

**The Workshop As the Work:  
White Anti-Racism Organising in 1960s,  
70s, and 80s US Social Movements**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the rise of anti-racism workshops developed by white activists in various United States social movements from the late 1960s through the mid-1980s. The shifting ideology of the black freedom movement in the late 1960s, from integration to Black Power, transformed white activists' place within racial justice struggles. While recent scholarship has begun to turn its attention towards whites' ongoing racial justice activities, one of the most radical and widespread of these efforts is consistently overlooked: anti-racism workshops. Increasingly prevalent from the late 1960s through to the diversity-trainings explosion of the 1990s, this thesis demonstrates that these workshops had their roots in the black freedom, women's liberation and gay liberation movements. White activists from these movements led these workshops in order to examine white racial domination and privilege within both leftist social movements and larger US society.

Analysing case studies from the black freedom, women's liberation and gay liberation/rights movements, this thesis explores the foundational assumptions of anti-racism workshops. It seeks to explain how and why these efforts sought to frame race and racism as issues of knowledge and consciousness and why such efforts constituted radical praxis. It is argued that early anti-racism workshops were pedagogical projects that sought to confront the racial ignorance that structured the lives of whites in the US, including progressives and their liberation movements. This thesis draws attention to the efficacy and power of these workshops in terms of their epistemological effects, in the transformations they brought about in whites' understanding, or awareness, of racial realities.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

B&B – Borg & Beck

BWMT – Black and White Men Together

CCAC – City-Wide Citizens Action Committee

COAHR – Committee on Appeal for Human Rights

COINTELPRO – Counter-Intelligence Program

DCO – Detroit Council of Organizations

DIM – Detroit Industrial Mission

DRRI – Defense Race Relations Institute

DRUM – Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement

DYB – Detroit Youth Board

LRBW – League of Revolutionary Black Workers

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender

NBFO – National Black Feminist Organization

NOW – National Organization for Women

NPR – New Perspectives on Race

NWC – New White Consciousness (workshops)

NYRW – New York Radical Women

PACT – People Acting for Change Together

RNA – Republic of New Africa

SDS – Students for a Democratic Society

SNCC – Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

SSOC – Southern Student Organizing Committee

TWWA – Third World Women's Alliance

YWCA – Young Women's Christian Association

## Introduction: The Workshop As the Work

In 1997, a young white activist named Catherine Jones wrote a paper that found wide circulation amongst activists in the United States who were involved in a range of race-related social justice movements. Called 'The Work Is Not the Workshop: Talking and Doing, Visibility and Accountability in the White Anti-Racist Community', the essay remarked upon the ubiquity of the anti-racism workshop, the structured group-based study of racism and anti-racist practice, within white racial justice activism.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, by the time Jones' article appeared, anti-racism workshops had become a mainstay of racial justice activity in the US. Aside from being organised intermittently or informally by all kinds of groups, several institutions had been founded largely for the purposes of running such workshops. Included amongst them was the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (PISAB), founded in 1980 by activists Ron Chisom and Jim Dunn. Still in existence, PISAB utilises a 'training model rooted in community organizing efforts of the 1960s and 1970s that encourage[s] citizen activists to reclaim their role in and rights to self-determination'. PISAB has gained fame particularly for its Undoing Racism® workshops that it implements for community leaders and activists.<sup>2</sup> PISAB is perhaps the most widely known activist-based institution that puts anti-racism workshops at the centre of its work, but it has inspired the founding of several other similar organisations, including some that were

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Jones, 'The Work Is Not the Workshop: Talking and Doing, Visibility and Accountability in the White Anti-Racist Community', *Colours of Resistance* [online] 1997, <<http://colours.mahost.org/articles/jones.html>> [accessed 25 November 2008].

<sup>2</sup> Ilana Shapiro, *Training for Racial Equity and Inclusion: A Guide to Selected Programs* (Queenstown, MD: The Aspen Institute, 2002): 9. See also, The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, 'Who We Are: Our History' *The People's Institute* <<http://www.pisab.org/who-we-are>> [accessed 30 November 2008].

developed by and for white activists.<sup>3</sup> The San Francisco-based Challenging White Supremacy Workshop (CWSW) got its start in the early 1990s after white co-founders Sharon Martinas and Mickey Ellinger attended a PISAB workshop. Its mission was to ‘train principled and effective grassroots anti-racist organizers’, and during its 13-year history, it worked largely with young whites.<sup>4</sup> CWSW, in turn, was influential in the founding of the Catalyst Project, an entity that describes itself as a ‘center for political education and movement-building in the San Francisco Bay Area’.<sup>5</sup> For several years, the Catalyst Project has run the Anne Braden Program, an intensive four-month training programme for white racial justice activists. While both CWSW and the Anne Braden Program also partake in activities like mentoring and internships, at the heart of both is the kind of activism-based education on race that has long characterised anti-racism workshops.

Jones’ article, as well as the very presence of these institutions that continue to carry out anti-racism workshops, indicate that anti-racism workshops have been a significant aspect of racial justice activism in the post-Civil Rights era, particularly amongst US whites. However, these grassroots efforts have been left out of the historical record. To Jones, white activists had been designing and leading anti-racism workshops for some time, and they could be seen everywhere. But within historiographical narratives, they are virtually non-existent. What is more, the extensiveness and significance of these workshops

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<sup>3</sup> Shapiro, *Training for Racial Equity and Inclusion*: 41, 73. See also, Challenging White Supremacy Workshop, ‘About Us’ CWS <<http://www.cswsworkshop.org/about.html>> [accessed 25 November 2008].

<sup>4</sup> Sharon Martinas with Mickey Ellinger, “‘Passing It On’: Reflections of a White Anti-racist Solidarity Organizer”, in Bonnie Berman Cushing, Lila Cabbil, Margery Freeman, Jeff Hitchcock, and Kimberley Richards (eds.) *Accountability and White Anti-racist Organizing: Stories from Our Work* (Roselle, NJ: Crandall, Dostie & Douglass Books, 2010): 141-68 (141-42).

<sup>5</sup> See the Catalyst Project’s website, <http://collectiveliberation.org/>. On the influence of the CWSW, see Matt Meyer and Sara Steele, ‘What If They Gave an Empire and Nobody Came?’ *Peace & Change* 32(10), 2007: 89-98 (93).

to white activists in particular highlights problems regarding the participation of whites within histories of racial justice activism. While today's historiography benefits from rigorous reinterpretations of the ways in which racial politics and injustices played out within and across social movements from the 1940s to the 1980s, what is missing is an understanding of the evolutions of whites' involvement in anti-racism efforts, particularly from the late-1960s onward. Indeed, Jones' article implicitly refutes a dominant historiographical narrative that understands whites' participation in black freedom and other anti-racism efforts as having ended with the rise of Black Power. Jones' essay points to a contemporary but long-standing critical mass of US whites participating in racial justice efforts, and it suggests that a historically significant, if problematic, aspect of their praxis had been race-based education efforts like workshops.

This thesis strives to historicise the continuing significance of racial justice to white activists during and beyond the Black Power era. It does so by looking at anti-racism workshops as one particular form of white racial justice commitment. It develops an understanding of the roots of these activist-led workshops – particularly, but not solely, those developed by and for white individuals. In doing so, it helps to shed light on the roots of what is today a widespread and central practice in racial justice activism in the US. Historians have overlooked anti-racism workshops as important sites for the creation of *epistemic resistances* to racial injustice. That is, these workshops were especially significant in terms of their abilities to reconfigure what whites knew of racism, for their capacity to challenge race-based ignorance.

Studying the participation of US whites within racial justice efforts presents hazards even while it inspires. In some ways, whites' efforts have already been central to the historical records of many racial justice movements.

As discussed below, the roles whites played within the black freedom movement, particularly in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), have been debated by historians for years. There is, then, a danger of bloating the importance of white participants in social movements like the black freedom movement or in individual groups like SNCC. Centring the efforts of whites can make it seem as though whites were responsible for the creation, growth, successes, or ideologies of racial justice movements. What this thesis demonstrates, however, are the ways in which white racial justice activists took cues from radical activists of colour at every turn. Guiding those who staged anti-racism workshops was the thinking of nationalist groups, the books and articles of Black Power activists, and the principle that whites should organise other whites against racism. The aim of this thesis is, thus, not to romanticise the efforts of white activists but rather to historicise them in ways that elucidate both their points of potential or success and their limitations.

A small but growing number of scholars have begun to recover the histories of white racial justice activists in the twentieth century US.<sup>6</sup> Yet, feminist scholar Becky Thompson argues that there remains a ‘historical amnesia’ that surrounds white anti-racism endeavours, and she and sociologist Eileen O’Brien

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<sup>6</sup> As scholar Jeb Middlebrook points out, ‘The history of slavery abolition and women’s rights movements of the nineteenth century set a precedent for what could be accomplished when white people directly challenged individual and institutional white supremacy—from playing key organising roles against oppressive systems to building political relationships and alliances across race.’ See his, ‘The Ballot Box and Beyond: The (Im)Possibilities of White Antiracist Organizing’ *American Quarterly* 62(2), 2010: 233-252 (235). Scholarship on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century anti-racism activity enacted by whites arguably centres on the abolitionist movement, though Herbert Aptheker has taken a broader view of such activities. See his, *Anti-Racism in U.S. History: The First Two Hundred Years* (Westport: Praeger, 1993). Scholarship on 21<sup>st</sup> century white racial justice activism includes, Middlebrook, ‘The Ballot Box and Beyond’; Meyer and Steele, ‘What If They Gave an Empire and Nobody Came?’; Jennifer L. Eichstedt, ‘Problematic White Identities and a Search for Racial Justice’ *Sociological Forum* 16(3), 2001: 445-470; Eileen O’Brien, *Whites Confront Racism: Antiracists and Their Paths to Action* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001); and Mark Warren, *Fire in the Heart: How White Activists Embrace Racial Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

have written of the disadvantageous effects that this ‘amnesia’ creates for activists and social movements.<sup>7</sup> Building on Thompson’s work, O’Brien says:

Those within the small white antiracist community are vocal about the silence with respect to their actions throughout time and the difficulty this creates for making change. Few people can name even five white antiracists throughout history, and this “historical amnesia” means that “few white people have role models or ways of knowing what has worked before – and not”. The historical amnesia not only makes it difficult for current white antiracists to know what to do, but it also forestalls the potential for more white people to join in the struggle.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, aside from eclipsing large tracts of history, this ‘historical amnesia’ stagnates *current* racial justice endeavours and confuses the racial composition of *past* racial justice efforts. White participation in racial justice, however, is crucial to the ultimate aim of ending racism. As historian Reiland Rabaka writes, ‘The rejection of white supremacy and the replacement of white supremacist views and values involves not only blacks and other people of color, but whites as well.’<sup>9</sup> Without diminishing the ways in which whites (whether activist or not) did indeed impede and even obstruct racial justice efforts, the need now is to uncover the ways in which many whites constructively contributed to such activities. This thesis strives to contribute informative histories that help to restore historical memory of white contributions to anti-racism efforts.

*White activists, social movements, and the Black Power imperative for whites*

It is largely within the historiography of the civil rights movement that twentieth-century white racial justice activism has been most consistently elucidated, though some scholars have examined the longer black freedom struggle as well

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<sup>7</sup> Becky Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life: White Antiracist Activism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001): xv, 365.

<sup>8</sup> O’Brien, *Whites Confront Racism*: 2.

<sup>9</sup> Reiland Rabaka, ‘The Souls of White Folk: W.E.B. Du Bois’s Critique of White Supremacy and Contributions to Critical Whiteness Studies’, *Journal of African American Studies* 11, 2007: 1-15 (2).

as activists outside of black-led social movements. Among them, Becky Thompson stands out, particularly her social history *A Promise and A Way of Life: White Anti-Racist Activism*.<sup>10</sup> Here, Thompson traces the actions of white racial justice activists involved in the civil rights, feminist, anti-imperialist, Central American peace and prison reform/abolition movements. Her account is a sweeping yet nuanced one that simultaneously divulges important histories and hints at dozens more to be told. While Thompson is at pains to explore white activists' relationships with many different movements, historian Winifred Breines has concentrated on the attempts of white women's liberationists to demonstrate solidarity with African Americans and the black freedom movement. In her influential book *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of Black and White Women in the Feminist Movement*, she contends that anti-racism was a central organising principle for many white feminists, even if they sometimes failed to put this into practice.<sup>11</sup>

Histories of the 1950s and 1960s civil rights movement have been particularly attentive to the racial justice efforts of whites. Many historians, for instance, have highlighted the early work of Carl and Anne Braden, who became leaders in Southern anti-segregation efforts during the mid-1950s through their work in the Southern Christian Education Fund and for enduring a sedition trial after they bought a house in an all-white part of Louisville for African American family friends.<sup>12</sup> For many, though, the story of white involvement within SNCC

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<sup>10</sup> Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*; and her 'Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism' *Feminist Studies*, 28(2), 2002: 337-360.

<sup>11</sup> Winifred Breines, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*: 51-52; and Catherine Fosl, *Subversive Southerner: Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War South* (University Press of Kentucky 2006). Other histories of individual whites involved in the civil rights movement include, Constance Curry and others, *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2000); Cynthia Stokes Brown, *Refusing Racism: White Allies and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York:

has served as a microcosm for the trajectory of white anti-racism activism in the post-war era.<sup>13</sup> Though works like Howard Zinn's *The New Abolitionists* appeared during the height of SNCC activity, more contemporary histories of the organisation have emerged in tandem with important shifts within civil rights movement historiography – from top-down leadership centred histories to grassroots, bottom-up and youth-based histories. Newer histories like Wesley Hogan's *Many Minds, One Heart* and memoirs like the collection *Hands on the Freedom Plow* have demonstrated the significance of grassroots organisations like SNCC at the same time that they have historicised white participation in the black freedom movement.<sup>14</sup>

From its founding in 1960 in the midst of student-led sit-ins all over the South, SNCC included whites amongst its ranks.<sup>15</sup> Various projects viewed the apposite role of whites in the movement differently. Some, though not most, limited or rejected white applicants from the start, which worked to contain the number of white activists present during the organisation's earliest years.<sup>16</sup>

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Teachers College Press, 2002); and Gail S. Murray (ed.), *Throwing off the Cloak of Privilege: White Southern Women Activists in the Civil Rights Era* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> SNCC's existence and significance far exceeded its ranks of white activists, however important these individuals were to the organisation. The account offered here singles out the story of white participation because of the goals of this thesis. I am mindful of the charges that have been levied against SNCC historians that white scholars have emphasised white activists' experiences to such degrees that the stories and voices of black activists are drowned out. See Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long?: African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 117; and Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 39.

<sup>14</sup> Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); and Faith S. Holsaeart, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson and others (eds) *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Concord: Harvard University Press, 1995): 25, 51-53; Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, 'Introduction' in Cheryl Lynn Greenberg (ed.), *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Howard Zinn, *The New Abolitionists* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2004 [1964]): 167-189; and Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart*: 66-77.

<sup>16</sup> Emily Stoper, 'The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee: Rise and Fall of a Redemptive Organization' in Jo Freeman (ed.) *Social Movements of the Sixties and Seventies* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1983): 320-334; Hogan, *Many Minds*: 151; and David

However, some white activists, for instance Casey Hayden and Bob Zellner, were early and significant figures within SNCC. Moreover, the organisation's earliest years witnessed two white-centred and white-led efforts: the White Folks Project and the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC). Little understood though often judged a failure within SNCC histories, the White Folks Project, as activist Sue Thrasher later remembered it, was a 1964 attempt to 'search out sympathetic white people in Mississippi and try to get them involved [in the black freedom movement]'.<sup>17</sup> Also founded in 1964, SSOC likewise attempted to galvanise Southern white participation in black freedom efforts. Though it survived most of the decade and maintained close links with SNCC for some of those years, historians have only recently begun to consider the significance of this organisation.<sup>18</sup>

Far more common with the historiography is a focus on the escalation of white participation in large SNCC initiatives over the years 1963-64.<sup>19</sup> Today, scholars note the tactical motivations behind SNCC's decision to invite hundreds of largely white Northerners to, for instance, the Mississippi Freedom Summer project, a decision which stoked interracial tensions. Hundreds of young whites travelled to Mississippi for the summer of 1964 to help register African Americans to vote and to teach in Freedom Schools. The increased media attention that they brought with them was crucial and sorely needed, but

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Barber, *A Hard Rain Fell: SDS and Why It Failed* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2008): 21. See also Carson, *In Struggle*: 66-67, 144.

<sup>17</sup> Sue Thrasher, 'Circle of Trust' in Constance Curry and others (eds) *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2000): 207-252 (233). For a typical gloss over and dismissal of this project within the historiography see Hogan, *Many Minds*: 158 and 350, n.11.

<sup>18</sup> Gregg L. Michel, *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*: 66-67, 144; Zinn, *The New Abolitionists*: 167-189

frustratingly connected to their whiteness.<sup>20</sup> Many veteran SNCC activists also grew irritated with Northern white women's ignorance of Southern socio-racial mores, particularly where gender and sexual relations were involved.<sup>21</sup> Despite these strains, the early- to mid-1960s are generally viewed as the heyday of white participation in black freedom efforts in particular and racial justice activism more generally.

Experiences revolving around the increased numbers of white organisers within SNCC continue to be privileged in scholarly quests to illuminate the rise of racial separatism and Black Power. The predominant historiographical understanding is that, aside from proving frustrating to black SNCC organisers, rising white participation was harmful to SNCC's work, and the continued presence of whites in SNCC after 1964 is seen as coinciding with the organisation's diminishing effectiveness. As historian Belinda Robnett puts it, 'With the flood of Whites into the movement, and the passage of the Voting Rights Act, SNCC's course began to flounder. Many Black activists believed that their organization was being taken over by Whites and were advocating the expulsion of all White participants'.<sup>22</sup> That SNCC voted narrowly to expel whites in late 1966 receives a great deal of attention in the historical record. As

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<sup>20</sup> Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, 'Foreword' in Cheryl Lynn Greenberg (ed.) *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998): xiii. For other histories that have spoken to the tactical benefit of white inclusion, see Julian Bond, 'The Movement We Helped to Make' in Alexander Bloom (ed.) *Long Time Gone: Sixties America Then and Now* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): 11-22 (17); John R. Rachal, 'We'll Never Turn Back: Adult Education and the Struggle for Citizenship in Mississippi's Freedom Summer' *American Educational Research Journal* 35, 1998: 167-98 (169); and Hogan, *Many Minds*: 153-54.

<sup>21</sup> Robnett, *How Long? How Long??:* 120-25, 31-33; Carson, *In Struggle*: 113, 120-25; Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 36-47; Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage, 1980): 78-82; Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry: The Liberation of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998); Cleveland Sellers and others, 'Black Power' in Cheryl Lynn Greenberg (ed.) *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998): 152-76 (155-60); and Hogan, *Many Minds*: 174.

<sup>22</sup> Robnett, *How Long? How Long??:* 130.

Thompson indicates, this narrative is now part of a 'popular assumption...that the whites who left SNCC in 1967 went unwillingly and that the racial split in SNCC was the primary cause of the organization's demise'.<sup>23</sup>

Examining SNCC historiography reveals how we currently understand white racial justice activists in the 1960s, and it highlights a number of problems within these historical interpretations. Despite the problems that arose as the number of whites in SNCC grew, their participation is seen as a time when integration was the central pursuit of the black freedom movement, a struggle in which whites had an important part to play. Aside from the fact that it overshadows other important events and debates taking place within SNCC at the time, the expulsion of whites is often viewed dolefully within current historiography. It is understood that it prompted the end of both SNCC and white participation in racial justice efforts. Rather than continue their involvement in racial justice activism or develop different kinds of relationships to the Black Power movement, it is largely taken for granted that white activists simply joined or created other social movements and left behind anti-racist activism.<sup>24</sup> This means that, for whites, racial justice activism is seen to decline as Black Power begins to rise.

These historiographical issues, thus, connect to a failure to historicise a significant aspect of white racial justice history: how white activists responded to the Black Power imperative that whites organise against racism with other whites

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<sup>23</sup> Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*: 69. For arguments on why the expulsion of whites from SNCC and the rise of Black Power gained so much notoriety so quickly, see Mike Thelwell, Cleveland Sellers, Gloria House, Courtland Cox, Kwame Ture, Tom Hayden, and Hollis Watkins, 'Black Power' in Cheryl Lynn Greenberg (ed.) *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998): 152-176.

<sup>24</sup> Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*: 69-73. One early study that provided a foundational understanding for the notion that white activists left the black freedom movement and developed other movements that did not centre on race is Evans, *Personal Politics*.

and within white communities. The role of whites in the Black Power era was set out clearly by political scientist Charles Hamilton and then-chairman of SNCC Stokely Carmichael in their landmark book *Black Power*. What they originally wrote in 1967 almost directly speaks to current historiography:

Some people see the advocates of Black Power as concerned with ridding the civil rights struggle of white people. This has been untrue from the beginning. There is a definite, much-needed role whites can play. This role can best be examined on three different, yet interrelated levels: educative, organizational, supportive. Given the pervasive nature of racism in the society and the extent to which attitudes of white superiority and black inferiority have become embedded, it is very necessary that white people begin to disabuse themselves of such notions. Black people, as we stated earlier, will lead the challenge to old values and norms, but whites who recognize the need must also work in this sphere. Whites have access to groups in the society never reached by black people. They must get within those groups and help perform this essential educative function....Where possible they might also educate other White people to the need for Black Power.<sup>25</sup>

Carmichael and Hamilton thus not only insist that whites should continue to contribute to black freedom efforts, but they also plainly outline what roles they should fulfill. Of the three they identify, it is significant that they emphasise the 'essential educative function' of whites, the need for whites to address notions of white superiority and black inferiority within white communities. Carmichael and Hamilton imply that these are learned ideas when they assume that they may be unlearned, and they suggest that this educational function that whites 'must' perform will be foundational in the formation of a committed body politic of white racial justice activists in the US.

If any, however, it is the 'organizational' and 'supportive' roles that have been elucidated within existing histories of white activism during and beyond the Black Power era. In her work on the women's liberation movement, Breines overlooks the contentions set out by Carmichael, Hamilton and other Black

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<sup>25</sup> Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: Politics of Liberation*, Vintage edition (New York: Vintage, 1992 [1967]): 81-82.

Power activists and instead maintains that white feminists found too few outlets for racial justice work because no black freedom organisations would have them. ‘Support for the Panthers,’ she contends, ‘was one of the only tangible ways for white radicals to articulate antiracist politics’.<sup>26</sup> Other historians seem to agree. One of the few groups recognised for having attempted to fulfill the Black Power imperative for whites – the Weather Underground – is particularly noted for supporting the Panthers and other radical groups of colour through militant means in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>27</sup> Participant Bernadine Dohrn famously encapsulated what became that group’s purpose: ‘The best thing that we can be doing for ourselves, as well as for the Panthers and the revolutionary black liberation struggle, is to build a fucking white revolutionary movement.’<sup>28</sup> Historian Dan Berger has constructed arguably the strongest and most sympathetic case for understanding the Weather Underground’s ‘embrac[e] of the Black Power ideology by building an all-white group to fight racism’.<sup>29</sup>

Without undercutting the importance of these efforts and other ‘organizational’ or ‘supportive’ roles that white activists fulfilled in the Black Power era, which indeed require *further* historicisation, what has been completely overlooked are the ways in which whites attempted to fulfil the kinds of educational functions set out by Carmichael and Hamilton. This is so despite the fact that the historical record recognises that questions of race, knowledge, ignorance and power were central to black freedom and other racial justice efforts of the 1960s and 1970s. Historian Daniel Perlstein has written that ‘a pedagogical vision infused SNCC’s activism as militants sought simultaneously

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<sup>26</sup> Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 109.

<sup>27</sup> Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006); Barber, *A Hard Rain Fell*: 145-225; and Ron Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground* (New York: Verso, 1997).

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*: 13.

<sup>29</sup> Berger, *Outlaws of America*: 96.

to change the hearts of southern whites, to enlighten America about conditions in the South, and to discover true morality in themselves'.<sup>30</sup> This is to say that black freedom efforts viewed racial oppression in the US as greater than segregation and disenfranchisement. They knew that it was bound up with the ways in which African Americans and other peoples of colour were presented in dominant, white understandings and discourses of race in America. They felt that constructions of knowledge on race and racism could be both pernicious barriers and powerful tools in racial justice struggles. As Huey Newton wrote of the Black Panthers in May of 1968:

The main function of the [Black Panther] party is to awaken the people and to teach them the strategic method of resisting the power structure, which is prepared not only to combat the resistance of the people with massive brutality, but to totally annihilate the black community, the black population....The result of this education will be positive for Black people in their resistance and negative to the power structure in its oppression.<sup>31</sup>

To Newton, the Black Panther Party's *raison d'être* was pedagogical, and strategies related to ignorance and knowledge were vital. Other black freedom activities like the Freedom Schools of the Mississippi Freedom Summer as well as the development of black studies, Chicano studies and other 'ethnic studies' departments also embodied this 'pedagogical vision' and signified the quest by peoples of colour to create alternative knowledges of their histories and contemporary realities.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Daniel Perlstein, 'Teaching Freedom: SNCC and the Creation of the Mississippi Freedom Schools' *History of Education Quarterly* 30(3), 1990: 297-324 (298).

<sup>31</sup> Huey Newton, 'The Correct Handling of a Revolution' *The Black Panther*, 18 May 1968, reprinted in Phillip S. Foner (ed.) *The Black Panthers Speak*, First Da Capo Press Edition (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1995): 41-44 (42).

<sup>32</sup> On the establishment of 'ethnic studies' departments, see Karen Umemoto, "'On Strike!'" San Francisco State College Strike, 1968-69: The Role of Asian American Students' *Amerasia Journal* 15(1), 1989: 3-41; William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993): x, 1-19; Carlos Munoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso, 1989): xi-xiii; and Colleen Lye, 'US Ethnic Studies and Third Worldism, 40 Years Later', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 11(2), 2010: 88-93.

Unlike literature on SNCC, intra-movement racism and anti-racist praxis have not always been recognised within histories of other postwar social movements, including the women's liberation and gay liberation/rights movements. A central assumption within histories of Second Wave feminism is that white women's experiences within the black freedom movement and New Left prompted them to create a feminist movement towards the late 1960s. Having faced prevalent sexism but also having learnt a great deal about organising and about analysing power, white women activists began to form radical feminist organisations. Liberal feminists had been active throughout the 1960s; liberal feminist milestones include the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and the 1966 founding of the National Organization for Women. The foundational histories of the women's liberation movement have, however, focused far more on the kinds of politics and projects developed by the white women who founded 'radical' organisations such as the Chicago-based Westside Group, Boston's Cell 16, and New York Radical Women.<sup>33</sup>

As the movement's earliest historians began to illuminate the different aims and gender analyses of these groups, their histories highlighted 'splits' or 'divisions' within the movement. Both 'radical' and 'liberal' feminisms were constituted mostly by white, middle-class women, though radical feminists tended to be younger. The important distinction between the two revolved around their understanding of gender and the political, social and cultural structures of life in the US. Liberal feminists felt women needed greater

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<sup>33</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*: 3-23; Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in American, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989): 3-102; Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement : Dynamics of Change in Social Movement, Ideology and Activism* (New York, Routledge, 1992): 39-52; and Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin, 2000): 3-142. On the National Organization for Women, see Maryann Barasko, *Governing NOW: Grassroots Activism in the National Organization for Women* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

representation in and access to these structures; hence, they lobbied and fought for equal opportunities and sexual discrimination legislation, and mounted campaigns for the Equal Rights Amendment. Radical feminists, on the other hand, felt that women's oppression was integral to the very functioning of US society and so new structures, values and institutions would be necessary. They protested beauty pageants, challenged dominant views of (white) femininity, demanded and created university courses related to women, and sometimes called for women to completely separate from men.<sup>34</sup> Within radical feminism, dominant understandings have held that women were further divided by what historian Alice Echols termed the 'politico-feminist schism'. Politico women remained connected to the New Left and felt that the oppression of women stemmed from capitalism such that the overthrow of capitalism would bring about gender equality. Feminist women, Echols contended, tended to be far more critical of the New Left and often left it entirely, organising mostly in women-only groups. Echols went so far as to argue that 'feminists...blamed not only capitalism but male supremacy and, later, men'.<sup>35</sup>

Over the last decade, revisionist scholarship has begun to challenge the privileging of these kinds of feminism within the historiography. They have shed light on the ways in which both white Second Wave feminisms (and their earliest histories) often displayed limited racial cognizance, and they have begun the important work of historicising those feminisms advocated by African American, Chicana, Asian American, American Indian and multiracial groups of women. Some scholars like Sherna Berger Gluck and Becky Thompson have argued for more expansive views of feminist activities and for complex understandings of

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<sup>34</sup> Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*: 3-202; Rosen, *The World Split Open*: 142-262; and Alix Kates Shulman, 'Sex and Power: Sexual Bases of Radical Feminism' *Signs* 5(4), 1980: 590-604.

<sup>35</sup> Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*: 51-52.

the many women of colour feminisms that existed as part of the Second Wave.<sup>36</sup> Other scholars, including Kimberly Springer, Benita Roth and Jennifer Nelson, have written rich histories of the anti-racist feminist politics and practices of black feminist groups like the Combahee River Collective and the National Black Feminist Organization; Chicana groups like Las Hijas de Cuauhtémoc; the American Indian women's group Women of All Red Nations; and multiracial feminist projects like the hugely influential anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*.<sup>37</sup> Still largely missing within this revisionist work, is a view of the racial justice feminist politics of white women's liberationists.<sup>38</sup>

The absence of such work is even more conspicuous in accounts of the gay liberation/rights movement, however. Historiographical interrogations of intra-movement race relations and racial justice projects within this movement have been rarer than in its women's liberation counterpart. Typically, histories of the gay liberation/rights movement begin with the work of homophile activists during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1950, for instance, Harry Hay founded the male-dominated Mattachine Society, and in 1955, lesbians Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin founded the Daughters of Bilitis. Along with ONE, Inc., these groups began to create gay media, developed ideas around lesbians and gay men as a

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<sup>36</sup> Sherna Berger Gluck, 'Whose Feminism, Whose History? Reflections on Excavating the History of (the) U.S. Women's Movement(s)', in Nancy A. Naples (ed.) *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing across Race, Class, and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1998): 31-56; and Thompson, 'Multiracial Feminism'. See also Nancy MacLean, 'The Hidden History of Affirmative Action: Working Women's Struggles in the 1970s and the Gender of Class' *Feminist Studies* 25(1), 1999: 43-78 (47).

<sup>37</sup> Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*: 115-227; Gluck, 'Whose Feminism, Whose History?'; Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); and Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> An important exception here is Thompson's work. See especially, *A Promise and a Way of Life*: 115-227, and 'Multiracial Feminism': 341-46.

'minority' group, and strategised a gay rights movement. For most historians, however, the Stonewall rebellion of June 1969 marks the beginning of the radical gay liberation movement and on-going gay rights efforts. This event inspired a more militant movement that took cues from the women's liberation movement and Black Power to demand rights, carry out direct actions, and theorise gay oppression. In the wake of Stonewall, newly formed groups like the Gay Liberation Front developed radical media like the newspaper *Come Out!*; activists in the Gay Action Alliance performed 'zaps' to confront public officials and draw media attention; and many began to mark the Stonewall riots with an annual gay pride march in New York and elsewhere. Important to this new generation of activists were efforts to encourage lesbian, gay, and bisexual-identified persons to 'come out', to fight to overturn the official psychological classification of homosexuality as a mental illness, and to challenge heteronormativity.<sup>39</sup>

During the mid- and late-1970s, gay liberation/rights activists continued in their struggles, but like liberal feminists, they also began to fight for equal opportunity laws, run as representatives in government, and fight conservative backlash. In San Francisco in 1976, Harvey Milk became the first openly gay city commissioner in the country, and he and thousands of other activists successfully fought Proposition 6, one of a rash of anti-gay legislative initiatives

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<sup>39</sup> Eric Marcus, *Making Gay History* (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2002): 21-183; Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (New York: Basic Books, 2006): 104-196; Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993); Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon, 2011): 179-224; Terence Kissack, 'Freaking Fag Revolutionaries: New York's Gay Liberation Front, 1969-1971' *Radical History Review* 62, 1995: 104-134; Elizabeth A. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002): 31-112; and Steven Epstein, 'Gay and Lesbian Movements in the United States: Dilemmas of Identity, Diversity and Political Strategy' in Barry Adam, Jan Willem Duyyevdak, and André Krouwel (eds) *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics: National Imprints of a Worldwide Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998): 30-90 (34-41).

promoted around the country by Anita Bryant and other anti-gay activists.<sup>40</sup> Significantly, while lesbians had been involved in most gay liberation/rights groups and activities, they also sometimes organised independently from men. Because they formed separate groups like the Radicalesbians and worked on feminist and gay rights fronts, historians, such as Steven Epstein, have understood lesbian organising as ‘the most significant alternative to the mainstream lesbian and gay rights movement of the 1970s’.<sup>41</sup> The organising of nearly all groups, but especially those of gay and bisexual men, is understood to have shifted significantly during the early 1980s as the AIDS crisis took form. Confronted with this crisis, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activists developed community-centered healthcare groups, tools and projects to raise awareness about HIV transmission and safe sex practices, as well as non-profit organisations that provided food banks, hotlines and other means of support for people living with AIDS. Gay rights activists also worked to fight stigma and governmental refusals to fund AIDS research. In 1987 the group AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) began performing public ‘zaps’ that targeted drug companies, the Food and Drug Administration and other entities in order to force reforms in AIDS research and treatment.<sup>42</sup>

Unlike literature on SNCC and newer histories of the women’s liberation movement, intra-movement racism and racial tensions have not usually been recognised as fundamental within this dominant narrative of the gay

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<sup>40</sup> Bronski, *A Queer History*: 219-224; Marcus, *Making Gay History*: 187-242; Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*: 197-230; Tina Fetner, ‘Working Anita Bryant: The Impact of Christian Anti-Gay Activism on Lesbian and Gay Movement Claims’ *Social Problems* 48(3), 2001: 411-428; and Epstein, ‘Gay and Lesbian Movements in the United States’: 34-48.

<sup>41</sup> Epstein, ‘Gay and Lesbian Movements in the United States’: 48. See also Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*: 140-144; and Arlene Stein, ‘Sisters and Queers: The Decentering of Lesbian Feminism’ *Socialist Review* 22(1), 1992: 33-55.

<sup>42</sup> Bronski, *A Queer History*: 224-35; Epstein, ‘Gay and Lesbian Movements in the United States’: 52-57; Marcus, *Making Gay History*: 245-341; and Stein, ‘Sisters and Queers’.

liberation/rights movement. Only recently, and particularly with localised studies, has this movement's historiography treated the numerous race-based problems that afflicted it.<sup>43</sup> Often, these are the only histories that recount the resistances mounted to these problems, such as legal and direct action challenges against the widespread discrimination of peoples of colour in gay bars.<sup>44</sup> Overall, however, gay liberation scholarship has not paid sufficient attention to the complex and ever-shifting dynamics of race within the movement and the ways in which these dynamics shaped the movement and its participants. Quite typical in the narration of the movement is a simple nod to race-based problems. A case in point, Steven Epstein posits that, 'Over the course of the late 1970s and the 1980s, the unifying model of lesbian feminism gradually became less stable, as lesbian feminist communities were racked with disputes over racial and sexual diversity'.<sup>45</sup> Epstein does not unearth the 'disputes', however. In studies that do attempt to look at racial disputes within gay liberation activity, there is a myopic focus on either overt racial prejudice within gay social life, particularly in gay bars and clubs, or the insensitivity of white lesbian feminist-separatists.<sup>46</sup> Though these occurrences are undoubtedly significant, both to those who

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<sup>43</sup> Local studies that have interrogated the complex racial dynamics of gay liberation include, Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*; Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*; and Rochella Thorpe, "A House Where Queers Go": African-American Lesbian Nightlife in Detroit, 1940-1975' in Ellen Lewin (ed.) *Inventing Lesbian Cultures in America* (Boston: Beacon, 1996): 40-61.

<sup>44</sup> Chong-Suk Han, 'They Don't Want to Cruise Your Type: Gay Men of Color and the Racial Politics of Exclusion', *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 13(1), 2007: 51-67 (59); Abram J. Lewis, "'Within the Ashes of Our Survival': Lesbian and Gay Antiracist Organizing in New York City, 1980-1984', *Thinking Gender Papers*, UCLA Center for the Study of Women, UC Los Angeles, 2010; and Thorpe, "A House Where Queers Go".

<sup>45</sup> Epstein, 'Gay and Lesbian Movements in the United States: 49.

<sup>46</sup> See for instance, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993): 119; Thorpe, "A House Where Queers Go": 48; Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*: 236; Daneel Buring, 'Gay Activism Beyond the Magnolia Curtain: The Memphis Gay Coalition, 1971-1991' *Journal of Homosexuality* 32, 1996: 113-135 (126); Stein, 'Sisters and Queers': 385; and Allan Bérubé 'How Gay Stays White and What Kind of White It Stays' in Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Eric Klinenberg, and Irene J. Nexica (eds) *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001): 234-265 (237).

endured them and to current conceptions of the history of racism in the movement, their frequent invocation as *the* racist practices within the movement oversimplifies the racial tensions that were at play. They obscure the tendencies within the dominant, white-majority groups to claim a universal gay voice while actually engaging issues that primarily affected white and middle-class individuals. At the same time, with too narrow a focus on race relations and racism within the gay liberation/rights movement, there is almost no understanding of the racial justice politics and practices that white LGBT activists helped to put in place.

The historiographical absence of white activists' participation in the creation of racial justice politics within the women's liberation and gay liberation/rights movements may be understood as related to three, interconnected issues. First, this oversight is connected to the dominant narrative: that as whites were 'expelled' from the black freedom movement, they formed other social movements where issues of race and racism were largely unimportant. In the second place, the narrative follows that for most of these movements, perhaps particularly for women's liberation and gay liberation, Black Power and other nationalist struggles were not influential forces. Implicit in dominant historiographical narratives is the idea that, even while feminists and gay liberationists may have drawn on the rhetoric of these struggles or sporadically supported them, their 'real' work revolved around challenges to sexism and heterosexism. As Becky Thompson argues:

The omission of militant white women and women of color from Second Wave history partly reflects a common notion that the women's movement followed and drew upon the early civil rights movement and the New Left, a trajectory that skips entirely the profound impact that the Black Power movement had on many women's activism.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Thompson, 'Multiracial Feminism': 341.

Both of these issues highlight a final setback of most postwar social movement histories. Even while some excellent revisionist work has begun to look across movements and to compare them, most of the foundational scholarship and much of the new literature examines these movements as distinct and discrete entities, rather than as engaged in complex and evolving relationships with one another.<sup>48</sup> Looking at social movements in this way may allow for in-depth explorations of movement activity, but it fails to historicise the relational dynamism amongst post-war US social movements. It becomes one of the ways in which we are unable to read, for instance, how white activists responded to Black Power imperatives to whites.

*White activists and anti-racism workshops*

This thesis addresses these historiographical problems and oversights, and it contributes to the small but growing body of work that historicises white anti-racism activism. It does so by examining the anti-racism workshop as a significant site for the continued efforts of white racial justice activism during and beyond the Black Power era. This thesis marks the rise of workshops by white activists who considered themselves involved in black-led struggles, as well as those who were firmly embedded within the women's liberation and gay liberation/rights movements. As such, it sees Black Power 'at work' in these other movements. This thesis attempts to trace the multiple and varied ways in

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<sup>48</sup> One important early work that looked across and comparatively at US social movements was Robert L. Allen with Pamela P. Allen, *Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1974). For more recent works see Simon Hall, *Freedom and Peace: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Simon Hall, *American Patriotism, American Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*; Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*; Felicia Kornbluh, 'Buying Black Power: Welfare Rights, Consumerism, and Northern Protest' in Jeanne F. Theoharris and Komozi Woodward (eds) *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside of the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2003): 199-222.

which white activists – sometimes working in racially separate groups, sometimes working interracially – developed workshops as efforts that performed the kind of ‘essential educative function’ in largely white communities that Carmichael and Hamilton advocated in *Black Power*. Anti-racism workshops became a particularly significant and widespread aspect of white racial justice activism by the 1990s. It is hoped that this thesis helps to account for how this came to be.

Here, ‘workshop’ is used as a register for many different kinds of educational work that whites (and peoples of colour) carried out from the late 1960s. Many of these were grassroots efforts; they were designed by and for activists who worked at the local level and/or other members of the community. Some activists in this study, though, truly attempted to reach those ‘groups in the society never reached by black people’, such as corporate executives and churchgoers in white-dominated suburbs. All of the workshops examined in this study, however, strove to impart to whites the continuing significance of race and racism in the US, and whether implicitly or explicitly, all communicated ‘the need for Black Power’.

These workshops were distinguishable but not entirely disconnected from what feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty later referred to as the ‘race industry’, the profitable ventures that are ‘responsible for the management, commodification, and domestication of race’ particularly in the corporate world.<sup>49</sup> This ‘industry’ refers to a range of race-related training programmes that mushroomed in the 1980s but which actually existed in the US since the late

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<sup>49</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ‘On Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberal Education in the 1990s’ in Becky Thompson and Sangeeta Tyagi (eds) *Beyond a Dream Deferred: Multicultural Education and the Politics of Excellence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 41-65 (43).

1940s and 1950s (though they were uncommon then).<sup>50</sup> As present-day racial justice educator Patti DeRosa notes, 'race industry' programmes include a number of different approaches, but most forego analyses of power, domination or oppression.<sup>51</sup> Importantly, though, as Becky Thompson argues, this 'industry' had its roots in several political and social dynamics of the 1960s:

[F]rom corporate heads who saw compliance and antidiscrimination training as insurance against lawsuits; from clinical and academic research in social psychology and in organizational development; and from activists with experiences in progressive social movements (primarily the Civil Rights Movement and feminism).<sup>52</sup>

While the case studies in this thesis sometimes highlight the first two impetuses, all of them elucidate the relationship between 'progressive social movements' and anti-racism workshops. Though the activist roots of the 'race industry' have been largely obscured, this thesis recovers some of these roots, and each of the case studies presented here demonstrate the profound analyses that activists developed in anti-racism workshops and understandings of race and racism that centred on power relations, subjugation and domination.

While this thesis focuses on such analytical work, it also explores the political reform that it prompted. Anti-racism workshops have been criticised for ostensibly perpetuating a division between 'thinking' and 'doing'. In the late 1990s, Catherine Jones implored racial justice activists to reconsider anti-racism workshops as a primary function of their activism.<sup>53</sup> Without undercutting the importance of such efforts, in 'The Work Is Not the Workshop', she asserted that white activists had come to over-rely on workshops and that they needed to

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<sup>50</sup> Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*: 309-310; and Clare C. Swanger, 'Perspectives on the History of Ameliorating Oppression and Supporting Diversity in United States Organizations', in Elsie Y. Cross, Judith Katz, Frederick Miller, and Edith Seashore (eds) *The Promise of Diversity* (Chicago: Irwin, 1994): 3-12 (9-10).

<sup>51</sup> Patti DeRosa, 'Social Change or Status Quo?: Approaches to Diversity Training' *Change Works Consulting* 2001: 1-4.

<sup>52</sup> Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*: 310.

<sup>53</sup> Jones, 'The Work Is Not the Workshop'.

begin 'doing' more and 'talking' less. 'If we are to be truly accountable to revolutionaries of color', Jones wrote, 'we need to create a culture that prizes the doing, as much as we prize our abilities to educate each other. Both are crucial if we want to build an effective movement.'<sup>54</sup>

Though helpful for the ways in which they interrogate the limitations of anti-racism workshops, critiques like Jones' set up a false dichotomy between 'talking' and 'doing', between activism and education. This thesis demonstrates that, in confronting the practices of miskonwng and ignoring racial histories and realities, anti-racism workshops constituted important activist efforts and were usually conceived of as foundational to a larger project of political change. The creation of anti-racism workshops signalled efforts to challenge the ignoring of racial oppression in the US, the practices involved in miskonwng the US's historical racial landscape, and the minimising of anti-racist concerns. These white activists instead instructed others on the interconnections of oppressive systems, the historical practices of domination, and the contours and ubiquity of institutional racism. Workshops were thus conceived of as sites of epistemic resistance to racism. That many conducted this work in the context of their own social movements also represented efforts to save white-dominated movements from foundering on unsound epistemological foundations. The activists in this study were also committed to challenging institutional and cultural racism in wider US society. As such, their workshops were designed to transform political consciousness as well as effect political change.

