Catalyst Volunteer Study Group Curriculum

Session 1: Orientation
Session 2: Challenging the Masters and their Society
Session 3: Revolution Will Come From a Black Thing
Session 4: Black Feminist Resistance
Session 5: White Supremacy: A System, Not an Attitude
Session 6: Cops and Cages: Enforcing White Supremacy

Session 1: Orientation

- no required reading
- in session: listened to mumia abu jamal’s 2 minute segment about Charleston and discussed the charleston shooting
- discussed group agreements, group goals, buddy system, and proposed topic of black liberation

Session 2: Challenging the Masters and Their Society

Required Reading:

- Andrea Smith, “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy”, from The Color of Violence: The INCITE Anthology.
- Sweet Honey in the Rock, James Baldwin, and Freedom Songs on Black Liberation Audio Part One

**The Freedom Archives contains over 10,000 hours of audio and video tapes which date from the late-1960s to the mid-90s and chronicle the progressive history of the Bay Area, the United States, and international movements. Their website is an awesome resource!!**

Further Reading:
How the Irish Became White, Noel Ignatiev- this is a book!

Discussion Questions

1) Andrea Smith’s “Three Pillars”:
   - What are the three pillars of white supremacy as outlined by Smith?
   - How are they inter-related? How do they relate to patriarchy?
   - How does her analysis inform organizing among people of color? What are the implications for white anti-racist organizing?

2) Harding:
   - How did the institution of slavery shape the relationship between Black people and white people in the U.S from the beginning?
   - What were some moments in U.S. history when there was unity between poor whites and enslaved Blacks? How was that eroded?
   - What are some of the many ways enslaved Africans struggled for self-determination? How do current struggles for Black freedom connect to that history?
   - Harding writes that for resistant slaves “their goal was not simply the absence of chains but the presence of a new society.” What meaning does this have for current struggles for justice?

Session 3: Revolution Will Come from a Black Thing

Required Reading:

- Malcolm X - "Message to the Grass Roots"
- Martin Luther King: "Beyond Vietnam"
- Lorde, Learning from the Sixties, From Sister Outsider
- Birth of a New Civil Rights Movement
- Patrisse Cullors video

Further Reading:

- Forman, James: Liberation Will Come From a Black Thing
We will view excerpts from Black Power Mix Tape during the session. The full documentary can be streamed on Netflix.

Discussion Questions

1) In the Sixties many Black organizers, primarily young organizers from the Civil Rights Movement, called for building a Black Power movement. And what did they have in common? How did those two movements differ? How have those differences played out over time?
2) How did changes on an international level contribute to the development of the Black Power movement?
3) Some Black revolutionaries described the situation of Black people in the U.S. as a colonial relationship. Discuss.
4) What were some of the critiques of the Black radical movement raised by Black feminists like Audre Lorde?
5) “This is not your parents’ Civil Rights movement!” Is a common theme in the current wave of radical Black organizing. In what ways does this movement follow in the tradition of previous Black freedom movements, and in what ways is it creating a new path?

Session 4: Freedoms’ Daughters: Black Feminist Resistance

Required Readings

- Ida B. Wells, Lynch Law in America
- Angela Davis, Reflections on the Role of Black Women in the Community of Slaves
- Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class and Sex” from Sister Outsider

Discussion Questions

1) What common threads do you see in these various readings that span a period of nearly 100 years?
2) How do white supremacy and class status shape Black women’s experience of being female?
3) What are the challenges posed by Black feminists to white women organizing for women’s liberation?
4) How did the contributions of Black feminists, particularly Black lesbians from the 60s and 70s influence the development of contemporary radical politics in the Black movement? How have those politics been developed and advanced in this period?

Session 5: White Supremacy: A system, not an attitude

Required Readings

- What is White Supremacy? By Elizabeth 'Betita' Martinez
- The Case for Reparations, Ta-Nehisi Coates
- Where Are You In the Class System? By Paul Kivel

Discussion questions

1) Prior to reading “The Case for Reparations,” what did you know about reparations as an idea, and as an actual practice by governments?
2) How does Clyde Ross’ story reveal the systemic nature of white supremacy?
3) When many people discuss reparations, it is often in reference to slavery. What other damaging policies does Coates highlight as the basis for his case? Why do you think he is focusing his discussion on post-slavery offenses?
4) What does Coates mean when he speaks specifically of reparations?
5) Do you think Black people in the U.S. have a case for reparations from the United States government? What form do you think such reparations should take?
6) What does the discussion about reparations mean for us as anti-racist whites?

Session 6: Cops and Cages: Enforcing White Supremacy

Required readings:

- Angela Davis - CH.2 of Are Prisons Obsolete?
- Captive Nation Intro, Dan Berger
- Michelle Alexander, New Jim Crow, "The Birth of Mass Incarceration."
- Organizing for community accountability
Further reading on prison abolition and transformative justice:

- Miklat Miklat Zine-
- Are prisons obsolete? by Angela Davis- chapter 5

Discussion Questions
1) What are the connections between the modern prison system and slavery?
2) What do you think Angela Davis means when she describes whiteness as “property”?
3) What was the “southern strategy”, as explained in Michelle Alexander's book?
4) What is at stake for white people in ending white supremacy?