people (including the authors/cultural producers/scholars/writers/organizers/community members etc. whose words, histories, knowledge, artwork, etc. was included in our learning) who so generously shared their knowledge and skills that I feel I have a greatly enhanced toolbox as well as network of people. With support from comrades, I have been able to work through hard questions and I have also been exposed to a wide community of supportive people with whom I can strategize, ask questions, work together and make connections. This has greatly enriched my work, through connecting different groups of people that I work with, making connections with mentors, and also being able to more easily make connections between the various struggles that people have/are engaging with.*

*Lastly, I think I learned a lot about the importance of love - for our movements, for each other, for myself. I didn't realize how much I needed to embrace this and it surprised me. To find a supportive cohort where I could delve deeply into some painful, vulnerable and also inspiring challenges, gave me a confidence important for much*

*of my work going forward. I have received feedback from loved ones that I seem more grounded, clearer and more confident. I feel truly transformed by the program.*

And, an example of how what I learned in the program played out in my internship:

*After participating in the Anne Braden Program, I decided to take an internship with CURB (Californians United for a Responsible Budget"). My motivation for taking the internship was to increase some skills that the clarity and focus I developed during the program helped me to identify. I wanted to learn about research and targeting as well as working with a large coalition group and CURB offered me an incredible opportunity to do this kind of learning and also to support the fierce anti-prison organizing happening all over California by many different groups. My volunteer placement organization through the Anne Braden Program (California Coalition for Women Prisoners) introduced me to CURB and their work and members of the Braden leadership supported me through my decision to work with CURB. Additionally, throughout my internship, learning from the Anne Braden Program increased my capacity to understand and address my own role as a white person who is not formerly incarcerated seeking to stand in solidarity with people and communities who are targeted by systemic racism, state violence and the prison industrial complex.*

Thanks for reading, I hope some of this is useful  
Drop me a line at anniebee @ riseup . net  
I'd love to hear your thoughts/feedback/ideas  
With revolutionary love and towards collective liberation,  
annie bee