The anti-racism workshops in this study speak to an epistemological confrontation taking place in the US at the time. Black freedom activists had long

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* For another critique of anti-racism workshops, see Guerrilla Mama Medicine, 'We Don't Need Another Anti-Racism 101', *Guerrilla Mama Medicine* [online] <<http://guerrillamamamedicine.wordpress.com/2009/03/17/we-dont-need-another-anti-racism-101/>> [accessed 6 March 2013].

been concerned with questions regarding race, knowledge and power. But in addition to creating projects that would promote new kinds of knowledge within African American communities, Black Power activists emphasised the ignorance at work in white-dominated communities and institutions, and they demonstrated that this racialised ignorance was in many ways the logic of white supremacy in the US. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton connected false notions of ‘white superiority and black inferiority’ to ‘the nature of racism in the society’.<sup>55</sup>

They elucidated this ignorance and implicated it in the machinations of racism:

Across the country, smug white communities show a poverty of awareness, a poverty of humanity, indeed a poverty of ability to act in a civilized manner toward non-Anglo human beings. The white middle-class suburbs need “freedom schools” as badly as the black communities.<sup>56</sup>

In analyses like this, Black Power activists challenged whites’ racialised misconceptions – not just their general unawareness (or ‘poverty of awareness’) but also the myths, half-truths, and lies that whites had propagated about peoples of colour. White ignorance of peoples of colour was thus cast as an integral aspect of racism in the US, one that was inextricably connected to whites’ general inability ‘to act in a civilized manner toward’ non-white peoples.

These epistemological confrontations presaged what critical race theorists today refer to as an ‘epistemology of ignorance’ with regard to race. These scholars assert that racialised ignorance, or more specifically whites’ *misknowing* of society’s racial landscape, is central to historical and contemporary relations of racial domination. Working off the political idea of the social contract, the philosopher Charles Mills famously wrote that a ‘racial contract’ exists in the US that ‘*prescribes for its signatories an inverted*

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<sup>55</sup> These were certainly not new ideas amongst African Americans or other peoples of colour in the US. For an excellent examination of W.E.B. Du Bois’ earlier work around these ideas, for instance, see Rabaka, ‘The Souls of White Folk’.

<sup>56</sup> Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power*: 82.

*epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance...producing the ironic outcome that whites in general will be unable to understand the world they themselves have made*.<sup>57</sup> Such ignorance is not, however, representative of a mere gap in knowledge on the part of individuals, or whites particularly. Rather, as scholar Elaine Swan points out, 'Ignoring takes labor. In fact, it takes resources, skill, techniques, argument, and justification.'<sup>58</sup>

The production of racialised ignorance is indeed laborious. In the US, it has entailed the creation of national myths, attempts to conceal truths, and the ignoring of racial inequalities and injustices, especially at the systemic and institutional levels. Black Power activists and other activists of colour in the 1960s and 1970s persistently drew attention to the construction of racialised ignorance. A case in point was Angela Davis' 1971 article 'Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves', originally published in *The Black Scholar*. Written largely while the former Black Panther was being held as a political prisoner, it proved hugely influential within the academy and was widely read outside of universities, including in some of the workshop settings explored in this thesis.<sup>59</sup> Davis outlines a social history of women slaves in the US, particularly with regard to their roles within slave families, and she explodes the noxious myth perpetuated by white, male social scientists like Daniel Patrick Moynihan that black families were 'dysfunctional' due to their matriarchal

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<sup>57</sup> Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997): 18. Emphasis in original.

<sup>58</sup> Elaine Swan, 'States of White Ignorance, and Audit Masculinity in English Higher Education' *Social Politics* 17(4), 2010: 477-506 (478).

<sup>59</sup> Angela Davis, 'Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves' *The Black Scholar* 3(4), 1971: 2-16. The huge influence of this article could be seen for instance in the multiple re-printings it witnessed – for instance in *The Massachusetts Review* in 1972 and again in *The Black Scholar* in 1981. Any references to 'Black Woman's Role' here come from *The Massachusetts Review* 13(1/2) Spring/Winter 1972: 81-100.

nature.<sup>60</sup> She discusses the ways in which Moynihan and others promote and aggravate the *misknowing* of African American women in ways that helped to constitute their racial and gender subjugation. Davis draws attention to and begins to challenge a racialised epistemology of ignorance with regard to black women and demonstrates the ways in which epistemologies of ignorance may serve multiple systems of oppression.

Davis' article was representative of the kinds of critiques that were being mounted by feminists of colour – often, women who were connected with Black Power and/or nationalist struggles – who demonstrated that epistemologies of ignorance did not affect all peoples of colour in the same ways. Specifically, these women pointed to the ways in which racialised knowledge and ignorance were gendered. The Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA) offers a compelling example. In their 1968 'Statement', the feminists of the TWWA highlighted not only the 'myth' of the black matriarch, but also a dominant idea within largely white feminist circles: the 'argument that we are all equally oppressed as women and should unite as one big family to confront the system'.<sup>61</sup> The TWWA argued this was 'artificial'; it reflected an ignorance of the 'problems of poor and working class women' and thus could not reach women of colour. It also eclipsed racism within the white feminist movement and the ways in which the dominant framework of gender 'equality' strove to bring 'reforms that will put white women into a position to oppress women of color or OUR MEN in much the same way as white men have been doing for centuries'.<sup>62</sup> What TWWA struck at, then, was a supposedly colour-blind understanding of women's oppression. The

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<sup>60</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington: Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor: March 1965).

<sup>61</sup> Third World Women's Alliance, 'Statement' [1968], reprinted in Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon (eds) *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2000): 65-66 (65).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*: 65-66. Emphasis in original.

'Statement' conveyed that this was a way of ignoring both raced and gendered realities that would ultimately further white domination over both women *and* men of colour.

It was these various forms of misknowing or ignoring – first highlighted by activists of colour – that many of the white activists in this study picked up on and confronted in the Black Power era. Anti-racism workshops represented pedagogical responses to the racialised epistemological confrontation represented by Black Power and other nationalist struggles taking place in the US. Though often quite different in content and thrust, the workshops examined in this thesis operated from an assumption that racialised ignorance within white-dominated social movements constituted an important, perhaps even primary, target for the continuing efforts of white activists concerned with racial justice and that ignorance was productive of racial injustice.

Connected to considerations of whites' racialised ignorance was a move towards interrogating and problematising whiteness, not as a racial identity but as a system of racialised power relations (with gendered and classed dimensions). Of course, these kinds of analyses of whiteness in the US were not new, particularly to peoples of colour.<sup>63</sup> Towards the end of the 1960s, however, critical examinations of whiteness proliferated. As historians Peter Ling and Sharon Monteith have written, among African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s 'most liberal and radical commentators shared the view that the evil [of racism] consisted solely of a prejudicial white construction of blackness', while whites within the black freedom movement 'usually...conceptualized the problem in

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<sup>63</sup> For works on African American understandings of US whiteness, for instance, see W.E.B. Du Bois, 'The Souls of White Folk' in W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1999 [1920]): 17-29; Rabaka, 'The Souls of White Folk'; Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and David Roediger (ed.) *Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White* (New York: Schocken Books, 1999).

terms of racial barriers of prejudice'.<sup>64</sup> They usefully point out that contemporary histories are beginning to deal with racism as a larger idea of whiteness 'and the institutions that have reproduced it throughout history' rather than racism as a matter of prejudice or individual acts of discrimination.<sup>65</sup>

However, radical racial justice activists from the late 1960s, including Black Power advocates, did develop critical analyses of whiteness themselves. Carmichael and Hamilton had argued that it was vital to understand the structural or institutional nature of racism and to connect it to whiteness in order to reach a fuller understanding of racism in the US. While the 1963 bombing of a black church which killed four black girls could be easily understood by most as racist, they said, the deaths of 500 African American babies in Birmingham each year were not seen in light of various institutionally racist patterns. These deaths were the result of widespread poverty in black communities and of social and political practices that kept blacks segregated and with little or no access to the higher quality institutions that whites in the US routinely enjoyed.<sup>66</sup> Activists of colour also signalled the ways in which whiteness informed cultural ideas. For instance, black feminists Patricia Haden, Donna Middleton and Patricia Robinson of the Mount Vernon/New Rochelle group wrote: 'The American Dream is white and male when examined symbolically. We are the exact opposite – black and female and therefore carry the stigma, almost religious in nature, of the spurned and scorned and feared outcast.'<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith, 'Introduction: Gender and the Civil Rights Movement' Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith (eds) *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004): 1-16 (2).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*: 3.

<sup>66</sup> Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power*: 4.

<sup>67</sup> Patricia Haden, Donna Middleton, and Patricia Robinson, 'A Historical and Critical Essay for Black Women', reprinted in Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon (eds) *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2000): 93-95 (94).

Through these and similar critiques, activists thus highlighted the different relationships that whites and peoples of colour, especially African Americans, had to various institutions, systems, and cultural ideas. They indicated that important institutions like the healthcare system were not equally accessed and enjoyed by all, neither was a central national myth like the 'American Dream'. What was particularly crucial here was the clear connection of racial oppression to *white control* of institutions, practices, and social and cultural ideals. Racism was thus not simply an issue of prejudiced belief or attitudes but was in fact about the ways in which power was mobilised to benefit US whites and ensure their dominant position. To draw these connections, to racialise power in this way, was to eschew dominant understandings of race relations in the US, particularly notions that the problems of race could or should be solved within communities of colour. It was also to critique a set of relations that scholars later referred to as 'whiteness'.<sup>68</sup>

White racial justice activists picked up on such critiques and brought them into their workshops. They highlighted institutional and cultural racism, examined the ways in which whites attempted to control political and social institutions, and traced the historical development of this racialised power. This thesis therefore demonstrates that critically analysing the meaning of whiteness, historically and contemporaneously, was a central practice within anti-racism workshops. Indeed, linking whiteness to racism in this way made it clear that whites had a responsibility to challenge racism in all its forms, which was not at

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<sup>68</sup> See for instance, Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Ruth Frankenberg (ed.) *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Joe L. Kincheloe, Shirley R. Steinberg, Nelson M. Rodriguez, and Ronald E. Chennault (eds) *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America* (London: Maxmillan Press Ltd, 1998); and David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991).

all to say that peoples of colour would or should concede anti-racist struggles to whites. Rather, as the black feminist group the Combahee River Collective stated of the white feminist movement, ‘Eliminating racism in the white women’s movement is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue.’<sup>69</sup> Aside from forcing the question of accountability, assessing whiteness within anti-racism workshops redirected the racial gaze and indicated that, as one white Detroit activist from this study wrote, ‘The racial problem in American society is not a “black problem.” It is a “white problem.”’<sup>70</sup> Rather than examining communities of colour, particularly African American communities, in order to understand race-based problems, the activists in this thesis pointed to the connections between white-dominated institutions, systems and cultural practices and racial injustice.

This thesis, thus, makes an intervention in the field of critical whiteness studies regarding knowledge sources and production. While scholars in the field have traced its development in the US academy back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they have generally ignored non-academic knowledge sources, including social movements. What this thesis demonstrates, however, is that activist processes and organisations have been significant to the creation of critical analyses of whiteness. As the case studies presented here attest, the black freedom, women’s liberation and gay liberation movements all gave rise to powerful, if imperfect, understandings of whiteness. One figure introduced in the first chapter, for instance, Robert Terry, was involved in black freedom efforts in Detroit from the late 1960 through the 1970s, and part of his activism involved writing a widely-read book, *For Whites Only*, that critically explored white

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<sup>69</sup> The Combahee River Collective, ‘The Combahee River Collective Statement’, in Barbara Smith (ed.) *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1983): 272-82 (281).

<sup>70</sup> Robert W. Terry, *For Whites Only* (Detroit: Eerdmans, 1970): 15. Emphasis in original.

America's relationship to race and racism. It was through his experiences providing anti-racism workshops that Terry developed his ideas for this book, and, in turn, this book proved hugely influential to a generation of anti-racism trainers. That analyses like Terry's are largely overlooked by critical whiteness scholars today suggests that academic knowledge is privileged over other knowledge sources within the field. As I have argued elsewhere, to the extent to which this privileging persists, our understanding of whiteness will move at the 'snail's pace' of the academic imaginary.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, considering activist knowledge on whiteness not only elucidates a richer history of the field, it allows for more complex understandings of whiteness, connects the field more closely with racial justice struggles and pushes scholarly debate beyond the confines of the academy.

### *Case studies, Methodology and Terms*

This thesis is divided into two parts. The first tells the story of two, largely unknown organisations that staged anti-racism workshops for largely white audiences in and around Detroit – the Detroit Industrial Mission (DIM) and People Acting for Change Together (PACT). It places Detroit as an epicentre of white anti-racism activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly for those whites who still saw themselves as part of the on-going black freedom movement. Though DIM and PACT were established in different decades and with differing objectives, the introduction to this section outlines the importance of the 1967 Detroit race rebellion as a catalyst for the anti-racist activism of both organisations. DIM and PACT were founded as not-for-profit organisations. As

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<sup>71</sup> Say Burgin, 'Locating Douglass Fitch: The Roots of Colour and Activist Traditions of United States Critical Whiteness Studies' *Critical Race and Whiteness Studies E-journal* [online] 9(1), 2013. On 'snail's pace', see Zeus Leonardo, 'The color of supremacy: beyond the discourse of "white privilege"' *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 36(2) (2004): 137-152.

case studies, they offer insight into the ways in which anti-racism workshops could operate in 'professional' settings. While DIM in fact most often worked with white-collar management at large corporations, PACT had a variety of audiences, including community and church groups and schools, but it was situated within a prominent non-governmental group and, like DIM, had a professional staff. Both organisations challenged ideas of colour-blindness with regard to race, instructed on the meaning and significance of Black Power and raised questions about whites as allies within racial justice struggles. They speak to the wide appeal of race-based educational efforts during the late 1960s and early 1970s, as well as the motivations of different kinds of audiences to engage in such efforts. Though many of the companies with which DIM worked may have been motivated by legal compliance and fears of unrest, rather than a passion for racial justice, DIM staff used these opportunities to challenge racialised ignorance and to stimulate the creation of what they felt were racially just policies at those companies. PACT's audiences were far more varied, and they were motivated to request workshops for a multitude of reasons. PACT volunteers who designed and staged the workshops were also keen to challenge the ways in which white Detroiters misunderstood race-based problems and to prompt them to constructively engage in struggles for racial justice.

The second part of the thesis explores how anti-racism workshops emerged within the women's liberation and gay liberation/rights movements. It is introduced by a discussion of racism within these movements and how educational efforts like workshops were understood as important ways to confront intra-movement racism, to continue racial justice activism and to do so within largely white communities. The second section is comprised of two chapters on little-known feminist free schools: the Women's School in

Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Breakaway in San Francisco. The case study of the Women's School uncovers a set of feminist politics, anti-imperialist feminism, that is rarely discussed with Second Wave historiography but for which anti-racist politics were central. The following chapter makes a close investigation of one individual, Pamela Allen, and her trajectory within black freedom and feminist struggles in order to account for the experiences, ideological influences and motivations that led her to design a class on 'Institutional Racism' at Breakaway. Together, these two chapters indicate the importance of free schools as sites where whites carried out race-based educational efforts with other whites. The final chapter in the thesis treats a long-standing but rarely explored interracial gay rights group, Black and White Men Together (BWMT). It is the only organisation studied in this thesis that still exists. BWMT also staged workshops to address racism within its own movement. However, this chapter explores the group's attempts to challenge racism amongst its ranks, which included explorations of white racist practices as well as internalised racism. Taken together, these three case studies highlight different workshop styles and different frameworks for understanding race and racism from the case studies in the first section. However, they also suggest that, whether carried out professionally or in grassroots organisations, with non-activist or seasoned participants, particular currents tended to run through anti-racism workshops. As with many activists of colour, questions of knowledge, ignorance, whiteness and power were central.

As a study of the ways in which racism and anti-racism were conceived of as epistemological forces, this thesis privileges the details of racial frameworks and knowledge constructions over the specific aspects of legacy or impact, though these dimensions are certainly not absent. What this thesis is concerned

with is uncovering how activists confronted racialised ignorances with different constructions of knowledge on the historical and contemporary realities of race and racism in the US. It attempts to look with critical sympathy at the racial frameworks that were developed, pointing out both the limitations and profundity of them.

The case studies in this thesis were chosen for the ways they highlight the wide range of anti-racism workshops from the late-1960 to the mid-1980s, particularly their different formats and audiences. While women's liberationists developed free school classes and gay rights activists designed consciousness-raising sessions, Detroit's non-profit organisations custom-tailored training sessions. Customised workshops were important for the Detroit activists because DIM's corporate clientele paid for training sessions and because PACT worked with such a wide variety of groups, including schools, religious organisations and government agencies. Unlike DIM and PACT, the feminists and gay liberationists in this study organised workshops for fellow activists. Collectively, the case studies in this thesis demonstrate that white activists developed a variety of methods and frameworks for educating others about race and racism. They were chosen to demonstrate the versatility of the workshop.

This is not to say that these case studies are perfectly representative of workshops taking place across the US during the late-1960s to the mid-1980s. Missing from this thesis, for instance, is a case study from the Southern US, where the politics of regional race relations might have shaped workshops distinct from those presented in this thesis. Research carried out for this thesis suggests that anti-racism workshops were not as common in the South as they were in North, East and West of the US. It was difficult to locate examples of Southern workshops; neither could adequate source material be found. On the

other hand, the North presented several potential case studies, and from these, those with the richest archival sources were chosen. Importantly, all of the groups treated in this thesis have received little to no recognition within the historical record. As such, these case studies also represent significant recovery work. They historicise the efforts of racial justice groups and activists who have hitherto been overlooked in the historical record.

These case studies have been shaped through engagement with archival sources and other printed materials, as well as through oral history interviews. Various collections within US libraries have informed the general storylines of the anti-racism workshops – their timing, leadership, structure and resources. Particularly important were the collections of the Detroit Industrial Mission and New Detroit, Inc., at Wayne State University; the Pam Allen Papers and the BWMT-Milwaukee Records of the Wisconsin Historical Society; and in Boston, Northeastern University's collections related to the Women's School and BWMT-Boston. These holdings also pointed to other print materials that were significant for understanding the racial frameworks that were constructed; typically, these were texts that were either used (in part or in full) in workshops or which impacted upon activists' understanding of race and racism more generally.

The narratives constructed through these sources were corroborated, elaborated upon, and more generally elucidated by oral history interviews with activists who were centrally involved in the creation and leading of anti-racism workshops. These interviews were sometimes undertaken in-person or via email but most often took place over the phone. Interviews followed a semi-structured format: though a general set of questions guided the interviews, it was not strictly adhered to, and often participants were asked to expound upon ideas. This was particularly true of interviews that were not face-to-face and when

follow-up interviews occurred over email and phone. For most of the case studies, between five and seven individuals were interviewed, and generally speaking, once an individual had been contacted, that individual facilitated contact with other participants. In-depth interviewing with fewer individuals allowed for 'thicker' descriptions of workshops, organisational structures, disputes and racial frameworks. For two case studies, far less interviewing took place. In the first chapter, on DIM, attempts were made to contact individuals who were central to this organisation's anti-racism workshops. However, it was discovered that only one individual was still living, and attempts to reach Douglass Fitch were unsuccessful. Because of their close association, however, the chapter on DIM was informed to some extent by the interviews that took place about PACT. Chapter Four, on Pam Allen, was informed by interviews with Allen alone because her workshop participants could not be traced or located. Moreover, as with the other case studies, in-depth interviews with Allen fleshed out the complexity of both her approach to workshop design and facilitation and the kind of racial knowledge she foregrounded in workshops.

In deciding to employ oral history interviewing as a research method, the work of social movement scholars Kathleen Blee and Verta Taylor was particularly influential. They have pointed out the particular benefits of semi-structured interviewing for studying social movements.<sup>72</sup> Most importantly, oral history interviewing allowed the participants to partake in the construction of knowledge about the efforts that they led. A dynamic process occurred whereby participants were asked not only to describe and reflect on their efforts but were given opportunities to challenge or affirm the narratives written here. This was

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<sup>72</sup> Kathleen M. Blee and Verta Taylor, 'Semi-Structured Interviewing in Social Movement Research' in Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg (eds) *Methods of Social Movement Research* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): 92-117.

an intentional effort to collapse – admittedly to a limited degree – the distance between the author as the ‘objective’ subject and the participants and their stories as ‘objects’ of study. Oral history interviews revealed a great deal of information that could not have otherwise been obtained. For instance, without having carried out interviews with feminists who had been involved with the Women’s School, the particular faction of anti-imperialist feminists who were influential in the creation of race-related classes would have been hidden. In some cases, when a good deal of archival documentation existed, oral history interviewing was found to ‘counteract the biased availability’ of this information.<sup>73</sup> With regard to PACT, for instance, the ‘official record’ represented by archival material suggested that this organisation was embedded in and well regarded by its parent organisation. Interviews revealed the existence of important disconnects between PACT and the larger organisation, however, as well as the significance of these detachments for the operations and eventual marginalisation of PACT.

Finally, specific terms used throughout the thesis were chosen deliberately but not without an understanding of the problems associated with them. The term ‘peoples of colour’ generally refers to racialised persons and groups within the US, including American Indians, Asian Americans, Latino/as, African Americans, and persons of multiracial or mixed heritage. While this term certainly ‘lumps’ large groups of peoples together in ways that obscure important differences amongst them, its frequent use by racialised groups in the US denotes its continuing usefulness, not least because it indicates a shared position vis-à-vis white hegemony. It is also preferred over the term ‘non-whites’, as this term constructs racialised groups with regard to what they are not and

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*: 94.

positions whiteness as normative.<sup>74</sup> With regard to the terms ‘racial framework’ and ‘racialised ignorance’, these signify race-based knowledges or understandings, on the one hand, and ignorances or *misknowings*, on the other hand, that are constructed, contested or refuted by activists in this study. These terms thus provide a helpful short-hand, and they are often used alongside, or interchangeably with, terms like ‘racial politics’ or ‘racial thinking’, which again refer to the constructions of certain kinds of politics or ideologies that centre on race.

The different terms used to describe the Detroit race rebellion of July 1967 have most frequently included ‘riot’, ‘disorder’, and ‘uprising’. In the wake of this five-day event and in the wake of many others like it around the country, President Lyndon Johnson appointed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. Not surprisingly, this panel used its titular term ‘disorder’ to discuss research into race rebellions that took place in Newark, Detroit and elsewhere over the summer of 1967.<sup>75</sup> Later, scholars of these rebellions most frequently referred to them as ‘race riots’ or ‘uprisings’.<sup>76</sup> In the following chapters, the term ‘race rebellion’ is used instead because of the political stance it denotes regarding those who rebelled in July 1967. Rather than acting purposelessly or without a view to wider social and political conditions – as might be conveyed with terms like ‘riot’ or ‘disorder’ – July 1967 represented a moment when black Detroiters symbolically and literally rebelled against entrenched patterns of racial injustice, a case which President Johnson’s National Advisory Commission

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<sup>74</sup> ‘For a critique by feminists of colour of the term ‘people of color’, see a discussion in Thompson, ‘Multiracial Feminism’, 346-47.

<sup>75</sup> United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam, 1968).

<sup>76</sup> See for instance, Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996): 259-260.

made quite clear.<sup>77</sup> As the introduction to Section 1 demonstrates, many white Detroiters recognised the rebellious character of the event. Some became radicalised in the aftermath of the Detroit race rebellion, and many of these individuals helped to make Detroit a hub of white racial justice activism.

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<sup>77</sup> National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report*: 236-277.

## SECTION 1: Detroit and the Black Freedom Movement

In his landmark book on the racial and economic landscape of Detroit in the mid-twentieth century, historian Thomas Sugrue describes a city whose residential, employment and political patterns in the immediate postwar era set in motion a racialised 'urban crisis' that is still taking place. Diverging from other accounts, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* maintains that, rather than 1970s stagnation or the dialectic of civil rights gains and white backlash:

Detroit's postwar urban crisis emerged as the consequence of two of the most important, interrelated, and unresolved problems in American history: that capitalism generates economic inequality and that African Americans have disproportionately borne the impact of that inequality.<sup>1</sup>

As an industrial Mecca that became home to thousands of African American migrants from the South during the early- and mid-twentieth century, Detroit and its auto-manufacturing industry had encapsulated hopes for the economic betterment of Southern blacks. However, the Motor City's auto-manufacturing industry had only barely and begrudgingly opened its doors to the city's newest migrants before it began to automate and relocate. Largely closed off from the city's more lucrative employment options and prejudicially barred from affordable real estate, black Detroiters found that their housing options were both limited and beset with exploitative practices. As deindustrialising processes took hold in the city during the 1950s and white Detroiters took flight for the suburbs en masse, it was indeed African Americans who shouldered the lion's share of the economic fallout. Widespread black poverty and unemployment as well as starkly segregated

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<sup>1</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*: 5.

residential formations are all present-day testaments to the historical processes of inequality conveyed in Sugrue's account.<sup>2</sup>

Detroit may be singular in the extent to which deindustrialisation decimated the city's economy and afflicted its black residents, but its story shares a great deal with other cities in the Northeast, Rustbelt and Midwest. Larger political and social processes played out similarly across the North. Urban centres from Boston to Chicago and further west attracted millions of black Southerners looking for work that paid and often treated them better than sharecropping or domestic work. The vast majority moved in the years during and after World War II, almost simultaneous with government-supported suburban white flight. Aside from subsidising home ownership for (white) veterans, the federal government began offering incentives for industries to relocate outside of cities. While Washington justified such 'industrial decentralization' in terms of national security, historian Eric Avila points out that its 'federal housing policy [also] created the basis for the racial resegregation of postwar America', a US in which blacks occupied urban centres and whites the suburbs.<sup>3</sup>

Further into this process of resegregation, during the mid-1960s, many of these same cities witnessed mass uprisings on the part of their black citizens, whose rebellions shattered the white North's palliative assumption that racial discord

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<sup>2</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*: 96-100, 33-56. On present-day Detroit, see Sugrue *Origins of the Urban Crisis*: 3-4; John Hartigan, Jr., *Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999): 9-10; Amy J. Schulz, David R. Williams, Barbara A. Israel, and Lora Bex Lempert, 'Racial and Spatial Relations as Fundamental Determinants of Health in Detroit' *The Milbank Quarterly* 80(4), 2002: 677-707; and Kevin Boyle, 'The Ruins of Detroit: Exploring the Urban Crisis in the Motor City' *Michigan Historical Review* 27(1), 2001: 109-127.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Vintage, 1992): 6; and Eric Avila, 'Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Film Noir, Disneyland and the Cold War (Sub)Urban Imaginary' *Journal of Urban History* 31(3), 2004: 3-22 (6). On black migration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Lemann, *The Promised Land*.

was a Southern issue. The by-now longstanding employment and housing problems had stoked the coals of black frustration, but, as later reported by the government-backed Kerner Commission, patterns of police brutality provided the spark. Largely black rebellions broke out in the streets of Northern and Western cities in ways that ranged from a deadly six-day ordeal in Watts in August 1965 to a so-called 'riot that wasn't' in New Brunswick in July 1967. Against the backdrop of a black freedom movement that was gravitating towards a black nationalist framework, the rebellions seemed to dramatise nation-wide shifts towards a prouder and more confrontational approach to resisting racism, and many US whites, including President Johnson, worried that a larger black conspiracy was afoot. In the end, however, the Kerner Commission's findings more closely echoed analyses of the 'white power structure' produced by Black Power activists than the flights of the white imaginary. The US, it famously reported, was 'moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal', and although most rebellions took place in urban black pockets, 'white society was deeply implicated' in creating and sustaining them.<sup>4</sup>

Precisely because of the extent to which deindustrialisation had impacted the city and its black residents in particular, increasing segregation was particularly obvious in Detroit. Unsurprisingly then, Detroit held the ignoble honour of hosting the worst race rebellion of the many the nation saw in the summer of 1967. After a police raid on a 'blind pig' (an afterhours establishment, this one with a large black

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<sup>4</sup> National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report*: 1-2, 7, 201-206, 302; Kevin Coyne, 'Remembering the Riot that Wasn't' in *New York Times* [online], 20 July 2007 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/29/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/29colnj.html>> [accessed 1 April 2010]; and Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, *Violence in the City: An End or a Beginning?* [online], 2 December 1965] <<http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/cityinstress/mccone>> [accessed 1 April 2010]. On the 'white power structure', see for instance Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power*.

patronage), the city heaved with fires, looting and violence for five hot and turbulent July days. Of the forty-three people who died, thirty-three were black, and most of them died at the hands of the legions of military and police personnel summoned by Governor Romney. Buses and parking garages became temporary detention centres as the city's jails could not hold the more than 7000 people arrested. Over twenty million dollars worth of property damage was estimated to have been perpetrated. As with most other rebellions that summer, most of the deaths, arrests, injuries and property damage took place within largely black neighbourhoods. It was while ashes were still smouldering in Detroit that President Johnson established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, the Kerner Commission.<sup>5</sup>

The rebellion's impact on the city, both in the short- and long-term, was enormous. It transformed Detroit's landscape. The shells of razed buildings can still be seen around the city. It prompted policy shifts. Governmental organizations and major corporations began to prioritise job training programmes for Detroit's long-term (largely black) unemployed population. And the city's racial justice milieu, especially black freedom activism, underwent deep ideological and tactical transformations in the wake of the rebellion. While many black activists in the city understood that the stage had been set for a large-scale rebellion that would signal a new 'mood' amongst black Detroiters and other African Americans, July 1967 took by surprise even those whites who had been active in black freedom efforts, and

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<sup>5</sup> National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report*: 84-85, 106-07, 110. For more on the Detroit rebellion of July 1967, see in this volume pp. 86-108; and Rutgers University, 'Detroit Riots – 1967' *Riots – 1967* [online] <[http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/d\\_index.htm](http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/d_index.htm)> [accessed 29 August 2012].

many of these individuals would become even more engaged in racial justice work post-rebellion.<sup>6</sup>

This section explores two non-profit organisations whose histories illustrate this effect: the Detroit Industrial Mission (DIM) and People Acting for Change Together (PACT). A Christian organisation founded amidst concerns over the role of faith in industrial life, DIM predated the rebellion by more than ten years but had turned its attention toward race relations prior to the rebellion. After July 1967, though, the Mission poured itself into both an initial response to the rebellion that pivoted on facilitating a positive white reaction to the event as well as a longer-term commitment around affirmative action programming within Detroit-based corporations. PACT, on the other hand, grew directly out of a demand created by the rebellion for public speakers on race relations, the rebellion and its effects. For both organisations, educational efforts came to form the crux of their work.

Comprised of mostly white activists who strongly identified with the black freedom movement – its preceding and ongoing efforts, its shifting aims and overarching ideology – DIM and PACT provide windows into the activist lives of those whites whose efforts within the black freedom movement neither ceased nor were translated to a different social movement in the wake of Black Power's call for whites to organise with other whites. Detroit had a special place within the 1960s and 1970s black freedom organising. In the mid-1960s, some of the city's most famous black radicals – including James Boggs, Grace Lee Boggs, and Rosa Parks – organized the Michigan Freedom Now Party, which, amongst other activities,

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<sup>6</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*: 99; Robert W. Terry, *Action from the Boundary: an Historical Study of Detroit Industrial Mission 1956-1970* (University of Chicago: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1973): 305-78.

promoted black-centred curriculum in schools.<sup>7</sup> Towards the end of the decade, Detroit became the birthplace of the Revolutionary Union Movements and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, as black Detroiters took Black Power into industry and made their city a hub for black union activity. Many of these organisers also spearheaded the Detroit chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1969.<sup>8</sup> Religious-based activism also thrived in the Motor City. As Historian Heather Ann Thompson has pointed out, although often remembered as the birthplace for the Nation of Islam, Detroit was also ‘home to the country’s most serious black Christian challenge to religious as well as political accommodation and moderation’.<sup>9</sup> The Reverend Albert Cleage put radical black Christianity on the map when he founded the Shrine of the Black Madonna Church, and it was in Detroit that former SNCC secretary James Forman first delivered his *Black Manifesto*, calling on white churches and synagogues around the country to provide funding to black freedom organisations as reparations for historical injustices. When some religious institutions did offer funding, some of the above Detroit-based groups received large sums which went towards black-led institutions like a bookstore and printing press.<sup>10</sup>

Detroit also became an important centre for on-going white involvement in racial justice activism. Formed in 1962, the Metropolitan Detroit Religion and Race

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<sup>7</sup> Jeanne Theoharris, “‘A Life History of Being Rebellious’: The Radicalism of Rosa Parks’ in Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharris and Komozi Woodard (eds) *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009): 115-137 (131-32); and Paul Lee, ‘The Roots and Responsibilities of Black Power’, *Michigan Citizen* [online], 15 April 2012, <<http://michigancitizen.com/the-roots-and-responsibilities-of-black-power/>> [accessed 5 October 2012].

<sup>8</sup> See James Geschwender, *Race, Class, and Worker Insurgency The League of Revolutionary Black Workers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001): 84-85; and Angela Dillard, *Faith in the City: Preaching Radical Social Change in Detroit* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007): 295.

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*: 84-85; and Dillard, *Faith in the City*: 295.

Conference was an interracial, inter-religious organisation that promoted integration through its contacts with elites in Detroit. It began to change shape during and after the 1967 rebellion, however. It changed its name to Interfaith Action Council, started working more closely with emerging black leaders such as Reverend Cleage, and opened Action Centers in white suburban areas that worked to confront racism on a variety of fronts, including in the media and in housing.<sup>11</sup> Also at the end of the 1960s, white Detroiters Frank Joyce founded People Against Racism, which sponsored a number of events and seminars that aimed to raise whites' racial consciousness and encourage them to join black freedom efforts. Then, in the early 1970s, as attacks were mounting against police brutality, whites helped to establish groups like the Ad Hoc Committee and the State of Emergency Committee to disband the police squad that was largely responsible for the many instances of brutality against black Detroiters.<sup>12</sup> Whether explicitly or implicitly so, all of these groups responded to the imperative that whites fight racism within white communities.

DIM and PACT activists were also faithful to this call, though PACT often worked with multiracial groups as well as all-white audiences. Though embedded within non-profit organisations that were not immediately recognised as radical, these individuals – some as paid professionals, others as volunteers – used their organisational spaces to upend whites' normative understanding of race and to

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<sup>11</sup> Leonard Gordon, 'Aftermath of a Race Riot: The Emergent Norm Process among Black and White Community Leaders', *Sociological Perspectives* 26(2), 1983: 115-135 (126-27).

<sup>12</sup> Thompson, *Whose Detroit?:* 92-94; and 'Use and Sponsorship of Volunteers: A Report to Communications Task Force, New Detroit, Inc.' Harvey Bertcher, H. Frederick Brown, Roger Lind, Eugene Litwak, Rosemary Sarri, Wayne Vasey, Robert D. Vinter, University of Michigan, School of Social Work, August 1969, Speakers' Bureau 1969 Funding and Correspondence, Box 154, New Detroit Inc. Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library of Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan. (Hereafter NDI Collection.)

promote sweeping changes to the political, economic and cultural landscapes of the US. This work was often fraught, however; the cultural and financial dynamics of small advocacy organisations could pose precarious funding situations, sustain fears regarding respectability, stymie radical efforts, and prioritise process over goals. In this way, activists in both groups exemplify what business scholars Debra Meyerson and Maureen Scully referred to years later as ‘tempered radicals’: ‘people who work within mainstream organizations and professions and want also to transform them’.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the white community with which DIM and PACT activists organised were those located within the system. It was here that many of Detroit’s white racial justice activists sought to promote radical change and racial justice at the end of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s.

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<sup>13</sup> Debra E. Meyerson and Maureen A. Scully, ‘Tempered Radicalism and the Politics of Ambivalence and Change’ *Organization Science* 6(5), 1995: 585-600 (586).

**Chapter 1:  
Workshopping New White Consciousness:  
The Detroit Industrial Mission**

In 1969, the well-known clutch manufacturer Borg & Beck decided to move its large central Detroit-based plant twenty miles north, outside of the city. While B&B propounded the increased productivity of the future plant – to be based in Sterling Heights – the company’s move would in fact mimic a number of similar urban-to-suburban transitions already made by major manufacturing plants all over the country. The ‘Big Three’ of the automotive industry (Ford, General Motors and Chrysler) had spent millions on new plants in suburban areas in the 1940s and 1950s, and as Sugrue has shown, parts manufacturers were some of the first to ‘follow the auto industry out of the city’.<sup>1</sup> While other parts manufacturers were comfortably at home in Detroit suburbs by the late 1950s, Borg & Beck was actually somewhat behind the trend. Still, the company’s move eventually contributed to the general decentralisation of the manufacturing industry and to the substantial loss of manufacturing jobs within urban areas throughout the US during the 1960s and 1970s. Some researchers later suggested that manufacturing jobs tended to follow their workers, such that post-war suburban white flight prompted manufacturing flight. Others have pointed out that, in decentralising, manufacturing employers could more effectively subdue unions and decrease labour costs by tapping into the cheaper workforce of rural areas. And still other researchers have demonstrated that

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<sup>1</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*: 126-130 (129).

these factors were secondary to the federal incentives put forward during and following the war for manufacturing companies to decentralise.<sup>2</sup>

Complex and multifarious motivations aside, what was definitive about Borg & Beck's impending move was the anxiety it generated for its executives. In particular, they worried that the move would prompt racial frictions within the company and that its black workforce would resist the relocation. Such resistance, in fact, would not be unfounded. Most of the black workforce lived within the city limits, much closer to the Highland Park-based plant than its future home. Moreover, Detroit's suburbs, like those of many other cities, were characterised by *de facto* segregation and fierce white resistance to black residency. Assuming that new workers would need to be hired, in the case that many could not or would not follow their employment to the suburbs, the likelihood of African Americans stepping into those roles was slim; the farther outside the city that companies moved, the fewer blacks they tended to employ.<sup>3</sup>

In their apprehension, Borg & Beck executives turned to an organisation that was beginning to break ground in the area of anti-racism training in the Detroit area. Just a few years before, the Detroit Industrial Mission would have been an odd non-profit organisation to turn to for guidance on race relations; though always leftist in its political orientation and increasingly geared towards social justice, the Mission

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<sup>2</sup> E. Douglas White, 'Borg & Beck Division, Borg-Warner Corporation: Background' Notes, undated [1970]: 1-4, Folder: Borg & Beck, Detroit Industrial Mission Unprocessed Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library of Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan (hereafter, DIM Collection); John Wayne Jones, 'Borg-Warner Tooled Up for Solid Gain in Net' *Barron's National Business and Financial Weekly* (5 April 1971): 26, 32 (32); W. Norton Grubb, 'Flight to the Suburbs of Population and Employment, 1960-1970' *Journal of Urban Economics* 11(3), 1982: 348-367 (362); and Avila, 'Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight': 5.

<sup>3</sup> 'Borg & Beck Division, Borg-Warner Corporation: Background' Notes: 3; and Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*: 140-141 and 181-230. As I indicate further below, B&B management eventually worried about transportation for black employees to the suburban plant, indicating that most lived far from the plant even in the mid-1970s.

had been better known for its work on employment or human relations than racial justice. Relatively quickly, however, in the space of the three years in which it worked with Borg & Beck, the Detroit Industrial Mission transformed itself into an industrial consultancy best known for its efforts in the areas of affirmative action and anti-racism training. The Mission's work with the auto parts manufacturer Borg & Beck, which this chapter treats after a historical sketch of the Mission, illuminates not only the contours of the organisation's corporate anti-racism trainings, but also the motivations behind companies' desire for such trainings. In the interstices of the Mission's influences and drive in this area and the social and economic forces behind B&B's anxiety we encounter the niche in which corporate anti-racism trainings could develop and rapidly expand. As one of the earliest companies with which the Mission conducted anti-racism consultations, Borg & Beck's example sketches the development of that organisation in particular and its work in the arena of anti-racism training.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Detroit Industrial Mission*

The Detroit Industrial Mission (DIM) began in 1956 as an organisation dedicated to illuminating the ways in which a Christian ethic could contribute to industrial settings in Detroit, particularly auto manufacturing companies. As work that took place across denominations and which aimed to reach out to people within industry as *workers*, industrial ministry had been practised in the US and UK since the turn of the twentieth century, often simply in an individual minister's own capacity but

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<sup>4</sup> 'Borg & Beck Division, Borg-Warner Corporation: Background' Notes: 1.

becoming increasingly structured by the church over time.<sup>5</sup> As Presbyterian minister and mid-century practitioner of industrial missionary work, Donald Matthews wrote in 1951:

Statistics indicate that the church and the working man don't know each other very well. Our experience suggests that the minister and his people don't know each other very well. To the degree that is true then it becomes increasingly difficult for the minister to mediate between the questions of life and the answers of the Christian faith...particularly in a workingman's community. I am working in industry in an attempt to bridge the gap.<sup>6</sup>

Matthews, like many of his predecessors, actually worked both as a minister for the church and in manufacturing. Dual roles were common for industrial missionaries up until and during the first few years that organised industrial missions formed. Two Detroit-based Presbyterian ministers, James Campbell and Jesse Christman, were also employed on the Cadillac assembly line at General Motors for several years before taking up jobs at DIM.<sup>7</sup>

Though it was one of the first organised industrial missions in the country and clearly had roots in theological practices already taking place in the US, DIM's founding also reflected the trendsetting of the Church of England, which had begun forming industrial missions in the 1940s. Industrial missions on both sides of the Atlantic reflected the church's anxieties over what it perceived as its irrelevance to working-class people. In founding these institutions, dioceses hoped to connect the church with industrialised society and working-class folk. The goal of DIM and other industrial missions was not necessarily to convert industrial workers or persuade

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<sup>5</sup> Richard P. Poethig, 'Toward Worldwide Industrial Mission: The Presbytery Story, 1945-1975' *American Presbyterians* 73(1), 1995: 35-47 (35-38).

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Poethig, 'Toward Worldwide Industrial Mission': 39.

<sup>7</sup> Michael S. Northcott, *The Church and Secularisation: Urban Industrial Mission in Northeast England* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1983): 37-40; and Poethig, 'Toward Worldwide Industrial Mission': 38-40.

them to attend church (if they were not already doing so).<sup>8</sup> Rather, DIM ‘attended’ industry. Throughout its existence, DIM’s staff sat in on union meetings, engaged white collar management on issues such as personal fulfilment in work, and circulated the shop floor, setting up discussion and Bible study groups. Though these engagements often found industrial workers (both white and blue collar) and DIM staff discussing working conditions and ethical dilemmas on the job rather than Christian scripture, according to DIM staffer Scott Paradise the relationships formed with these workers served the wider purpose of industrial missions: to bridge ‘the yawning chasm between the world of the church and the world of industry’.<sup>9</sup>

DIM’s specific efforts and goals evolved over the organisation’s first fifteen years. As a staff member who also conducted academic research into the Mission’s work, Robert (Bob) Terry wrote in his 1973 doctoral thesis that between 1956 and 1970 DIM devoted itself to three different pursuits. It was founded amidst a desire to ‘renew the church’, to reassert its importance in an industrialised age.<sup>10</sup> Within three years, however, it had instead become ‘committed to dialogue’, and it set about instigating discussions on, as one DIM affiliate put it, the ‘human dimensions’ of industrial work.<sup>11</sup> This change, of course, coincided with a larger, more lasting shift

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Bagshaw, ‘The Church Beyond the Church: Sheffield Industrial Mission 1944-1994’ in Michael Northcott (ed.) *Urban Theology: A Reader* (London: Cassell, 1998): 268-273 (269); and Emma Bell, ‘Whose Side Are They On? Patterns of Religious Resource Mobilization in British Industrial Mission’, *Management & Organizational History* 1(4), 2006: 331-347 (332, 335).

<sup>9</sup> Scott I. Paradise, *Detroit Industrial Mission: A Personal Narrative* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968): 13.

