

*Challenging White Supremacy:
Multiracial Alliance and Antiracist Organizing in the U.S.*

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ABSTRACT

This comparative ethnic studies project is a cultural history of multiracial alliance and organizing against the white supremacist system in the U.S. The project examines five historical events from 1966-2008 as cultural texts to understand attempts at alliance between people-of-color grassroots member organizations and white grassroots member organizations to recruit, politicize, and mobilize their respective constituencies for coordinated antiracist action. This interdisciplinary study considers literature, art, film, interviews, and manifestos from participants in various multiracial alliances as part of its historical and cultural archive. Methodologically, the project employs historical, literary, visual, and ethnographic analysis to think uniquely about the role of relationship-building, grassroots member organizations, and community organizing in work against racism. At a time when organizing across race succeeded in electing the first black president of the United States, but fails to resolve continuing racial inequalities, this project offers an analysis of the possibilities and limitations of multiracial alliances for shifting collective consciousness and power in regards to race.

CONTENTS

“Introduction: Challenging White Supremacy”

The introduction defines the terms of the project: white supremacy, multiracial alliance, antiracist organizing, and reviews literature that discusses ways of challenging the white supremacist system. The introduction also explains the need for a deeper analysis of the role of relationship-building in work against racism, particularly in terms of multiracial alliance and antiracist organizing, and provides an overview of the project.

“Chapter 1: Black Power and the Roles of Whites”

This chapter analyzes the multiracial alliance and antiracist organizing model emerging from the work of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, the Southern Conference Education Fund, and the Southern Student Coordinating Committee, 1960-1966. The chapter specifically considers the development of black power within the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, as it relates to the history of antiracist organizing across race. The chapter serves as a historical origin point for popular articulations of the role of whites in multiracial alliances, and the centrality of antiracist organizing in work against white supremacy.

“Chapter 2: The Original Rainbow Coalition”

This chapter engages multiracial alliances and antiracist organizing from 1966-1969, which built upon the work of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, through the

development of the original Rainbow Coalition that involved the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords Organization, I Wor Kuen, the American Indian Movement, the Gay Liberation Front, the Students for a Democratic Society and the Young Patriots. This chapter analyzes an effective model of radical organizing across race, and elucidates the possibilities for multiracial alliances to exist on the basis of shared social and economic conditions.

“Chapter 3: Revolutionary Union Movement”

This chapter examines the role of solidarity against capitalism in relation to multiracial alliance and antiracist organizing. This chapter analyzes organizing by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, in alliance with the Motor City Labor League, from 1969-1970. This chapter considers the role of multiracial alliance and antiracist organizing within the sphere of labor, offering a story of white supremacy failing to divide workers across race but instead galvanizing them to develop alliances to challenge capitalism.

“Chapter 4: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism”

This chapter considers the relationship between antiracist and anti-imperialist organizing in the alliance work of the American Indian Movement, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, the Republic of New Africa, and the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, 1974-2006. This chapter, offering some of the longest standing alliances in the project, gives the reader a wide geographic and historic view of how antiracist organizing changes across space and time. Additionally, the chapter shows how local and global antiracist politics connect through transnational alliances and organizing.

“Chapter 5: The Ballot Box and Beyond”

This chapter analyzes multiracial alliance and antiracist organizing for racial justice in a contemporary context, through a historically situated ethnography of the alliance work of the Labor/Strategy Community Center, South Asian Network, Community Coalition, and the Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere – Los Angeles, 2006-2008. Reflections on the Obama presidential victory, Ethnic Studies, Whiteness Studies, antiracist workshops, and post-Katrina solidarity organizing. This chapter brings the history of multiracial alliance and antiracist organizing from chapters one through four to bear on the contemporary moment, and considers the role of antiracism in the spheres of academia, electoral politics, and community organizing broadly-speaking.

“Conclusion: Alliance and Organizing for Racial Justice”

The conclusion explores the meaning of a history of multiracial alliance and antiracist organizing for future academic and community projects that seek to challenge the white supremacist system, and considers what happens when alliance and organizing is put at the center of such projects.