<sup>10</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary: 20*. Terry’s study of DIM is unique and, unfortunately, rare. As a former staffer of the Mission, he is able to provide an insider’s account of the organisation. I have found it necessary to rely greatly on Terry’s work because of the dearth of writing on DIM (particularly from the mid-1960s onward) and other industrial missions in the US. I have taken care to consider the ways in which Terry’s insider-ness may have obscured his understanding of DIM; nonetheless his thesis is an invaluable source to this study precisely because of this insider-ness.

<sup>11</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary: 20*.

within DIM's work towards an emphasis on human relations within employment. Another significant transition was in place by 1968 when the Mission had converted itself, in Terry's words, into a 'social justice change agent'.<sup>12</sup> This turn saw the Mission take on a consultancy-like role with the Detroit corporations with which the Mission had been working. It was in this phase that DIM became known for its work – and workshops – around racism and race relations.

In his thesis, Terry argued that the story of DIM's first decade and a half could be largely understood as the Mission's attempt to resolve its difficult position on the 'boundary' of different institutions, particularly the church and industry. That is, DIM's changing foci and efforts reflected the challenges that it experienced as it practiced this novel and exploratory form of ministry. For instance, throughout its first decade many within both industry and the church viewed DIM suspiciously, unsure of the purpose of this new kind of Christian agency. Other US-based industrial missions, which cropped up after and took lessons from DIM, underwent similar transformations, almost affirming the troubles of this 'boundary existence'.<sup>13</sup> It was in large part because of this boundary existence that, during its first ten years, up to the 1967 Detroit rebellion, the Mission distanced itself from issues it deemed controversial. Yet some on the staff grew weary of this cautious approach, particularly because of the ways in which it curbed the Mission's efforts and zeal. Paradise, for instance, recalled a discussion group in which 'a frustrated and angry young manager' challenged DIM staffer Jesse Christman after the latter claimed that

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<sup>12</sup> 'Taking All Night' in *Life & Work* 9(2), January 1967, not paginated, General Holdings of Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan. (Hereafter, Holdings of BHL).

<sup>13</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 11-12; Poethig, 'Toward Worldwide Industrial Mission': 40; and Richard Henry Luecke, 'Protestant Clergy: New Forms of Ministry, New Forms of Training' in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 387, 1970: 86-95.

his organisation 'enhance[d] the process of reflection, communication, self-criticism, and responsible action within corporations'. The young man's problem, Paradise recollected, was that Christman's comments lacked any sense of urgency or passion. While Christman stood by his statement by arguing that 'he was not seeking controversy but rather assent and access to industry managers', Paradise's sympathies lay with the young manager, and he worried that DIM had concerned itself with 'access to industry managers' at the expense of theological principles and a more engaging practice.<sup>14</sup>

Among those issues the Mission felt were too 'controversial' to involve itself with initially were race and race relations. Feeling that the Mission did not yet have enough legitimacy in industrial settings – as Christman insinuated – the all-white staff and board feared alienating the people it most sought to reach by carrying out work that they felt did not directly relate to industry and which did not carry popular public support. Such was the case with an integration project proposed by two parishes in 1957. The board deliberated over the proposal but in the end felt that 'involvement to any great extent in an integration project in the early stages of the Mission would not be wise. At a later date, when the Mission is established, it might be possible to back such a plan'.<sup>15</sup> This disconnected approach to race relations may have helped DIM survive its first years, but it also reflected a myopic understanding of race relations and a privileged approach to involvement in racial justice. A decade later the organisation came to understand that issues of race and racism were intimately connected to industry; race unevenly shaped its history,

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<sup>14</sup> Paradise, *Detroit Industrial Mission*: 125-127 (125-126). On the larger dynamic of suspicion directed at industrial missions, see also Bell, 'Whose Side Are They On?'.  
<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 117-18 (117).

workforce, policies and culture. That DIM could choose not to involve itself with projects that explicitly treated race highlighted the fact of its whiteness, of its racially dominant constitution. This was a privileged choice, one that would not have been available to a largely black or multiracial group in the same way.

This was not to say that DIM was wholly divorced from the issue of civil rights or from the black freedom movement during its earliest years. Occasionally and on an informal basis, discussion groups that staff members started amongst union members, foremen and other workers would discuss civil rights. Moreover, standing policy allowed individual staff and board members to support controversial issues so long as they did not do so in DIM's name, and, like so many Northern whites associated with the church at the time, a number of Mission staff members were in fact deeply involved in civil rights efforts. Dr Robert Spike, who sat on the Mission's board of directors until his assassination in the fall of 1966, served as the first director of the National Council of Churches' Commission on Religion and Race. In this role, Spike was instrumental in arranging white church involvement in the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and in sending Northern white students to the South for the Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964.<sup>16</sup> Long-time staffer Scott Paradise was likewise deeply involved in the struggle for black freedom. In 1962, he animated the Mission's fears over involvement in race-based issues when he testified before the State Affairs Committee on Civil Rights on issues of open

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<sup>16</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 228-232; James F. Findlay, Jr, *Church People in the Struggle: the National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 48-110; and 'Robert Spike: In Memoriam' in *Life & Work* 9(2), January 1967, not paginated, Holdings of BHL. The Commission on Religion and Race of the National Council of Churches was established in 1963 in response to Martin Luther King, Jr's, 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail', and, as church historian James Findlay writes, it 'brought together tendencies and people who for some time had been thinking about, and hoping for, direct commitments nationally by the churches in racial matters'. See Northcott, *Church People in the Struggle*: 34-35 (35).

housing (the elimination of housing discrimination) and brought DIM under censure from industrialists, even though he had been acting in his capacity as a member of the Christian Social Concerns Committee.<sup>17</sup>

As the Mission began to gain greater legitimacy with its industrial clientele, starting around 1966, it loosened its reins on 'controversial' activity. It began to see its boundary existence as an asset, Terry wrote, one that would allow it to challenge the people with whom it worked.<sup>18</sup> Such increased ease began to open up race-based issues. In January 1967, the Mission's newsletter, *Life & Work*, carried its first critical piece on work and racism, highlighting the Michigan Civil Rights Commission's bleak report on black employment in the construction trades.<sup>19</sup> Though its 'boundary existence' did indeed shape and re-shape DIM in many ways, life for the Mission was larger than this positioning. Other factors, not the least of which included those same factors that fed the Detroit rebellion of 1967 and especially the rebellion itself, prompted DIM to re-orient and re-organise itself in terms of both its activities and its racial politics.

The July 1967 rebellion dramatically affected the work of the Mission. During and directly following the event, the Mission was largely concerned with how white Detroiters would perceive and react to the rebellion. In the midst of the rebellion, DIM virtually dropped its on-going projects and enmeshed itself in the official government response to the riot: the founding of a committee charged with rebuilding Detroit. Soon established as a non-profit organisation called New Detroit, Inc., this association took on a host of issues, including employment and police-

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<sup>17</sup> Paradise, *Detroit Industrial Mission*: 121; and Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 118.

<sup>18</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 288.

<sup>19</sup> 'Room for Negroes in Construction?' *Life & Work* 9(2) January 1967, not paginated, Holdings of BHL.

community relations. It also eventually brought into being People Acting for Change Together, with whom DIM would come to have close ties. In the more immediate aftermath of the rebellion, though, the Mission dealt with what was then an ad-hoc committee of governmental and business leaders attempting to present a constructive response to the rebellion. Eager to see black Detroiters involved with these efforts, DIM provided the committee with contacts in the 'militant' black community, as well as its consultative skills. It was anxious to use its capacities to ensure that black leaders who were 'not usually included in city decision-making' had a place at the table.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, DIM worried about the potentially negative response that white church-goers in Detroit would have towards the rebellions. The staff decided to write 'an interpretive account of the rebellion and its meaning' for Detroit's white parishioners, one that reflected sympathetically upon the issues of racial inequality and injustice that drove the rebellion. James Campbell, who by this point (August 1967) was DIM's executive director, wrote the piece and remarked on the kinds of reparations that should follow the rebellion:

What will arise from the ashes? The need is for a new kind of city to arise from the rubble...A city where every man has a job and every family an income, and the American promise that once meant forty acres and a mule now means the training and technical competence to participate in a technological society.<sup>21</sup>

Here, Campbell revealed, inadvertently, the gendered ideals that shaped DIM's ideas around racial reparations and, in turn, racial justice. While acknowledging that slavery's restitutions remained empty 'promises', this statement constituted a renewed call for reparative measures, ones refitted for a 'technological' age but

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<sup>20</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 316-323 (318, 317).

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 311.

which centred on normative (or, rather, idealised) notions of the heterosexual nuclear family and its breadwinning father. The statement implied that African American men and women's limited access to normative gender roles were key to their continuing racial oppression.

The Mission's actions in the wake of the rebellion did not always meet with great success. For example, of the thirty-five 'militant' blacks that DIM helped to convene for the rebuilding committee, only three were actually asked to be a part of New Detroit. These actions did however represent moments when the Mission unapologetically took up the issue of racial justice and approached it in ways that reflected an awareness of historical and contemporary patterns of racial injustice. DIM understood that, as Campbell put it, 'keeping the negro down has been part of the American way of life', even in their city of supposed 'model' race relations.<sup>22</sup> The rebellion served almost as a relief valve that allowed the Mission to act, as an organisation, on the racial justice thought and work that individual board and staff members had long been practicing. At the same time, DIM's ability to opt into debates and efforts that revolved around race at this particular moment again highlighted the extent to which the organisation's racially privileged position made a 'choice' out of racial justice. At a time when the entire city (including white Detroit) was engulfed in disputes over race, the Mission could easily prioritise racial justice efforts in a way that it would not before, in a way that it had once feared.

Yet, DIM would not prove sporadic or impulsive when it came to racial justice in its post-July 1967 years. The rebellion marked a truly significant shift for the Mission in terms of its racial justice praxis. This turn can be clearly seen in the pages

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<sup>22</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 320, 311.

of the organisation's mouthpiece, *Life & Work*. With the exception of the article on African American construction workers, prior to the rebellion *Life & Work* carried pieces that mostly related to unemployment, the effects of industrial work on workers' minds and bodies, and the intersection of ethics and politics in unions. Following the rebellion, however, it was devoted to the issues of affirmative action, racism, and race relations in industrial settings.<sup>23</sup>

Aside from prompting shifts in terms of the Mission's sphere of action, the rebellion also instigated a deep turn in the staff's racial thinking. Terry reflected that part of the significance of the rebellion for DIM was that it 'exposed weak spots in D.I.M.'s understanding and analysis of the racial condition in the United States and particularly in Detroit'.<sup>24</sup> The staff came to realise that a large part of its 'weak' analysis stemmed from the fact of it being all-white. Thus in 1968, after a long process of searching for candidates and preparing itself for the arrival of its first black staff member, the Reverend Douglass Fitch joined the staff of the Mission. A Methodist pastor and black freedom activist who was moving to Detroit from California, Fitch had been very active in both the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Congress of Racial Equality. As DIM's first staff member of colour in its twelve-year history and as the only black staffer amongst seven, to some extent Fitch became the Mission's token African American. In hiring Fitch, the Mission sought more than black representation, however; it

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<sup>23</sup> On pre-rebellion articles in *Life & Work*, see for instance, Robert C. Batchelder, 'Can We Outgrow Unemployment?' *Life & Work* 5, 1963, not paginated; Jesse Christman, 'On the Line' *Life & Work* 6, 1963, not paginated; and Jesse Christman, 'The Union and Politics' *Life & Work* 8, 1965, not paginated, Holdings of BHL. On post-rebellion articles, see Douglass E. Fitch, 'Doing My Thing' *Life & Work* 11, 1969, not paginated; George D. Colman, 'Racism: New Alternatives for Management' *Life & Work* 13, 1971, not paginated; Robert W. Terry, 'Racism Isn't Just...' *Life & Work* 13, 1971, not paginated; and Michele D. G. Russell and others, 'Racism/Sexism: Two Fronts, One War' *Life & Work* 13, 1972, not paginated, Holdings of BHL.

<sup>24</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 344.

wanted Fitch because he was ‘an advocate of black power and a man conversant with the militant struggle for justice in America’.<sup>25</sup> That the Mission explicitly sought ‘an advocate of black power’ both presaged the ways in which the previously all-white staff would be challenged on its understanding of the ‘race problem’, and it revealed how significantly the Mission’s racial politics had developed since its days of non-intervention in racial politics.

Fitch sparked a deep and lasting shift at the Mission in two key ways. First, he brought to DIM his thinking on new black consciousness. Drawing from revisionist historical scholarship of the 1960s, Fitch had conceived of a history of African and African American peoples that extended from a pre-15<sup>th</sup> century period (of unsure length) that he termed ‘African Greatness’, through to an era he called ‘Exile in Western Hell’, which spanned from the beginning of slavery in the Americas to the present day. Within the latter (present) era, Fitch described several different periods in which blacks in the US made choices in order to ensure their survival or enhance their quality of life. The contemporary ‘New Era’ of this ‘Exile in Western Hell’ epoch presented a new challenge: be patient and toe the integrationist line or organise separately and demand rights. The younger generation of blacks in the US, Fitch taught, chose the latter and looked to Black Power as ‘a move to assure justice in the black community – politically, economically, and physically – by any means necessary’.<sup>26</sup> His work in this area cemented the Mission’s positive view of Black Power. Second, he revealed to the Mission the ways in which their understanding of

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<sup>25</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 382-387 (383). See also Sunday Afternoon Fellowship’s ‘About Douglass’ [online], <<http://sundayafternoonfellowship.org/bio.html>> [accessed 31 March 2010].

<sup>26</sup> ‘Doing My Thing’. Fitch drew from, for instance, Lerone Bennett, Sr’s *Before the Mayflower*, Benjamin Quarles’ *The Negro in the Making of America*, and Joseph C. Hough, Jr’s *Black Power and White Protestants*.

racial justice reflected a pattern of thinking that saw peoples of colour as in need of help or fixing. Mission staff should be focusing on *white people*, Fitch urged, not blacks. Fitch's argument, of course, reflected views that were gaining traction throughout the US at the time. Not just Black Power advocates but a number of individuals and institutions within the political mainstream attempted to redirect the racial gaze onto white institutions, systems and communities in attempts to both understand and confront racism. Fitch's urging for DIM to focus on whites was therefore part of a larger shift taking place throughout the country but it had not yet reached the white staffers at the Mission. Fitch managed to provoke this change in DIM, however, particularly through his impact on Terry.<sup>27</sup>

In this way, Fitch and DIM were bound into a larger pattern wherein blacks around the nation directly and indirectly radicalised whites (and sometimes by extension their organisations and communities) around issues of race. This dynamic would later be criticised for the ways in which it put the onus of racial consciousness-raising onto peoples of colour. The Combahee River Collective, for example, in their founding 'Statement' wrote indignantly of having to confront white feminists who had shown 'little effort...to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial comprehension of race, color, and Black history and culture'. A raised consciousness around historical and contemporary realities of racialised peoples was necessary for the women's liberation movement to eradicate racism within its ranks, but this kind of

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<sup>27</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 356-58. On the larger shift towards examining white institutions, see, National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report*: 2; and SNCC, 'The Basis of Black Power' (1966) *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement* [online] 'Documents of the Civil Rights Movement' <<http://www.crmvet.org/docs/blackpwr.htm>> [accessed 1 April 2010].

work 'is by definition[,] work for white women to do', the Collective wrote.<sup>28</sup> It was, in fact, as a result of such critiques that many whites began to carry out anti-racism workshops in all-white groups; as anti-racism trainer Judith Katz has written, such groups allowed whites to 'explore their racism without exploiting minorities'.<sup>29</sup> Aside from putting even greater responsibility on peoples of colour to eliminate racism and taking advantage of their knowledge, the practice of whites coming to radicalised racial consciousness because of the efforts and attentions of Black Power activists could confer unequal benefits for those involved. Terry, for instance, parlayed his radicalised awareness into a book that sold tens of thousands of copies and raised his profile nationally. Though the book was dedicated to him, it is unclear that Fitch gained any of the financial benefits or exposure that Terry did from this work whose roots laid in Fitch's efforts to educate the Mission on issues of race.<sup>30</sup>

These issues notwithstanding, Terry took eagerly and painstakingly to Fitch's ideas. In his thesis, he reflected that Fitch's counsel that whites 'figure out what they stand for' had 'hit responsive chords' that resulted in him spending many months thinking and writing about what it meant to be white.<sup>31</sup> Through a marriage of his own thinking on white racial identity and the Mission's previous creation of a 'comprehensive model of social justice', Terry devised his ideas around 'new white consciousness'.<sup>32</sup> As I detail below, these ideas hinged on assumptions about whites' awareness and knowledge of race in US society. Terry proposed that, in the context of a white-dominated society, whites' ignorance around race sustained racial

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<sup>28</sup> Combahee River Collective, 'The Combahee River Collective Statement': 381.

<sup>29</sup> Katz, *White Awareness*: 19.

<sup>30</sup> Burgin, 'Locating Douglass Fitch'. Before *For Whites Only* was published again in a revised edition in 1975, it had already seen eight printings.

<sup>31</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 357.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*: 379.

inequalities, and in order to begin rectifying an unjust social order, whites had to develop a different, racially aware consciousness. This set of ideas was pivotal to the Mission's own understanding of whiteness and racism, as it literally adopted Terry's analysis in the 'new white consciousness' training it carried out from the late 1960s through the 1970s. Though the Mission never ceased its consultative work in other areas, its workshops on 'new white consciousness' came to both distinguish the Mission from other industrial consultants and drive the Mission in new directions.<sup>33</sup>

*Becoming an anti-racism consultant: DIM meets Borg & Beck*

By 1971 it seems that much of DIM's anti-racism work consisted of workshop-styled training for management personnel at various corporations in Detroit. The new white consciousness (NWC) workshops that the Mission staged were often part and parcel of larger consultations in which the Mission helped to create and implement affirmative action programmes for companies. Of course, by the beginning of the 1970s, affirmative action programmes had begun to be implemented in many settings, especially workplaces. Affirmative action had been spurred by the black freedom struggle; as historian Terry Anderson has pointed out, the civil rights movement had forced national corporations to recognise that 'they had an obligation

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*: 419-420. The Mission was well aware of its dependence on Terry's ideas. In a *Life & Work* article describing the Mission's NWC seminars, staffer George Colman directed readers to Terry's *For Whites Only* for a fuller description of the concepts introduced in the seminar. (See 'Racism: New Alternatives'.) Over the years, other anti-racism workshops would rely on Terry's work, as well, but it is important to bear in mind that Terry's ideas around new white consciousness grew out of and were originally intended for the racial justice endeavours of the Detroit Industrial Mission. For instance, Judith Katz's seminal work *White Awareness* was heavily influenced by *For Whites Only*.

to train and hire African Americans'.<sup>34</sup> A host of mid-1960s federal policies arose in response to this imperative of the movement and helped to establish incentives and ramifications for the establishment of affirmative action programmes, such as Executive Order 11246, signed by President Johnson in 1965, which required that companies with government contracts not racially discriminate in their hiring practices and that they take affirmative action measures (i.e. increase the numbers of racial 'minorities' in their workforces). Even when the black freedom struggle lost momentum, companies were afraid of violating Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (which prohibits racial discrimination in most work environments) and thus maintained affirmative action programmes. When Nixon assumed office in 1969, he not only upheld Johnson's affirmative action policies but in some ways extended them, for instance through the Philadelphia Plan.<sup>35</sup> These policies had implications for a number of corporations in Detroit, including one whose corporate executive wrote in a letter to *Life & Work* in 1975, 'To me, the only saleable reason for affirmative action is because the law requires it'.<sup>36</sup>

DIM, like many other racial justice advocates, believed that affirmative action posed a practical way to push towards a more racially just society. It felt that affirmative action carried the possibility of ending patterns of discrimination in the hiring and placing of workers, which would have positive carry-on effects for black Detroiters. As the organisation began working against sexism in the mid-1970s, it

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<sup>34</sup> Terry H. Anderson, *In Pursuit of Fairness: A History of Affirmative Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 111-160, 277.

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *In Pursuit of Fairness*: 111-160; 'Racism: New Alternatives for Management'; 'Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right'. See also, 'Issues '72: Quarrel Over Quotas', 9 October 1972, *Time Magazine* [online] <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,906504,00.html>> [accessed 3 April 2010].

<sup>36</sup> 'Corporate Executive, Detroit' letter to *Life & Work*, published in 'Quotas, Reverse Discrimination, and White Male Self-Interest', *Life & Work* 15(1), Winter 1975: 1, Holdings of BHL.

again touted the potential for gender equality posed by affirmative action policies.

Staff member George Colman penned a 1974 *Life & Work* article entitled 'Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right', in which he stated:

AA [affirmative action] can mean positive programs to crack the patterns of discrimination and exclusion which characterized all corporations until recent years. AA can mean new company policies which provide genuine equal opportunity for blacks and whites, for men and women; AA can contribute to the creation of an internal environment in which workers overcome their isolation from and suspicion of other sexes and races.<sup>37</sup>

In part, Colman's article revealed how much the Mission's approach to gender relations had changed. If the post-rebellion statement Campbell wrote highlighted the Mission's investment in normative gender relations, this article suggested that the Mission had developed a critical stance towards normative relations. Moreover, the Mission viewed affirmative action as an aide to the creation of more collegial work environments, and, more importantly, it saw it as a potential corrective to the historical exclusions of peoples of colour and white women in corporate and other employment. With regard to affirmative action and race, the Mission was echoing sentiments that black freedom activists had for years been vocalising. James Farmer, for instance, the well-known Congress of Racial Equality founder and activist, said at a 1963 Congressional hearing that between two 'roughly qualified' applicants where 'one is Negro and one is white, and [within] a company which historically has not employed Negroes, I think then the company should give the nod to a Negro to overcome the disadvantages of the past'.<sup>38</sup> DIM was also in line with many other black freedom activists in their outspoken rejection of the mounting backlash posed by conservatives, some academics, popular media outlets and

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<sup>37</sup> 'Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right.'

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness*: 77.

others who insisted that affirmative action was simply 'reverse racism' or 'discrimination in reverse'.<sup>39</sup> As Colman wrote, affirmative action policies simply levelled the playing field by forcing whites 'to compete not only with each other for better jobs but also with blacks and women'.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the Mission's eventual attention to it, gender discrimination was barely a blip on DIM's radar over the first several years that it carried out consultancies on affirmative action. Indeed, during the first years it carried out anti-racism training, DIM exhibited ignorances around gender realities comparable to those ignorances around race that it sought to challenge. Fitch and Terry's theorising did not consider the ways in which race was shaped by gender. Despite the fact that many of the anti-racism consultations involved working solely with groups of white men, for years it seems the Mission did not consider how whiteness within the corporations with which they worked and which they sought to critique was in fact classed and gendered in particular ways. Akin to the shifts that Fitch instigated in the Mission, it was not until the organisation brought on a woman missionary in 1971 – a black woman named Michele Russell with a background in political organising – that issues related to gender began to surface in DIM's work. It was well after her departure before the still male-dominated staff showed signs that it was considering the implications of white masculinity.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> On backlash against affirmative action, see Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness*: 161-216; Cheryl I. Harris, 'Whiteness as Property' *Harvard Law Review* 106(8), 1993: 1707-1791 (1760-1790); and Ronald E. Hall, 'Entitlement Disorder: The Colonial Traditions of Power as White Male Resistance to Affirmative Action' *Journal of Black Studies* 34(4), 2004: 562-579.

<sup>40</sup> 'Racism/Sexism: Two Fronts, One War'.

<sup>41</sup> 'Racism/Sexism: Two Fronts, One War'; 'Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right'; 'Quotas, Reverse Discrimination and White Male Self-Interest'; and George Colman, 'Christman, Hinsberg, Russell, Terry Leave DIM' *Life & Work* 14, 1972: not paginated, Holdings of the BHL.

While the bifurcation of race along gender and class lines did not register with the Mission for several years, its work in affirmative action was dominated by two other sets of intertwining ideas – organisational development and human relations, on the one hand, and whiteness, power and equality, on the other. Influenced by the human potential movement and its focus on developing individuals' skills and capacities (in many areas of life), DIM became engrossed in questions of organisational change and workplace relations.<sup>42</sup> The Mission referred to its work in this area as its 'anti-bureaucracy' thrust. Like many other activists and thinkers of the time, the Mission felt that 'bureaucracy' de-humanised institutions and organisations, stripping work of its meaning and workers of power. As Free Speech movement activist Mario Savio put it, '[B]ureaucracy masks the financial plutocrats...[it] is the efficient enemy in a "Brave New World".'<sup>43</sup>

Staff members like Bob Terry and Phil Doster had worked in the summer and fall of 1967 on the development and testing of training curricula for 'middle-management' and union leaders in the area of 'Motivation and Human Values'. Amongst other subjects, training included several sessions on 'job enrichment' and 'interpersonal competence' that tried to push workplace leaders to critically reflect on corporate and industrial work environments. One staffer's experience with the National Training Laboratory, a bulwark of the human potential movement, led the Mission to abandon broad training seminars like this one, however, and to instead

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<sup>42</sup> On the human potential movement, see Jane Howard, *Please Touch: A Guided Tour of the Human Potential Movement* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970); and Gordon B. Spence, 'Further Development of Evidence-Based Coaching: Lessons from the Rise and Fall of the Human Potential Movement' *Australian Psychologist* 42(4), 2007: 255-265. On the impact of the human potential movement on anti-racism trainings, see Say Burgin, 'The Workshop as the Work: White Anti-Racism Activism in 1970s United States' (unpublished MA Dissertation, University of Leeds, 2009): 16-17.

<sup>43</sup> Mario Savio, 'An End to History' *Humanity: An Arena of Critique* 2, 1964: 1-4 (1).

begin to focus on ‘smaller modules that could move in more depth’.<sup>44</sup> As Terry reflected on it, this shift marked the Mission’s move ‘toward a more flexible consultative style as its dominant mode of interaction in industry’.<sup>45</sup> DIM’s expansion in the area of organisational development was in line with other industrial missionary work, which, as management scholar Emma Bell describes in the UK context, likewise began ‘working towards achieving change in the workplace’ as a larger, general goal.<sup>46</sup> For DIM, a guiding principle in this work centred on the place of large organisations in modern life:

All of us...are deeply affected by large organizations. ...What our large organizations do in the future and how they organize people to do it will deeply affect the quality of life in our society. It is our conviction that the corporation, the union, the Church, or the school system are all made for man and not man made for them. Our problem is to figure out what it means to structure a large organization for the sake of men.<sup>47</sup>

The second set of questions – around equality, race and whiteness – gave shape to the somewhat abstract ideals of the Mission. DIM began to recognise the ways in which affirmative action might benefit whites as well as peoples of colour in Detroit. Such a programme ‘helps whites deal seriously with their own involvement in an oppressive system and enables them to become active participants in the struggle for a more just society’, Colman wrote in *Life & Work* in the spring of 1971.<sup>48</sup> DIM felt that the creation and implementation of affirmative action policies should be accompanied by educational training around the historical and contemporary realities of US racism, particularly around the roles of white individuals and institutions. If they were, then those policies carried the additional potential for racial

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<sup>44</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 336-340 (339-340).

<sup>45</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*.: 340.

<sup>46</sup> Bell, ‘Whose Side Are They On?’: 336.

<sup>47</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 338.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right’.

justice: through the development of racially conscious white communities engaged in social justice. It was in large part this vision that compelled the Mission over many years of anti-racism consultations with groups of mostly white, white-collar management in the development of affirmative action policies. By the summer of 1974 DIM had worked with many of Detroit's major companies on their affirmative action policies, including National Cash Register, Proctor and Gamble, Bundy, Dayton-Hudson, Detroit Edison, Sanders, Borg-Warner, and Borg & Beck.<sup>49</sup>

It was with this latter company that DIM was first able to develop a long-term relationship and work on the issues of racism and affirmative action. A division of the multinational auto parts manufacturer Borg-Warner, Borg & Beck (B&B, or the Division [of Borg-Warner]) first approached DIM in late 1969, just two weeks before it was due to announce that it was selling its Highland Park-based plant and moving that operation many miles outside the city to suburban Sterling Heights. Initial meetings between DIM and B&B centred on the impending move and the anxieties it provoked for Division management. After meeting with the upper echelons of B&B, DIM noted that these executives were 'anxious and defensive about the move'.<sup>50</sup> They worried that the black workforce (100 people of the 500 who worked at the Highland Park facility) would resist the move and racial frictions would arise. From the outset, the Mission noted why such resistance would be justified. Sterling Heights had been openly resistant to black residency, and housing in that area was more expensive than in Detroit, Highland Park or adjacent Hamtramck. Public transportation did not adequately service Sterling Heights at the time; in fact, for years to come managers would express concern about the lack of transportation to

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<sup>49</sup> 'Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right'; and 'Racism: New Alternatives for Management'.

<sup>50</sup> 'Borg-Beck' Notes, undated [1969], Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

the area. The imminent move would thus place a disproportionate imposition on its black workers, most of whom would have been tied to urban living in ways that whites would not have. Unsurprisingly then, Mission staff members perceived guilt behind the anxieties of B&B executives.<sup>51</sup>

Initial meetings with Division management suggested that racial tensions amongst workers at the plant had been simmering for some time, much as they had in other companies around Detroit. Cass Bilinski, the Detroit plant manager, told DIM staff that he was worried that a 'black problem would blow up'.<sup>52</sup> His reference to a 'blow up' likely implied organised resistance. As historian David Goldberg has described, in the wake of the 1967 rebellion, 'the tenor, direction, and leadership of the black community' was 'dramatically altered' in ways that saw Black Power activists take 'the struggle for economic and political self-determination' to the "house of labor".<sup>53</sup> Black auto workers formed the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) in 1968 on the heels of a wildcat strike at the Dodge factory in Hamtramck, and just months before B&B approached DIM, DRUM and other radical black labour organisations that had emerged in its wake (many also attached to the auto industry) created the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW). Black labourers and activists were galvanised by ideas of self-determination, as well as patterns of repression and white racism. Black Power, in other words, had found its

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<sup>51</sup> Borg-Beck Notes, undated [1970], Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection; and 'Borg & Beck Division, Borg-Warner Corporation: Background': 1-4 (1); 'Borg-Beck' Notes, undated [1969], Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection; and Memo from George Colman to Gretchen Wilson and Ann Thomas, 21 February 1974, Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

<sup>52</sup> 'Notes from interview with Cass', Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

<sup>53</sup> David Goldberg, 'Community Control of Construction, Independent Unionism, and the "Short Black Power Movement" in Detroit', in Goldberg and Trevor Griffey (eds) *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010): 90-111 (91-92).

way inside the 'house of labor', and white executives, particularly those in the auto industry, were distressed.<sup>54</sup>

In the end, then, it was a complex entanglement of raced and classed power relations, evolving through political and economic processes, that brought B&B to DIM. A dialectic between racial discrimination and repression and black labour resistance had existed for many years but by 1969 in the milieu of a national Black Power movement, it seemed to be flourishing. In the context of deindustrialisation – with its attendant corporate and residential white flight, economic drain on urban centres and government backing – as well as employers' shifting obligations (often legal) to the employment of peoples of colour, anxious white employers like B&B began to turn to putative experts on affirmative action and workplace race relations in order to avoid the greater demands that this dialectic of black oppression/resistance might make of them. The Mission could step into this role, even while it had different motivations, because it too had been schooled by the particular dialectic of black oppression/resistance which gave rise to Black Power and had invested itself in the transformation of Detroit's large corporations.

*New white consciousness: DIM's workshops*

After initial meetings in early December 1969, Division President Henry Miller wrote to DIM to formally request that, as a 'process consultant', the Mission 'investigate the feasibility and all implications connected with the program which Detroit

Industrial Mission would undertake for broadening the awareness of the total subject

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<sup>54</sup> Muhammad Ahmad, *We Return to the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations, 1960-1975* (Chicago: Kerr Publishing, 2007): 237-286; and James Geschwender, *Race, Class, and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

of Racism [*sic*] at our Division'. For its part, DIM took eagerly to the B&B opportunity. The staff voted to take B&B on as a 'major client' and to devote the staff as a whole to the effort, utilising each member's strengths. Douglas White, who had proven adept at building relationships with corporate management at Chrysler and was present at the first meeting with Division executives, took a leading role in DIM's relationship with B&B, but all staff members participated in the research, analysis and training phases of the consultation.<sup>55</sup> Terry took on a key role in the development and execution of the anti-racism training, as Fitch left the Mission at the end of December 1969. The pair had tested some anti-racism curricula prior to DIM connecting with B&B, but some of these experiences had proven quite frustrating and all had been on a short-term basis. Terry's NWC ideas had been rolled out earlier in 1969 when a new anti-racism organization, People Acting for Change Together, provided a platform to 'test' these ideas.<sup>56</sup> The Mission's work in this area was thus in its infancy and, importantly, had only barely been implemented in industry. Knowing that it would involve a commitment of two or three years, DIM felt that its relationship with B&B would allow the Mission to 'learn and practice meaning and skill of total system change' and provide it with 'the experience of working at Racism [*sic*] and change in an entire manageable system'.<sup>57</sup> In other words, as a 'social justice change agent' increasingly interested in questions of racial justice, DIM sought to spur systemic transformations within industry, and B&B offered perhaps the first chance for DIM to attempt this.

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<sup>55</sup> 'Borg & Beck Division, Borg-Warner Corporation: Background': 1-3 (1).

<sup>56</sup> The next chapter discusses this point further.

<sup>57</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 347-348, 359-362; and 'Borg & Beck Division, Borg-Warner Corporation: Background': 1-3 (2).

A few months prior to contacting DIM, B&B had published a 'Policy on Non-Discrimination' that typified what the Mission felt was lacking in such policies. It conveyed the company's putative stance on racial discrimination – that it did not pay attention to 'sex, age, race, creed, color or national origin' but rather that employees were hired and promoted because they were 'the best qualified for any position by reason of education, training, experience, intelligence, judgement and general ability'. The document betrayed a supposedly colour-blind stance, however, when it stated that an affirmative action programme had been taken up in order 'to increase its minority group representation'. It identified 'problem areas', departments within the company that lacked 'minority representation'. All were related to white-collar or office-based jobs. The Division thus aimed, the document stated, 'to commence special recruitment activities which it hopes will result in greater numbers of employment applications from minority group persons'. Mostly reliant upon outside recruitment agencies and referrals by current employees of colour, such 'special recruitment activities' revealed not only the many ways in which the company had thus far been failing to do all it could to recruit greater numbers of applicants of colour, but also the extent to which it felt it simply did not have the internal capacity to recruit such applicants. Finally, the 'Policy on Non-Discrimination' set out short-term goals for hiring 'minority persons' within several (though not all) of the identified 'problem areas'.<sup>58</sup>

DIM was sceptical of this kind of policy and wary of the ways in which affirmative action policies often took similar shape. Aside from believing that colour-blind stances, as Terry wrote, 'eliminate neither the fact nor the problem of white

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<sup>58</sup> 'Borg & Beck Policy on Non-Discrimination', 25 August 1969: 1-3, Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

privilege', the Mission felt that policies of non-discrimination were simply ineffective.<sup>59</sup> Even at their best, the Mission felt, they tended to share qualities with the worst affirmative action policies – qualities that reinforced racial power relations. When affirmative action policies were not consciously and carefully implemented with an eye to relations of power in both the larger US society and the company itself, they could 'mean the creation of spurious job classifications which...foster the illusion that people are moving up in the system'.<sup>60</sup> Even if a company or plant promoted some individuals of colour in this way, very often it still pathologised African Americans because it operated under assumptions about black demands for such an obviously unjust 'double standard'. Rather than taking into account the history and contemporary reality of racism within the company (let alone on local and national stages), these policies often worked, Terry believed, to 'highlight white goodness'.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, DIM did not feel that affirmative action policies automatically promoted racial justice, nor did it believe affirmative action policies were an end in themselves. It took a far more tempered view of them, as a 1971 *Life & Work* article testified:

Affirmative action to hire and promote more minority persons is one very limited, very important goal. Limited because the "web of urban racism" is a tough, thick network which thwarts black participation in this society at every economic, political, and social point. That "web" must be destroyed and that task requires action far beyond affirmative action by industry. Yet this task is important because it does increase some options for blacks and other minorities and thereby supports the broader movement for full freedom and equality.<sup>62</sup>

Because of this caution, DIM made stipulations when consulting with companies on the design and implementation of affirmative action programmes and

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<sup>59</sup> 'Racism Isn't Just...'; and Terry, *For Whites Only*: 18.

<sup>60</sup> 'Racism Isn't Just...'.

<sup>61</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 69-72 (72).

<sup>62</sup> 'Racism: New Alternatives'.

many of these seem to have been put in place through the Mission's consultancy with B&B, suggesting that this early consultation was constituted of several successful, time-tested practices. The Mission required from the company the explicit commitment and support of its executives because only then would a company's employees – including all those persons with the power to hire and fire – take the affirmative action programme seriously. Affirmative action programmes frequently failed, DIM felt, because of a lack of 'buy in' from 'the top'. It also mandated that supervisors, managers, and foremen (usually or exclusively male) be involved in the creation and implementation of the new programme, since they were the middle managers who had the most interaction with those employees who would be hired under affirmative action programmes. DIM also asked that all or most of those who participated in their workshops go through an interviewing process with the trainers in order to allow the latter to tailor the workshop to the specific needs, concerns, and practices of the company.<sup>63</sup> Because it was largely white men who were involved in these workshops, especially when the Mission first began this work, it would appear that it had very little contact with African American or women employees. In other words, individuals whose lives they hoped would be impacted were not widely included in the preparation of the workshops.

DIM staff continued to meet and communicate with the Division president and other executives, as well as plant managers, through the winter and spring of 1970. They began to construct the Mission's larger plan of action with the Division (i.e. when and how different aspects of the consultancy would be carried out). This close working relationship continued as the Mission began to implement the research,

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<sup>63</sup> 'Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right'; and 'Racism: New Alternatives'.

training, and design phases of its consultancy. Staff members interviewed several executives and managers, for instance, as part of DIM's preparation for the training component, and the Division president attended and spoke at the final training event, during which participants began to devise an affirmative action plan. Thus, Division executives and other leaders within the company became active participants in consultation with DIM in many ways.<sup>64</sup>

DIM was thorough. Staff members took two months over the winter of 1970 to carry out the 'research phase' that preceded the Mission's first training event for the Division. During this time, they gathered information on B&B's history and the composition of its workforce, as well as observing staff meetings of top management in both the Division headquarters and at the Highland Park plant. They interviewed several managers at the company, and an extensive questionnaire was distributed to a number of B&B employees, including those who would attend the coming training. Aimed at uncovering how white employees in particular understood race relations within the US and at B&B, surveys and interviews asked participants to describe their views on 'the role of business' or government in US race relations; to react to contemporary and/or hot button terms such as 'militant', 'capitalism' and 'black panthers [*sic*]'; and to share their candid projections for the employment positions they felt were 'possible for blacks in this organisation – now, [in the] next three years, next fifteen years'.<sup>65</sup> The interviews were designed to uncover

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<sup>64</sup> 'Borg & Beck Division, Borg-Warner Corporation: Background' Notes: 2; Letter to Bill Weltyk from E. Douglas White, 5 Jan 1971, Folder: Borg & Beck Feb., '71 Conf., DIM Collection; 'Notes from interview with Cass'; 'Composite Report – Borg & Beck Follow-Up Questionnaire', 6 April 1971, Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection; and 'Notes from meeting between DIM and B&B', undated [20 Jan 1970], Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

<sup>65</sup> 'Questionnaire for B&B 1970 seminar': 3-4, undated [1970], Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

participants' views on race relations and inequalities within the company, especially 'black mobility' in the company, while the questionnaires picked up demographic information about the future workshop participants.<sup>66</sup>

Through these measures, staff members at the Mission learnt that issues related to race were rarely discussed at B&B. This was so despite the fact that most of the white individuals surveyed by DIM said that their greatest contact with African Americans was through the workplace, generally as their line managers or employers. As cross-racial as their work experiences might have been, though, the Mission discovered that this highly educated group resided in racial segregation; nearly all lived in Detroit's very white suburbs. These factors held true when B&B employees at its Chicago-based plant were included prior to the second round of training. Most individuals in both groups reported that they were informed on issues pertaining to African Americans by local media outlets such as the *Detroit News* and *Chicago Daily News* in addition to national, mainstream magazines like *Time*. Only a handful of individuals read historically black newspapers like the *Daily Defender*.<sup>67</sup>

For the Mission, the information gathered, particularly prior to the second training event in the winter of 1971, indicated several critical issues that needed to be taken into account as staff members designed the workshop. Perhaps primary

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<sup>66</sup> 'Notes from meeting between DIM and B&B'; 'Introductions and Opening Remarks' Notes for June 1970 Borg & Beck seminar, undated [1970], Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection; Phil Duster, 'Themes to be covered in interview', Phil Duster, 8 January 1971, Folder: Borg & Beck Feb., '71 Conf., DIM Collection; 'Principle Sources of Information: Borg & Beck, Detroit-based', undated [1971], Folder: Borg & Beck Feb., '71 Conf., DIM Collection; and 'Principle Sources of Information: Borg & Beck, Chicago-based', undated [1971] Folder: Borg & Beck Feb., '71 Conf., DIM Collection.

<sup>67</sup> 'Introductions and Opening Remarks' Notes for June 1970 Borg & Beck seminar, undated [1970], Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection; 'Principle Sources of Information: Borg & Beck, Detroit-based'; 'Borg & Beck Assumptions', undated [1971], Folder: Borg & Beck Feb., '71 Conf., DIM Collection; 'Questionnaire for Borg & Beck Group/Individual Interviews', undated [1971], Folder: Borg & Beck Feb., '71 Conf., DIM Collection.

among these was that, on issues of race, most of these white B&B employees lived in 'total isolation [from blacks] except at work'. Nonetheless, in terms of their ideas about race relations at work, a confusing picture emerged. Their perceptions of the Division's own 'racial situation' often mimicked the larger white backlash happening nationally, with individuals feeling the company promoted 'discrimination in reverse'.<sup>68</sup> This was the case despite the fact that many employees did not understand affirmative action policies, how they operated or how they differed from non-discrimination policies. Yet in terms of how they understood the mobility of blacks within the company, the Mission found that participants' responses were accurate insofar as several dynamics actually worked to block upward mobility for blacks within the company, including qualifications and white attitudes. On the other hand, most respondents were 'generally affirmative' with regard to the company's overall 'direction'.<sup>69</sup>

Staff members felt that this tangled web of ideas suggested several 'design issues' related to the workshop. Those leading the training would need to work to challenge the 'basis of optimism' from which the white respondents were easily downplaying racial injustice in the company and larger society. The data also made the Mission aware that they would be sharing very different sources of information with workshop participants than they would be accustomed to and that a comparative element within the training might help to elucidate the qualitative difference in these sources, particularly their varying standpoints. DIM also realised that trainers would need to highlight the significance and potential effects of

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<sup>68</sup> Borg & Beck Interview Data', undated [1971] Folder: Borg & Beck Feb., '71 Conf., DIM Collection.

<sup>69</sup> Borg & Beck Interview Data'.

affirmative action policies and work to dispel ignorance and misgivings around them. Lastly, DIM had learnt that some individuals who would be participating in the training were wary of what they saw as the Mission's 'hidden agenda', and many also questioned if and why race alone would be discussed when other social issues (such as pollution and 'law and order' ) were contemporary and critical. Though the Mission itself had a clear understanding of the contemporary significance of race to large organisations and corporations, data implied that this view would have to be conveyed with clarity, depth and persistence.<sup>70</sup>

DIM's work with Borg & Beck ushered one other, crucial stipulation that the Mission placed on the companies that hired it for affirmative action consultancies – a two-to-three day 'intensive training event' on new white consciousness (NWC). The second training that DIM staged for the Division was this NWC workshop, and after its work with B&B, DIM felt that these workshops were a 'critical part of [their] work with corporations'.<sup>71</sup> The NWC seminars were the crux of the training events that the Mission staged for corporations; without them, the Mission doubted that effective affirmative action policies could be established.<sup>72</sup> NWC brought together the anti-bureaucratic and racial justice thrusts of DIM. In addition to interrogating the historical and contemporary significance of race in larger US society, it located problems of racial injustice and inequality within the nature of corporations – the way they were organised, the policies they created, the views they communicated towards personnel. Problematizing the impersonal nature of large organisations was the stuff of job enrichment and organisational development. In understanding that

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<sup>70</sup> 'Borg & Beck Interview Data'.

<sup>71</sup> 'Racism: New Alternatives'.

<sup>72</sup> 'Racism: New Alternatives'.

those practices were also products of white racism, what DIM enacted through NWC was the naming of these as racially unjust practices and the demonstration that racial injustice was constitutive of and through large corporations.

While NWC seminars were designed for ‘the managers who do the hiring, firing, and promoting’ who were assumed to be, and often were, all white, DIM did not insist upon all-white groups of participants.<sup>73</sup> The participants at B&B’s two trainings – one in the June of 1970 and the other in February 1971 – were, however, predominantly white. Of 75 employees classified as ‘officials’ or ‘managers’ in the spring of 1971, all were male, 71 were white, two were African American and two were Native American.<sup>74</sup> On the facilitator side, it seems that when the Mission first tested aspects of NWC, it preferred to use teams that included both black and white individuals, and often Fitch and Terry co-facilitated workshops. However, much to the frustration of both Fitch and Terry, no other DIM staff members trained themselves on the NWC curriculum until Fitch left the Mission in late 1969, so the desire for interracial training teams sometimes meant non-DIM facilitators had to be co-opted. Such was the case with B&B’s first training event. Dr Orian Worden, an African American and a professional trainer at the National Training Laboratory, co-facilitated with Terry. Worden had developed a relationship with the Mission the year before when he led ‘a series of group sessions’ with the staff in order to better prepare DIM for Fitch’s arrival; this exercise, Terry later wrote, aimed to better the

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<sup>73</sup> ‘Racism: New Alternatives for Management’. Writings from DIM staffers often refer to ‘all white’ seminars, particularly on NWC. See for example, ‘Racism Isn’t Just...’; as well as Terry, *For Whites Only*: 40, 44-45, 58-59; Robert Terry, evaluation of B&B training of June 1970, 22 July 1970: 1, Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection; and Letter from E. Douglas White to W. Weltyk, 5 Jan 1971, Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

<sup>74</sup> Equal Employment Opportunity Employer Information Report, 10 May 1971, Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

staff's 'communication before subjecting a black man to unresolved and perhaps misplaced conflicts'. The second B&B training event displayed the talents of four Mission staffers – three long-term white staffers (Terry, Douglas White and Phil Doster) and a newer member of the organisation, Walt Hardy. A black Catholic layman, Hardy joined the staff towards the end of 1969, just as Fitch was leaving. He had been an active volunteer in People Acting for Change Together, along with Terry and Fitch, and his presence on the DIM staff marked the first time the organisation hired a non-clergy industrial missionary.<sup>75</sup>

Challenges beset the work of facilitators regardless of their affiliation with the Mission. Terry later wrote that, after Fitch's departure, many interracial NWC training teams had disagreements over facilitation style or the content of the training itself. Fitch's efforts in the area of new black consciousness fed the development of Terry's on new white consciousness; much like Fitch and Terry's professional relationship, the two sets of ideas worked well, perhaps best, together. Without this interconnection and Fitch and Terry's rapport and investment significant problems easily developed.<sup>76</sup> White trainers, including some among the Mission staff, sometimes failed to take ownership of or misinterpreted the NWC content. Though he served as a workshop facilitator and point-person for B&B, Douglas White had, in fact, resisted Terry's NWC theorising. In Terry's words, White felt that Terry 'was using it as a hammer on the rest of the staff to make them accept it'.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, white trainers often posed issues when they rejected aspects of the NWC framework. Yet

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<sup>75</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 362-63, 387, 396; 'Principle Sources of Information: Borg & Beck, Detroit-based'; 'Principle Sources of Information: Borg & Beck, Chicago-based'; and 'Questionnaire for B&B 1970 seminar'.

<sup>76</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 362-63.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*: 399.

the interracialism of many of the training teams could also provoke problems. Terry and Worden, for example, had to labour to ensure that Worden was not seen as a mouthpiece for all African Americans or that, as a white individual, Terry was not seen as having nothing to contribute to conversations around race. Terry reflected that DIM never entirely solved these different issues, and he implied that throughout the 1970s, many workshops were actually led by all-white teams.<sup>78</sup>

The goals of NWC workshops were, firstly, the re-working of white participants' consciousness in such a way that they began to see the centrality of whiteness, including their own white identities, to racism and secondly, getting participants to use this new awareness as a motivation to eliminate racism in their workplaces. In essence, NWC workshops tried to shift the focus of 'the race problem' from peoples of colour to white people. In problematising whites and whiteness in issues of race, DIM challenged dominant racial understandings that positioned peoples of colour, particularly African Americans at the nexus of racial problems. Terry put it this way:

The strategic target for solution to the race question is wrong. The white quandaries are misplaced. *What is at stake for white America today is not what black people want and do but what white people stand for and do.* The racial problem in American society is not a "black problem." It is a "white problem."<sup>79</sup>

Such a view clearly and self-consciously drew from Black Power advocates, who, by the late 1960s, had been consistently drawing attention to the 'white power structure' as the locus of the country's racial ills. Writers and activists such as Stokely Carmichael, James Forman and Black Panther Party members argued that African Americans needed to determine and create for themselves the solutions to the

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*: 397-400.

<sup>79</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 15. Emphasis in original.

problems that white-dominated institutions, policies and communities had created. After Fitch brought this message to DIM along with the attendant imperative that whites fight racial injustice within their own communities, Terry and the Mission evangelised it and aimed to contribute to the reorientation of the dominant racial gaze.<sup>80</sup>

In order to reorient the problem of racism, the Mission had to teach workshop participants an entirely different definition of racism than they (presumably) held. Provided by Terry, this definition placed racial understanding within a social justice context. Reflecting the influence of social ethicist Gibson Winter, who had served as Terry's doctoral supervisor, Terry saw 'justice' as requiring the values of self-determination, respect and cultural pluralism. Terry and DIM held that 'the just society maximises these three values' for all people.<sup>81</sup> Under this ideology, racism was the 'unjust' treatment of, or the 'denial of justice' to, 'people of color by individuals, groups, institutions, and cultures and the rationalisation of such behaviour by attributing inferior characteristics to those denied justice'.<sup>82</sup> Racism, then, could only be perpetuated by whites, and it occurred when they prevented blacks and other peoples of colour from controlling their own communities and institutions, as well as larger systems and institutions; refused to acknowledge or dignify their concerns; and/or insisted upon assimilation to white US norms.

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<sup>80</sup> Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power*: 7. See also, for instance, Yohuru Williams, *Black Politics, White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

<sup>81</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 31-40 (40). See also Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 288.

<sup>82</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 41. See also, 'Racism: New Alternatives'. *For Whites Only* spells out the qualities of 'justice' at greater length (31-36). On Winter, see his, *Elements for a Social Ethic* (New York: Macmillan, 1966). In 1965, staff at DIM had actually approached Gibson Winter, who was at the University of Chicago's Divinity School, about conducting research into the Mission. Terry's 1973 thesis formed part of that research.

As evident from this definition, DIM taught workshop participants that racism operated on multiple levels. In a 1971 *Life & Work* article entitled 'Racism Isn't Just...', Terry recounted a recent NWC workshop in which one of the exercises prompted participants to not only wrestle with the definition of racism, but to re-configure their take on *how* racism functioned. The workshop got them to see that racism occurred through 'closed structures and [the US's] ethnocentric culture', as well as through individual acts of bigotry.<sup>83</sup> The Mission strove to instil in NWC workshop participants an appreciation for these different dimensions of racism: institutional, cultural and individual. Importantly, though, the Mission focused on one particular level. Terry's theorising led DIM to concentrate on cultural racism, though not to the exclusion of other levels of racism. In *For Whites Only*, Terry explained cultural racism at length, in part because he saw it as having been overlooked, but more importantly, because he believed white culture to be the foundation of racism in the US 'New white consciousness', he wrote, 'suggests that the underlying problem [of racism] is the culture, the carrier of norms and standards'.<sup>84</sup> Cultural values and assumptions in the US had been and continued to be set by whites, Terry thought, which meant that whites refused pluralism and forced peoples of colour to assimilate to the values, standards, and norms of white culture. Consequently, this culture – which Terry seems to have imagined as homogenous – had to be analysed and reconstituted before 'new possibilities [could] arise for restructuring power and institutions'. This also meant that not only could whites be

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<sup>83</sup> 'Racism Isn't Just...'

<sup>84</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 60.

the only perpetrators of racism but, insofar as no US white could escape white cultural norms and standards, *all whites were definitively racist*.<sup>85</sup>

While this prejudice-plus-power definition of racism had become increasingly common and it carried the transformative potential to shake US whites out of dominant (i.e. colour-blind) understandings of race, it was not without its hazards. It tended to convey the idea that all US whites had the same access to racialised power and that, as a nexus of power, whiteness operated the same across vastly different settings. As indicated, it took several years of anti-racism and affirmative action consultancy work before the Mission staff incorporated ideas around gender into their work; prior to this, the prejudice-plus-power definition of racism actually worked to erase the fractured nature of whiteness along lines of gender, as well as class, sexuality and other differences. Conveyed in the way that it was to, say, B&B employees, this idea of racism could not account for the ways in which the racial inequalities that marked the masculine whiteness of the corporate US vastly differed from, for instance, the kinds of racial injustices that operated within the white-dominated women's liberation movement. Thinking through the many kinds of racialised power accessed by these (and other) different groups could have been instructive for the white-collar male workers and male executives with whom the Mission worked, not least for the ways in which it emphasised the relative unhindered access to racialised power available to them.

These issues notwithstanding, Terry and other NWC facilitators worked at getting participants to grasp these new definitions and principles for themselves through both lectures and multi-faceted exercises. These included role playing;

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<sup>85</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 41-43; and 'Racism Isn't Just...'.

examining language, films, music and other cultural carriers; and large- and small-group discussions. '[NWC] participants actively explore their experience with the various dimensions of racism,' Colman wrote in 1971:

Business advertisements are analyzed; pictures are drawn of race relations in their plant; games are played which reveal the way people seek and use power, organizational forms, and standards to dominate others; and policies are proposed to increase justice.<sup>86</sup>

While exercises were designed to push white participants towards the larger goals of the workshop, the particular purpose of each exercise was fairly individualised. The Mission opened B&B's NWC training with the game Star Power, for instance. A particularly popular exercise amongst participants, this interactive exercise attempted to unpack issues around power relations. Participants were divided into three different groups by picking a chip out of a bag; each of the three different chips corresponded to a different symbol that positioned members within a stratified 'place' within the game (in order of ascending power: squares, circles, triangles). Through various trading rules, participants could try to attain chips that gave them more points, and as more points were gained, those with enough points were allowed to change the rules of the game, usually making it easier for them to gain even more points. Star Power was an energetic game that offered a definite learn-it-for-yourself element, but more importantly it called attention to the ways in which those who are powerful in an already unequal system can end up deepening the social stratification and how, without access to chips (resources) and rules (the creation of policies, laws, standards), those with far less power in the system face an

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<sup>86</sup> 'Racism: New Alternatives'. See also, 'Racism Isn't Just...'

impossible situation.<sup>87</sup> In their evaluations, a number of Division employees reflected on what they learnt in terms of larger class and racial power relations: ‘a reallocation of power and wealth must be accomplished’, ‘must do more to share resources’, ‘power has been used in the wrong direction; dangerous if you’re in power’.<sup>88</sup> Many also connected the larger systemic problem of unequal power to their own individual power bases. As one B&B participant wrote (two weeks after the training had finished), the key lesson he took from the training was with ‘Star Power. [A triangle is] what I am.’<sup>89</sup>

Another important exercise which the Mission later called ‘White Racism by Design’, asked the B&B participants to ‘design a community in the United States that would be “believable” but clearly racist’.<sup>90</sup> By asking participants to design an environment that inevitably had a strong resemblance to their own workplaces and communities, this exercise aimed to show participants how racism continued to shape their communities. Among other things, participants were told to think about who held the power within their fictional, racist communities – who created policies, set the norms – as well as the roles of certain institutions (such as churches and the media) vis-à-vis race. In comparing the ‘fictional’ answers to these quandaries with the realities within their companies, a conversation opened up whereby racism within the company could be discussed. Because they constructed their racist communities on their own, participants also came to their own conclusions as to how

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<sup>87</sup> ‘Overview – Borg & Beck’, Folder: Feb. 1971, Borg & Beck, DIM Collection; and Joann Terry, phone interview with the author, 10 March 2011, Minneapolis, and Detroit, USA.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Composite Report’: 14; and ‘A review of the learnings reported by participants in the Borg & Beck seminar upon its conclusion February 13, 1971’, memo from George Colman to Borg & Beck Team, 22 February 1971, Folder: Borg & Beck Feb., ’71 Conf., DIM Collection.

<sup>89</sup> ‘A review of the learnings reported by participants in the Borg & Becky seminar’: 1-2.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Racism Isn’t Just...’.

racism could operate on levels other than individual bigotry, and they could grasp how racism within their own company could be enacted (through company policies, standards, and practices). Thus, this exercise fostered critical self-reflection on racism amongst workshop participants. Significantly, participants could draw from what they learnt playing Star Power as they designed and discussed their racist communities.<sup>91</sup> In the words of one participant, 'In the beginning of the session [Star Power] was not tied in with race relations. This became evident the next day, and from there on the seminar became increasingly interesting and I, personally, grew in my awareness.'<sup>92</sup>

The Mission also felt it was important for workshop participants to understand the rise of Black Power – where it came from and what it represented. At the B&B training, Walt Hardy took the lead in this. He showed and led large group discussions on two relatively short films. The first was the documentary *Black History: Lost, Stolen, or Strayed*. Narrated by Bill Cosby, *Black History* explored African Americans' significance to the development of the US's power and wealth, while acknowledging that 'these facts are not usually a part of "American history"'. It engaged with the various ways in which a major carrier of white cultural values, Hollywood, depicted African Americans than them as not being contributors to the nation – an image of 'a Negro characterised as lazy, stupid, cowardly, and dishonest'.<sup>93</sup> *Black History* ended with an examination of the impact of these images and distortions on blacks' self-perceptions. The film thus revealed the US's legacy

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<sup>91</sup> 'Overview – Borg & Beck'; and Terry, *For Whites Only*, 40; and 'Racism Isn't Just...'

<sup>92</sup> 'Composite Report': 1.

<sup>93</sup> People Acting for Change Together, 'Films and Discussions Designed to End Hate', 14, Folder: Speakers' Bureau: Pamphlets 1974, New Detroit, Inc., Records, UR000660, Walter P. Reuther Library of Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan. (Hereafter, NDI Collection.)

as a perpetrator of racial injustice and the ways in which dominant narratives of US history were distorted, lessons that Terry and the Mission felt were crucial in order for whites to develop a deeper awareness of racism. Appreciating the US's history of white domination over peoples of colour and the implications that history carried into the present was not, Terry emphasised, a ploy for instilling shame in white workshop participants. 'Examination of the past is not done to intensify guilt,' he wrote, 'We do not need another "guilt-in."' <sup>94</sup> Rather, historical understanding was meant to demonstrate to participants how the US was culturally racist; it often valorised European Americans and demonised African Americans, American Indians, Latinos and other peoples of colour. White participants, it was hoped, could come to understand how these myths perpetrated racial exploitation and worked to benefit white Americans. <sup>95</sup>

The second film, titled *Black Power*, built on the foundations of the first in order to elucidate the rise of Black Power and define its meaning. It featured Stokely Carmichael giving a speech to a group of Black Panthers on the occasion of Huey Newton's birthday. The film focused on 'what black Power means to blacks' and, as such, it forced participants to consider the significance of Black Power from this perspective as opposed to white conceptions or fears of it. <sup>96</sup> Hardy rounded off the screenings with a talk about his own experiences as an African American and the 'meaning of blackness' in the contemporary US. <sup>97</sup> In their evaluations, participants wrote of being moved by Hardy's descriptions of the racism endured by himself and

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<sup>94</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 44-45.

<sup>95</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 45; 'Racism: New Alternatives'; and 'Provisional Layout: Borg & Beck Design', undated [February 1971], Folder: Borg & Beck Feb., '71 Conf., DIM Collection.

<sup>96</sup> 'Films and Discussions Designed to End Hate': 17.

<sup>97</sup> 'Provisional Layout'.

his family members, the picture he drew 'of blackness, black pride, black power, [and] black self-determination', and the contemporary aims of the black freedom movement.<sup>98</sup> As with every other aspect of the workshop, though, Hardy's films and discussion did not convince everyone. Some participants complained that he was 'almost too dramatic' in his presentation style, or that his talk was based on 'little facts – much emotion'. One participant wrote to DIM after the training saying, 'I cannot, and will not, accept the fact that people like Stokely Carmichael and Walt Hardy will advocate the physical destruction of my family, myself or my friends, in order to [amend] the so-called "lack of equality"'.<sup>99</sup>

Despite these few misgivings, Hardy's point around the historical and contemporary significance of racial injustice helped to push the Mission's goal of getting B&B executives and managers to understand why affirmative action was so critical. George Colman's 1974 article 'Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right' in *Life & Work* explained that affirmative action programs only 'make sense in a very specific historical context'.<sup>100</sup> DIM believed that before one could recognise the validity of affirmative action in the US, it was first necessary to grasp how racial inequalities and prejudices were created – by individuals and institutions, as well as through cultural norms and beliefs. Thus, participants discussed more than American mythology and the rise of Black Power. They also analysed past economic and political policies (such as the denial of reparations to slaves) that played a heavy hand in the creation of modern economic disparities between white and non-white groups in the US. In doing so, NWC participants could better

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<sup>98</sup> 'Composite Report: 8-9 (9).

<sup>99</sup>; Unsigned letter to DIM from workshop participant, undated, Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

<sup>100</sup> 'Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right'.

understand why policies of ‘non-discrimination were not active enough to reverse these disparities’.<sup>101</sup>

For white participants to really absorb the Mission’s understanding that all white (and only white) individuals were racist in the US, they had to discuss more than the country’s past patterns of racial injustice. It was necessary to also grasp the ways in which racism was currently maintained, particularly the more covert ways that had nothing to do with individual bigotry. For Terry, this meant focusing on white American culture. In his film screenings and discussion of Hollywood, Hardy began this work. Eventually, DIM developed exercises that also looked at the ways in which language reflected and reinforced racial prejudice. Terry recalled having a group of white participants list any words or phrases that used the words ‘white’ or ‘black’ and carried either positive or negative connotations. Though the group came up with numerous negative examples for black, it could only produce two positive examples (‘in the black’ and ‘black soil’), and its search for negative usage of white words hit upon just one word, ‘whitewash’, the connotation for which, they felt, was actually rather inconclusive.<sup>102</sup> This exercise had not yet been developed when DIM staged its first training events with B&B. However, Terry provided a lecture on cultural racism and its connections to the development of new white consciousness.<sup>103</sup>

The Mission’s exercises and Terry’s lecture on cultural racism strove to get participants to see the ways in which whiteness had been made synonymous with ‘good’ or ‘right’. In doing so, they built on ideas from those psychologists and sociologists who were trying to understand the transmission of racial prejudice

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<sup>101</sup> ‘Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right’. See also, ‘Doing My Thing’.

<sup>102</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 45-46.

<sup>103</sup> ‘Provisional Layout’; ‘Composite Report’: 5-8; and ‘Racism: New Alternatives’. See also ‘Racism: New Alternatives’

through children's education. Particularly influential was Abraham F. Citron's 1969 article on 'The "Rightness of Whiteness"'. Citron was a sociology professor at Wayne State University in Detroit, and his work sought to understand the various ways in which white children learned to equate their skin colour with 'rightness'. He analysed various aspects of child's play, including doll-play and fairy tales and nursery rhymes, as well as the colloquialisms and racial epithets ('nigger in the wood pile', 'darky') that children pick up in their environments. Citron determined that, 'All major sources of [a white child's] impressions reinforce each other and lead him to feel that whiteness, the way he is, is natural and standard.'<sup>104</sup> Children did not just learn that whiteness was good; they learned that it was normal. Terry extrapolated on Citron's ideas and applied them to white adults. If white children learned to believe that their skin colour renders them 'right' and 'normal', then their parents – the people with whom the Mission held workshops – were also socialised into these conceptions. Thus, Terry emphasised:

Cultural racism imposes white standards on other racial groups. Whiteness dominates....Cultural racism is white ethnocentrism. We do not doubt that white is right, and we impose this frame of reference on others without any sensitivity to their reactions.<sup>105</sup>

To Terry, it was not enough to assail individual and institutional racism because cultural racism lay beneath these forms. Whites were first socialised into a sense of

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<sup>104</sup> Abraham F. Citron, 'The "Rightness of Whiteness": The World of the White Child in a Segregated Society' (Detroit: Michigan and Ohio Regional Educational Laboratories, 1969): 1. For other sociologists and psychologists working in a similar area, see for instance, Charles Silberman, *Crisis in Black and White* (New York: Random House, 1964); Mary Ellen Goodman *Race Awareness in Young Children* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964); and Kenneth Clark, *Prejudice and Your Child* (Boston: Beacon, 1955).

<sup>105</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 46-47.

racial superiority, into a 'racist mentality that legitimate[d] and justify[d] institutional and individual acts of racism'.<sup>106</sup>

The Mission pushed NWC workshop participants to confront these ideas (which they presumed were hard truths for most participants) and to see the ways in which ethnocentrism in US culture was also perpetuated within the companies for which they worked. DIM believed that the culture of its clients included their companies' policies and practices. Companies often carried 'informal and formal standards [that] created an alien atmosphere which forced blacks to assume white styles in order to make it in the organizations'. These standards essentially put a clamp on cultural pluralism.<sup>107</sup> What is more, even companies that carried policies of 'non-discrimination', like B&B, still promoted a form of individualism that favoured whites, who were more likely to have more education and employment experiences. Thus, because of companies' standing policies, progress and even access was blocked for peoples of colour. Having pressed workshop participants on the implicit racism behind their companies' policies, the NWC framework was well-poised to promote the need for affirmative action:

Compensatory justice is required. Positive action to increase the number of blacks employed and promoted in every department is the only way to break the tradition of white superiority and favoritism. And that means a color-conscious, not a color-blind, policy....New whites will therefore advocate affirmative action because it is the only way to increase jobs for black people at every level of the organization.<sup>108</sup>

Understanding 'compensatory justice' as reparations here suggests the ways in which the Mission, like many others, felt affirmative action could serve as a form of racial reparations. There was, therefore, some continuity between the Mission's

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*: 43.

<sup>107</sup> 'Affirmative Action: Necessary and Right'; and 'Racism Isn't Just...'

<sup>108</sup> 'Racism: New Alternatives'.

post-rebellion statement written by Campbell and the seemingly very different work of anti-racism training that it had begun to carry out.

Once NWC participants had a grasp on the historical implications of racism, cultural racism, and the Mission's teaching that by definition all US whites were racist, DIM hoped that they were able to see that whiteness was the crux of the race problem in America, and that whiteness and white Americans needed to change in order to fix this problem. NWC workshops proposed a solution. In conceiving of a new white consciousness, Terry was aware that his way of contextualising race relations in the US presented a novel and often threatening way of understanding race for most white people. He and DIM realised that the information presented in the workshop usually constituted an entirely new way of thinking (for whites) and would challenge whites' established ways of seeing race. Thus, a new white consciousness was presented as a 'new context' (not just a workshop title) that helped to lessen confusion and helped participants to make sense of the information being presented to them.<sup>109</sup>

Crucially, this 'new context' also offered a new way of being white – one that recognised the centrality of race to the organisation of US society, understood white culture to be situated at the core of racism, and actively sought to eliminate racism. In *For Whites Only*, Terry clearly demarcated this new identity from 'old' ways of being white, which included both conservative and liberal orientations. 'Old' white ways of addressing racism included targeting black communities for social programming, couching fear of non-white peoples in language and policies of safety and lawfulness, and using white institutions as the yardstick against which to

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<sup>109</sup> 'Racism: New Alternatives'; and Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 362.

measure the health or usefulness of institutions which were not white-dominated.<sup>110</sup> The 'new white alternative' instead problematised white culture and institutions and sought to change them rather than peoples of colour and their culture and institutions – tenets that corresponded with the NWC workshops' goals. Essential to this new white identity was the imperative for whites to actively oppose racism in white institutions and culture, and for DIM and its clientele, this meant aggressively pursuing AA programmes.<sup>111</sup>

Terry offered further insight into this 'new white' identity in *For Whites Only*. Reflecting his self-consciousness regarding the novelty of this emerging form of whiteness, Terry cautioned that the 'parameters' he offered were 'exploratory and suggestive rather than conclusive', before going on to describe four specific characteristics of 'new whites'. Terry first emphasised that new whites must 'become *intentionally political*', by which he meant that they needed to work toward change in concert with other whites and in ways that leveraged their collective power. They must, secondly, 'engage in *intelligent reflection*' upon those actions in order to ensure effectiveness. Further, new whites needed to develop 'credentials' – that is, partake in anti-racism struggles – before they could contribute to a 'serious conversation' about racism with peoples of colour. Finally, Terry insisted that new whites become 'aggressive' listeners, who sought knowledge from peoples of colour and ensured that their communication had shared meaning. Thus this new way of being white in America entailed serious and sustained engagement with the problems and solutions of racism, as well as a willingness to take criticism and direction from peoples of colour. That Terry outlined what could constitute a new

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<sup>110</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 48-59.

<sup>111</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 59-61 (59). See also, 'Racism Isn't Just...'

white identity meant that DIM had a concrete base from which to educate its workshop participants on developing a constructive way to enact racial consciousness.<sup>112</sup>

In their evaluations, a number of B&B employees illustrated a heightened awareness of the centrality of white-dominated institutions and communities to racism, as well as a desire to become more active in the struggle for racial justice. While a few people certainly expressed their frustrations with the programme, particularly with relation to specific aspects or exercises, the majority stated that they could now see that racism was a ‘white problem’ and that whites ‘can do something about the problem’. ‘There is something that we personally at [Borg-Warner] can do about [racism]’, one participant wrote.<sup>113</sup> Another Division employee’s comments perhaps best epitomised the overall goal of the workshop:

We [whites] have a responsibility that can’t be assumed by any other segment of our society. To fulfil this responsibility we must discriminate “for” the Negro. We are discriminating now against the Negro even though most don’t see it. We seldom see the problem looking from ourselves unless we seek to gain a new viewpoint.<sup>114</sup>

Part of what this employee articulated was also a newfound knowledge of the importance of affirmative action. A key in the facilitation of this was the very last activity of the workshop where participants broke into small groups and worked to create affirmative action policies. With guidance from one of the Mission staff, each group was asked to think through ‘critical areas for attention’ regarding affirmative action, ‘objectives and time tables’, ‘implementation steps’, goals and the potential

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<sup>112</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 94-97. All emphases in original.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Composite Report’: 13-15 (14-15, emphasis in original).

<sup>114</sup> ‘Composite Report’: 14.

for evaluating such policies.<sup>115</sup> Though varied, each group's practice policy hit upon increasing 'minority group' numbers 'in all levels of the company'. All were thorough in their consideration of potential obstacles such as internal and external backlash, the problem of relating the programme to colleagues who had not undertaken the NWC training, white-created standards within the company, and whether or not resources were available to help train peoples of colour for the positions that would be opened up. Crucial in getting B&B managers and executives to think about practising the concepts learnt in the workshop, this capstone exercise also began the work of developing a new company affirmative action policy. Individuals from each group formed the committee that would begin to write the policy after the workshop.<sup>116</sup>

Borg & Beck's Detroit plant moved to Sterling Heights in 1971, some time after its February training with DIM. When, in December of 1971, George Colman interviewed a number of managers who had participated in the training, they indicated that nearly all of the Division's African American workers 'made the move to the suburbs'. They seem to not have made mention of any hardships or tensions induced by the move. Significantly, however, they maintained that the move had eaten up the attentions of managers and 'account[ed] for some loss of urgency regarding affirmative action'. The company's poor financial health also contributed to this, they said, as few hirings or promotions had taken place. A more complex picture emerged, though. Most of those individuals who were not involved with the

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<sup>115</sup> 'Policy Statement and Affirmative Action Plan – Group 1'; 'Policy Statement – Group 2'; and Policy Statement – Group 3', all in Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

<sup>116</sup> Letter to Borg & Beck Team from George Colman for the DIM staff, 22 Feb 1971; and 'Policy Statement and Affirmative Action Plan: Group 1'; 'Policy Statement: Group 2'; and Policy Statement: Group 3'.

affirmative action committee said they knew nothing of that group's work, nor had they attempted to maintain communication with it. That committee had been engaged in the creation of a policy that did not diverge greatly from the company's non-discrimination policy; yet, committee members saw their work as improving the internal understanding of that policy in such a way that it served as an affirmative action measure. Despite lack of progress in affirmative action hirings and promotions, most of the individuals Colman interviewed 'continued to be positive or enthusiastic' with regard to the February workshop. The key lessons they had taken from it, the interviewees told Colman, were that 'whites are the problem' with regard to race relations and 'affirmative action is necessary'. The suggestion for more or wider training was made by many, and Colman proposed to B&B management that the Mission carry out training for other levels of management as well as refresher training for those from the February workshop.<sup>117</sup>

The Mission, in fact, continued its consultative relationship with B&B until at least the end of 1974, providing more training and guidance on the implementation of affirmative action policies, which came to encompass those for women as well as 'minorities'.<sup>118</sup> By the beginning of 1973, B&B had revised its non-discrimination policy to account for its affirmative action programme, which, the policy read, would help 'to further promote the Borg & Beck Division policy of non-discrimination and to promote the effective utilization of minority group and female personnel'.<sup>119</sup> The Mission's on-going relationship with and continuous training provisions for B&B point

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<sup>117</sup> Memo from George Colman to DIM Staff, 20 December 1971, Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*; and Memo to John Dresser from George Colman, Ann Thomas, and Gretchen Wilson, 6 February 1974, Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

<sup>119</sup> Borg & Beck Division of Borg-Warner Corporation Policy on Non-Discrimination, 15 January 1973, Folder: Borg & Beck, DIM Collection.

to the limitations of the kind of efforts in which DIM was engaged. Efforts to confront whites' racial ignorance might yield more racially aware individuals and even foster the creation of policies that aimed to promote racial justice, but these individuals and policies would still be operating within a larger unjust system. B&B supervisors spoke of this rub when they indicated to Mission staff in January 1974 that they had trouble finding 'qualified minorities in engineering and in this geographic region'. Moreover, supervisors observed that, once African Americans were hired, transportation to Sterling Heights often proved a clear obstacle in the retention of these employees.<sup>120</sup> In short, patterns of racial injustice in housing, education and other areas had hindered their affirmative action programme. The employees that Colman interviewed at the end of 1971 had suggested the same. They had essentially implied that the knowledge they had acquired through DIM's training was still fairly isolated from the inner workings of B&B, and that though their racial ignorance had been challenged, this had not yet had any great impact on their workplace. Their new racial knowledge and revised policies seemed to chafe against the larger, unyielding system embodied by the phrase the 'white power structure'.

#### *The legacy of NWC workshops*

The overall impact of the Mission's NWC workshops is difficult to gauge, but DIM had an indisputable influence in Detroit, even outside of the city's corporations. Aside from helping to establish affirmative action programmes in corporations in Detroit, Bob Terry's theoretical work fed into countless workshops in Detroit – and throughout the country – that also critiqued whiteness, and DIM had an impact on

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<sup>120</sup> Memo from George Colman to Gretchen Wilson and Ann Thomas, 21 February 1974.

other Detroit-based anti-racism organisations, such as People Acting for Change Together, which, as the next chapter explores, worked closely and shared resources with the Mission. Judith Katz's widely influential 1978 guide to anti-racism training for whites, *White Awareness*, also drew from Terry theories and DIM's workshop methodology.<sup>121</sup>

The Mission also undoubtedly had an impact on the racial consciousness of many of its white NWC participants, and it is particularly for this reason that DIM's workshops around new white consciousness are significant. They represent moments within the US's Black Power milieu wherein white people methodically and critically assessed white identity and advocated for its complete re-creation. The Mission pathologised modes of normative whiteness – what it referred to as white culture – indicating that these modes only exacerbated racial disparities and injustices in the US. Racism was so inherent in the normal operation of the white-dominated society, that most whites could not see that the cultural values and standards that they promoted for everyone stemmed from their own racialised realities, and at its heart, this related to white racial ignorance. As one B&B employee put it, the 'central learning' he took from the NWC workshop regarded 'the tremendous unintentional restraints place on the minority groups by the white power structure through ignorance of the problem.'<sup>122</sup>

New white consciousness workshops allowed the Mission to pursue these ambitious goals. They provided an almost intimate arena in which facilitators could

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<sup>121</sup> David Snider, in-person interview with the author, 7 April 2010, Detroit, USA; 'PACT of New Detroit, Inc' pamphlet, 'People Acting for Change Together', Reel 17, Radicalism and Reactionary Politics in America [Microform Collection], Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. Katz, *White Awareness*.

<sup>122</sup> 'Composite Report': 15.

push white businesspeople in Detroit to grapple with the idea that they were racist and that their normal mode of operation worked to entrench racism. The workshops' interactive exercises demonstrated the ways in which cultural racism operated through media, language, history and national mythology. The larger consultation on affirmative action in which the NWC workshop was positioned provided an end goal, a point towards which the exercises and facilitators could push. And the context of 'new white consciousness', the understanding that US whiteness needed to be focused on and made anew, held everything together, and provided an alternative worldview for participants. As Terry wrote of the NWC workshops:

Our task, in these seminars, is to provide resources and a format to whites to focus on their own whiteness and explore new meanings and anti-racist ways to be white...What is beginning to develop for some of us whites are ways to cope with racism from strength, not weakness, and to have a sense of ourselves that is positive.<sup>123</sup>

For the companies that hired DIM, such as B&B, a complex configuration of political, economic, legal and social motivations spurred their desire to seek expertise in the area of race relations and affirmative action. Even while many individuals may have experienced profound shifts in racial awareness and may very well have invested in racial justice activism, NWC workshops were also limited by the explicit focus on corporate environments and white-collar employees. The Mission's focus on justice – as opposed to legality – could be lost in an environment that constantly raised questions about efficiency, finances and public image. As one B&B employee wrote in a letter to DIM after the first workshop:

Perhaps the major point of the session for me was how proper attitudes towards various groups can benefit our business operations. Before this seminar, I was completely opposed to the idea of establishing goals for balancing minority group

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<sup>123</sup> 'Racism Isn't Just...'

employment, but can now appreciate the validity of doing so from both an employee and employer viewpoint.<sup>124</sup>

This is not to say that DIM could be faulted for failing to upset corporate culture and as has been shown the organisation in fact worked quite hard to demonstrate the connections between this culture's racial landscape and that of the wider white US. Nonetheless, the Mission's tempered radicals developed an anti-racism strategy in a context that, until coerced by governmental policy, had proven hostile to black freedom efforts. And in these attempts to re-route companies' race-based anxieties and attentions towards justice-based aims, both the epistemological potency and the structural limitations of anti-racism workshops were revealed.

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<sup>124</sup> Unsigned letter to DIM from workshop participant.

**Chapter 2:  
'To approach the problem of man's mind':  
The Speakers Bureau/PACT of New Detroit, Inc.**

In 1970, the Speakers Bureau, an organisation dedicated to anti-racism education in the greater Detroit area, posed a question:

We can state what needs to be done in housing and employment but how do we begin to approach the problem of man's mind? We know this is the most important because progress in solving all the other social ills is dependent on it. For without the kind of communication and understanding inherent in this objective there will not be the support needed to move effectively against the more tangible aspects of the urban crisis.<sup>1</sup>

While its parent organisation, New Detroit, Inc., laboured to ameliorate racial discrimination and disparities within Detroit institutions – including within housing and employment – the Bureau was troubled by the kinds of knowledge, assumptions and interpersonal relations that would undergird this work. It pointed to the Kerner Commission's recommendation for better cross-racial communication, specifically within cities that witnessed race rebellions at the end of the 1960s. The 'urban crisis' that had led to Detroit's July 1967 rebellion continued, and the Speakers Bureau saw its job in line with that specific urging of the Kerner Commission. To foster better communication and understanding, however, it had to begin with 'man's mind'.<sup>2</sup>

Founded in 1968, the Speakers Bureau operated for nearly six years within New Detroit, the not-for-profit coalition created in the wake of the July 1967 rebellion. It evolved from a communications arm for New Detroit to a multi-faceted anti-racism educator. In 1972, the Bureau changed its name to People Acting for Change Together (PACT) to better reflect the work to which it had transitioned and to denote

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<sup>1</sup> Speakers Bureau, Untitled project summary, 27 February 1970: Section II page 1, Box 158, Folder 30: Speakers' Bureau, 1971, Communications, NDI Collection.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*: Section II page 1.

its self-perception as an agent of change within Detroit. The close relationships that the Speakers Bureau enjoyed with the Detroit Industrial Mission and other anti-racism groups in Detroit meant that it constituted part of a wide network of racial justice activism that shared ideas, resources and activists.

The Speakers Bureau's transition into the community-based educator that was PACT was an organic one; for the most part, its efforts adjusted to the demand it faced from its public. Perhaps better than any other organisation in the Motor City, the Bureau's history represents the reach that educational racial justice projects had in the US during the Black Power era, including among whites. By the end of 1969, it had received over 1500 requests for speaking engagements and training. The next year it received 1960 requests and connected with a total audience of over 315,000.<sup>3</sup> Workshop participants included high school and college students and teachers, camp counselors, church and synagogue members, Michigan Bell employees, public servants and local activists. If the work of the Detroit Industrial Mission signaled that white racial justice activists could develop anti-racism workshops in particular sectors or with niche audiences, the Speakers Bureau's efforts demonstrated the widespread appeal of such educational work. At the same time, the Bureau created a good deal of its own demand. Its veritable army of trained volunteers saw the need for anti-racism education everywhere, and they often brought Bureau training into their workplaces, community groups or faith centres. This zealous, multiracial volunteer corps often worked with audiences that

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<sup>3</sup> Memo from Jo-Ann Terry and Anne Cox to Steve Stockmeyer, Re: Statistics on the Speakers Bureau, 30 December 1970, Box 158, Folder 30: Speakers' Bureau, 1971, Communications, NDI Collection.

were just as racially diverse. However, many if not most of the Bureau's engagements were with largely white audiences.

As the Bureau steadily oriented itself towards white audiences, it demonstrated its commitment to the Black Power directive to combat racism in white communities and its objective of doing so by tackling whites' racialised ignorance. At the same time, it gravitated towards a professionalism that saw its staff and volunteers designing workshop outlines and training materials that were specialised for certain sectors. This greater sophistication in many ways presaged the 'race industry' that would evolve into a lucrative enterprise in the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> However, it also reflected the Bureau's interest in deepening its impact, not just extending its reach. Moreover, the Bureau's workshops were free, in no small part because of its large volunteer corps but also due to its continual funding through its more liberal-oriented parent organisation. That the Bureau faced ever increasing demand and was fairly independent meant that it was somewhat insulated or protected from attack or marginalisation, even as it engaged with – or rather, instruction in – the racialised thinking of Black Power. Yet its connection to New Detroit proved precarious. When the larger organisation's funding began to dwindle and its priorities shift, the Bureau did not rank high. Undoubtedly, the fact that the Bureau's greatest effects could be felt in the incalculable sphere of 'man's mind' lent to its precariousness and, ultimately, to its separation from New Detroit.

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<sup>4</sup> Mohanty, 'On Race and Voice': 43.

*New Detroit: its founding, aims and racial politics*

New Detroit, Inc., was established as the state and local governments' response to the July 1967 rebellion. While the Mayor's Office, Michigan state legislators, and the Kerner Commission all investigated the causes, occurrences and effects of the Detroit rebellion and eventually began acting on these findings, New Detroit was conceived of as an immediate and short-term effort to rebuild the city physically, socially and economically.<sup>5</sup> Michigan Governor George Romney and Detroit Mayor Jerome Cavanaugh chose the president of Hudson Department Stores, Joseph Hudson, Jr, to lead the organisation. It was his job to assemble the rest of the board and set New Detroit's priorities. He extended board membership mostly to other white business elites in the area, including Henry Ford II, others from the 'Big Three' auto manufacturers, and white leaders like United Auto Workers head Walter Reuther. As noted in the previous chapter, however, with some cajoling from local groups like the Detroit Industrial Mission, Hudson also asked local black leaders from both moderate and radical groups to join the committee. These individuals included well-known community organisers and black nationalists, like Lorenzo Freeman of the West Central Organization and Inner-City Organizing Committee co-founders Alvin Harrison and Norvell Harrington. Thirty-nine individuals representing business, union and local community interests initially comprised the New Detroit Committee, as it was originally called – nine blacks and thirty whites.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report*: 152, 203-77. Sidney Fine, *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanaugh Administration, Race Relations, and the Detroit Riot of 1967* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1989): 320-321, 385-345.

<sup>6</sup> Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 320-22; Richard C. Hula, Cynthia Y. Jackson and Marion Orr, 'Urban Politics, Governing Nonprofits, and Community Revitalization', *Urban Affairs Review* 32(4) 1997: 459-489 (471-472); and Dillard, *Faith in the City*: 292-295. The New Detroit Committee was incorporated and then called New Detroit, Inc., the year after its founding. (See, Richard C.

Hudson felt that a relatively quick task for New Detroit should be to identify and provide evidence of the city's problems and to advise relevant agencies, organisations and businesses on how to ameliorate them. Chief amongst these issues were black unemployment and poverty. As historian Sidney Fine has written, Hudson felt that 'business leaders in Detroit in the past had left the city's problems to be solved by government and social workers and had absolved their responsibilities by writing a check'.<sup>7</sup> Now, Hudson rallied these elites in order to push for job creation within their businesses. Hudson's conception of New Detroit's thrust was, arguably, conservative. He felt that the city already possessed the necessary resources, and he advised the organisation to "work toward identifying and increasing the effectiveness of existing community, public and private agencies, and only to recommend the establishment of new agencies when no existing institution was to be found."<sup>8</sup> Thus, New Detroit could, Hudson believed, place the responsibility of 'long-range completion' of the rebuilding effort with these agencies and cease to exist in short time.<sup>9</sup>

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Hula and Cynthia Jackson-Elmoore, 'Nonprofit Organizations as Political Actors: Avenues for Minority Political Incorporation' *Policy Studies Review* 18(4), 2001: 27-51 (32)). New Detroit, Inc., still exists as 'a coalition of leaders from civil rights and advocacy organisations, human services, health and community organizations, business, labor, foundations, education, media, and the clergy'. See its website: [www.newdetroit.org](http://www.newdetroit.org).

<sup>7</sup> Fine, *Violence in the City*: 320 (quote), 439-444. See also Hula and Jackson-Elmoore, 'Nonprofit Organizations as Political Actors': 32-33.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in, Harvey Bertcher, H. Frederick Brown, Roger Lind, Eugene Litwak, Rosemary Sarri, Wayne Vasey, and Robert D. Vinter, 'Use and Sponsorship of Volunteers: A Report to Communications Task Force, New Detroit, Inc.' University of Michigan, School of Social Work, August 1969, Box 154, Folder 26: Speakers' Bureau, 1969, Funding, Correspondence, NDI Collection. Hula, Jackson, and Orr overstate New Detroit's initial orientation. They contend, 'The goal adopted by the committee was nothing short of a fundamental restructuring of the social and political fabric of the city'. (See Richard C. Hula, Cynthia Y. Jackson and Marion Orr, 'Urban Politics, Governing Nonprofits, and Community Revitalization': 471.) Though, as Fine writes, black militancy enjoyed a brief period of heightened credibility in the eyes of many whites, most of New Detroit's white elites were certainly not interested in a 'fundamental restructuring' of the city. (See Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 371-376.)

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 439.

Hudson was mistaken, though. Even before the winter of 1967, the trustees and staff had decided that New Detroit should be permanent, that Detroit businesses should provide it with millions of dollars, and that much of this money should go towards grant-making and funding new organisations. Its work was split into five task forces: housing and redevelopment; education and employment; law and finance; community service; and communications. In its first few years, the first two of these task forces ardently pursued solutions by working with area businesses, agencies and schools to develop job training programmes and modify stringent job entry requirements, rehabilitate low-quality housing, and invest in public schools and the creation of Wayne County Community College. It also created an organisation that sought to foster black business ownership and made grants of hundreds of thousands of dollars to black-run economic development organisations. With regard to law enforcement, a Police-Community Relations Committee was established which led investigations into police operations and the relationship between the Detroit police force and Motor City residents. While none of these seem to have enjoyed great success, especially in terms of lasting and tangible effects, New Detroit's efforts in the areas of race relations and community communications enjoyed sustained attention and energy in the months and years immediately following the rebellion. Substantial projects, like the production of television programmes and a black-produced documentary, came out of the Communications task force.<sup>10</sup> As described in detail below, PACT, which also stemmed from this task force, thrived during New Detroit's first years as it met ever-growing demand.

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<sup>10</sup> Hula, Jackson and Orr, 'Urban Politics, Governing Nonprofits, and Community Revitalization': 471, 474; Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 423-424, 439-451; and Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 1 March 2011, Minneapolis, and Detroit, USA.

In all of these efforts, New Detroit sought to fulfill its explicit commitment to tackle racial inequality and discord in the Motor City. Yet, despite its interracial nature and attention to a host of black problems – stemming from the so-called ‘urban crisis’ – from the outset, New Detroit had a fractious relationship with the city’s different black freedom groups and activist strands. When Hudson, Romney and Cavanagh announced New Detroit’s membership less than a week after the rebellion had been quashed, the inclusion of self-described ‘militants’ prompted dismay from many white Detroiters and allegations that Hudson merely sought “riot insurance”. Some prominent black-led groups were also affronted by Hudson’s failure to seek their representation on the committee, while yet other African Americans (and some whites) asserted that the organisation lacked crucial representation from young blacks, particularly in the communities that experienced the rebellion.<sup>11</sup>

Wariness of New Detroit continued when a number of black activists organised an August 1967 City-Wide Citizens Meeting of Soul Brothers. This meeting launched the City-Wide Citizens Action Committee (CCAC) and resolved that New Detroit serve as an advisory group to CCAC, which should lead the post-rebellion efforts. The founding of the CCAC represented an attempt to capture and channel the momentum of the rebellion and to establish a black-led group that would demand and then harness the political power of white establishment groups like

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<sup>11</sup> Donald I. Warren, ‘Some Observations from Post-Riot Detroit: The Role of the Social Research in Contemporary Racial Conflict’, *Phylon* 34(2), 1973: 171-186 (174); Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 320-323 (322); Hula and Jackson-Elmoore, ‘Nonprofit Organizations as Political Actors’: 32; and Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 309-320.

New Detroit. Reverend Albert Cleage, who would come to lead the CCAC, declared 'The Hudson committee [i.e. New Detroit] will take orders from us.'<sup>12</sup>

Soon after, the Reverend Roy Allen and many of the city's other moderate black leaders founded the Detroit Council of Organizations (DCO) which challenged New Detroit's inclination to look to Cleage and his organizations for creditable black-led initiatives. As historian Paul Lee has written, many in the DCO 'were resentful of the respect accorded the "militants"' so suddenly after the rebellion, and thus established the [DCO] as an alternative distinguished along lines of class and respectability.<sup>13</sup> However, many whites on the New Detroit board assumed that the professional and economically comfortable African Americans of the DCO were ignorant of the realities of black poverty. When a Cleage-led coalition and the DCO submitted competing proposals to develop community centres, New Detroit opted to provide each group with \$100,000, less than half of what each had requested, and with stipulations relating to coordination, matching funds, evaluation and other considerations. Cleage, who had previously, if also surreptitiously, worked out a no-strings-attached arrangement with members of the New Detroit board, turned down the offer when it came in the first week of January 1968, and his organization cut ties with New Detroit.<sup>14</sup> Upon refusing the money, he lamented to *Jet* magazine, 'We thought we had an agreement with Hudson and the white power structure of Detroit

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 373; David Goldberg, 'From Landless to Landlords: Black Power, Black Capitalism, and the Co-optation of Detroit's Tenants' Rights Movement, 1964-1969' in Laura Warren Hill and Julia Rabig (eds) *The Business of Black Power: Community Development, Capitalism, and Corporate Responsibility in Postwar America* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012): 157-183 (170-171); Warren, 'Some Observations from Post-Riot Detroit': 328; and Lee, 'The Roots and Responsibilities of Black Power'.

<sup>13</sup> Lee, 'The Roots and Responsibilities of Black Power'; and Gary Blonstein, 'How Detroit's Militants Are Changing' *Detroit Free Press*, 1 October 1967: 46.

<sup>14</sup> Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 375-378; Lee, 'The Roots and Responsibilities of Black Power'; and Leonard Gordon, 'Aftermath of a Race Riot: The Emergent Norm Process among Black and White Community Leaders', *Sociological Perspectives* 26(2), 1983: 115-135 (128).

that black people would have self-determination and accountability of leadership.<sup>15</sup> Having worked with Cleage on the proposal, Lorenzo Freeman quit the New Detroit board. Norvell Harrington also resigned in protest but re-joined a few months later. Though DCO accepted the money, it could not raise matching funds, and soon both it and Cleage's group no longer existed.<sup>16</sup>

This funding fiasco signalled an issue that continuously wrought tension and conflict, not only between New Detroit and various black organizations, but also amongst black groups themselves: the question of which, if any, black individuals and/or groups New Detroit should heed. Without its own clear set of racial politics, New Detroit repeatedly foundered in its attempts to connect with the city's black groups. The ambivalence that New Detroit demonstrated towards black Detroiters' varied political orientations meant that it only haphazardly recognised the importance of black self-determination during a time when many African Americans across the political spectrum were increasingly demanding that they lead efforts to re-envision and rebuild their communities.

Nonetheless, the committee continued its attempts to establish relationships with the city's more radical black groups, knowing that, as one spokesperson put it, they could be "useful" to the organisation. In August of 1968, well-known community organiser and black nationalist Frank Ditto accepted the first of many grants from New Detroit on behalf of his East Side Voice for Independent Detroit. He soon became a trustee. Importantly, New Detroit responded to Ditto's first request for funds with a no-strings agreement. For his part, Ditto well understood his value to

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<sup>15</sup> 'Minister Tells Why \$100,000 Was Rejected', *Jet*, 25 January 1968: 22-23.

<sup>16</sup> Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 378-380; Dillard, *Faith in the City*: 194; and Lee, 'The Roots and Responsibilities of Black Power'.

the committee, remarking that “They know if there aren’t some crumbs on the table...[people like me] might burn down some shit.”<sup>17</sup>

While growing numbers of black Detroiters began to organise around the principle of self-determination, white conservatives and moderates in Detroit’s expansive suburbs also saw their anti-integration and anti-Communist groups expand in the wake of the rebellion. Gun sales had jumped, and rumours circulated in the suburbs that the rebellion ‘had been a “Communist-inspired insurrection” whose purpose was to “terrorize” blacks to join “the black power movement”’.<sup>18</sup> The Kerner Commission disavowed theories of this sort in its report in 1968, but as Black Power activity moved apace in Detroit during the late 1960s, anxious whites fled the city in even larger proportions than they had pre-rebellion. It was in part the pressure of this mounting polarisation that dictated New Detroit’s tempered stance towards black militancy.<sup>19</sup>

The fine line that New Detroit trod was best exemplified in its reaction to an event that took place at New Bethel Baptist Church in the spring of 1969, a year and a half into the organisation’s existence. Late on the night of 29 March, the black separatist and nationalist group the Republic of New Africa (RNA) was finishing up a celebration of its one-year anniversary when two patrolling police officers approached several RNA members outside of the church. Accounts differ as to what exactly occurred thereafter, but one officer was shot and killed and the other wounded. When back-up police appeared on the scene, they raided the church,

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<sup>17</sup> Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 380-382 (380); and Goldberg, ‘From Landless to Landlords’: 170-171.

<sup>18</sup> Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 383-386 (384).

<sup>19</sup> National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report*: 201-202; and Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 383-385, 455-456.

wounding five black men and women. Police arrested all 142 people inside, including children, in a move reminiscent of the blind pig raid that had sparked the 1967 rebellion. Beginning early the next morning, Judge George Crockett moved that many of these defendants could post bond, after which the police began to release dozens of the arrestees against whom they had no probable cause. White conservative groups and various media were outraged and cast aspersions on Judge Crockett, an African American. He was accused of being racially biased, of acting unjustly or illegally; some even alleged he was Communist. In his defense, Crockett said he had exercised “prompt judicial action with strict observance of constitutional rights” in order to avoid another race rebellion.<sup>20</sup>

Amidst the host of groups quick to stand up for Crockett was New Detroit, who greatly feared another rebellion in the offing. New Detroit’s chairman at the time, white business mogul and philanthropist Max Fisher, immediately backed Crockett publically, and the organisation sought funds to repair police damage to New Bethel and appealed for information on the dead officer’s assailant, offering a reward. Soon after, New Detroit’s Law Committee carried out an investigation of the events at New Bethel and reported that Judge Crockett had acted within the law. Working with the Detroit Industrial Mission and the new suburban-based racial justice group, the Interfaith Action Council, New Detroit also produced an hour-long television programme about the incident that aimed to ‘help reduce hysteria, get fuller facts before the public and ward off a vendetta against Judge Crockett’.<sup>21</sup> ‘The total

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<sup>20</sup> Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 418-421 (421); Geschwender, *Class, Race and Worker Insurgency*: 75-76; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002): 124; and Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 377

<sup>21</sup> Letter from James Campbell to William Patrick, Jr., 17 April 1969, Folder 26, Unprocessed DIM Collection (quote); New Detroit, Inc., ‘Beyond the Difference: A New Detroit Assessment’, *Detroit*

situation', New Detroit staff later wrote, 'offered New Detroit an opportunity to make an interpretation to the entire community and, hopefully, to reduce the black and white antagonism'.<sup>22</sup>

This response on the part of New Detroit is telling for several reasons. First, the organisation's preoccupation with the avoidance of another race rebellion suggested that the committee felt another race rebellion was not only possible, but given the heightened racial tensions and polarisation, likely. Second, its solicitations for, on the one hand, money to repair damage sustained by New Bethel during the police raid and, on the other hand, information regarding the deceased police officer's assailant(s), indicated a particularly cautious approach with regard to the police. Just as it had with Judge Crockett, defending or criticising the police had become highly divisive along racial and political lines (with conservatives and moderates pitted against progressives and liberals). New Detroit sidestepped the issue of wrongful police conduct but implied sympathy for the RNA and black Detroiters in its appeals on behalf of New Bethel. At the same time, it demonstrated arguably stronger support for the city's police, as its own money (or the promise of it) went towards efforts to apprehend whoever attacked the officers. Third, that New Detroit felt an educational effort was needed to explain the events and the legality of Crockett's actions implied that the 'hysteria' of the white community was at least somewhat based in misunderstanding or ignorance. Lastly, aside from mere descriptions of the events and the implications of its concern over the damage to New Bethel, New Detroit's various responses avoided any engagement with the

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*News* supplement November 1969, supplement to the *Detroit News*: 11; Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 422-423; and Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 377-378.

<sup>22</sup> 'Beyond the Difference: A New Detroit Assessment': 11.

black radicals of the RNA. Focusing on a defence of Judge Crockett's actions was certainly important, as so much of the fallout pivoted on them. However, this also allowed New Detroit to circumvent (another potentially damaging) involvement with a strand of black militancy in the city.

Though New Detroit's involvement in the New Bethel incident suggested that its engagement with black nationalists and separatists had already begun to wane, historian Heather Thompson argues that New Detroit was more concerned with black militancy than white conservatism during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Her view of New Detroit's liberal racial politics further illuminates that organisation's links with black radicals:

The overwhelmingly white liberal leadership of New Detroit still believed that if average poor and working-class African Americans believed that tangible progress was being made by city leaders, they would ultimately reject black nationalism. And because it considered white conservatives only a fringe element, New Detroit believed that if black faith could be restored, peace would return and liberal leadership would be secure.<sup>23</sup>

While the complexities of New Detroit's relationships with individual radical black organisations suggests that it was more reserved vis-à-vis Black Power than Thompson suggests here, she underscores the political investment that New Detroit had in black Detroiters and black nationalist efforts. As a largely white liberal organisation, it was far more concerned that 'black faith...be restored' than that black Detroiters exercise self-determination, and in fact its relationship to radical black activism was deeply cynical.

The development within New Detroit of PACT, whose work to raise white racial consciousness in and around Detroit entailed the radical analyses developed by staunch Black Power advocates like DIM's Douglass Fitch and Bob Terry, was

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<sup>23</sup> Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*: 75.

thus somewhat paradoxical. As New Detroit's larger organisational position towards radical black activism and thinking appeared to cool, a project embedded within the institution emerged that unabashedly embraced the ideals and philosophy of Black Power. Although shared qualities could at times be seen in the work of both the larger organisation and its offshoot – for instance a concern with the fact and effects of white Detroiters' ignorance around racialised issues and events – PACT came to be attached to a very different set of racial politics than New Detroit, and quite self-consciously so. Its origins, though, were in New Detroit's earliest months, and as detailed below, it grew organically out of an ever-growing need of the larger organisation.

*The Speakers Bureau: its founding, racial knowledge and volunteers*

PACT began as New Detroit's Speakers Bureau. Soon after New Detroit's establishment, groups all over the area began to request that members of the committee (board members, usually, but also staff) speak at their events or meetings about this new organisation and the 'urban crisis'.<sup>24</sup> New Detroit created a position within the Communications Task Force to handle these requests. For many of its operations, New Detroit relied on 'loaner' staff – employees of other organisations in the area who were temporarily lent to New Detroit and whose salaries continued to be paid by their 'home' organisations. This new position, though, became the third full-fledged New Detroit post, and a white woman who had been working for the National Council of Churches, Jo-Ann Terry, was hired to fill it. Terry scheduled speaking events for New Detroit board members and liaised with

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<sup>24</sup> Untitled informational on PACT, July 1973: 2, Box 101, Folder 3: LAW's PACT (1972-1973).

staff who would usually be writing their speeches. Hudson in particular was in high demand. By June of 1968, about 200 groups totalling several thousands of people had requested speakers.<sup>25</sup>

As it turned out, though, New Detroit board members were not especially effective speakers, because they often could not answer the questions that followed or even, if they had not written their speeches, effectively expound upon aspects of them when requested. While their presentations may have been accurate and poignant, Terry recalls, 'If the word racism came up they wouldn't know how to respond at all'.<sup>26</sup> Issues around racial inequality came up frequently, however, as Detroiters expected to hear about New Detroit's efforts, for instance, in bettering education for black students and promoting small business development in black neighbourhoods. Though Terry attempted to better prepare speakers by providing them with relevant articles and hand-outs to distribute, many of them had embarrassing experiences and began to turn down speaking opportunities. Meanwhile, requests for speakers had steadily risen. 'Without any solicitation', Terry wrote in the summer of 1968, 'we [New Detroit] receive approximately 30 requests per month for speakers'.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, New Detroit's first film production was near completion. *The Black Eye*, a short documentary with an all-black production team 'on life in the city as seen through black eyes', would surely draw even more

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<sup>25</sup> Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 10 March 2011; Hula, Jackson and Orr, 'Urban Politics, Governing Nonprofits, and Community Revitalization': 472; and Jo-Ann Terry, 'Review of the Past Year', [August 1969]: Attachment 1 (Undated [June 1968] Letter of invitation to volunteers), Box 184, Folder 15: Communications Committee; Speakers' Bureau Training Program, 1969, NDI Collection.

<sup>26</sup> Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 10 February 2011, Minneapolis, and Detroit, USA.

<sup>27</sup> Janet E. McNaughton, 'Proposal: Volunteer Speakers Bureau', Undated [1968]: 1, Box 154, Folder 25: Speakers' Bureau, 1969, Correspondence, Funding, NDI Collection; Edgar Davis, Speaker Evaluation Form, 16 June 1968; Articles for New Detroit Speakers, Undated [1968]; and 'What Can I Do?', Undated [1968], Box 47, Folder 14: Speakers Bureau (1968), NDI Collection.

requests for speakers and screenings. Terry requested that New Detroit create a Speakers Bureau that would recruit and train volunteers who would assume most of the speaking engagements. This would allow board members to save face and take on only larger keynote addresses. More importantly though, the Speakers Bureau could then use people in the area who could provide more effective and informed presentations.<sup>28</sup>

Terry's first vision for who would comprise the Speakers Bureau highlighted a telling way in which dominant relations of gender, race and class could bear upon racial justice praxis at the time. A greater number of requests for speakers had been made from groups within the city for a daytime engagement than for suburban events and meetings that took place largely during the evening. Terry correctly speculated, though, that largely white women's groups based in the suburbs would increasingly put in daytime requests. Consequently, the proposal to found the Speakers Bureau stated:

We will need to draw on women to provide the daytime manpower and supplement the evening schedule. Men of the caliber we would like to have as representatives of New Detroit probably would not be available during the day.... There are many women who would be available, gratis, to show the film and handle discussion who are intelligent, well-educated, interested, reliable, and personable. It is my suggestion that we contact the League of Women Voters, United Community Services, the Junior Leagues, and various other organizations that are well known to have a highly intelligent and active membership.<sup>29</sup>

Terry did not think the Communications Task Force should open up Bureau volunteer places to any and all women in these groups, though, and she did not plan to recruit only from women's groups. She also reached out, for instance, to contacts

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<sup>28</sup> '150 Speakers Reach 150,000', *Region* 2(3) (Jul-Aug 1969): 2; 'Proposal: Volunteer Speakers Bureau'; and Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 1 March 2011.

<sup>29</sup> 'Proposal: Volunteer Speakers Bureau': 1.

at the Michigan Department of Civil Rights for volunteer recommendations. Above all else, Terry sought to be 'selective' in order to locate volunteers that the Speakers Bureau could rely on in terms of their commitment to social change and knowledge of race relations.<sup>30</sup>

Terry's proposition that New Detroit reach out to mainstream, largely white women's groups to enlist the Speakers Bureau volunteers implied an understanding that it was mostly white, middle- and upper-class women who could afford to take up such volunteering, in terms of time and finances. It was a dynamic echoed within other white-led racial justice efforts at the time. In his time as the director of one of the Interfaith Centers for Racial Justice, this one in the northwest suburbs of Detroit, white minister Cliff Schrupp remembers that well over half of his centre's volunteers were white housewives. A small army of white suburban housewives, for instance, carried out a television monitoring project spearheaded by the Centers when they attempted to challenge certain stations' license renewals on the grounds of racially exclusive television programming. The Interfaith Action Council had established these centres in 1969 in order, as Schrupp has recounted, to 'promote racial justice issues within the white community and get allies in the white community to work with black organizations and be supportive of racial justice issues'.<sup>31</sup> More explicitly, then, they aimed to incorporate whites more than the Speakers Bureau originally had. However, both efforts capitalised on a set of unequal and racialised gender and class relations in which a certain class of white women was able to devote energy to certain racial justice projects in ways that many poor or working-class white and black women and men could not – or it was imagined they could not.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 1; 'Proposal: Volunteer Speakers Bureau'; and 'Review of the Past Year': 2.

<sup>31</sup> Cliff Schrupp, in-person interview with the author, 9 February 2011, Detroit, USA.

Proposing that New Detroit appeal to white housewives and women from mainstream groups could also have been a strategic and largely rhetorical measure on Terry's part. The promise of such women would have lent an air of respectability to the Speakers Bureau that many on the New Detroit board would have undoubtedly found appealing. In reality, however, Terry did not gather huge numbers of such women in her volunteer drives. Indeed, as early as her very first training event for volunteer speakers in August of 1968, dynamics were already present which would shift the organisation's purpose and composition.

After soliciting volunteers from many different interest groups, Terry's expectations were wholly surpassed when more than double the number of expected volunteers signed up for training. Eighty-five people from a range of backgrounds were trained – housewives, teachers, students, religious leaders, single mothers on welfare and 'men and women in business'. Roughly a third of these individuals were black, while three quarters of the group were men. Most were young, in their 20s or 30s.<sup>32</sup> Most also had full-time jobs and worked outside of the home. While at this point it was still thought that the Speakers Bureau volunteers' main purpose was to fulfill requests by acting as representatives of New Detroit to the larger community, the training nonetheless had loftier goals. It helped to hone volunteers' communication and conflict management skills, but it strove towards a collective 'sensitization and understanding of the phenomenon of racism as well as the individuals' own attitudinal orientation toward it'.<sup>33</sup> The two-day training included lectures and follow-up discussions on Black Power and institutional racism, as well

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<sup>32</sup> 'August 1968 Volunteer Speaker Training: Project Definition': 2, Box 148, Folder 10: Volunteer Speakers Bureau, 1968, Subcomm; Communications; Project Cost Data, NDI Collection; and 'Review of the Past Year': 2B.

<sup>33</sup> 'Review of the Past Year', Attachment 2.

as a preview of *The Black Eye*, and it fostered dialogue around the role of whites in challenging racism. The aspiration to heighten trainees' awareness around racism and Black Power particularly anticipated white trainees' needs and surely reflected the lack of preparedness around and knowledge of race relations that had discomfited New Detroit's early speaking arrangements. Yet it also hinted at a vision that Terry, who had designed and led the training along with staff from the Community Development Training Institute, already held for a larger purpose for the Bureau than as a New Detroit mouthpiece.<sup>34</sup>

This newly trained body of dozens of speakers quickly helped to spread the word about the new Bureau and its free service. Requests poured in. By mid-December 1968, speakers had reached an estimated 18,000 people in the larger Detroit area at all kinds of events and gatherings.<sup>35</sup> A great many of these not only received positive feedback but were able to prompt action or dialogue beyond the event. A suburban Lutheran church, for instance, placed a request with the Speakers' Bureau for a screening and discussion of *The Black Eye* in November. The minister's glowing evaluation indicated that a group of parishioners would begin 'a long term self-encounter type of experience' after the event revealed deep-seated and problematic assumptions on the part of many audience members:

The speaker identified well with the group and emphasized effectively the need for white people to deal with themselves. ...Most of the people revealed their underlying feelings that the problem and responsibilities fall within the black community. No in-depth recognition of the white problem.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> 'Review of the Past Year': 2-2B: 'Volunteer Speakers Training Schedule' [August 1968]; and Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 1 March 2011.

<sup>35</sup> 'Review of the Past Year': 3; Memo from Bob Spencer to Bill Patrick, 19 December 1968, Box 150, Folder 9: Spanish-American Outreach, School Decentralization, Speakers Bureau, Staff Recruitment, Summer Programs, 1968-1969, NDI Collection.

<sup>36</sup> 'Review of the Past Year': 11-12 (12).

The Speakers Bureau's relationship with Michigan Bell Telephone Company also began in this period, and it reflected the Bureau's gravitation towards continuing engagements with clients as opposed to one-off events. Michigan Bell was one of a number of Detroit-area companies that had, in the wake of the 1967 rebellion, committed itself to hiring many individuals, most of them African American, who were frequently categorised as 'hard-card unemployed'. Consultations with the Detroit Industrial Mission had prompted the company to begin 'Urban Training' sessions for the largely white supervisory and managerial staff. Beginning in the fall of 1968, black volunteers from the Bureau began implementing the first phase of this training, often using *The Black Eye* as a tool.<sup>37</sup> A letter from a division manager revealed his own delight with the programme, as well as others' frustration. Volunteer speaker Commodore Clark, a black public relations manager for a local radio station, had been a 'superb' speaker, he said, and he had handled a number of antagonistic questions quite well. Despite accusatory questions directed by many whites and one black woman trainee regarding, among other things, how his 'lecturing' could possibly help in the alleviation of 'ghetto' problems, the manager indicated that by the later sessions the trainees had warmed to Clark's ideas.<sup>38</sup>

These evaluations suggest more than the success of the Bureau's efforts. They make explicit the Bureau's gravitation away from engagements in which speakers simply extolled New Detroit. Terry had been attuned to the kinds of information Detroiters sought when they hired the Bureau, and as the glitz of New Detroit began to dull, its luminaries' inability to speak on issues of race became all

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<sup>37</sup> 'Review of the Past Year': 17-18; and Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 361-363.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from J.S. Richards, Division Commercial Manager-Fort at Michigan Bell, to the Speakers Bureau, 22 November 1968, unnumbered attachment to 'Review of the Past Year'.

the more apparent. In order to train volunteers to take up this work, an overarching framework was necessary. More insinuated than explicit at this point, this framework included three key assumptions: that knowledge was a crucial aspect of racial justice, that whites in particular were ignorant of racial realities, and that this had to do with their general inability to understand the connections between whiteness and racism. In recounting the usefulness of Commodore Clark's efforts, the Michigan Bell manager got at the importance of knowledge, particularly amongst whites, in anti-racism. The suburban Lutheran pastor's comment that his congregants realised that they had 'no in-depth recognition of the white problem' connected whiteness, racism and ignorance. These interlinked presumptions would soon become more explicit, and the racial politics enacted by the Bureau, as we shall see, became increasingly aligned with that of the Detroit Industrial Mission.

Significantly, these shifts also coincided with a trend towards professionalisation within the Speakers Bureau that began with its first volunteer-speaker training. A number of volunteers left the Bureau (more than a third), most because they felt they could not commit the necessary time and energy and others because they and/or Bureau staff felt they were ineffective in the work.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, many of those who remained became increasingly engaged. They arranged to socialise and to talk about problems they faced in their engagements, and they began to ask for further training. In the fall of 1968, the Bureau made plans for a library to house its swelling collection of reading and audiovisual resources. For volunteers, these resources were helpful both in terms of deepening their understanding of race and racism and as tools in their engagements. An

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<sup>39</sup> 'Review of the Past Year': 2B-3, 29-30.

administrative assistant joined the Bureau staff after a sharp increase in requests in late 1968.<sup>40</sup> If the Bureau was beginning to draw on a radical understanding of US race relations, it was also establishing itself through notions of efficiency, effectiveness and skill – in other words, through the trappings of professionalism.

The Speakers Bureau had made a name for itself and become a more established entity when it held its second volunteer training in February of 1969. Whereas it had previously received limited funding for training and operations, staff now argued that the trustees' 'on record' approval of the Bureau and the Bureau's record as 'one of [New Detroit's] most successful programs to date', dictated that New Detroit should essentially put its money where its mouth was.<sup>41</sup> It requested and received funds for its literature and film library, as well as a bigger budget for its second training of volunteers, which had garnered a great deal of unsolicited interest.<sup>42</sup>

With part of the additional funds for training, Bureau staff devoted more time and resources to recruiting volunteers. The selection process was drawn out. Potential volunteers – individuals who were either recommended or expressed an interest – filled out a lengthy questionnaire that interrogated their perceptions of significant ideas and events. Potential speakers were asked to define racism and Black Power, describe what they felt caused the July 1967 rebellion, and comment on their 'own prejudices and how you see them manifest'. They were asked to state

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<sup>40</sup> Letter from Paul E. Hansen to Volunteer Speakers, 1 November 1968, Box 44, Folder 37: Speakers Bureau, Nov '68-May '69, NDI Collection; and Memo from Bob Spencer to Bill Patrick, 19 December 1968, Re: Communications.

<sup>41</sup> Memo from Bob Spencer to Bill Patrick, 19 December 1968 (quote); and 'Review of the Past Year': 3.

<sup>42</sup> Memo from Communications Committee to Robert Spencer, 9 December 1968, Re: Project Funds, Box 150, Folder 9: Spanish-American Outreach, School Decentralization, Speakers Bureau, Staff Recruitment, Summer Programs, 1968-1969, NDI Collection.

how they would respond to specific questions. For example, 'What would be your response to a Warren housewife's question, "What do THEY (Negroes) want?"'<sup>43</sup> The questionnaire also inquired into the respondents' knowledge of published work, events and locally- and nationally-known figures who were important to the black freedom struggle. They were asked to identify which books they had read from a list that included the Kerner Commission report, Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul On Ice*, Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton's *Black Power*, Malcolm X's autobiography and *Before the Mayflower* by Lerone Bennett, Jr. They were asked if they knew who Frank Ditto, Albert Cleage, Rosa Parks and Bayard Rustin were, among others, or if they knew of such organisations as the Interfaith Action Centers or Ditto's East Side Voices for an Independent Detroit.<sup>44</sup>

On a practical level, the questionnaire provided the Bureau – its staff and training consultants – with a way to assess where their potential volunteers stood in relation to race-related issues and an opportunity to better prepare for the training. They also used it to better prepare potential volunteers, to whom the Bureau sent readings if they had indicated that they had not read significant works. Yet the questionnaire was also 'designed as a self-screening device'.<sup>45</sup> It alluded to the racial politics and knowledge that the Bureau valued, allowing individuals to withdraw if they sensed that they might be opposed to these politics or would not want to devote themselves to the kind of study the Bureau demanded. In other words, the Bureau had developed its framework for understanding race and racism in the US, and it would expect its volunteers to propound it as well.

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<sup>43</sup> 'Review of the Past Year', Attachment 8: 5-12 (quotes from 7,10).

<sup>44</sup> 'Review of the Past Year', Attachment 8: 2-4.

<sup>45</sup> 'Review of the Past Year', 3-4 (4); and Memo from Communications Committee to Robert Spencer, 9 December 1968.

Central to this framework were the ideas of Black Power advocates, not least Douglass Fitch and Bob Terry who were amongst the twelve individuals hired as ‘consultant-trainers’ for the February 1969 training session. The theorising that they had been undertaking under the banner of the Detroit Industrial Mission was carried over to the Bureau in central and lasting ways.<sup>46</sup> New black consciousness and new white consciousness were two of three key conceptual components of the second training; the third was white racism. Naturally, Fitch and Bob Terry led presentations on their respective components, though other consultants co-facilitated these sessions. The ideas differed little from those that DIM would convey in their own anti-racism consultations. The new black consciousness component fostered an ‘understanding of black history, and the new mood in the black community today’, while training around white racism emphasised ‘individual, institutional, and cultural aspects’.<sup>47</sup> As what was conceived as the capstone, the element that would promote ‘change agency’ amongst the largely white audiences, new white consciousness ‘propos[ed] the development of a new white identity for whites which attempts to unite the fight against racism with a positive affirmation of whiteness’.<sup>48</sup> The Speakers Bureau in fact provided a platform for Fitch and Bob Terry to test out and promote their race-based theories.<sup>49</sup>

Because of the ways in which it was already subsumed within new black and white consciousness, the third theme, white racism, in many ways became the great

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<sup>46</sup> Memo from Communications Committee to Robert Spencer, 9 December 1968; and ‘Proposal to hold a second training for SB speaker-volunteers’, 3 January 1969, Box 184, Folder 15: Communications Committee; Speakers’ Bureau Training Program, 1969, NDI Collection.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Review of the Past Year’: 4.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Review of the Past Year’: 5, and Attachment 7. See also, ‘Proposal to hold a second training for SB speaker-volunteers’.

<sup>49</sup> Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 360-361.

constant of Speakers Bureau trainings. It presented a different inroad for discussion, however. White racism allowed the Bureau to refer to and build on the then-widely-known Kerner Commission report and its indictment of white racism in the race rebellions of 1967. The moderates that made up the Kerner Commission named white racism as a national, endemic problem, and their document explored some of its contours.<sup>50</sup> Many people attached to the Bureau found the report lacking, however. In *For Whites Only*, Bob Terry wrote that it demonstrated the trouble whites often had when they attempted to ‘shift orientations’ and see racism as a ‘white problem’: ‘*While white institutions are indicted as the main cause of our racial problems, the same white institutions are used as the standard of success [for African Americans]*’.<sup>51</sup>

For many reasons, though, the Kerner Commission’s report proved a useful springboard for many of the Bureau’s engagements. Noel Saleh, a native Detroitier whose father had emigrated from Lebanon, spent years with the Bureau. He recalled:

The Kerner Commission was...important because it had the aura of legitimacy, so when you were talking about this theory in public and in your trainings and to people who would be resistant to this message, you could use the findings of the Kerner Commission as the authority to support your position. Whereas using the words of Malcolm X or other black activists wasn’t going to get you anywhere in terms of...opening the door and asking people to think about these issues in terms of, ‘What’s your responsibility?’ ‘What’s the white community’s responsibility?’... Broaching that discussion, and not having people immediately shut off, the only way to open that door was to use the Kerner Commission.<sup>52</sup>

Even while the Kerner Commission’s report angered a great many whites around the country, many of the audiences with which the Bureau worked – particularly its

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<sup>50</sup> ‘Review of the Past Year’: 3-4A; and National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report*: 2, 283-288, 299-301, 389-395.

<sup>51</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*: 15-17 (quotes, 15, 17, emphasis in original).

<sup>52</sup> Noel Saleh, in-person interview with the author, 17 February 2011, Detroit, USA. See also David Snider, in-person interview with the author, 7 April 2010.

growing white, middle-class suburban audiences – regarded its racial knowledge (its ‘findings’) as more authoritative than that of black activists. In order to get these audiences to listen to and learn from activists like Malcolm X – or even Douglass Fitch and Bob Terry – Saleh and other volunteers first pointed to the Commission and its charges against white racism.

The usefulness of the Kerner Commission report notwithstanding, the Bureau’s relationship with Fitch, Bob Terry and the Detroit Industrial Mission was far more productive and valuable. The February 1969 training inaugurated a close and long-standing relationship between DIM and the Speakers Bureau. Jo-Ann Terry had intimate knowledge of the Mission’s work through her marriage with Bob Terry and close friendship with Douglass Fitch and his family. By her recollection, Bob Terry and Fitch were hired as trainers for Bureau volunteers because of their unique theoretical contributions, on-going efforts in the area of race and racism, and because they were ‘specialists’ in the areas of new black and white consciousness.<sup>53</sup>

Other volunteers also remember the importance of the Mission’s and, in particular, Bob Terry’s racial thinking to the Bureau and its volunteers. David Snider, a white man originally from North Carolina, volunteered for the Speakers Bureau for several years. He and his wife actually moved to Detroit from New York, where David had gone to seminary, after they learnt about the rash of white racial justice activism taking place there at the end of the 1960s. He recalls that Bob Terry’s notion of the ‘anti-racist racist’ helped him to understand how he could be constantly engaged in racial justice activity and still battling racist thoughts and inclinations.

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<sup>53</sup> ‘Proposal to hold a second training for SB speaker-volunteers’: 1; and Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 1 March 2011.

Employing this concept during engagements on behalf of the Speakers Bureau allowed him and others to highlight the ways in which white racial consciousness operated, not as an on-off switch, but as a continual process.<sup>54</sup> Noel Saleh remembers that there was in fact very little ‘divergence or diversity of concepts’ between the Mission and the Bureau. In his time as the Bureau librarian and a volunteer speaker, Saleh saw that it was the ‘application’ and the ‘audience’ that differentiated the work of the Speakers Bureau from that of DIM.<sup>55</sup> The work of the two organizations was highly complementary; over the years, they shared intellectual work, training resources and personnel. Yet the work of the Bureau, as described further below, did attract quite different audiences.

The winter 1969 training was thus a turning point for the Speakers Bureau. If prior to this training flickers of white racism and new white and black consciousness were discernible in the Bureau’s work, from February 1969 on they were its ideological guideposts. By the summer of 1971, the Speakers Bureau had taken on a ‘statement of purpose’ that made plain its own understanding of race relations. Though it ‘continue[d] to provide information to groups on issues related to the urban crisis’, the Bureau’s programmes now focused on ‘three major themes’:

1. New black consciousness, including an awareness and understanding of black history and the new mood in the country’s contemporary black community in its struggle for liberation from racism.
2. White racism, stressing individual, institutional and cultural aspects (and understanding its difference from prejudice and discrimination.)
3. A new white consciousness, which proposes the development of a new identity for whites which seeks to unite the fight against racism with a new positive affirmation of whiteness.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> David Snider, in-person interview with the author, 7 April 2010.

<sup>55</sup> Noel Saleh, in-person interview with the author, 17 February 2011.

<sup>56</sup> ‘New Detroit Inc. Speakers’ Bureau Statement of Purpose, under revision 9/71’, (emphasis in original), September 1971, Box 88, Folder 39: Speaker’s Bureau, Misc – Articles, NDI Collection.

Speaker-volunteers were clear that these themes were educationally driven. When asked what they believed the Bureau's goals were in a 1970 questionnaire, one responded, 'to inform the community that racism is a white problem', while another said, 'to combat racism through information'. They thus implied that ignorance of racial issues was deeply connected to racism and the key target of the Speakers Bureau. Or as one volunteer made explicit, in order to combat racism the Bureau brought 'the fearful and ignorant together with those who are more familiar with the problems of society'.<sup>57</sup>

Yet this kind of knowledge, this precise understanding of race and racism that the Bureau presented did not sit well with everyone, nor did the style of the training. To one volunteer, the training had an aggressive quality: 'More "educated" people in terms of racism tended to jump down "less educated" people's throats at the slightest provocation without allowing for explanation'.<sup>58</sup> More of the unhappy volunteers – those who were perhaps obstinate or defiant in the face of the Bureau's 'self-screening' device – were resentful of what they perceived as the Bureau's radical take on race relations. One participant wrote to Max Fisher, then-head of New Detroit, that his son-in-law had attended the training but 'left in such disgust with the Bureau for its 'biased position...in favor of the Negro people' and attempts to force trainees to 'speak in a militant manner'. The event, his father-in-law concluded, must have been 'organized with the thought of only militants and

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<sup>57</sup> Charles A. Green, Reginald Wilson and Floyd Wylie, Jr, 'Findings From Questionnaires Completed by Volunteer Speakers Related to their Training Experiences', February 1971, in author's possession: 5-6.

<sup>58</sup> 'Findings From Questionnaires Completed by Volunteer Speakers': 11.

agitators'.<sup>59</sup> Another attendee also wrote to Fisher to express her frustrations that 'a number of people, black and white...used the [training] to give vent to their own hates, prejudices and general nihilist philosophies', which meant she was forced to listen 'to unbelievably vitriolic anti-white, anti-semitic [*sic*], obscene diatribes'. She withdrew herself from the Bureau's volunteer list.<sup>60</sup> One participant in an April 1970 volunteer training session perhaps summed up these individuals' frustration best: 'Not being aware of the modus operandi, I, as a conservative type, resented being continuously put down by what I considered [to be] radicals'.<sup>61</sup>

As might be expected with such carefully screened audiences, most of those participants who wrote post-training letters to the Bureau received were, in fact, effusive in their praise and indicated that the training had been challenging, constructive and transformative. In the 1970 questionnaire, the majority of volunteers portrayed the February 1969 and April 1970 trainings as imperfect but highly effective and meaningful.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, training concerns were perennial. Volunteers continuously urged further or re-training in specific areas, including those related to content and to process (training in 'group dynamics' for instance). Many supported the Bureau's eventual move towards specialist areas for volunteers, which they felt would allow them to be more effective and confident as

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<sup>59</sup> Letter from Karl H Smith to Max Fisher, 19 February 1969, Box150, Folder 9: Spanish-American Outreach, School Decentralization, Speakers Bureau, Staff Recruitment, Summer Programs, 1968-1969, NDI Collection.

<sup>60</sup> Letter to Max Fisher from Mrs. Ruth D. Share, 17 February 1969, Box150, Folder 9: Spanish-American Outreach, School Decentralization, Speakers Bureau, Staff Recruitment, Summer Programs, 1968-1969, NDI Collection.

<sup>61</sup> 'Findings From Questionnaires Completed by Volunteer Speakers': 11.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from David to Jo-Ann Terry, 13 February 1969, Letter from Frances K. Large to John R. Pingle, 17 February 1969, Letter from Mike A. Mullett to Jo-Ann Terry, 13 February 1969, and Letter to William Schindler from Reverend Thomas J. Kerwin, 15 February 1969, Box 150, Folder 9: Spanish-American Outreach, School Decentralization, Speakers Bureau, Staff Recruitment, Summer Programs, 1968-1969, NDI Collection; and 'Findings From Questionnaires Completed by Volunteer Speakers': 9-18.

individual speakers and therefore strengthen the Bureau as a whole. Aside from this structural change, Bureau staff often observed Bureau workshops and offered feedback, staged refresher sessions on theoretical materials and practice sessions for various simulations, mailed out monthly packets of race-related readings, and maintained its lending library.<sup>63</sup> Staff and volunteers participated in conferences and adult education programmes, and they often organised them as well. The spring of 1971 witnessed a spate of events organised by Bureau staff and volunteers, for instance a public course on the ‘Social Psychology of Racism’ co-sponsored by the Bureau and led by Dr Reginald Wilson, director of the University of Detroit’s Department of Black Studies and one of the Bureau’s first black volunteers. With this and other educational efforts, the Bureau was also able to deepen its connections to other race-based educational efforts, local racial justice organisations and Detroit’s black freedom movement.<sup>64</sup>

In no small way, these efforts evidence the inclination towards the professionalisation of anti-racism education work in general and the Bureau in particular – a trend especially telling in this volunteer-led effort. They further

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<sup>63</sup> ‘Findings From Questionnaires Completed by Volunteer Speakers’: 15-18; Memo from Jo-Ann Terry to Steve Stockmeyer, 28 December 1970, Re: Speakers’ Bureau Job Descriptions; Memo from Jo-Ann Terry to Volunteer Speakers, 15 November 1969, and Memo from Jo-Ann Terry and Anne Cox to Volunteer Speakers, 15 October 1969, Box 154, Folder 25: Speakers Bureau, 1969, Correspondence, Funding, NDI Collection; Memo from Jo-Ann Terry to Staff, Re: Memos to volunteer speakers 4 March 1969, and Memo from Jo-Ann Terry to Speaker-Volunteers, Re: Viewing of Films, 13 February 1969, Box 57, Folder 34: Speakers Bureau (1969), NDI Collection; Memo from Jo-Ann Terry to Staff, Re: Movie Preview, 16 April 1969, Box 44, Folder 37: Speakers Bureau, Nov ’68-May ’69, NDI Collection; Memo from Jo-Ann Terry to Steve Stockmeyer, 28 December 1970, Re: Speakers’ Bureau Job Descriptions; and Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 1 March 2011.

<sup>64</sup> Memo from Speakers Bureau to All Staff, Re: Course Offering, 19 April 1971, Box 50, Folder 44: Speakers Bureau 1971, NDI Collection; Speakers Bureau, ‘New White Consciousness: Prerequisite for Change in America, A Theory/Practice Conference’ Pamphlet, Box 158, Folder 30: Speakers’ Bureau, 1971, Communications, NDI Collection. Letter [from Jo-Ann Terry] to Volunteer-Speakers, [24 February 1971] (quote), Box 50, Folder 39: Mailings to Volunteer Speakers; ‘The Ghetto Speaks’ Feb 24 1971, NDI Collection; and Letter from Hayward Wilson to the Black Caucus Members, 28 February 1969, Re: Chairman’s Report.

underscore a trend towards efficiency, efficacy and sophistication within the Bureau. Yet, they also insinuate important tensions at the heart of this work. The need for continual training was well understood by Bureau staff but most urgently pushed for by its volunteers, those who actually facilitated the Bureau's engagements, its workshops. This was especially true of white volunteers. Their anxieties around their own abilities suggested the uncertainties of this novel and ill-defined form of activism, while their uneasiness with conceptual material revealed the problems of pointing out others' ignorance(s) from a position of (supposed) enlightenment. If a better understanding, greater knowledge or indeed a new consciousness were needed to effectively challenge racism, how did a volunteer ever know if and when s/he was informed or knowledgeable enough to carry out education for racial justice aims? The experiences and standpoints of African Americans (and other persons of colour) meant that this work could be and often was grounded in different and longer-standing forms of knowledge for them than it was for whites, who seem to have worried that the distance between their enlightened selves (their 'new white' selves) and their ignorant pasts was never quite enough.

*PACT in its prime*

From the final months of the 1960s until the end of 1973, the Speakers Bureau of New Detroit staged thousands of free race relations training events. It still received some requests for volunteers to speak generally about New Detroit and its activities; however, more and more engagements centred on content picked up from DIM and re-fashioned to fit the Bureau's different audiences. While DIM began to gather an industrial clientele for its affirmative action and new white consciousness

consultations, the Bureau sent volunteers into elementary and high schools, churches, governmental and civic groups, and some businesses. It more assertively sought out longer-term commitments, which would allow it to make a deeper and more sustained impact. Such work often entailed the creation of additional curricula, and so a number of the Bureau's staff and volunteers began to create workshops and content material. These exercises, simulations, and workshop outlines expanded on pre-existing themes like white racism, but also explored areas, like human relations and black studies, that audiences persistently requested. Important in terms of the Bureau's long-term sustainability, together with New Detroit, it came to advance different political approaches to black freedom efforts. New Detroit's ambivalence towards black militancy was matched by the Bureau's embrace of Black Power ideals. A political schism was emerging between the Bureau and its parent organisation. As described below, the Bureau faced an astounding demand for its services in the months and years following the February 1969 training, and this demand protected the Bureau as it continued to enact a different set of racial politics from New Detroit. Its reputation only protected the Bureau for so long, though. As we shall see, when New Detroit's funding began to dry up, the Bureau and its race-based educational efforts soon felt the squeeze.

Though a rising backlash to black freedom efforts was making itself felt around Detroit and the larger nation, Detroiters were availing themselves of the Bureau's anti-racism workshops in ever-greater numbers. In 1970, the Bureau faced an average monthly demand of over 160 engagements, more than twice the demand of the previous year, and more requests were from schools, colleges, churches and community-based groups. Staff estimated that by the end of 1970 its

audiences totalled over 315,000 individuals. These numbers remained high even after the development of other anti-racism education efforts such as the Black Applied Resources Center, which black volunteers from the Bureau designed as a black-centred, black-led counterpart. The Bureau still averaged well over 100 programmes each month with total audiences of several thousand individuals.<sup>65</sup> By 1972, the Bureau and its volunteers opted to change the organisation's name to 'more adequately reflect what the Bureau was doing'. They chose the name People Acting for Change Together, or PACT, which reflected their self-perception as 'change agents' and racial justice activists.<sup>66</sup>

Though they were staging anti-racism workshops with similar content by 1970, there were important differences between PACT and DIM. To reiterate an earlier observation, PACT attracted a far more varied audience than the Mission. This was in no small part due to their diverging organisational foci and financial situation. DIM had always targeted industry in its efforts, and its clientele could easily afford the substantial fees the Mission began to demand for its labour as it lost funding from other sources, churches in particular. The services of PACT, on the other hand, remained free, in no small part because of its large volunteer corps. Still, its financial dependence upon its parent organisation was not negligible. Until it was defunded in 1974, PACT consistently sought, justified and was rewarded greater

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<sup>65</sup> Memo from Jo-Ann Terry and Anne Cox to Steve Stockmeyer, Re: Statistics on the Speakers Bureau, 30 December 1970. Programming Ledger, undated [October 1970], Box 158, Folder 30: Speakers' Bureau, 1971, Communications, NDI Collection. 'Summary of Data on PACT Activities for January-March 1972', Box 101, folder 3: LAW's PACT (1972-1973), NDI Collection; and Summary Quarterly Report, April-June 1973 Box 101, Folder 6: PACT II: Admin; Lawe, T. (1973), NDI Collection; and Jo-Ann Terry, in-person interview with the author, 23 June 2012, Minneapolis, USA.

<sup>66</sup> Untitled informational on PACT, July 1973, Box 101, Folder 3: LAW's PACT (1972-1973); Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 1 March 2011; and Noel Saleh, in-person interview with the author, 17 February 2011. For the remainder of the paper, I refer to the Speakers Bureau/PACT as PACT, even when describing events that took place prior to this name change.

funding from New Detroit. And as part of New Detroit, it was open to the whole of the geographical area. No group or institution was out of its purview. This meant that PACT attracted more racially diverse audiences.<sup>67</sup>

Whatever the nature of the requesting group, PACT staff carefully planned for the training event. A key part of their value was in their ability to create effective volunteer-requester matches. Jo-Ann Terry and other staff communicated with those making requests and, as she recalls, tried to discover 'what the [requesting] group was and what they really wanted'.<sup>68</sup> In order for her volunteers to be as prepared as possible, they needed to understand what kind of service the requesting group sought (the purpose, goal and length of a training event), as well as the demographics of the group. Staff also worked to 'probe where a [requesting] group was in terms of awareness [and] needs for content'.<sup>69</sup> In other words, it was important to gain an understanding of the group's general knowledge of race and racism. Speaker pairings were made based on that information and the availability and interests of the volunteers. A number of volunteers felt more effective with particular types of groups or began to specialise in certain sectors. White housewife Mary Campbell, for instance, recalls working mostly with church groups. She was a Christian herself, and her husband, Jim Campbell, was an ordained minister and DIM director. Noel Saleh also worked intensively with religious institutions, particularly their social action committees. Having worked for one of the Interfaith

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<sup>67</sup> 'Review of the Past Year': 6-25; Speakers Bureau, *Programs and Films Designed to End Hate* Pamphlet: 3, Box 147, Folder 21: Speakers' Bureau; Pamphlets 1974, NDI Collection; 'Active PACT Volunteers', 21 July 1972, Box 158, Folder 19: PACT, 1972-73, NDI Collection; Terry, *Action from the Boundary*: 413-18; Mary Campbell, in-person interview with the author, 8 March 2011, Detroit, USA; Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 1 March 2011; and Noel Saleh, in-person interview with the author, 17 February 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 1 March 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Memo from Jo-Ann Terry to Steve Stockmeyer, 28 December 1970, Re: Speakers' Bureau Job Descriptions, Box 150, Folder 30: Speakers' Bureau, 1971, Communications, NDI Collection.

Centers for Racial Justice, he had grown accustomed to working with faith-based social justice groups.<sup>70</sup> Its wide purview notwithstanding, PACT gained footing in particular sectors, especially primary and secondary schools, white churches, businesses and community-based groups. By the end of 1969, PACT staff had requested funding to develop curriculum 'packages' for work with specific sectors that had demonstrated an unflagging interest in PACT and which could greatly benefit from more specialised training. Such a reorganisation, Jo-Ann Terry reasoned, 'would cluster those [volunteers] who can provide information and those who wish to develop change patterns around similar issues and structures'.<sup>71</sup>

In some cases, clustering took place in relation to specific projects. This was the case in the spring and summer of 1973 when PACT worked with the city government agency, the Detroit Youth Board (DYB). The Board contacted PACT in March to request training for their camp staff who would be placed at camps receiving Title IV funding, money for childcare services for parents on welfare. The previous camping season – the summer of 1972 – was the first in which Title IV funding had gone towards youth camping on a large scale. Most of the Title IV recipients at DYB camps were black and Latino children, diversifying its camps which had previously served mostly white children and opening out the camping experience to many children who had not experienced it before. Programme coordinator Bev Davenport, who was also a PACT volunteer, indicated that the largely white staff had been underprepared for this shift, however. As a result, friction arose 'between [staff] and some of the other counselors, between children

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<sup>70</sup> 'A Research Proposal for an Evaluation of the Speakers Bureau of New Detroit, Inc': 1; Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 1 March 2011; Mary Campbell, in-person interview with the author, 8 March 2011; and Noel Saleh, in-person interview with the author, 17 February 2011.

<sup>71</sup> 'Review of the Past Year': 24-26 (26).

and children, and between all of that and the camping situation'.<sup>72</sup> This time around, the DYB was taking steps to better prepare. It made efforts to recruit more African American and Latino counsellors and counsellors-in-training, though most were still white, and Davenport expected that most had 'very little exposure or understanding of Black or Latin cultures and the dynamic of racism'. DYB thus worked out an agreement with camps to ensure that all of those with Title IV-funded children would devote at least two but up to five days of 'Human Relations-Group Process training'. Up to ten camps would require this training within a two week period in June.<sup>73</sup>

PACT's staff was enthusiastic about the opportunity, having only recently realised that the organisation needed to 'seek more ways to relate [PACT] services directly to youth'.<sup>74</sup> In communicating with the DYB, they also saw a clear need to 'make the summer camping programs more relevant to Third World campers' and hoped to help in this.<sup>75</sup> PACT's programme coordinator, Mary Fran Doyle, solicited volunteers for the project and coordinated special training for them in 'communication, team building and conflict resolution tools and how to help camp staffs [*sic*] deal with racism and cultural understanding through these tools'. Some of PACT's veteran volunteers led this.<sup>76</sup> Those who volunteered for the project were involved in three levels of training for camps. They helped to organise leadership

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<sup>72</sup> Memo from Mary Fran Doyle [to PACT volunteers] re: Detroit Youth Board Program, 26 March 1973 (quote), Box 101, Folder 4: PACT; Corr. LAW's Files (1972-73), NDI Collection; and PACT Quarterly Report, January-March 1973: 4-5, in author's possession.

<sup>73</sup> Memo from Mary Fran Doyle [to PACT volunteers] re: Detroit Youth Board Program, 26 March 1973.

<sup>74</sup> PACT Quarterly Report, January-March 1973: 4.

<sup>75</sup> Memo from Jo-Ann Terry to Carol Campbell, re: PACT's institutional targets, 10 April 1973, Box 101, Folder 4: PACT; Corr. LAW's Files (1972-73), NDI Collection. The term 'Third World' had, by this time, come into wide usage, and often designated peoples of colour both inside and outside of the US.

<sup>76</sup> Memo from Mary Fran Doyle [to PACT volunteers] re: Detroit Youth Board Program, 26 March 1973.

development workshops for a number of black and Latino high school students who were counsellors-in-training, and they offered training to fifteen camp directors that was aimed at helping them to 'better facilitate healthy pluralistic camping experiences'. PACT volunteers' most intensive efforts were their 'anti-racism and group management skills' workshops that strove to improve relations between the mostly white camp staff (15-40 staff at each camp) and their black and Latino campers and staff.<sup>77</sup> The overall programme was successful enough that a number of those involved, including several PACT volunteers, went on to create the Community Committee for Alternative Camping in the autumn of 1973. Supported by DYB and PACT, this group built on lessons learnt from the summer 1973 workshops to design and create 'A Pluralistic Camping Model' that aspired to:

[B]uild a living situation where ethnic/racial differences were appreciated, not sublimated; where people feel comfortable in self-expression, not pressured to fit an unnatural mold; and where understanding of new ideas and customs replace fears.<sup>78</sup>

While some volunteer clusters formed around specific projects like this, others developed out of high demand among certain sectors. Among these was a faction who worked largely with the mostly white faith-based institutions that contacted PACT: churches, synagogues and their social action committees. While many white churches and synagogues had long been involved in the black freedom struggle, this commitment had surged again at the end of the 1960s, particularly in the Detroit area. At the Black Economic and Development Conference that took place in Detroit in April of 1969, former SNCC executive secretary James Forman delivered his *Black Manifesto*, which essentially outlined his funding strategy for

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<sup>77</sup> Memo from Jo-Ann Terry to Carol Campbell, re: PACT's institutional targets, 10 April 1973.

<sup>78</sup> Community Committee for Alternative Camping, 'A Pluralistic Camping Model', 1974: 1, in author's possession.

revolutionary black struggle. In what historian Robin Kelley has called the ‘first systematic, fully elaborated plan for reparations to emerge from the black freedom movement’, Forman demanded \$500 million from white churches and synagogues, which he said were “part and parcel of the system of capitalism” and had, moreover, played a role in oppression, racism and colonialism.<sup>79</sup> The *Black Manifesto* soon reached national fame, and its Detroit debut had a big impact on the city. Much of the money that Forman’s appeal did attract (nowhere near the target he set out) was distributed to Detroit-based organisations like the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which in turn set up a black-operated bookstore and print shop. Many white churches and synagogues in the metropolitan area struggled to understand the *Manifesto*, debated its demands and strove to understand the connections between their faith-based communities and racial injustice in the US.<sup>80</sup>

Meanwhile, frustrated by the frequent one-off requests it received from churches and synagogues, particularly in its earliest years, PACT pushed churches and synagogues to undertake continual programming and built a collection of simulations, readings and films for use with religious groups. It also collaborated with the Interfaith Action Centers to create programming specifically on the Kerner Commission.<sup>81</sup> Slowly, religious institutions developed longer relationships with PACT. In one exceptional case, a group of parishioners from First Church Presbyterian in the affluent suburb of Birmingham began a weekly training with

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<sup>79</sup> Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*: 120-121 (120); and Dillard, *Faith in the City*: 295.

<sup>80</sup> Geschwinder, *Class, Race and Worker Insurgency*: 145-46; and Findlay, *Church People in the Struggle*: 120-122.

<sup>81</sup> Untitled PACT volunteer listing, 21 July 1972, Box 158, Folder 19: PACT, 1972-73, NDI Collection; and ‘Review of the Past Year’: 11.

PACT volunteers in the fall of 1969 that lasted over four months. In addition to ‘changing our thinking, our understanding’, as one participant put it, these congregants became active in debates over the allocation of church funds to local black groups, urging for restrictions on allocations to be lifted.<sup>82</sup>

More typical of PACT’s long-term engagements with religious groups was the Episcopal Church of the Advent in the Detroit township of West Bloomfield. Over the 1972 Lenten season, PACT volunteers ran two three-week training sessions in anti-racism for parishioners. At least one congregant was a PACT volunteer, a white Christian education teacher named Patricia Wood who had joined PACT fairly recently. She co-designed and assisted in the workshops, which were led by long-term white volunteer Bob Shepherd with the assistance of some other members of the faith-based cluster. Billed as ‘What does it Mean to be White?’, ‘Racism in courts, jobs, churches and housing’, and ‘Black history in the U.S.’, the workshop sessions reflected the three central themes in PACT’s statement of purpose.<sup>83</sup> They attracted around 65 congregants, who were also invited to screenings of several short films in PACT’s library. Some of these explored black history, such as the well-known *Black History: Lost, Strayed or Stolen*, while others like *The Friendly Game* examined the problems of ‘white liberalism’ in contemporary race relations.<sup>84</sup>

In addition, PACT provided these workshop participants and other congregants with writings that explored institutional racism and whiteness. These included a number of pamphlets published by religious institutions and designed with religious groups in mind, such as the pamphlet entitled ‘Institutional Racism in

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<sup>82</sup> Speakers Bureau, Untitled project summary, 27 February 1970: Section III pages 1-2 (2).

<sup>83</sup> Patricia G. Wood résumé, undated [1972], and Letter from Ann Poole to Mary Tiley, 5 April 1972 (quotes), Box 158, Folder 35: Speakers’ Bureau By-Laws, 1971, NDI Collection.

<sup>84</sup> *Programs and Films Designed to End Hate* Pamphlet: 10-14 (10).

American Society: A Primer' from the Christian ministry Mid-Peninsula Community House.<sup>85</sup> Written as an overview of various institutionally racist practices, it also drew connections between a lack of whites' racial cognizance and these practices and urged whites to promote racial justice in their communities. 'The prerequisite to ending institutional racism,' it posited was, 'self criticism [sic] by white society.'<sup>86</sup> A member of the church's outreach commission, Ann Poole, wrote to PACT after the training and said that there had been 'discussions of racism among members of the church as had not previously existed'. What was more, they were planning a 'White Consciousness Seminar' to be held in late April, for which twenty members had already signed up. 'It is our hope', Poole said, 'that following this seminar many will see areas in which they can act.'<sup>87</sup>

The camping and faith-based clusters exemplified some of the key strengths of grouping volunteers into certain sectors. As a volunteer designated to the faith-based cluster, Patricia Wood's own church could more easily access PACT and its many resources; the same was true for Bev Davenport and the DYB. Other institutions were similarly impacted through members who were part of PACT clusters. Such investments in both PACT and 'home' organisations and communities could also translate into the kind of continuing training that PACT felt was necessary to effect change, which Poole's letter suggests was the direction in which Church of the Advent headed. That Wood, Shepherd and others could focus on faith-based trainings allowed them to become specialists in effective designs and resources for

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<sup>85</sup> 'Institutional Racism in American Society: A Primer' (East Palo Alto, CA: Mid-Peninsula Community House, 1968). In 1969, this pamphlet was developed into Louis L. Knowles and Kenneth Prewitt (eds) *Institutional Racism in America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

<sup>86</sup> 'Institutional Racism in American Society: A Primer': 17.

<sup>87</sup> Letter from Ann Poole to Mary Tiley, 5 April 1972.

these audiences, and the same went for those volunteers involved in the camping project and later the Community Committee for Alternative Camping. Such specialisation did, however, suggest a certain degree of insularity. The presumption that volunteers would be more driven and effective in arenas in which they felt invested was not unfounded by any means, but clustering may have impeded more challenging perspectives from outsiders.

Perhaps the most successful example of a 'cluster' involved those volunteers who worked with elementary and secondary schools. One of PACT's first long-term commitments with a public school was with Robichaud High School in suburban Dearborn Heights. Though the majority of its students lived in the predominantly white suburb in which the school was embedded, Robichaud also included a sizeable African American student population. Students from nearby Inkster – a suburban anomaly in that it had a black majority – also enrolled there. During the 1967-68 school year, Robichaud had closed three times and brought in police patrols for several weeks as a result of 'student unrest and student-teacher disputes, generally with racial overtones'.<sup>88</sup> In September 1969, Robichaud asked PACT to show a documentary, *Confrontation in Color*, about an interracial encounter group, and to lead a discussion with students, teachers, administrators and community members. Stemming from this experience, the school spent the rest of its fall semester working with PACT (its staff and some volunteers) and a research centre at the University of Michigan to design and run a 'human relations course' that would

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<sup>88</sup> Untitled Speaker Bureau project information form, 27 February 1970: Section 3, page 4 (quote), Box 158, Folder 30: Speakers' Bureau, 1971, Communications, NDI Collections; and 'Review of the Past Year': 23-24.

concentrate on 'black-white conflicts within the school'.<sup>89</sup> Robichaud students indicated that this effort had made a positive impact. The vast majority said that they would recommend the programme to a friend, and most expressed a desire for PACT to stay involved in Robichaud. Their evaluations also noted that there had not been a 'riot' or other moment of hostility at the school since the programme had been implemented. As one student reflected on the school's racial tensions, 'The thing is that we used to solve it by fighting. Now we solve it by talking.'<sup>90</sup>

This engagement also greatly impacted PACT who discovered that public education was one of the areas for which it desperately needed specialised resources. Very little effective work had been done to quell the race-based conflicts that erupted in Detroit Public Schools, and virtually no programming existed to tackle racism within the nearly all-white suburban schools. As Jo-Ann Terry wrote, 'White students must live in this black and white world and the schools should be preparing them to live better in it.'<sup>91</sup> Moreover, PACT anticipated receiving future requests from schools for training. It felt that the most effective way to serve the long-term demands of schools would be to produce a comprehensive 'human relations package'. White education graduate student Pat Bidol was among those PACT volunteers who had worked with Robichaud, and now PACT hired her to reorient the human relations curriculum that was developed at Robichaud to white-majority schools. Over the summer of 1970, she put together an extensive rubric for 'teaching white awareness/anti-racism for social studies classes in white high

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<sup>89</sup> 'Review of the Past Year': 23 (quote); and *Programs and Films Designed to End Hate* Pamphlet: 21.

<sup>90</sup> 'Project Summary', 27 February 1970: Section III, page 4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*: 4.

schools' that was called 'Developing New Perspectives on Race'.<sup>92</sup> At the end of 1969 and the beginning of 1970, PACT also requested funds and a 'loaned staff person' (from Detroit Public Schools) to test this material.<sup>93</sup> School teacher Richard Weber had been with PACT since its first days (as the Speakers Bureau), and the Detroit Board of Education 'loaned' him in the fall semester of 1970. Bidol and Weber spent that term testing New Perspectives on Race (NPR) with over twenty teachers from twelve public and private schools in the Detroit metropolitan area. The following semester, the curriculum was piloted by these trained teachers, and New Perspectives on Race saw such great success that it eventually became its own organisation within New Detroit. Bidol and Weber originally co-directed NPR and were later joined by PACT volunteer and black Episcopalian minister, Reverend Arthur Williams, Jr.<sup>94</sup>

Throughout its existence, NPR worked solely in the area of education, utilising an analysis of race and racism that did not diverge greatly from PACT's. Its five-unit course was designed for teachers and administrators who were trained and

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<sup>92</sup> Request for Check/Expense Form for Pat Bidol, 6 October-8 December 1969, Box 184, Folder 15: Communications Committee; Speakers' Bureau Training Program, 1969, NDI Collection; and Memo from Dick Weber to All NDI staff Re: African-American Institute, 19 January 1971 (quote), Box 93, Folder 39: Speakers Bureau 1971, NDI Collection.

<sup>93</sup> 'Review of the Past Year': 29-30; 'Project Summary', 27 February 1970: Section IV, page 4. On racial conflicts in Detroit public schools, see Fine, *Violence in the Model City*: 434-448.

<sup>94</sup> Memo from Dick Weber to All NDI staff Re: African-American Institute, 19 January 1971; Jo-Ann Terry, 'New Detroit Speakers' Bureau 1971 Budget Request': 5, and Memo from NPR to Herman Dooha Re: Re-allocation of NPR Funds Under Line Item 1 – Salary for Richard C. Weber, 7 September, 1971, Box 158, Folder 30: Speakers' Bureau, 1971, Communications, NDI Collection; PACT, 'RACISM: What Does It Mean?' Brochure, Box 94, Folder 9: PACT 1972, NDI Collection; and Noel Saleh, in-person interview with the author, 17 February 2011.

then would deploy the full course with their students.<sup>95</sup> Billed as a social studies course, it touched on:

- White awareness – focusing on the historical, psychological & sociological aspects of whiteness in America
- Prejudice and Racism – focusing on the differences between prejudice and racism
- Institutional Racism – focusing on the forms of institutional racism
- Black America – exposing students to the fundamental realities of Black American History and contemporary culture
- New White America – exploring what it means to be an anti-racist white in a white racist society.<sup>96</sup>

To PACT and DIM's attention to institutional racism, historical and current black realities, and new white consciousness, NPR added a foundational unit that explored whiteness as a racial reality and identity of its own, as well as another unit that used the distinction between prejudice and racism to raise questions about power relations. Geared towards white students – who would be 'expose[d]' to realities of U.S. blacks and explore how they could be 'anti-racist white[s]' – NPR's primary human relations package was particularly useful to Detroit's white-majority suburbs.<sup>97</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Despite continually producing at least 100 workshops each month and expanding its programmatic purview, PACT was effectively pushed out of New Detroit towards the end of 1973. In October, New Detroit's Board of Trustees held a meeting at which it

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<sup>95</sup> 'Orientation to New Detroit, Inc.'s New Social Studies Course: "Developing New Perspectives on Race", 16 September 1970, Box 9, Folder 39: Speakers Bureau 1971; and Noel Saleh, in-person interview with the author, 17 February 2011.

<sup>96</sup> Memo from JT to NDI Staff Re: Training Events, 17 October, 1970, Box 93, Folder 39: Speakers Bureau 1971, NDI Collection.

<sup>97</sup> Pat Bidol, with Richard C. Weber (eds) 'Developing New Perspectives on Race: A New, Innovative, Multi-Media Social Studies Curriculum in the area of Race Relations for the Secondary Level', 1970, Folder: New Perspectives on Race, DIM Collection.

set its priorities for the following year; anti-racism efforts did not even rank. It approved a budget that offered no funding for New Perspectives on Race for the second half of 1974 and no money for PACT for the whole of the year. While a national economic downturn brought decreased funding to the organisation, exactly why PACT would not be funded was not made clear to Jo-Ann Terry or other PACT staff. This was, however, a time of great change at New Detroit. Political science scholars have demonstrated that Coleman Young's 1973 election as Detroit's first black mayor ushered a close alignment of New Detroit with 'the city's political establishment', which meant that 'New Detroit lost, to some extent, its initial focus and potential as a voice for the community'.<sup>98</sup> Though Coleman would only win the mayoral election the month following that fateful board meeting, the decision not to continue to fund PACT suggests that Coleman may have hastened movement away from community-based efforts that was already underway. Changes within the local political landscape may have spurred shifts in New Detroit's priorities. Heather Ann Thompson argues that the 'liberal coalition politics' which New Detroit had embodied during its earliest years had been forcefully challenged between 1969 and 1972, by which time 'serious alternatives to postwar liberalism [had] emerged'. These competing alternatives – mounted by conservative whites and interracial groups of radicals – focused race-based efforts around the issues of police brutality and school de-segregation, turning Detroit into a political 'war zone'.<sup>99</sup> In such a climate, PACT's labours could easily be seen by many as frivolous. Racial progress in

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<sup>98</sup> Hula, Jackson and Orr, 'Urban Politics, Governing Nonprofits, and Community Revitalization': 474.

<sup>99</sup> Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*: 102. See also her, 'Rethinking the Politics of White Flight in the Postwar City: Detroit 1945-1980' *Journal of Urban History* 25(2), 1999: 163-198.

Detroit's schools and police force could be understood in terms of decreased unrest or complaints or greater integration, but how could one measure 'man's mind'?

PACT did not exactly go quietly. It was defunded despite some members' resistance and New Detroit's own statement the previous year reconfirming its 'commitment to support basic institutional change aimed at combating racism' and claiming that *more* emphasis would be put towards this goal in 1974.<sup>100</sup> PACT's clients and supporters wrote letters to New Detroit all month expressing their gratitude for its services and regret that it was being de-funded.<sup>101</sup> It was to no avail. On 24 October, New Detroit's vice president, Walter Douglas, wrote to Jo-Ann Terry, rejecting her request for short-term emergency funding that could tied over PACT for a few months while they strategised their next move. He stated:

The 1974 New Detroit priorities do not include anti-racism activity among the nine items specified. Although the budget does include an amount for addressing institutional racism, it is understood that this will be expended in some way different from our past activity. We must conclude, therefore, that financial support for PACT will end on December 31 of this year.... I want to emphasize that the end of financial support in no way implies the end of concern for PACT and its future on the part of New Detroit.<sup>102</sup>

The decision to defund PACT and NPR, despite the stunning success of both, was sudden but not surprising to PACT staff. In reality, PACT and NPR operated somewhat autonomously from New Detroit. While the New Detroit's higher management and board had not been unsupportive of PACT and NPR over the years, Terry recalls that they also did not necessarily understand or pay much

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<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Letter from Reginald Wilson to Lawrence Doss, 8 October 1973, Box 101, Folder 6: PACT II: Admin; Lawe, T. 1973, NDI Collection; Jo-Ann Terry, Summary Quarterly Report, April-June 1973, Box 101, Folder 6: PACT II: Admin; Lawe, T. 1973, NDI Collection; and Jo-Ann Terry, in-person interview with the author, 23 June 2012.

<sup>101</sup> Letter from Reginald Wilson to Lawrence Doss, 8 October 1973; Memo from PACT Staff to All Volunteers, Re: Future of PACT, 10 October 1973, Box 101, Folder 6: PACT II: Admin; Lawe, T. 1973, NDI Collection.

<sup>102</sup> Letter from Walter E. Douglas to Jo-Ann Terry, 24 October 1973, Box 101, Folder 6: PACT II: Admin; Lawe, T. 1973, NDI Collection.

attention to them either. This relative independence turned out to be a double-edged sword. It allowed the smaller organisations to assume radical frameworks and positions without much interference, but it also meant that, regardless of their efficacy and repute, the powers that be invested little in the organisations in terms of political capital.<sup>103</sup>

The decision set in motion a flurry of hurried planning on the part of the staff and many volunteers, who scrambled to put together a plan of action. Worse though was the disheartening effect of the board's decision, which had demonstrated to PACT that 'our efforts at anti-racism work were not supported in the ways we had long worked for'.<sup>104</sup> While panicked and somewhat demoralised, some in PACT nevertheless felt relieved at the thought of no longer being connected to New Detroit. Jo-Ann Terry understood that, at least in the very short term, PACT would have to clamp down on expenditures and become even more adept at sharing resources with other racial justice organisations. However, as she and other PACT staff said to volunteers, 'We have long and often lamented the constraints of boards and bureaucratic structures; the endless paper work defending our existence and statistically substantiating that we are working out there by the minute.' This development, they felt, 'may not be all bad'.<sup>105</sup> Ironically, it was one board member's relationship with and faith in PACT that gave it new life. Reginald Wilson had been on the board and strongly expressed his objection to the defunding of PACT, but as the president of Wayne County Community College, he sought and got approval for

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<sup>103</sup> Jo-Ann Terry, phone interview with the author, 1 March 2011.

<sup>104</sup> Memo from Jo-Ann Terry and Reginald Wilson to PACT Volunteers, Re: Update on what's happening, 10 December 1973, Box 101, Folder 6: PACT II: Admin; Lawe, T. 1973, NDI Collection.

<sup>105</sup> Memo from PACT Staff to All Volunteers, Re: Future of PACT, 10 October 1973.

PACT to relocate there. Not overly optimistic about the transition, Jo-Ann Terry and Wilson wrote to volunteers that 1974 would be 'a year of change and reorientation for PACT. Some things will be different because we have a different home.' In the end, though, Wayne County Community College housed PACT for the rest of the decade.<sup>106</sup>

PACT's history at New Detroit highlights the sheer breadth of interest in anti-racism education at the end of the 1960 and the beginning of the 1970s. Its efforts hit a nerve. To the hundreds of thousands of individuals who participated in its workshops, PACT provided something different and crucial. As with DIM, it challenged dominant (white) understandings of the US's racial landscape and problems, but its wide-ranging work demonstrated how far racial consciousness (including a 'new white consciousness') could reach. Whether participants came to a PACT workshop through their synagogue, their community council or their 10<sup>th</sup> grade social studies class, they learned how race had shaped these communities and institutions in large part through its hold over 'man's mind', through the knowledge upon which women and men acted in the world. For white Detroiters in particular, it worked to make visible the seemingly invisible influence of knowledge and education in matters of race.

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

## SECTION 2: The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation/Rights Movements

In the spring of 2008, Chude Pam Allen, a former participant in the women's liberation movement, wrote an article that reflected on the ways in which white feminists were often vilified by their contemporaries as 'racist'. Condemnations of the feminist movement as racist not only allowed other social movements to escape having to examine sexism, Allen said, but also prevented an understanding and practice of racial justice for women's liberationists. Allen wrote:

Those early attacks on women's liberation as being white, and therefore racist, contributed to a polarization, an either/or paradigm. You could be for Black liberation or Women's Liberation, but you couldn't be for both. That's what our critics said. It's not what we said.<sup>1</sup>

Having been a part of Southern black freedom struggles, Allen said that she and other white feminists 'wanted a movement that would stand against both racism and sexism' and for 'white women to be able to join with women of color whenever we could'. However, Allen also acknowledged that 'white supremacy and class bias' was certainly present in those many feminist groups that were 'made up primarily of more privileged, college-educated white women'.<sup>2</sup>

Within women's liberation movement histories, practices of racial injustice and inequality have received a good deal of attention, and some historians of the gay liberation/rights movement have also recognised many similar patterns within that movement. In the latter, there was a long history of racial discrimination in social establishments, including a widespread practice of 'carding' – requiring gay men and lesbians of colour to produce several forms of identification as a way of discouraging

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<sup>1</sup> Chude Pam Allen, 'Confronting the -isms' *Against the Current* [online] 133 (Mar-Apr 2008) <<http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/node/1398>> [accessed 21 February 2013].

<sup>2</sup> Allen, 'Confronting the -isms'.

their patronage.<sup>3</sup> Within both movements – and in those organisations that represented overlaps between them – tokenising and other practices of marginalisation often occurred. For instance, historians Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons have written about the Southern California Women for Understanding, a ‘sorority-like’ and elitist lesbian organisation out of Los Angeles that tried to offset the charges of racism that their elitism garnered by putting ‘high-achieving lesbians of color in prominent positions’ in their organisation.<sup>4</sup> The city’s presumably more racially inclusive Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center pulled a similar move in the 1980s; one board member, Terry Gock, quit after being there just a year because he grew tired of being the sole Asian member of the board.<sup>5</sup> Gock had also been a part of LA’s Stonewall Democratic Club, Faderman and Timmons wrote, but he had ‘stopped attending...because of the “extra work” required of the only Asian person at most meetings’.<sup>6</sup>

While masquerading as inclusivity, tokenising actually highlighted the ways in which the feminist and gay liberation movements could often exclude peoples of colour and develop goals that centred on the needs of middle-class whites. All too often, the white majorities in these movements claimed to engage issues that *all* women or lesbians and gay people faced, when in actuality the issues primarily reflected white, middle-class concerns. This white-centred thinking was not usually intentional, but it was part of an ethnocentric logic, a racist cognition, that

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<sup>3</sup> Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*: 119-131; Thorpe, “A House Where Queers Go”: 48-52; and Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*: 236.

<sup>4</sup> Faderman and Timmons, *Gay L.A.*: 243.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 292.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 292-93.

constructed whiteness as the norm.<sup>7</sup> With regard to reproductive rights, for instance, despite the vigour that characterised reproductive freedom efforts in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many white women's liberationists did not make sterilisation abuse – an issue that disproportionately affected poor women and women of colour – a key issue.<sup>8</sup> Historian Jennifer Nelson has noted that until the mid-1970s 'for most white women involved in women's liberation, reproductive freedom meant access to safe legal abortion and contraception', not necessarily freedom from sterilisation abuse.<sup>9</sup>

Within the gay liberation/rights movement, the strong emphasis on 'coming out' also belied a particular set of raced and classed priorities. The 'master identity' upon which the gay liberation movement developed, historian Elizabeth Armstrong has argued, was centred on a white, male, middle-class gay perspective which held a 'belief in the psychological and political benefits of coming out' that was so strong and 'unquestioned' as to be 'almost sacred'.<sup>10</sup> This made it very difficult, Armstrong wrote, for gay men and lesbians of colour to vocalise the difficulties they had in coming out, particularly of 'losing the protection of an ethnic/racial community and attempting to fit into an unfamiliar, hostile white world'.<sup>11</sup> In a 1981 essay, Vickie Mays addressed the hardships that frequently befell black lesbians when they decided to come out. She stressed the difference between a detachment from black community and kin, which one relied upon for racial support, and the detachment

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<sup>7</sup> On the construction of whiteness as the unseen norm, see Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). On whiteness, cognition, and ignorance, see Charles Mills, 'White Ignorance' in Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (eds) *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (Syracuse: State University of New York Press, 2007): 13-38.

<sup>8</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Women Race and Class*, 1983 edition (New York: First Vintage Books, 1983): 204-221; and Nelson, *Women of Color*: 1-3.

<sup>9</sup> Nelson, *Women of Color*: 1.

<sup>10</sup> Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*: 136-137.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*: 137.

from one's white community and family, which one might re-build from a network of fellow, white homosexuals. She also asserted that, at the hands of black men, black lesbians suffered a 'qualitatively different abuse from the abuse the Euro-American lesbian suffers at the hands of white or Black men'.<sup>12</sup>

Though the white-centeredness of these movements was not enacted in the same ways or to the same material effects in both movements, its existence deeply rent these movements along racial lines and invoked frustrations from straight, gay and lesbian peoples of colour. In a 2008 article, Allen wrote that attacks on the women's liberation movement, however, 'made our ability to understand and confront racism within the Women's Liberation Movement that much more difficult'. What white feminists needed, Allen reflected, was in fact 'help' to better 'understand how to identify and then struggle' with issues of race and class injustice.<sup>13</sup> A white lawyer and activist from New York, Mitchell Karp, articulated a similar sentiment with regard to the gay rights movement. As a long-term member of Black and White Men Together, a multiracial organisation for gay men, Karp had reached out to other whites in the movement in a 1986 article in which he urged them to not collapse differences in the pursuit of LGBT aims or coalition-building. He sought to help whites see themselves as 'symbols' and not just 'individuals', to help them

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<sup>12</sup> Vickie M. Mays, 'I Hear Voices But See No Faces: Reflections on Racism and Woman-Identified Relationships of Afro-American Women' reprinted in Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan (eds) *We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1997): 476-480, (478). On issues for gay and lesbian Chicano/as in coming out, see Tomas Almaguer, 'Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior', reprinted in Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale and David M. Halperin (eds) *The Gay and Lesbian Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993): 255-273.

<sup>13</sup> Allen, 'Confronting the -Isms'.

understand their historical and contemporary relationships to systems of class and race domination.<sup>14</sup>

Both Karp and Allen implied that white activists' very understanding, or knowledge, of race and class injustices needed to be addressed. For them and their organisations, anti-racism workshops or seminars became central pursuits. This section treats race-based educational efforts within the women's liberation and gay liberation/rights movements by exploring three different case studies. The first two relate to white feminists who put racial justice at the centre of their efforts in feminist free schools during the early 1970s. The third examines a multiracial LGBT organisation whose national governing body created an anti-racism workshop manual that local chapters put to use. All three case studies attest to how white activists addressed racial injustices and racialised ignorance within their own movements, and yet had a sense of the effects of these efforts on the larger US society. Moreover, they all demonstrate the significance of Black Power ideology within other, largely-white social movements.

Free schools were generated out of desire to provide alternatives to institutionalised education and the many inequities and social ills it perpetuated. Those involved in establishing such alternatives, as radical education activist Jonathan Kozol has written, were 'above all, [invested] in the metaphor and symbolism of the *school itself* as something other than a walled and formidable bunker of archaic data and depersonalized people in the midst of living truth'.<sup>15</sup> For many activists who established them, free schools prefigured the kinds of education

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<sup>14</sup> Mitchell Karp, 'The Challenge of Symbolism', *Review of Law & Social Change* 14, 1986: 943-947.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Kozol, *Free Schools* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972): 13.

they wanted to see in US society. They entailed the pedagogical philosophies, organisational structures and course offerings that activists felt should be present within educational establishments.<sup>16</sup> Further, as testified in the histories of feminist free schools explored here – the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Women’s School and Breakaway in San Francisco – free schools often ‘inspired’ academic disciplines, including women’s studies.<sup>17</sup> Fittingly, the founding of the Women’s School can be traced back to the feminist take-over of a disused Harvard Building on International Women’s Day in 1971. A group of white anti-imperialist feminists – who remained connected to the radical, anti-imperialist left – became influential in the school’s earliest years. Espousing a set of politics rarely recounted in scholarly histories of the movement, these women developed classes that aimed to put race and class at the centre of gender analysis and feminist activism. They led classes on the histories of women in the US, on African Americans, and on social movements as a means to challenge white feminists’ racialised ignorance around the connectivity – as opposed to simply the similarities or parallels – of systems of domination.

While the chapter on the Women’s School investigates a particular set of feminist politics on the East Coast, the following chapter considers the endeavours of one white feminist at a women’s liberation free school on the West Coast. A pioneer within the women’s liberation movement, Chude Pam Allen’s story exemplifies the ways in which some white women consistently made attempts to craft an anti-racist feminist politics within this largely white movement from its

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<sup>16</sup> Say Burgin, ‘Coarse Offerings: Lessons from the Cambridge Women’s School for Today’s Radical Education Alternatives’ *Graduate Journal of Social Sciences* 8(2) 2011: 21-40 (25-29).

<sup>17</sup> Marilyn J. Boxer, ‘For and About Women: The Theory and Practice of Women’s Studies’ *Signs* 7(3), 1982: 661-695 (663).

earliest days. Her involvement in black freedom efforts, particularly her time as a Freedom School teacher during the Mississippi Freedom Summer, point to the myriad racial justice experiences that shaped whites' continuing engagement with racial justice, including the class she led on 'Institutional Racism' at Breakaway. For Allen, addressing white feminists' race-based ignorance was most important because women's liberation was doomed to reproduce racism unless such ignorance was thoroughly and consistently addressed. Thus, in looking closely at the Women's School, the antecedents, contours and implications of particular sets of anti-racist feminist politics can be recovered and elucidated, and in studying the life of Chude Pam Allen, the particular motivations and experiences of individuals who propound anti-racist feminism may be ascertained.

For both Allen and the anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School, it was important to distinguish between their race-based classes and consciousness-raising groups. As we shall see, they felt that the latter could not allow for the kinds of race-based knowledge that white women's liberationists needed, particularly around the histories and contemporary realities of peoples of colour. Interestingly, however, the group addressed in the final chapter, Black and White Men Together (BWMT), took inspiration from consciousness-raising methods as it began to design and stage its workshops. Established in 1980 as an organisation for mutually attracted black and white gay men, BWMT hit a nerve, and chapters in major cities all over the US quickly appeared. Many of these made it explicit that racism within both the gay rights movement and the larger society needed to be challenged. During the early 1980s, both the national leadership and numerous individual chapters mounted racial justice efforts, including the establishment of workshops

that asked participants to interrogate their own personal experiences and identities as they worked to counter racialised ignorance and injustices. Examining this national association and the workshopping efforts of one particular chapter illuminates how, by the early 1980s, anti-racism workshops were a frequently used weapon in the arsenal of anti-racism activism. Furthermore, the mushrooming of workshop materials meant that the workshops of groups like BWMT occupied a liminal space – a position in between the emerging arena of professional anti-racism training and earlier grassroots efforts to create a more racially aware white body politic.

In 2008, Allen recalled an incident that confirmed to her ‘that the charge of racism is still used to discount (rather than analyse) the Women’s Liberation Movement’.<sup>18</sup> She had been talking to a recent college graduate, a white woman who told Allen that she had majored in women’s studies:

“I was in the early women’s liberation movement,” I responded. “Oh, that was racist,” she answered, dismissing me — and the Women’s Liberation Movement — with a wave of her hand. I felt as if I’d been slapped in the face.<sup>19</sup>

For Allen, this experience was painful and disrespectful, not because racism had not been present in feminist organising, but because it erased the histories of women like herself who had always been at pains to create a white feminist body politic that acted out of an awareness of race and racism in the US. In light of Allen’s work (and workshops), the Women’s School and BWMT, this experience also relates the hazards of collapsing the complexity of race relations and racial justice politics within histories of the women’s and gay liberation movements. Together, the three chapters in this section suggest that racism – its manifestations and effects both in

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<sup>18</sup> Allen, ‘Confronting the –isms’.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

and outside of social movements – was a central concern to white women’s liberationists and white gay liberation/rights activists. Indeed, the racial landscape of these movements should be central concerns within historical interpretations of them. They also show that anti-racism workshops presented one key way in which the women’s liberation and gay liberation/rights movements were influenced by and connected to on-going struggles for black freedom, and they reveal that these movements were not disconnected from racial justice activism. As such, these case studies are posited as correctives to historiographies that have ignored the significance of racial justice politics and praxis to many white activists of the social movements examined in this section.

**Chapter 3**

**‘What we tried to do was open white women’s eyes’:  
The Women’s School and White Anti-Imperialist Feminism, 1971-1975**

*The relationship of the women’s movement to the black struggle is not an abstract question of morals or principles. The failure to eradicate racism has crippled nearly every radical movement in Amerika’s past, including feminism. Right here in the women’s center, we have hardly begun to discuss, much less resolve, the questions of our relationship to the black liberation movement in Boston, to our black sisters (very few of whom come to the center) and to the nearby black community (even though that community played a role in our getting the [women’s] center in the first place).*

*The white male capitalists who run this country have been able to maintain their position, against the interests of all of us, by dividing us against each other... To put it another way, we must understand how sexism, racism, and imperialism are connected.*

The Women’s School coordinating committee, March 1972<sup>1</sup>

When it issued its first registration call in the spring of 1972, the Cambridge Women’s School attracted more than 300 women from all over the Boston area for its thirteen volunteer-led classes. The droves of enrollees amazed the Women’s School organisers, who had only begun planning the alternative education project the previous autumn. They were heartened that so many women – from as far out of town as Quincy and Wellesley – were interested in furthering (or even beginning) their feminist education. Yet to a number of the Women’s School founders, the very composition of this student body signalled what was problematic about the larger women’s liberation movement. Like the school’s organisers, most of the students were white and middle-class, in their late teens or early- to mid-twenties, had at least some college education, and came of age politically through work in the antiwar,

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Please come to a meeting of the Women’s School, March 3’, 1973 [1972]: 3 and 1, Box, 1, Folder 40: History of Women’s School: Background Information, 197?, Women’s School Records, 1971-1992, M23, Archives and Special Collection, Northeastern University, Boston. (Hereafter, WSR.)

black freedom and New Left movements. That the school had not been able to attract more working-class white women, older women or women of colour, particularly black women, disappointed but did not surprise Women's School activists. It was, in fact, a problem of the larger movement itself, which had thus far failed to establish a working 'relationship to the black liberation movement'. This worried many of these white women's liberationists because, in the first place, they understood that racism among progressive activists had 'crippled nearly every radical movement' in US history. Moreover, the Women's School – and the Women's Center that housed it for many years – owed its existence in large part to the ties forged with a local working-class and (mostly) black community. The school and the larger movement out of which it emerged, however, had clearly not spoken to the needs of this community, very few of whom attended the school that year.<sup>2</sup>

Feminists at the Women's School would continue to grapple with these discomforts. For the next twenty years, until its closing in 1992, the school's persistent inability to appeal to working-class white women and women of colour would haunt its largely white organising collectives. Though it became the longest-running school of its kind in the US, the Cambridge-based Women's School has rarely been considered in histories of the women's liberation movement. Those few scholars and activists who have written about it have highlighted the school's roots in socialist-feminism. They have often insisted that the anti-capitalist and anti-racist platforms of this particular kind of feminism evidence the school's attempts to include a diverse range of women. Socialist-feminists undoubtedly played crucial

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<sup>2</sup> 'Bunch article', undated: 2-3, Box 1, Folder 39: History of Women's School, Article and Correspondence, 1977, 1978, WSR; and 'Please come to a meeting of the Women's School, March 3'.

roles in the founding and on-going organisation of the Women's School. Still, another group of women – and indeed another kind of feminism – proved particularly important in the development of a meaningful racial justice politic during the school's earliest years. For many of these particular white feminists, what both the feminist movement and the school needed was an overarching anti-imperialist framework.<sup>3</sup>

Much like the Women's School itself, white anti-imperialist feminists have not been well documented in women's liberation movement histories, despite the fact that by 1968 anti-imperialist analyses had engulfed the New Left (who had in turn been influenced by the political analysis coming out of the Black Power movement).<sup>4</sup> A number of white, anti-imperialist feminists were involved in the Women's School's earliest years and had a huge impact on the shape of the school – its pedagogical philosophy, the kinds of classes it staged, and the political analyses developed in those classes. Armed with a critical understanding of the connections between global and domestic race and class relations, they attempted to intervene in what they saw as the dangerous political analysis taken on by many feminists. Without a critical framework that understood 'how sexism, racism, and imperialism are connected', they argued that the white women's movement would end up perpetuating racism in the US and elsewhere. A particular pedagogical project for anti-imperialist feminists during the Women's School's earliest years, then, was to address an ignorance they perceived on the part of white feminists regarding the

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<sup>3</sup> Burgin, 'Coarse Offerings': 21-40; Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 99-105; and Winifred Breines, 'What's Love Got to Do with It? White Women, Black Women, and Feminism in the Movement Years' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 27(4), 2002: 1095-1133 (1100-1102).

<sup>4</sup> The work of Becky Thompson is an important exception to the general oversight of anti-imperialist feminism. See her volume, *A Promise and a Way of Life*: 115-227; and 'Multiracial Feminism': 336-361. On the rising importance of anti-imperialism, see for instance Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*: 1-37.

reality of structural racism and the interplay of racism, sexism and class inequality in the making of the US empire.

*The founding of the Cambridge Women's Center*

Amongst historians of the women's liberation movement, Boston has long been recognised as a hub of feminist activity. A range of feminist groups organised within the greater Boston area (including Cambridge) from the late 1960s through the mid-1980s. The city's largely white feminist groups epitomised trends within the wider white-dominated women's liberation movement. The oft-cited radical feminist group Cell 16, which started in 1968, was known for its advocacy of self-defence and separation from men. A vanguard group among feminist-separatists, Cell 16 published one of the earliest white feminist periodicals, *No More Fun and Games*, and incorporated an anti-imperialist, socialist stance. The year 1969 witnessed the establishment of a Boston chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Reflecting the national organisation's agenda, Boston NOW spent the 1970s organising for abortion rights and a Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment (which was eventually ratified), among other endeavours. As a national women's health movement began to take form, Boston women founded the not-for-profit Women's Community Health Center. Moreover, as Daphne Spain has written, 'Women in Boston were among the first in the nation to recognize and act on the need for [intimate partner violence] shelters'.<sup>5</sup> In the early 1970s, Boston feminists founded one of the nation's first shelters, RESPOND (Responsible Escape for Somerville

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<sup>5</sup> Daphne Spain, 'Women's Rights and Gendered Spaces in 1970s Boston' *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 32(1), 2011: 151-178 (161).

People through Options and New Development), which supported women from Somerville and the surrounding areas.<sup>6</sup>

Feminists of colour and multiracial feminist groups also organised powerfully in Boston. They established groups and projects that represented the concerns of women of colour at the national level, some of which (for instance welfare reform) were not addressed by many white women's liberation groups. A multiracial group of women with ties to the civil rights movement founded Mothers for Adequate Welfare in 1965, just as the welfare rights movement – which was made up largely of poor women of colour – began to spread. In the mid-1970s, activists in the South End founded Casa Myrna Vasquez, a shelter for those escaping intimate partner violence that principally served Latina women in the area.<sup>7</sup> Boston-based black feminists also broke new ground in feminist thinking. Perhaps the most well-known US black feminist organisation, the Combahee River Collective, was founded towards the end of 1974; its 1977 *Combahee River Collective Statement* became a foundational text in intersectional feminist theory. Many Combahee activists – including sisters Barbara and Beverly Smith – came out of the Boston chapter of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), which some of them had helped to found in early 1974. As Kimberly Springer has written, the Smith sisters and others 'determined that the NBFO was headed in a reformist direction that would do little for

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<sup>6</sup> Spain, 'Women's Rights and Gendered Spaces': 156-164; Roxanne Dunbar, 'Outlaw Woman: Chapters from a Feminist Memoir-in-Progress' in Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow (eds), *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998): 90-123; and Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*: 158-164.

<sup>7</sup> Premilla Nadasen, 'Expanding the Boundaries of the Women's Movement: Black Feminism and the Struggle for Welfare Rights' *Feminist Studies* 28(2), 2002: 270-301 (276); and Spain, 'Women's Rights and Gendered Spaces': 164. On Casa Myrna, which still exists, see their website: [www.casamyrna.org](http://www.casamyrna.org).

the poor and working classes, most of whom were black'.<sup>8</sup> Some activists from Combahee also became part of the multi-racial group of feminist activists that started Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press in Boston around 1980-81.<sup>9</sup>

Amidst this diversity of feminist energy, former women's liberationists have remembered Boston as a unique place for white women's liberationists at the end of the 1960s, many of whom were torn between competing feminist factions. While some white feminists identified with either camp of what has become known as the feminist/politico split, many did not. Cell 16 founder Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz has recalled, 'the women in our group concluded that [this] split was a false dichotomy and that a third alternative was necessary. We argued that a women-centered, anti-imperialist movement with the goal of socialism was necessary and possible.'<sup>10</sup>

White women's liberationist and New Left activist Laura Tillem remembers seeking out such a group. She had been living in New York and working for the New Left-turned-feminist publication, the *Rat*, but left the city because she felt feminist groups there were 'so sectarian: you either had to be like a feminist or an anti-imperialist [politico], and [she and her friends] weren't interested in dividing [movement activity] like that'.<sup>11</sup> She moved to Boston because she heard that its feminist scene was not as bitterly split. In particular, she had heard about the city's socialist feminist group, Bread and Roses Women's Liberation, and re-located to join it.

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<sup>8</sup> Springer, *Living for the Revolution*: 59.

<sup>9</sup> Springer, *Living for the Revolution*: 56-60; Barbara Smith "Feisty Characters" and "Other People's Causes": Memoirs of White Racism and U.S. Feminism' in Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow (eds) *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998): 477-481; and Barbara Smith, 'A Press of our Own: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 10(3), 1989: 11-13 (11).

<sup>10</sup> Dunbar, 'Outlaw Woman': 110.

<sup>11</sup> Laura Tillem, phone interview with the author, 14 August 2011, Wichita, USA, and Leeds, UK.

The ease with which Tillem and others moved to Boston to join Bread and Roses demonstrates the class and race privilege that characterised the group. Composed largely of highly educated, white middle-class women who were active in the New Left, Bread and Roses, got its start in 1969 after Cell 16 and other groups hosted a 'Female Liberation Conference' at Emmanuel College. Unlike members of Cell 16, Bread and Roses members 'struggled to define themselves in relation to the mixed [gendered] or male Left'.<sup>12</sup> Many of their activities, such as draft counselling and Black Panther support, overlapped with New Left organising. However, these socialist feminists also put energy into several woman-focused issues such as reproductive rights and violence against women.<sup>13</sup>

A number of Bread and Roses members were also heavily involved in the takeover of a disused Harvard building on International Women's Day in March of 1971 – the act that marks the beginning of the Women's School's story. The history of this takeover and the subsequent founding of the Cambridge Women's Center are intertwined with the history of the Women's School. In 1970, Bread and Roses members had been looking into founding a women's centre for Boston-area feminists, who often had to rent places in order to hold events. Members of the search committee envisioned a place for women to hold their events, meetings and classes, and it was hoped that such a site could centralise the feminist activity

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<sup>12</sup> Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 84.

<sup>13</sup> Meredith Tax, "For the People Hear Us Singing, 'Bread and Roses! Bread and Roses!'" in Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow (eds) *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998): 311-323 (312-315); Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 98-116; and Breines, 'What's Love Got to Do with It?': 1100-1102.

happening all over the city.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, revolutionary excitement was ratcheting up across the country in the fall of 1970 after the Black Panther Party's Revolutionary Constitutional Convention, which brought together activists from a range of liberation struggles all over the country to re-write the US constitution. A number of Boston feminists had attended the convention, and they returned to Boston, as former Bread and Roses member Marla Erlie remembers, looking eagerly ahead to International Women's Day in 1971 and thinking 'we need [to do] something dramatic'.<sup>15</sup> Over the next many months, a group of women met secretly to plan a takeover of a little-used Harvard building that they hoped would come to be their women's centre. This group included Erlie and other Bread and Roses members as well as Laura Whitehorn, a member of Weatherman (later known as the Weather Underground), a white, anti-imperialist organisation founded at the end of the 1960s. These women, about twenty in number, told no other feminists in the area about their plans to take over the building – not until the day of the action.<sup>16</sup>

On March 6, 1971, following a rally and lively march from the Massachusetts State House, occupation planners led the 150-strong march to 888 Memorial Drive. Then and there, they pronounced the beginning of the occupation and declared 888 Memorial Drive the new women's centre of Cambridge. Laura Whitehorn read out a

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<sup>14</sup> Susan Rivo (director) *Left On Pearl* (888 Women's History Project) Fine Cut edition, in author's possession ; Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 101; and Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011, New York, USA, and Leeds, UK.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Rivo, *Left On Pearl*; and George Katsiaficas, 'Organization and Movement: The Case of the Black Panther Party and the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention of 1970', in Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (eds) *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2001): 141-155.

<sup>16</sup> Rivo, *Left On Pearl*; and Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011. *The Harvard Crimson* reported that only eight women had been involved with the occupation planning. See Katherine L. Day and the *Crimson* Staff, 'Women's Group Seizes Harvard Building' *The Harvard Crimson*, 8 March 1971, <<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1971/3/8/womens-group-seizes-harvard-building-brbrbdemand/>> [accessed 21 August 2011].

statement that expressed the feminists' 'solidarity with the people of Vietnam, and especially the women of Vietnam'.<sup>17</sup> In this statement, the take-over organisers also made four demands, which, a few days later, were reduced to three and re-issued by other women who had become involved in the occupation<sup>18</sup>:

1. That Harvard build low-income housing on this...site, in accordance with the demands of the Riverside community.
2. That Harvard provide a women's center to serve the needs of women in the Boston area.
3. That Harvard give us full use of this building, with full facilities (heat, plumbing, electricity, etc.), until it is necessary to tear it down in order to break ground for the Riverside low-income housing.<sup>19</sup>

Though it is unclear why it was not a part of this set of demands, the demand that had been left out of this statement was that 'Harvard cease its war research'.<sup>20</sup>

Altogether, these demands evidence that the occupation had morphed into something larger than a struggle to establish a women's centre. These demands reflected a desire on the part of this group of women's liberationists to effect change outside of their own activist communities.

The occupation's organisers knew about on-going efforts to secure affordable housing by Riverside residents, who had been concerned about Harvard's encroachment on their neighbourhood for some time. Organisers had met with a representative of a local tenants' association prior to the action.<sup>21</sup> Still, a number of Riverside residents – most of whom had not been informed of the occupation beforehand – expressed scepticism and frustration with the action. One local resident characterised the occupation, which consisted largely of young white

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<sup>17</sup> Laura Whitehorn, email interview with the author, 26 March 2013. Rivo, *Left On Pearl*.

<sup>18</sup> Laura Whitehorn, email interview with the author, 26 March 2013; and Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Rivo, *Left On Pearl*; Katherine L. Day and the *Crimson* Staff, 'Women's Group Seizes Harvard Building'.

<sup>20</sup> Laura Whitehorn, email interview with the author, 26 March 2013.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

middle-class women, as ‘a very typical example of white middle-class cooptation’, and he asserted that the occupiers were ‘taking the very real issue of housing for poor blacks, and using it in an exploitative manner for their own purposes’.<sup>22</sup> Today, Whitehorn admits the organisers could have done much more to reach out to Riverside residents prior to the occupation. She recalls that the organisers’ meeting with the representative of the tenants’ council in Riverside was ‘fairly perfunctory – in other words, we made sure to let them know, but did not talk to enough, nor make enough of an effort to do so’ out of fear of jeopardising the occupation.<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, some local residents, including Sandra Graham who later became a Massachusetts state Senator, did work with the women occupying the building, and some residents enjoyed the free childcare offered by them. Moreover, the demands made clear the fact that Harvard played a key role in exploiting the labour of both the local, working-class community and women throughout Boston.<sup>24</sup>

Over the ten days of the occupation, women from Bread and Roses, Gay Women’s Liberation, Weatherman and other groups in the city held the large two-story building and made it a hub of activity in the local Riverside neighbourhood. Men were not allowed to enter the building. The women who stayed at or visited 888 Memorial Drive held classes on healthcare and karate, sang and danced, provided childcare for Riverside youngsters, supported lesbians who wanted to come out, and

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in J. Anthony Day, ‘Graham Denies Allegiance’, *The Harvard Crimson*, 10 March 1971, <<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1971/3/10/graham-denies-alliance-psaundra-graham-president/>> [accessed 27 September 2011]. See also Spain, ‘Women’s Rights and Gendered Spaces in 1970s Boston’: 165-166.

<sup>23</sup> Laura Whitehorn, email interview with the author, 25 March 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Rivo, *Left On Pearl*.

offered plenty of meeting space for feminist and lesbian groups.<sup>25</sup> In short, the women occupying the building began to create their own women's centre.

On March 16<sup>th</sup> amidst mounting fears of a police raid, the occupation ended. A few of the activists had begun negotiations with high-powered figures at Radcliffe, which was at that time a women's college connected to Harvard. Though not everyone agreed with the idea of negotiating with Radcliffe or with ending the occupation, and though both of these decisions were hotly debated over a few days, the negotiations resulted in Susan Lyman, the chair of Radcliffe's Board of Trustees, donating \$5000 towards the purchase of a building for a new women's centre. This money and its loose connections to Harvard prompted many of the occupiers to declare the occupation a victory, despite the fact that Harvard made no concessions to the demand for low-income housing in Riverside. In the months that followed, several women who had been part of the occupation searched for a site for the women's centre, and late in 1971 they bought a large old house at 46 Pleasant Street in Cambridge, only half a mile from 888 Memorial Drive. Still operating out of the same location today, the Cambridge Women's Center is the longest-running women's centre in the US.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 100-103; Rivo, *Left On Pearl*; Katherine L. Day and the *Crimson Staff*, 'Women's Group Seizes Harvard Building'; and Spain, 'Women's Rights and Gendered Spaces in 1970s Boston': 165-166.

<sup>26</sup> Rivo, *Left On Pearl*; and Spain, 'Women's Rights and Gendered Spaces in 1970s Boston': 165-167. See also the Cambridge Women's Center website: [www.cambridgewomenscenter.org](http://www.cambridgewomenscenter.org).

*Founding the Women's School: anti-imperialism, feminism, and anti-imperialist feminism*

The feminist energy and enthusiasm fostered during the Harvard occupation ensured that many participants took ownership of the action. Laura Whitehorn – whom other activists have remembered as being central in the planning of the occupation<sup>27</sup> – warmly shares how this sense of ownership shifted women's narratives of their own role in the occupation:

[When some women] talk about the action, [it is] as if they had thought of it and planned it from the beginning. And I remember exactly what happened and it wasn't like that. But as soon as it jumped off and people got involved, it became everyone's action. And to me that's the most successful thing you can have is something that everyone feels they own.<sup>28</sup>

This collective sense of ownership is also reflected in the few histories written about the occupation and the subsequent founding of the Women's Center and Women's School. Scholar Winifred Breines, for instance, who participated in the occupation, has highlighted the role of her former group, Bread and Roses, and socialist feminists in general. She has characterised the Harvard occupation as Bread and Roses' 'most dramatic action'.<sup>29</sup> Though Bread and Roses members undoubtedly made important contributions, the positioning of them as central in the history of the takeover and the later founding of the women's centre and school has eclipsed the involvement of other feminists and, consequently, of other feminisms. In particular, accounts of anti-imperialist feminists have been all-but absent, despite the fact that they would come to shape the Women's School in significant ways.

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<sup>27</sup> See various interviews in Rivo, *Left On Pearl*.

<sup>28</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 101-103 (101). See also Breines, 'What's Love Got to Do with It?': 1104-1105. Spain's 'Women's Rights and Gendered Spaces in 1970s Boston', centres Bread and Roses to a lesser extent yet still highlights the group (see 164-167).

At the time, Boston-area feminists used the huge amount of enthusiasm and momentum created by the occupation not only to found the Cambridge Women's Centre but to plan and establish the Women's School. Its organisers have recounted several reasons driving their desire to open such a school. In the mid- to late-1970s organisers within the Women's School recalled that their predecessors had been looking for ways to channel 'the energy and enthusiasm that many women [in Boston] continued to have' after the demise of leading feminist groups in the city, such as Bread and Roses which had disbanded in 1971.<sup>30</sup> The founders themselves also emphasised their desire to provide women's liberationists with a political education so that they might begin to plan the direction of the movement. Laura Tillem had been amongst the group of about 20 feminists who began to plan for the school. She remembers that, among other topics, the founders wanted to study Rosa Luxemburg, Marxism and the Middle East, but that 'it was hard for women to learn this stuff in the context of...male dominated study groups' in the New Left. The Women's School, then, was envisioned as working in 'complementary' fashion, Tillem says, with the Women's Center's consciousness-raising (CR) groups; the former could further the 'political education skills' of women who had been talking through personal politics in the latter.<sup>31</sup>

More than an instrument with which to plan future directions for the movement, though, the school itself was a future direction. Its earliest organisers called attention to the need they perceived in the whole of the women's liberation

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<sup>30</sup> 'Bunch article': 2; and Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 152.

<sup>31</sup> 'The Women's School – what we are about' flyer, undated, Box 1, Folder 40: History of Women's School: Background Information, 197?, WSR. See also 'Bunch article': 2.

movement to move beyond the by-then ubiquitous CR groups. Leading up to the opening of the school in 1972, its founders wrote:

The process of coming together in consciousness-raising groups, of seeing ourselves and each other in a new light and of working together on programs to meet our own needs – all these are extremely important steps toward regaining control of our lives. But we have to go beyond this. We also have to start thinking about how we are going to overthrow our oppressors and how we are going to build a new society.<sup>32</sup>

Women's School activists clearly saw value in CR groups. Yet it is equally apparent that they felt some anxiety around them as a central initiative of the wider white women's liberation movement. While CR groups and similar projects ostensibly met the needs of women ('our own needs'), the founders argued that women gaining a degree of personal control over their lives did not lead to the end of patriarchy or related systems of oppression. In pressing to move 'beyond' CR activities, these activists signalled their intention to use the school and education as a way of examining political struggles that had not been central to the women's liberation movement thus far. The education carried out at the School would thus constitute both a new form of feminist activism in Boston and a means to reinvigorate, or even remake, the movement.

Because Boston became a place where white women's liberationists bridged the radical feminist/politico split, a number of Women's School founders and early organisers had extensive connections to, or remained involved with, the New Left, which had by that time roughly splintered into two ideological camps. Of the two primary 'camps' of the 'North American revolutionary left' identified by historian Michael Staudenmaier, several of the women involved with the school fell into the camp that 'emphasized questions of class and devoted themselves to workplace

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<sup>32</sup> 'Please Come to a Meeting of the Women's School, Saturday, March 3' article, undated [1973].

organizing’.<sup>33</sup> This included the socialist feminists that former Bread and Roses member Winifred Breines has written about – who, for instance, wrote position papers demanding free childcare, domestic help and affordable housing for women so that they did not have to choose between raising families and entering the paid workforce. Also in this camp was Laura Tillem, who had, before she moved to Boston, tried to find ‘some small industrial working class town’ in the Northeast ‘in order to do community organizing among working-class people’.<sup>34</sup> Though her activism more clearly fit the socialist, ‘workplace organising’ mould, Tillem and others of her ilk were also supportive of groups that exemplified the other camp: ‘those who prioritised anti-imperialist struggles both within the United States and around the world’.<sup>35</sup> She and some other white socialist-feminists were sympathetic to Weatherman, for instance. Around the time she moved to Boston, in fact, women who had been underground with Weatherman were beginning to re-surface, and a number of them, she recalls, were moving to Boston. Firmly entrenched in anti-imperialist work, Laura Whitehorn had considerable experience with groups like Weatherman, and she says she ‘never stopped being a part of the anti-imperialist movement’.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Michael Staudenmaier, ‘Unorthodox Leninism: Workplace Organizing and Anti-Imperialist Solidarity in the Sojourner Truth Organization’ in Dan Berger (ed.) *The Hidden 1970s Histories of Radicalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010): 155-174 (155). Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011. Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 23 August 2011, New York, USA and Leeds, UK. See also Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 79-116.

<sup>34</sup> Laura Tillem, phone interview with the author, 14 August 2011; and Laura Tillem, email interview with the author, 20 March 2013. Tillem notes, ‘The reason my friends and I decided against [participating in community organizing efforts] was there already were radical collectives organizing in the most interesting towns, like Springfield and Fall River’. (Laura Tillem, email interview with the author, 20 March 2013.)

<sup>35</sup> Michael Staudenmaier, ‘Unorthodox Leninism’: 155.

<sup>36</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011.

Whitehorn and other like-minded feminists sought to bring the anti-imperialist analysis they gained from their organising within the mixed-gendered left into the white women's movement. These were women drawn to the women's movement and keen to organise with women, but their unwillingness to yield their anti-imperialist framework earned them the ire of many white women's liberationists in Boston. Liz Horowitz, who moved to Boston around 1973 in order to engage in the women's movement, first became involved with the Cambridge Women's Center. There, she says, 'the Women's School people were always kind of castigated and talked about as...those women who aren't really into women's issues'. Over time and after having met some activists from the school, Horowitz says she realised 'those are my people'. Though they were outsiders in the mainstream women's movement, anti-imperialist feminists in Boston banded together, and the Women's School helped to facilitate this. Horowitz recalls that in the early 1970s the Women's School 'tended to attract most of the women who were anti-imperialist, and as time went on, I think they...became much more focused on putting women's issues in the context of the general anti-imperialist movement'.<sup>37</sup>

The anti-imperialist framework used by Whitehorn, Horowitz and others came from their involvement with the white mixed-gendered left, but it had originally been honed in black freedom struggles in the US and anti-colonial struggles from many parts of the world. During a historical moment that political scientist George Katsiaficas has termed a 'world-historical movement' – from 1967-70 – anti-imperialist activists emphasised the role of empire-making (and empire-sustaining)

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<sup>37</sup> Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 23 August 2011. See also Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author 27 July 2011; and Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 29 December 2011, New York, USA, and Des Moines, USA.

on the part of the US in the creation of both domestic and global systems of class and race inequalities, and they worked to challenge this imperialist system.<sup>38</sup> The Black Panther Party for Self Defense and other advocates of Black Power were particularly influential in the creation of an anti-imperialist left in the US. They took inspiration from prominent (mostly) male figures on the global stage such as Che Guevara, Frantz Fanon and Mao Tse Tung and made connections between the exploitation of peoples of colour in the US and the expansion of US wealth and power around the world. The Black Panthers, for instance, demanded that ‘all black men...be exempt from military service’. ‘We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America’, they declared in their party platform.<sup>39</sup> Black Power advocates helped to shape the meaning of struggles of ‘national liberation’ for peoples of colour in the US – African Americans, American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Chicana/os and other groups. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton’s 1967 classic, *Black Power*, altered the left’s understanding of the status of peoples of colour in the US by detailing the ‘colonial status’ of US blacks. As discussed further below, black activists in the US (like those of the early twentieth century Pan-African movement) had a long history of viewing themselves as colonised, and by the end of the 1960s, as with the 1920s, these ideas proved highly influential. A key difference in the latter instance had to do with the impact of decolonisation and the subsequent ‘creation’ of the ‘Third World’. With the publication of *Black Power* in 1968, many

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<sup>38</sup> George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1987). See also Michael L. Clemons and Charles E. Jones, ‘Global Solidarity: The Black Panther Party in the International Arena’ *New Political Science* 21(2), 1999: 177-203.

<sup>39</sup> Black Panther Party, ‘Black Panther Party Platform’, *The Black Panther*, October 1966, reprinted in Phillip S. Foner (ed.), *The Black Panthers Speak*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1995): 2-4 (3).

came to see African American communities and other communities of colour within the US as “internal colonies”, as well as ‘citizens of the Third World’. In this way, links between Third World nations and peoples of colour in the US were forged. Many within the latter group began to identify as ‘Third World’ citizens, and the US government was identified as the common enemy of the Third World and its allies.<sup>40</sup> As Panther co-founder Huey P. Newton wrote:

If the White racist imperialists in America continue to wage war against all people of color throughout the world and also wage a civil war against Blacks here in America, it will be economically impossible for him to survive. We must develop a strategy that will make his war campaigns non-profitable.<sup>41</sup>

For the Panthers, this strategy included the development of community-based programmes that would meet ‘demands for basic human survival’, such as free breakfast and clothing programs, as well as educational efforts aimed at teaching African Americans ‘the strategic method of resisting the power structure’.<sup>42</sup> They also helped to carve out roles for white leftists in anti-imperialist struggles. The Panthers and similar groups like the Puerto Rican group the Young Lords and the Chicano/a group the Brown Berets had begun to emphasise racially separate organising. Even though they could not join the Panthers, white radicals could and should react ‘when something happens in the black colony’, as Newton put it. ‘Every time that we’re attacked in our community there should be a reaction by the white

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<sup>40</sup> Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power*: 6; and Berger, *Outlaws in America*: 6. On the centrality of Black Power activists, and the Black Panther Party in particular, to anti-imperialist activism, see the ‘Introduction’ in this work.

<sup>41</sup> Huey P. Newton, ‘Functional Definition of Politics’, *The Black Panther*, 17 January 1969, reprinted in Phillip S. Foner (ed.) *The Black Panthers Speak*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1995): 45-47 (46).

<sup>42</sup> Quote from Huey P. Newton, ‘The Correct Handling of a Revolution’ *The Black Panther*, 18 May 1968, reprinted in Phillip S. Foner (ed.) *The Black Panthers Speak*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1995): 41-44 (42). See also from this collection, Bobby Seale ‘The Ten-Point Platform and Program of the Black Panther Party’, *The Black Panther*, 18 October 1967: 78-80; and Berger, *Outlaws in America*: 11.

revolutionaries; they should respond by defending us, by attacking part of the security force', Newton urged.<sup>43</sup>

For their part, white leftists invested in this anti-imperialist framework to varying degrees. Within the largely white mixed-gendered movement – most notably, in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) – some whites adopted the Panthers' analysis in full. Although they were often sympathetic to central tenets of the Panthers' anti-imperialist framework and certainly did not disagree with the contemporary significance of Third World liberation movements, others in SDS, particularly those with leanings towards socialist organising, advanced the view that black communities in the US represented more of a 'superexploited' working class than an 'internal colony'. This faction promoted the view that liberation from racial injustice would occur once class revolution had taken place.<sup>44</sup> Whether they lay on one or another side of the divide or somewhere in between, a number of white-led anti-imperialist groups and projects in the 1970s carried out support work for the Panthers and Puerto Rican and Chicano/a groups, as well as solidarity efforts with Iranian students, South African anti-apartheid activists and other leftists on the global stage.<sup>45</sup>

Within the faction of SDS that assumed the Panther's anti-imperialist approach in full, some went on to form Weatherman, the group with which Laura Whitehorn had strong connections and which found support amongst many other

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<sup>43</sup> Huey P. Newton, 'Huey Newton Talks to the Movement about the Black Panther Party, Cultural Nationalism, SNCC, Liberals and White Revolutionaries', *The Movement* pamphlet, 1968, reprinted in Phillip S. Foner (ed.) *The Black Panthers Speak*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1995): 50-66 (55).

<sup>44</sup> Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*: 12-13.

<sup>45</sup> Berger, *Outlaws in America*; Staudenmaier, 'Unorthodox Leninism': 163-169; and Barber, *A Hard Rain Fell*: 145-225.

Women's School founders. Weatherman took very seriously the Black Power imperative that whites organise against racism within white communities. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, their purpose was most famously affirmed by member Bernadine Dohrn who said, 'The best thing that we can be doing for ourselves, as well as for the Panthers and the revolutionary black liberation struggle, is to build a fucking white revolutionary movement.'<sup>46</sup> Weatherman split from other factions within SDS over questions about the role of whites in mounting such resistance, in the development of 'revolutionary change', and this occurred at a time – the late 1960s – when the US government was intensifying its repression of radical activists and groups. Weatherman and supporters believed that, in the past, working-class whites had failed to side with peoples of colour against capitalism because white privilege provided the former with economic, political and social dominance over the latter. What was deemed necessary for white activists, then, particularly at a time when the FBI's Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) was working to kill, imprison and in other ways silence activists of colour, was to 'work in parallel organizations alongside Black militant organisations domestically and with liberation movements in Third World countries to bring down white supremacy' by using militant tactics, such as carrying out the targeted bombing of buildings.<sup>47</sup> As former Weatherman member and current political prisoner David Gilbert has said, it was hoped that this white militant 'front' would divert government attention away from the many groups of colour, like the Panthers, trying to organise in urban areas across the country.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*: 13.

<sup>47</sup> Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*: 90-97 (93). Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 23 August 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*: 95. See also Berger, *Outlaws of America*. On FBI repression and COINTELPRO, see Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers*:

One key difference, then, between socialist and anti-imperialist feminists was in the tactics they used to try to produce revolutionary change and to demonstrate their solidarity with Third World liberation struggles (especially those of black activists in the US). Aside from participating in Panther events and demonstrating for the release of imprisoned black activists, anti-imperialist feminists supported the idea that violent tactics were necessary to create a revolution.<sup>49</sup> Some of them, in fact, had already participated in violent actions. Whitehorn's involvement with Weatherman included the period when that group planted some of its first bombs, for instance during the 'Days of Rage' in Chicago in the summer of 1969. For Weatherman members like Whitehorn and for many other anti-imperialist feminists, there was a moral logic behind the strategic use of violence. Laura Whitehorn says:

The basic morality of Weather and [some other leftist groups] was this: If you live in a country whose government is breaking international law and causing irreparable harm to oppressed people, you have a responsibility to try to stop that. To fail to act in some active manner because of respect for the laws of an illegal regime, we reasoned, is in itself immoral. We also asked, why is violence OK when used excessively by the police or the military, but somehow off limits for the victims of that state violence? We were moved by the war of national independence waged by the people of Vietnam, and saw that tactics derive their character from the goals for which they are being used. We also saw a huge divide between what violence meant to white, middle-class people and what it meant, a daily reality, in the lives of poor and oppressed people in the U.S.<sup>50</sup>

Weatherman argued that violence was being enacted upon peoples of colour around the world by the US military, which was in constant breach of international laws, and at home by the police and COINTELPRO. So to reject violent tactics and insist on

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*Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1990); and Churchill and Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 21 December 2011, New York, USA and Lincoln, USA.

<sup>50</sup> Joe Trapea, 'Laura Whitehorn Interview' *Baltimore City Paper* [online], 24 Feb. 2010, <<http://www2.citypaper.com/story.asp?id=19825>> [accessed on 2 January 2012].

abiding by these same laws in order to end this violence was not only 'immoral', it was to deny that violence was already a 'daily reality' for a great many US citizens. Violence was thus seen as a necessary tool by white activists, who believed they could use it to create the 'front' David Gilbert and others envisioned. Though not all anti-imperialist feminists carried out bombings or participated in other violent means, most were at least supportive of these tactics or saw them as unfortunate but necessary.<sup>51</sup> Whitehorn, for one, carried her belief in the efficacy of violent tactics for many years beyond her time at the Women's School. In 1999, she was freed from prison after having served over 14 years for participating in 'a series of property bombings...to protest police brutality and U.S. foreign policy' with an anti-imperialist group in the early 1980s.<sup>52</sup>

The difference in tactics actually indicated a deeper ideological difference between socialist and anti-imperialist feminists: the extent to which they prioritised the leadership of Third World peoples (including and especially African Americans) and the relationship between the feminist movement and Third World liberation struggles within and outside the US. As indicated above, many socialist feminists belonged to the camp that mostly tried to organise the working-class. They did, however, as Winifred Breines has demonstrated, support groups like the Panthers, for instance, by partaking in solidarity demonstrations for incarcerated Party members. Such work, Breines writes, often proved frustrating for many feminists. Aside from the oft-cited sexism of black nationalists – assertions that are now challenged by historians and former activists – white feminists also frequently ended

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<sup>51</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 21 December 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Susie Day, 'Cruel But Not Unusual: The Punishment of Women in U.S. Prisons' *Monthly Review* [online] 53(1), July-August 2001, <<http://monthlyreview.org/2001/07/01/cruel-but-not-unusual>> [accessed 25 August 2011].

up working mainly with male leadership and not women in the Panthers. Moreover, Breines has pointed out, they had to contend with hostility towards lesbians. Of course these problems were also endemic to the white left, and in both cases, many white feminists wound up breaking ties with specific groups or the overall mixed-gendered left.<sup>53</sup>

By contrast, anti-imperialist feminists emphasised the need to follow nationalist revolutionary groups over socialist organising. To these ends, anti-imperialist feminists argued, the women's liberation movement should prioritise solidarity efforts with nationalist groups in the US. These feminists did not believe that revolution in the US would be brought about through socialism, but this was certainly not to say that class was insignificant to their political framework. As Liz Horowitz recalls:

I don't think myself, or anyone else thought class unimportant, or of a secondary nature to the Black Liberation struggle. We were actually all very united and clear that, as anti-imperialists, the goal was revolution and the destruction of capitalism, as the only way racism, women's oppression, and class inequality could begin to be structurally addressed.... We were socialists, (still are socialists), but felt that socialism in the way that Marx discussed did not fully take into account the way history, racism, and the nature of class had developed in the US.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, not unhopeful for a socialist system in the US, they nonetheless felt that revolutions around the world were being brought about through national liberation struggles, such as those mounted by blacks, Puerto Ricans, and other racially

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<sup>53</sup> Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 109-113; and Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 23 August 2011. On sexism and homophobia within the black left, see Springer, *Living for the Revolution*: 26-28; and Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharris, and Komozi Woodard, 'Introduction', in Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharris, and Komozi Woodard (eds) *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009): 1-24 (9-10).

<sup>54</sup> Liz Horowitz, email interview with the author, 25 March 2013.

oppressed groups in the US and around the world. As Laura Whitehorn puts it, anti-imperialists hoped that, within the US, there would be:

[A] socialist revolution led by Black, Puerto Rican, Mexicano and Native American forces, joined – we hoped! – by white students, workers and women – anyone who would see their future being brighter by a world governed by collectivity, not competition, and by solidarity, not racism and sexism. In short: We believed that the international proletariat – the “workers of the world” – had become the Third World, due to the development of imperialism from capitalism and colonialism.<sup>55</sup>

These ideas were, of course, a carry-over from activism in SDS groups and the Weatherman and, as such, anti-imperialist feminists focused on black nationalist efforts.<sup>56</sup> As Horowitz recalls:

The point that [anti-imperialist feminists] were always trying to get across was that it was black people’s struggle in the United States that was leading everything else and *that*, for us, had to be the centre of the struggle, and I think we judged everything in relationship to that – whether you supported the black struggle or you didn’t and were willing to make that the central focus of your work or not.<sup>57</sup>

Critical of such thinking, Winifred Breines has written that such politics constituted ‘a kind of “third-worldism”’ that ‘verged on the sycophantic and/or the adulation of third-world revolutionaries’.<sup>58</sup> Anti-imperialists felt that, in closely following the ideology and strategy of Black Power groups, they were simply acting in ways that held them accountable to the visions set out by the most marginalised and oppressed groups in the country. However, such reasoning also had its flaws: first, it essentialised peoples of colour, especially African Americans, as anti-imperialist; and second, it presumed that struggles against the US as an empire

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<sup>55</sup> Laura Whitehorn, email interview with the author, 25 March 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 23 August 2011; Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 21 December 2011; and Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011. See also Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*; and Berger, *Outlaws in America*.

<sup>57</sup> Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 23 August 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 111.

would or should be led by peoples within the US. A number of staunch anti-imperialists from the period have written of their failures and oversights, and though many do not regret or disavow their analysis and actions, David Gilbert, for one, recognises that the central problems of anti-imperialist organising were sexism and racism. The latter reared its ugly head through ‘the arrogance of total unaccountability [e.g. proclaiming themselves revolutionary leaders] or the interventionism of picking third world leadership’ (i.e. selecting which nationalist groups to support over others).<sup>59</sup> Both practices reflected a continued paternalism by white activists who acknowledged that revolution should be led by peoples of colour. Moreover, in asserting the primacy of race in anti-imperialism, anti-imperialist feminists inadvertently re-centred frameworks that many feminists throughout the 1970s and 1980s rallied against, including many feminists of colour who asserted the need to understand the mutually sustaining nature of oppressions.<sup>60</sup>

Anti-imperialist feminists had high hopes for challenging both racism and sexism in the white left, but for those at the Women’s School, the emphasis was on understanding how both systems of oppression connected to imperialism. In particular, they sought to educate white women’s liberationists on racism. Learning about ‘the roots of white racism’, Women’s School activists wrote, was ‘vitaly important... [because] racism is one of the main props of the imperialist system’. They argued further that white women’s liberationists needed a better understanding of racism because ‘sexism and racism reinforce each other and are closely linked in their origins’. The linkages among these systems – imperialism, racism and sexism

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<sup>59</sup> David Gilbert, Laura Whitehorn, and Marilyn Buck, *Enemies of the State: An Interview with Anti-Imperialist Political Prisoners* (Montreal & Toronto: Abraham Guillen Press & Arm the Spirit, 2002): 39. See also in this volume, Laura Whitehorn’s remarks on pages 8-9.

<sup>60</sup> See for instance, The Combahee River Collective, ‘The Combahee River Collective Statement’.

– could be learnt through the historical study of black and other Third World peoples who constituted ‘the leading force’ in the contemporary anti-imperialist struggle.<sup>61</sup>

For anti-imperialist feminists in Boston, the Women’s School was thus another way – other than attending Panther events and demonstrations, or organising within the mixed-gendered left – for white radicals to continue racial justice organising in a manner that aligned with the political framework developed by Black Power activists. They attempted to challenge white women radicals themselves, using classes at the Women’s School – particularly those on women’s history and black history – to shift the consciousness of both individual women and the white women’s movement as a whole. In this way, the Women’s School served as a site in which anti-imperialist politics – alongside other sets of politics, particularly socialist feminist – were enacted. In the eyes of Whitehorn, Horowitz, and other anti-imperialist feminists at the school, the focus within the white women’s movement had been too heavily on women’s oppression, which more often than not implied the oppression of white women. This was exemplified in part through (anti-imperialist feminists’ perception of) the inability of the white women’s liberation movement ‘to go beyond’ CR groups, but it could also be seen in the analysis of sexism articulated by some white feminists. For instance, in a widely distributed pamphlet from 1968, white women’s liberationist Beverly Jones wrote, ‘Women must resist pressure to enter into movement activities other than their own. There cannot be real restructuring of this society until the relationships between the sexes are

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<sup>61</sup> ‘1972 Winter/Spring Class Schedule’.

restructured.<sup>62</sup> To anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School, such an analysis wrongly prioritised gender oppression in the creation of a complex and multi-faceted system of power relations. As Whitehorn says:

[W]e still had those particular anti-imperialist politics. What we tried to do was to open white women's eyes. The women who would be moved to come to a women's school were already people who were interested in social justice on some level. And what we tried to do was basically organise them to understand the fundamental nature of US imperialism, the fundamental nature of women's oppression, as rooted in capitalism...and which was based in white supremacy.<sup>63</sup>

By educating white women about the connections between these various systems – imperialism, capitalism, white supremacy, and sexism – Women's School organisers sought to challenge the white women's movement's singular focus on patriarchy and contribute to the making of a movement whose political scope and analysis were more comprehensive. As Becky Thompson has observed, politics that held 'sexism [as] the primary, or most destructive, oppression' did not 'sit well with many militant women of color and white women'.<sup>64</sup> Though socialist feminists were concerned with addressing racism and classism, white anti-imperialist feminists like those involved with the Women's School were especially uncomfortable with the idea that sexism was the 'primary oppression'.

Beyond proving too narrow in scope, Women's School founders felt that prioritising patriarchy and sexism within the white women's liberation movement was problematic because it perpetuated racism. Some white feminists at the Women's School sought to acknowledge the ways in which racism had debilitated major US social movements in the past. School founders also stressed the importance of

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<sup>62</sup> Beverly Jones and Judith Butler, 'Toward a Female Liberation Movement' reprinted in Barbara A. Crow (ed.) *Radical Feminism: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000): 37.

<sup>63</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011. See also 'Please Come to a Meeting of the Women's School'.

<sup>64</sup> Thompson, 'Multiracial Feminism': 342.

remembering racist practices and ideologies at work in the nineteenth century white women's movement, since they understood how those aspects of the women's movement had furthered racial inequalities. Liz Horowitz recalls that she and others believed:

'[I]f racism was not the central focus within building a women's movement, then once again it would just be a women's movement that basically wound up playing a negative role....[We] saw our role as organising the women's movement to deal fundamentally with racism because if it didn't, the women's movement was kind of destined to repeat a lot of the same errors that the women's movement throughout history had, which was to kind of leave black people and racism by the wayside and get more for white women.'<sup>65</sup>

Behind these fears was the realization that the larger white women's movement had already created an agenda and priorities that ignored the needs of women of colour and perhaps even further entrenched existing inequalities between white women and peoples of colour. Calls for 'sisterhood', which more often than not served to obscure differences among women, also obscured the reality that whiteness (and middle-class-ness) shaped the movement's agenda. So did a one-track focus on patriarchy/sexism. Some of the school's first organisers hoped to use the school to redirect the women's liberation movement towards a greater commitment to anti-imperialism. Reflecting on earlier struggles for (white) women's rights proved a useful way to demonstrate the necessity of maintaining a racial justice framework in the fight against sexism.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, in prioritising gender-based oppression over other forms of domination, the school's earliest activists believed the movement foreclosed a great

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<sup>65</sup> Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 29 December 2011.

<sup>66</sup> On calls for 'sisterhood', see Robin Morgan (ed.) *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Random House, 1970). On these calls as obscuring differences, see Springer, *Living for the Revolution*: 28-37; and Susan Stanford, 'Beyond White and Other: Relationality and Narratives of Race in Feminist Discourse' *Signs* 21(1), 1995: 1-49 (8-9).

deal of inter-movement alliance building. From the beginning, organisers recognised its racial and class constitution. They wrote that it seemed the majority of the first-term students were young (in their late teens and early twenties), white, and ‘with at least some degree of college “education”’.<sup>67</sup> In making this awareness explicit, organisers were able to challenge the race- and class-based priorities and practices that operated within the white women’s movement, including its narrow focus on (white) women’s oppression. In their original 1972 statement, released upon the school’s founding, activists wrote:

We believe the women’s liberation movement, as an independent movement, will help to shape and to lead the struggle for revolution in this country, but we also think the revolution will be made by all oppressed groups of people. As women, we need to understand both the basis and the limits of our interests in common with other oppressed groups (poor and working people of both sexes, black and third world people in the U.S. and abroad). This is why the school includes courses that do not deal exclusively with women.<sup>68</sup>

The white, middle-class women’s movement must connect with other oppressed groups and revolutionary struggles, school founders asserted, because they saw that the movement could not help create deep political transformations in the US (and elsewhere) without these connections. Despite the many connections that these particular women and others in Boston had with antiwar, New Left, and anti-imperialist activity, they believed that the overarching goals and projects that constituted the women’s liberation movement still did not sufficiently link women’s liberation to other freedom struggles.

Thus, many of the Women’s School’s founders and its earliest organisers sought to simultaneously shift the direction in which the white women’s liberation movement seemed to be heading and, as Laura Whitehorn recalled, to ‘generate an

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<sup>67</sup> ‘Please Come to a Meeting of the Women’s School’: 5.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*: 2.

anti-imperialist politics for women's liberation'. Anti-imperialist feminists also hoped that, in the classes, women would begin to 'become more analytical and more able to articulate and create strategies' that would in turn transform the 'mixed-[gendered] white anti-imperialist movement' that had so disenchanted many white women's liberationists. For these women, both the white women's liberation movement and the 'mixed movement' (the white left) stood to be improved through 'an anti-imperialist politics for women's liberation'.<sup>69</sup> A radical school for women could aid in both objectives by serving to both educate and reeducate women (mostly white women, as it turned out) about race, class, and nation-building politics in the US and elsewhere and the ways in which interconnections amongst these politics sustained racially unjust institutions and nations. With such knowledge, anti-imperialist feminists hoped, the white women's movement in the US could connect widely with black freedom and anti-imperialist struggles and help prompt the transformation of oppressive systems at local, national and global levels.

It is important to recognise that these white anti-imperialist feminists had ideological ties to earlier anti-colonial and anti-imperialism activism among women in the US, particularly black women earlier in the century. A long tradition of nationalist and Pan-Africanist efforts from the 1910s through the 1950s helped to shape the nationalist turn characterised by Black Power in the 1960s, and within these earlier efforts black women made important feminist contributions. From the 1910s through the 1930s, Margaret Murray Washington and other women in the National Association of Colored Women and the International Council of Women of the Darker Races deepened the anti-imperialist critiques of the burgeoning Pan-African

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<sup>69</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011.

movement by centring black women's experiences under imperialism and white supremacy.<sup>70</sup> In the 1940s and 1950s, the writings of Trinidad-born Communist and civil rights activist Claudia Jones developed an 'anti-imperialist, black feminist politics' and delved into the ways in which imperialism 'acted upon black women at local levels' at the same time that it served broader (national and international) purposes.<sup>71</sup> Also around that time, women like Shirley Graham Du Bois, Vicki Garvin and others made important contributions to Pan-Africanism; both spent time on the African continent during the 1950s and 1960s and witnessed a host of anti-colonial uprisings. Particularly significant among these struggles for independence, as far as the US black left was concerned, was Ghana and its first president, Kwame Nkrumah. As prominent black activists flocked to Accra to see this post-imperialist nation for themselves, Shirley Graham Du Bois was serving as a central figure in Nkrumah's government. Yet even before her move to Ghana, she co-founded a group called Sojourners for Truth that worked out of New York trying to 'inspire leadership of women of color across the globe [by] challenging barriers of race and nation alike'.<sup>72</sup> The work of black lesbian playwright Lorraine Hansberry, particularly her play *Les Blancs*, came out of her engagement with this same 'anti-imperialist black Left' of the 1950s and 1960s that was busy debating the meaning of African liberation struggles for blacks in Africa and the diaspora. As Cheryl Higashida has

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<sup>70</sup> Kate Dossett, *Bridging Race Divides: Black Nationalism, Feminism, and Integration in the United States, 1896-1935* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2008): 24-33.

<sup>71</sup> Carole Boyce Davies, 'Claudia Jones, Anti-Imperialist, Black Feminist Politics' in Carole Boyce Davies, Meredith Gadsby, Charles F. Patterson, and Henrietta Williams (eds) *Decolonizing the Academy: African Diaspora Studies* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003): 45-60 (50).

<sup>72</sup> Gerald Horne and Margaret Stevens, 'Shirley Graham Du Bois: Portrait of the Black Woman Artist as a Revolutionary', in Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharris, and Komozi Woodard (eds) *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009): 95-114 (104-105). On Vicki Garvin, see from the same edited collection Dayo F. Gore, 'From Communist Politics to Black Power: The Visionary Politics and Transnational Solidarities of Victoria "Vicki" Ama Garvin': 71-94.

argued, Hansberry's work shows that, not only were black feminists mobilizing against imperialism in the 1950s and 1960s, but also that they were developing important feminist and queer critiques of black nationalist and anti-colonial ideals.<sup>73</sup>

Today, historians and former movement participants often highlight the ways in which black women in the freedom struggles of the 1960s and 1970s incorporated feminism into their nationalist organising. Moreover, anti-imperialism served as the starting point for American Indian, Puerto Rican and Chicana feminists from the 1960s to the 1990s.<sup>74</sup> However, white anti-imperialist feminists seem to have rarely made connections between their own work at the Women's School and this rich legacy of US-based anti-imperialist feminism. They did not frequently draw on the writings and lessons of their predecessors. Granted, they could not benefit from the boom in women's history that has since provided feminists with knowledge of these earlier groups and figures. However, some of these women were prominent public figures at the time. Graham Du Bois worked briefly at the University of Massachusetts and Harvard in the mid-1970s, while she carried out speaking tours about her time in Africa and China. She and others, moreover, wrote for and/or edited prominent black leftist publications, like *Freedomways* and *Muhammad Speaks*, during the 1960s.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Cheryl Higashida, 'To Be(come) Young, Gay, and Black: Lorraine Hansberry's Existentialist Routes to Anticolonialism' *American Quarterly* 60(4), 2008: 899-925.

<sup>74</sup> See for example Gore, Theoharris, and Woodard, 'Introduction': 2-4, on feminism within black women's nationalist organizing. On anti-imperialist feminism of American Indian, Puerto Rican and Chicana feminists, see Thompson, 'Multiracial Feminism': 338-341; Paula Gunn Allen, 'Who Is Your mother? Red Roots of White Feminism' in Paula Gunn Allen, *Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986): 209-221; Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*: 129-177; and Elizabeth Castle, "'The Original Gangster": The Life and Times of Red Power Activist Madonna Thunder Hawk' in Dan Berger (ed.) *The Hidden 1970s Histories of Radicalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010): 267-283 (268-269).

<sup>75</sup> Horne and Stevens, 'Shirley Graham Du Bois': 111, 108.

The arena in which the early organisers of the Women's School made a more original contribution was in the development of anti-imperialist politics *as practised by white feminists*. It is important not to position them as founders of a 'new kind' of 1960s/70s feminism, but what should be understood about the white anti-imperialist feminists of the Women's School is, first, their place in a long history of anti-imperialist feminism and, second, their unique efforts in putting this feminism into practice in the white women's liberation movement.

### *The classes*

The Women's School began its first term in March of 1972, a year after the Harvard building occupation. Classes were held at the newly-opened Cambridge Women's Center. Over time, though, the school and the centre developed a fractious relationship, and teachers began to hold classes in other locales, for instance in people's homes or at a local tenants' union office. Quite unexpectedly, more than 300 women signed up to take the thirteen classes the school first offered. These included several women-centred class such as 'In Amerika They Call Us Dykes' and 'Women & Their Bodies'; how-to classes in drawing, writing, and a general 'Fix It' class; and history courses on women, African Americans, and Jewish peoples. Enrolments remained high – in the triple digits – up until a number of activists across the city became involved in busing (or 'anti-antibusing') activity around 1974-75. From 1972-74, Women's School activists organised an ambitious twelve to twenty-one classes in each of three terms: winter/spring, summer and fall. As part of the school's restructuring in 1975, it dropped the summer term and set about trying to attract a more racially diverse group of students. A majority of the school's students

during its first few years were white and had at least some college education, and as discussed further below, during those years many organisers concentrated more on (re)shaping the political consciousness of white feminists than on trying to attract women of colour.<sup>76</sup>

Class was a central concern for organisers throughout the school's history. Though they needed money to help with operational costs, they attempted to keep registration fees low (and sometimes free) so as to not prohibit enrolment for low-income women. Still, it cost \$3 to attend one of the school's first classes, not a negligible amount. Funding from a local foundation, the Haymarket People's Fund, sustained the school for several years during the mid 1970s, and it sometimes provided enough funding for the school to hire part-time staff. Early on, organisers also developed inventive arrangements for childcare. All child-less students were required to sign up to babysit at least one night per term. While this ensured free childcare for mothers wanting to take classes, it was oddly suggestive of essentialist notions of women as nurturing, or at the least assumed the fitness of every woman enrollee as a child minder.<sup>77</sup>

Like its organisers, Women's School teachers volunteered their time and energy, and oftentimes the school's organisers also taught. A majority of founders and first-term organisers had been and continued to be involved in antiwar, community organising and black freedom struggles, and many within this highly-

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<sup>76</sup> '1972 Winter/Spring Class Schedule', Box 8, Folder 339: 1972 [Winter/Spring], WSR; Ginger Ryan, Melanie Berzon, Kathy McAfee, Marla Erlie, Laura Whitehorn, Tess Ewing, Jackie Pine, Laura Tillem, Marsha Steinberg, Susie Waysdorf, Debby Knight, 'To Students and Teachers in the Women's School', undated [Feb 1973], Box 1, Folder 40: History of Women's School: Background Information, 197?, WSR; Laura Tillem, phone interview with the author, 14 August 2011; and Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011.

<sup>77</sup> 'Bunch article': 3-14.

educated group brought with them a critique of higher education that helped to shape the school's culture of learning and teaching. For instance, in response to the hierarchical and rigid structure of traditional university classes, in the course listing for the school's first term, activists declared, 'Classes will be as informal and flexible as possible: "teachers" are simply sisters who may know a little more about the course subject than most of us, and who have agreed to take responsibility for organizing the course, at least in the beginning.'<sup>78</sup> In this way, the school aimed 'to demystify the process of gaining knowledge and the right to possess that knowledge' in part by breaking down the notion that 'teachers' must be experts in their subject area.<sup>79</sup>

Throughout its twenty-year history, the Women's School staged a huge variety of classes. Its subject matter shifted over time. Its earliest years were characterised by a focus on history and politics, and very quickly in this period, greater numbers of teachers began to take on traditional disciplines (economics, history, literature, philosophy) and relate them specifically to 'women'. This broad category – 'women' – was sometimes explicitly narrowed, such that a class addressed a specific (though often still broad) group of women, for instance with classes such as 'Native American Women' and 'Women in Vietnamese History'. A number of classes, however, did not explicitly narrow their scope of 'women' and ended up assessing 'woman's' experiences through the lens of white and middle-class women. Still, as we shall also see, not all classes subsumed 'women' in this way, particularly in the school's early years. Notwithstanding the sometimes

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<sup>78</sup> '1972 Winter/Spring Class Schedule'; and Bunch article': 1-2. On the Women's School's take on higher education, see Burgin, 'Coarse Offerings'.

<sup>79</sup> 'Bunch article': 3.

problematic ways in which women's liberationists approached feminist education, that the Women's School opened before the onset of women's studies within the academy meant that it helped to pioneer feminist education. Some of the school's teachers, including Linda Gordon and Nira Yuval-Davis, went on to success in academia.<sup>80</sup>

Aside from politics- or history-based courses, the Women's School almost always staged some skills-based classes such as 'fix it', auto mechanics, writing and drawing. These classes were seen as serving political ends because, as the first organisers put it, they could 'help us develop our skills and tools for self-reliance and communication'. Activists also provided courses 'dealing with specific aspects of women's oppression', many of which also continued throughout the school's history in some form or another.<sup>81</sup> Such classes focused on topics like women's sexuality, lesbianism, and women's bodies. Some students registered on these courses even went on to produce the landmark Second Wave text *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Despite some of these general trends, much of the school's curriculum changed significantly over the years. As cultural feminism grew in prominence toward the late 1970s, courses began to reflect this change. Classes in Marxism and black history began to give way to classes in yoga, quilting, and children's literature. This is not to say that classes in politics and history were completely absent from course listings; in fact, shifts in US politics continued to shape some of the school's offerings, as when a class on 'Demystifying the Arms Race' appeared in the early 1980s. By and large,

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<sup>80</sup> 'Courses and Teachers – Fall Term 1972', Box 2, Folder 100: Course and Teacher Lists 1972, WSR; 'Courses and Teachers: Summer Term 1973' Box 2 Folder 107: Course and Teacher Lists, 1973, WSR.

<sup>81</sup> 'To Students and Teachers in the Women's School'.

however, the Women's School offered a much more overtly political line-up until the mid-1970s.<sup>82</sup>

For anti-imperialist feminists organising at the Women's School, several key courses formed the crux of their attempts to promote an anti-imperialist, anti-racist perspective to women's liberation. Most classes were structured around the socio-political history of various peoples of colour and, sometimes, the ways in which white progressives interacted with their struggles for equality or liberation. Classes on black history were particularly important in this regard. Unfortunately, even when the school attracted large numbers of participants, these courses never gathered much interest. Generally between eight and twelve women enrolled in them. The other set of courses that evidenced the influence of anti-imperialist feminism at the school – those on the history of women in the US – attracted many more students. Anti-imperialist feminists only intermittently taught these courses, however, and as shown below, they had a very different perspective on the study of women's history than was generally in feminist fashion. Whoever was teaching, though, women's history classes were quite often at capacity (of around twenty) and women joined waiting lists to take the class. Anti-imperialist feminists used the US women's history courses to further an anti-imperialist agenda by studying the histories of middle-class white women as well as black women and working-class white women.<sup>83</sup> Significantly, both sets of classes opened up analyses of institutional racism in the US. In doing so, they fostered discussions of racism in US history and politics, particularly the part it played within a complex and global system of imperialism.

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<sup>82</sup> 'Class Schedules, 1972-1992'. On *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, see Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 103.

<sup>83</sup> 'To Students and Teachers in the Women's School'; and Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011.

### *Women's history*

Among the most popular and enduring classes at the Women's School were those on women's history in the US. Such classes appeared more intermittently in the school's second decade but were a staple during its first. Every term between the years 1972 and 1975 carried a US women's history course. The title changed somewhat – running as 'Her Story' in the school's inaugural term but 'Amerikan Women's History' in a subsequent term. More frequently the classes were called simply 'Women's History', with the US-centric focus revealed in the course description.<sup>84</sup> Their popularity was demonstrative of the wider interest in women's history created in large part by women's liberationists. Former Women's School activist and long-time women's historian Linda Gordon has written that the women's liberation movement propelled the development of various 'important fields of women's studies', particularly women's history.<sup>85</sup> US feminists were keen to learn their history.

Typically, though, when white women liberationists communicated their desire to study women's history, they meant the history of white, middle-class women like those few notables they had heard of in school – Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Margaret Sanger. Only twice did anti-imperialists at the school teach women's history in the early 1970s – during the back-to-back terms of fall 1972 and winter/spring 1973. However, their instruction on these courses differed greatly from that of other white feminists. For instance, the first women's history course, 'Her Story', devoted one week to 'the history of black women in the

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<sup>84</sup> Women's School brochures, Box 2, Folder 107: Course and Teacher Lists, 1973; Box 2, Folder 128: Course and Teacher List, Spring 1974; Box 8, Folder 339: 1972 [Winter/Spring], WSR.

<sup>85</sup> Linda Gordon, 'U.S. Women's History' in Eric Foner (ed.) *The New American History*, revised and expanded edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997): 257-284 (257).

united states [*sic*]', and the other weeks covered early colonial women, women's labour history, women abolitionists, suffragists, and sex and sexuality. Without being explicit about it, this course focused primarily on white women's history and marginalised black women's history by relegating it to just one of ten weeks. Moreover, most of the weekly topics explored well-off white women, such as the Grimké sisters, or issues that white middle-class feminists found most pressing such as the nuclear family.<sup>86</sup> By contrast, when they taught the course a year later, Laura Whitehorn and anti-imperialist comrade Jacqui Pine ensured that working-class white or black women's experiences were included in a majority of their weekly topics.<sup>87</sup>

For anti-imperialist feminists the primary goal in teaching women's history at the Women's School was, as Laura Whitehorn recalls, 'to redefine who we mean by "women"'. A closely related aim, as Liz Horowitz remembers, was to ask 'What was women's history?' and who did it include.<sup>88</sup> In the description of their autumn 1972 women's history course, Laura Whitehorn and Ginger Ryan – who had the advantage of studying women's history as an undergraduate at Vassar – wrote:

We all know very little about our past except what we hear about the suffragists and other notables. But studying the exploits of a few exceptional women gives us a distorted view of how much power the individual has in society and robs us of the critical tools we need to understand and evaluate American culture. In this course we will look at "unexceptional" women – black and white, poor and rich, native-born and foreign-born.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> 'Herstory – Women's Center School – Spring 1972', Course Box 2, Folder 103: Herstory – 1972, WSR.

<sup>87</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011. 'Course Evaluations 1972 [Fall]', Box 2, Folder 101: Course Materials – 1972 [Fall], WSR.

<sup>88</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011; and Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 29 December 2011.

<sup>89</sup> 'Class Schedule – Fall 1972' Box 8, Folder 339: 1972 [Winter/Spring], WSR.

Aside from confronting the notion that only a ‘few exceptional women’ could create history, the anti-imperialist feminists who taught women’s history – Whitehorn, Ryan and Jacqui Pine, all of whom had connections to Weatherman – attempted to challenge the tendency within the white women’s liberation movement to assume that ‘woman’ equated to those who were white and bourgeois. Their classes disrupted the common practice of universalising women in ways that did not account for class and race-based differences, which effectively positioned whiteness and middle-class-ness as normative in the notion of ‘woman’.<sup>90</sup> However, their enlarged view of ‘woman’ still left many groups of women out of ‘women’s history’. Anti-imperialist feminists’ classes did not address the histories of Chicanas, American Indian, or Asian American women. Doing so would have proved difficult logistically, given that very little had been written in these areas at the time (in English). Their explicit focus on African American women, however, was also borne of their view that black struggles in the US were ‘the central struggles going on throughout US history’, as Liz Horowitz recalls.<sup>91</sup> For these teachers, the historical oppression and resistance of black peoples in the US was more directly related to the machinations of power in the US – specifically white supremacy, sexism, class inequality and imperialism – than the struggles of suffragists and other white, middle-class women, whom other white feminists tended to subsume under ‘women’s history’.

A great deal of time was therefore devoted to studying women’s experiences under slavery. Anti-imperialist feminists used Gerda Lerner’s 1972 compilation *Black Women in White America* (usually Xeroxed excerpts) for first-hand accounts. These included excerpts from slave narratives, such as that of Harriet Jacobs; testimonies

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<sup>90</sup> See Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 115-116.

<sup>91</sup> Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 29 December 2011.

from white abolitionists like Sarah and Angelina Grimké; and oral accounts from former slaves.<sup>92</sup> They touched on the system of slave selling and the effect this had on mothers and young children; different aspects of slave labour, including cotton picking and household work; punishments; and slave households and families. Included in the text was a brief overview of slavery by Lerner who highlighted the economic function of slavery and directly challenged scholarly notions that slaves were 'passive'.<sup>93</sup> The principal excerpts, however, came from slaves (or former slaves) themselves who testified to the complex relationships between masters and mistresses, gross abuses and mistreatment, and continual resistance. A portion of an interview carried out with a former slave named Martha Harrison, for instance, described an instance when Harrison's sister was being whipped because she "wouldn't keep her dress clean". Her mother successfully intervened in the whipping by throwing the slave woman who tattled out a window, thereby distracting the master from his whipping.<sup>94</sup>

Similar themes emerged in Angela Davis' 1971 article 'Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves', which, like Lerner's work, was used by anti-imperialist feminists in both the women's and black history courses. For white anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School, the article was incredibly important. Laura Whitehorn remembers the article being widely circulated in classes taught by her cohort: '[W]e used Angela Davis's article when that came out. I just

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<sup>92</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 21 December 2011; and Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Random House, 1972): 5-25, 34-41, Box 2, Folder 92: Black History: Readings, N.D., WSR.

<sup>93</sup> Lerner, *Black Women in White America*: 5.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*: 25.

used that in every class. I didn't care what it was. I thought they should use it in carpentry.<sup>95</sup>

Davis' article fit perfectly the framework that white anti-imperialist feminists were using for instruction in history, particularly strategies of resistance to systems of racism, sexism and class inequality (the basic structures of modern-day imperialism). Resistance entailed the examination of large political movements, such as abolitionism and the history of labour strikes, as well as slave uprisings and runaways, the establishment of maroon communities, and the defiance of social norms around femininity. It was also meant to inspire students to act, to join on-going black freedom struggles in particular.<sup>96</sup> Davis uncovered what she referred to as 'the overt and explosive upheavals' of the slave system carried out by women slaves: arsons, poisonings, and the establishment and defence of maroon communities. She notes, for instance, the 1776 execution of a slave woman who had set fire to her master's house, outhouses and other property.<sup>97</sup> In her article, Davis stresses that contemporary scholarship on black women had exacerbated the myth of black matriarchy, and her research served to directly challenge such racist patterns within scholarship. 'The myth must be consciously repudiated as myth and the black woman in her true historical contours must be resurrected', Davis asserts.<sup>98</sup> For their part, anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School took this directive to heart and strove to highlight these 'historical contours' in the study of US women's history.

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<sup>95</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 21 December 2011. Davis, 'Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves'.

<sup>96</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011; and Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 29 December 2011.

<sup>97</sup> Davis, 'Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves': 90-93 (90).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*: 100.

Not all the women enrolled in women's history under anti-imperialist feminist tutelage were on board with the black-focused content, and Laura Whitehorn recalls that she had initially feared backlash to the content. She remembers, however, that most enrollees were very open to the material. After they 'laid the basis for the class' and described their approach to the study of US women's history, she recalls that 'no one left and everyone was interested'. She credits this to the general mindset and excitement of the day: 'I think that people were really open-minded in those days, much more so than became true later in the left. Because everyone was excited...their eyes were opening to things they had never perceived before'.<sup>99</sup> Though it would be impossible to track exactly how successful anti-imperialist feminists were in shifting white feminists' understanding of what constituted 'woman' or 'women's history', it is significant that some, like Whitehorn, recall the ease with which black-centred content was used, given the implicit assumptions about who 'made' women's history. It suggests that these anti-imperialist feminists found some success in their goals.

Broadening white women's liberationists' view of who was included under the banner of 'woman' also carried implications for which struggles 'counted' within the movement. If the experiences of 'women' were understood through the lenses of race and class, then the particular struggles of poor and working-class women as well as women of colour would drive the aspirations of women's liberation. It would, moreover, create more complex understandings of white women's experiences and consequently provide lessons for contemporary feminists. In their course description in the winter 1973 term flyer, Laura Whitehorn and Jacqui Pine wrote, 'We hope that

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<sup>99</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 21 December 2011.

the questions we ask about our past will give us tools and insights for our current struggles.’<sup>100</sup> For instance, when a white student (the only such one that she recalls) told Whitehorn that she would rather they read the writings of Elizabeth Cady Stanton than the articles on early women labourers and slave women, Whitehorn remembers telling the woman that they would ‘get to that, but we have to...have a basis for understanding what was going on before the suffragist movement because there was a lot of racism in the suffragist movement’. For anti-imperialist feminists, the teaching of US women’s history could thus illuminate more racially just ways of building a movement for women’s liberation, particularly the need to create alliances between Third World struggles (in the US especially) and women’s liberation. This, they believed, would prove far more beneficial for white women’s liberationists in the end. As Laura Whitehorn puts it, anti-imperialist feminists felt that they needed ‘to organise white people to...believe that it is in our interest if we want to change our own conditions of life to be in solidarity with [Third World] struggles’.<sup>101</sup> In short, redefining the ways in which white feminists generally understood the category of ‘woman’ by highlighting the historical struggles of black women helped anti-imperialist feminists to promote the cause of contemporary Third World struggles as *feminist causes*.

Anti-imperialist feminists at the Women’s School utilised one other key framework within history courses – the economy.<sup>102</sup> They explored black and women’s histories in light of the roles that different groups played in the economic

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<sup>100</sup> ‘Course Catalog, Spring/Winter 1973’, Box 2, Folder 126: Class Descriptions, Spring 1974, WSR (quote); and Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011.

<sup>101</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011.

<sup>102</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011; and Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 29 December 2011.

functioning of the US and the creation of US imperialism. They illustrated how and why capitalism (and eventually the larger global system of US imperialism) worked and elucidated the meaning behind the enslavement of Africans, the frequent raping of slave women by white masters, the establishment of nuclear families headed by males, and the use of cheap female labour in industries. In other words, anti-imperialist feminists felt that studying history through the lens of black experiences and in light of larger economic structures could help reveal how the US had become an immense imperial power. In the vernacular of the day, they studied the history of 'the system'.<sup>103</sup>

A key text in this regard was Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Written in 1884, the work traces the evolution of familial structures through several epochs, asking how legal codes developed by the bourgeoisie shaped them. Engels identifies the role of private property in what he calls 'the world historical defeat of the female sex'.<sup>104</sup> For anti-imperialist feminists, Engels offered an important class-based critique of a topic that was high on white women's liberationists' agenda: the nuclear family. Engels did not argue against the nuclear family or monogamy as such; rather, he focused on the ways in which capitalists profited from family units that were divided by property and consumption patterns. Anti-imperialist feminists felt the text provided an important way to learn about the history of sexism within the context of a larger system of inequities. Whitehorn recalls that, having been urged to read it by co-teacher Ginger Ryan,

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<sup>103</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interviews with the author, 27 July 2011 and 21 December 2011; Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 29 December 2011; 'Course Catalog, Fall 1972' and 'Course Catalog, Spring/Winter 1973', Box 8, Folder: 'Class Schedules, 1972-1992', WSR.

<sup>104</sup> Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, 2010 edition (Atlanta: Pathfinder Press, 2010): 96.

*Origins* ‘opened my eyes about how to teach the history of women’s oppression under Western capitalism’. She remembers how Ryan, who was ‘from a fairly bourgeois family’, talked excitedly about the book in class and related to the students ‘how it had changed her view of her whole family and their finances, and the whole structure of their friendship circles, which she had grown up in’.<sup>105</sup> It was exactly this kind of re-thinking that anti-imperialist feminists hoped the text would provoke in students; though, as with their attempts to re-define ‘woman’, the efficacy of these efforts remains fairly untraceable.

### *Black history*

Between 1972 and 1975 the Women’s School ran history courses on many different populations of colour – on peoples in China, the Middle East, Puerto Rico, Vietnam. ‘Third World Women and Women’s Liberation’ ran in the school’s second term, over the summer of 1972. This class aimed to address ‘the views of Third World women in the U.S. on their role in history, in Third World movements and their relation to the women’s movement’, as well as white feminists’ ‘response’ to issues and criticisms raised by ‘Third World women’. This course description did not, however, delineate exactly who was meant by ‘Third World women’ – if for instance, the course would study histories and ideas of Puerto Rican, Chicana and black women, as well as Asian American and American Indian women.<sup>106</sup> Becky Thompson has argued that it was not until the rise of a ‘cross-race’ feminist struggle in the mid- to late-1970s that white feminists learned a key ‘directive’: ‘Do not lump African American, Latina, Asian American, and Native American into one category. History, culture,

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<sup>105</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011.

<sup>106</sup> ‘1972 Summer Class Schedule’ 1972 [Summer], Box 8, Folder 339: 1972 [Winter/Spring], WSR.

imperialism, language, class, region, and sexuality make the concept of a monolithic “women of color” indefensible.<sup>107</sup>

After this class, however, the Women’s School staged several classes that delved into the history of specific populations of Third World women. In the fall of 1972, Nan Stone, who described herself as ‘a white woman who believes we have a lot to learn from native American [sic] values’, led a course on ‘Native American Women: An Historical Perspective’. Despite a strong desire on the part of many women’s liberationists to support struggles of indigenous peoples in the US, Stone wrote, ‘we don’t know much about them’. Enrolees on this course learned about women from several different American Indian nations – ‘how their lives were shaped by the work they did and by the values and religious beliefs of their cultures’. This socio-cultural history was paired with a study of American Indian women’s resistance – ‘the ways that women united together, i.e. strikes, co-operatives, lesbianism’.<sup>108</sup> The course was meant to address the ignorance of many white women’s liberationists about indigenous women in the US in order that such ignorance no longer served as a crucial impediment to solidarity between white and American Indian feminists. Almost a decade later, though, a native woman, Chrystos, wrote of the persisting ignorance and lack of solidarity: ‘[M]ost of the feminist movement that I worked so hard to be a part of was propaganda... My differences were sloughed over None of them came to a pow wow or an AIM [American Indian Movement] fundraiser to see about *me*’.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Thompson, ‘Multiracial Feminism’: 346-347.

<sup>108</sup> ‘Courses and Teachers – Fall Term 1972’; and ‘1972 Fall Class Schedule’ 1972 [Fall], Box 8, Folder 339, WSR.

<sup>109</sup> Chrystos, ‘I Don’t Understand Those Who Have Turned Away from Me’ in Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (eds) *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2<sup>nd</sup>

While courses on native, Puerto Rican and other non-black peoples ran sporadically, black history remained constant during the Women's School's earliest years. They were also usually taught by anti-imperialist feminists who recognised the same problems of unawareness and lack of solidarity flagged by Stone and Chrystos. Despite their regularity, Laura Whitehorn remembers black history classes being a point of contention between socialist feminists and anti-imperialist feminists at the school. She remembers one meeting during which she and other anti-imperialists struggled to convince others that there 'should always be a black history class'. That so many white feminists would object to the continual inclusion of these classes on the grounds that they were unnecessary indicated to anti-imperialist feminists the very reasons they were crucial. In the end, only two terms between the years 1972 and 1975 did not include such courses.<sup>110</sup>

Though led mostly by the small cadre of anti-imperialist feminists, the black history classes were not the same year-in and year-out. Reading lists changed, albeit slowly as one or two new readings – usually from black scholars and activists – were added each term. Teachers and titles changed over the years, too. The first black history course was titled 'History of the Black Struggle and White Radical Response', while several others were simply called 'Black History'. A course titled 'Resistance, Repression, and Rebellion' attempted to bring histories of multiracial women's and black resistance into the same class.<sup>111</sup> These titular shifts denoted evolutions in the content of black history courses, but overall, the continuities of

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edition (New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1983): 68-70 (68-69). Emphasis in original.

<sup>110</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 21 December 2011; and 'Class Schedules, 1972-1992'.

<sup>111</sup> 'Class Schedules, 1972-1992', Box 8, WSR. Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 21 December 2011.

these classes were greater than these modifications. Most of the readings stayed the same, and were in fact handed down by anti-imperialists Laura Whitehorn and Jackie Pine, who originally compiled reading lists and taught the first black history class. Their content largely revolved around the resistance strategies of blacks in the US at certain points in particular periods: slavery, Reconstruction, the interwar period and in the contemporary moment. Resistance proved a useful prism for structures of white supremacy and capitalism, and frequently black women's experiences were brought to the fore. Lastly, with an eye to global colonial and imperial situations, anti-imperialist feminists strove to include an understanding of how US blacks had historically linked their economic and political situation to that of blacks and other peoples of colour around the world.

This content remained fairly consistent because the rationale for staging these courses remained constant. As previously discussed, anti-imperialist feminists pointed out that racism within the women's liberation movement could kill it: 'The failure to eradicate racism has crippled nearly every radical movement in Amerika's past, including feminism.' Insofar as having an awareness of race relations and histories of peoples of colour could help instil racially just principles and practices, the white women's liberation movement could succeed where other progressive movements in US history had failed.<sup>112</sup> Perhaps more important, however, was anti-imperialist feminists' anxiety about the growing gulf they perceived between the white women's liberation movement and black struggles in the US. This chapter's epigraph, taken from a 1972 document written by Whitehorn, Tillem and others, bears repeating:

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<sup>112</sup> 'To Students and Teachers'.

Right here in the women's center, we have hardly begun to discuss, much less resolve, the questions of our relationship to the black liberation movement in Boston, to our black sisters (very few of whom come to the center) and to the nearby black community (even though that community played a role in our getting the center in the first place).<sup>113</sup>

Anti-imperialist feminists felt that if the Women's School could not even discuss its relationship to the Riverside community, to black women or to local black liberation groups, the women's liberation movement would not contribute to the anti-imperialist revolution that radical black activists in the US were mounting. They felt that the Women's School needed to connect to black communities and struggles: 'There is a lot the women's movement needs to learn and do in order to bring ourselves into a more conscious and active alliance with the black liberation movement and learning black history is one step in this direction'.<sup>114</sup>

Significant in black history classes was the use of writing by black academics and activists to survey slavery, Reconstruction, the interwar period, and the black freedom movement. As with their women's history classes, anti-imperialist feminists gave a lot of attention to women under slavery, during which Lerner's and Davis's texts were, once again, central for conveying the realities of racialised and gendered resistance strategies. The economic analysis they provided also helped anti-imperialist feminists to begin to build an understanding of the historical processes that created African Americans' 'colonial' situation.<sup>115</sup> Anti-imperialist feminists remember this literature being just as powerful for students of black history as for students of women's history. Laura Whitehorn recalls one young white woman's

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> Davis, 'Reflections on the Black Woman's Role'; Lerner, *Black Women in White America*: 5-41; Box 2, Folder 92: 'Course Materials: Black History: Readings, N.D.', undated [1975], WSR; and Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 21 December 2011.

reaction when the class discussed Davis' description of different punishments for rebellious male and female slaves (men being hanged while women were often burnt alive):

She started to cry and she said, 'You know, I have relatives who live in the South, and I go visit them and I hear them talk. And it's as if, you know, they long for slavery again. And I [had] never thought about [slavery's] impact on individual people.'<sup>116</sup>

In Whitehorn's memory, slavery had been humanised for this student in a way that her previous education and experiences could not match. The student's evocation of her family recalls Ginger Ryan's experience on reading Engels and seeing her family connections in a new light; for both women, learning entailed personal change. The student's response illustrated the kind of self-interest ('believe that it is in our interest') that anti-imperialists hoped white feminists would see within struggles for racial justice.

Black history classes also examined Reconstruction and the interwar period, and teachers tried to contextualise the historical constitution of African Americans' contemporary 'colonial situation'. Here again, they used new publications from *The Black Scholar*. They read an article by Milfred C. Fierce in which he connected the US government's failure to provide blacks in the Reconstruction era with viable means for land ownership and the current moment of mass black poverty. He argued that 'a viable explanation for [black people's current] colonial existence is the failure to own and control land'.<sup>117</sup> An article by John Henrik Clarke explained the influence of Marcus Garvey and his organisation, the Universal Negro Improvement

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<sup>116</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011. See Davis, 'Reflections on the Black Woman's Role': 91, 95.

<sup>117</sup> Milfred C. Fierce, 'Black Struggle for Land during Reconstruction' *The Black Scholar* 5(5), February 1974: 13-17 (17), Box 2, Folder 117: 'Black History: Readings, Summer 1973'.

Association, during the interwar years as, in part, the product of broken government promises, lawlessness and lynching, and the humiliation and discrimination of Jim Crow. Garvey's back-to-Africa movement instilled hope where these dynamics had created mass black despair, Clarke argued. He highlighted Garvey's Pan-Africanism, according to which Garvey, as a Jamaican-born immigrant to the US, connected the plight of African Americans to that of people of African descent around the globe and urged the establishment of a 'Nation in Africa'.<sup>118</sup> Such readings helped anti-imperialist feminists understand black history as characterised by processes of systematic discrimination and resistance to this discrimination, where blacks 'had contributed to the wealth and development of the country in spite of conditions of previous servitude'.<sup>119</sup>

Among the readings that shaped discussions on the current realities of African Americans were writings by prominent activists such as former SNCC leader James Forman and political prisoner and Black Panther George Jackson. From Forman's auto/biography, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, students read the section about Ella Baker. Baker had organised in eminent black organisations for decades, but her significant and sympathetic role in the formation of SNCC had earned her a warm and revered place in the hearts of young radicals. Forman described the crucial behind-the-scenes work and respectful nurturing that Baker carried out for SNCC. It included a brief overview of Baker's stand against the male leadership of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which had hoped to draw in the burgeoning youth movement into its organisation. This discussion of

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<sup>118</sup> John Henrik Clarke, 'Marcus Garvey: The Harlem Years' *The Black Scholar* 5(4), December 1973-January 1974: 17-23 (20), Box 2, Folder 117: 'Black History: Readings, Summer 1973', WSR.

<sup>119</sup> Clarke, 'Marcus Garvey': 22.

SNCC's formation also gave occasion for Forman to consider the Cold War context of the group's founding and the ways in which McCarthyism – and US foreign policy – was variously debated and challenged during SNCC's first year. For anti-imperialist feminists, a reading from Forman's book proved useful for considering the very recent history of black people in the US and, in particular, the ways in which gender relations and foreign policy had been negotiated in the black freedom struggle.<sup>120</sup>

The reading from George Jackson came from the collection of his letters written while he was in prison. George Jackson had been a prisoner from the age of 18, when he was convicted of the armed robbery of a gas station. He was politicised during his time in prison and became a Black Panther. He and two other black inmates became known as the Soledad Brothers (named after the prison that housed them) after they were charged (many believe falsely) of killing a white guard. Jackson was killed by prison guards in August 1971. Angela Davis was a comrade of Jackson's, and Davis dedicated her essay on 'The Black Woman's Role' to Jackson, who she said had developed 'an acute sensitivity to the real problems facing black women'.<sup>121</sup> The particular letter read during black history classes was one he had written in April of 1970 to his lawyer, Fay Stender. Jackson explains to Stender the global 'new slavery' system. Like traditional slavery, the modern form derives its power through its 'ties to the wage', Jackson wrote, and in the modern era it is most easily understood as 'an economic condition which manifests itself in

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<sup>120</sup> James D. Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 2<sup>nd</sup> illustrated edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972): 215-223, Box 2, Folder 117: 'Black History: Readings, Summer 1973', WSR.

<sup>121</sup> 'Reflections on the Black Woman's Role': 12-13. On Jackson, see Jean Genet's 'Introduction' in Jackson's *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson, 1964-1970* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).

the total loss or absence of *self-determination*'.<sup>122</sup> Jackson compared the situation of 'the black colonies inside the Amerikan fascist state' with those in the 'Vietnamese colony'. While a number of black people in the US had forged close links with 'the established capitalist society', he felt that state institutions like the police and military (collectively referred to as 'pigs') connected the colonies inside and outside the country:

[All pigs] have the same intent: to preserve the economically depressed areas of the world as secondary markets and sources of cheap raw materials for the Amerikan fascist. The black colonies inside the Amerikan fascist state are secondary markets and sources of cheap raw materials. In our case [the case of the US black colonies] this cheap raw material is our bodies giving all of the benefits that property of this kind can render.<sup>123</sup>

Given these connections and the 'desperate need for coordination against Amerikan fascism', Jackson argued that it was crucial to forge cooperation between 'us in the black colonies and the peoples of other colonies across the country, around the world'.<sup>124</sup> This letter was a powerful tool for anti-imperialist feminists attempting to explicate the ways in which the current system of US imperialism played out in the lives of peoples of colour within and outside of the superpower nation.

In the spring of 1974, anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School began to take a different approach to the teaching of black history. They re-named the class 'Resistance, Repression, Rebellion' and revamped it so that black struggles, and those of other peoples of colour, were centred. Its description in the school's flyer that term stated:

Resistance, repression and rebellion are the real American traditions. In this course we will look at the history of this country as the experience of groups of

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<sup>122</sup> Letter to Fay, April 17 1970, in *Soledad Brother*: 189-203 (190-191, emphasis in original), Box 2, Folder 117: 'Black History: Readings, Summer 1973', WSR

<sup>123</sup> Jackson, 'Letter to Fay': 192.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*: 200.

people resisting and rebelling against the U.S. government and its economic foundations in their various forms of social and political repression. There will be a particular focus on the role of Blacks, because Black history provides the strongest and longest example of a people in conflict with the state. We will also talk some about the history of other poor and working people, and especially of women, in the U.S. One thing we want to study is the role of women in maintaining the strength of the community and thus providing a base for resistance. We'll spend the last weeks of the course on prisons – both how they function as part of the state's repressive system and as a place where rebellion is happening.<sup>125</sup>

The key changes to the course, as reflected in this description, involved an explicit and concentrated focus on resistance struggles and the inclusion of material related to oppressed groups and to prisons. Though a seemingly sudden shift, these changes had long been on the horizon, and in part, they reflected some of the key frustrations that anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School had been experiencing with the rest of the women's movement.

Discussions around prisons became increasingly salient in the context of the US government's repressive COINTELPRO measures. Growing numbers of activists, especially black liberationists, were incarcerated in the early 1970s, and prisoner solidarity efforts (supporting Angela Davis, Joan Little and George Jackson) took up a great deal of activists' energy.<sup>126</sup> For those on the inside, prison was often a radicalising though brutally repressive place. Angela Davis had begun researching and writing 'Reflections on the Black Woman's Role' while in prison, and during his incarceration, George Jackson organised a black Marxist group.<sup>127</sup> Against this backdrop, a number of anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School were, as Laura Whitehorn remembers, 'just livid' when Jane Alpert, a Weatherman activist-

<sup>125</sup> 'Spring 1974 Class Schedule', Box 8, Folder: Class Schedules, 1972-1992, WSR.

<sup>126</sup> Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*: 266-324; and Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 108-111, 156-157.

<sup>127</sup> Davis, 'Reflections on the Black Woman's Role': 2; and Joy James (ed.) *Imprisoned Intellectuals: America's Political Prisoners Write on Life, Liberation and Rebellion* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003): 85.

turned-women's liberationist, wrote after her conversion in 1974, 'I will mourn the loss of 42 male supremacists no longer', in reference to a black-led prisoner uprising that had taken place at the Attica Correctional Facility in New York in 1971.<sup>128</sup> They felt that to see the prisoners who died at Attica as nothing more than 'male supremacists' was to fail to understand how prisons were tools of the US government to repress peoples of colour. Though a number of feminists, including many others at the Women's School, hailed the letter and Alpert's conversion to feminism, to anti-imperialist feminists, it drove a wedge between women's liberation and black freedom if they could not recognise that prisons were 'a place where rebellion [was] happening'.

Anti-imperialist feminists were also disheartened with what they felt was a lack constructive engagement between most women's liberationists and black freedom activists. 'Resistance, Repression, Rebellion' encouraged such connections. As a former teacher on the course, Liz Horowitz recalls that she and others were 'constantly trying to make [black history] more focused on activism and what we could do in solidarity with the black struggle rather than just kind of an intellectual romp through black history'.<sup>129</sup> The course had originally been designed around the repression and resistance of blacks, though, so in many ways 'Resistance, Repression, Rebellion' simply made explicit what the black history teachers had long been doing. A number of the same texts were used. However, reflecting anti-imperialists' 'burgeoning political line', Horowitz also remembers using new readings

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<sup>128</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011. See also Jane Alpert, *Mother Right: A New Feminist Theory* (Pittsburgh: Know, Inc., 1974), reprinted by Special Collections Library, Duke University, *Documents from the Women's Liberation Movement: An Online Archival Collection* <<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/wlm/mother/>> [accessed 29 December 2011].

<sup>129</sup> Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 29 December 2011.

from Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams for example, that dealt with the possibility of independent black nations and armed self-defence. Horowitz and others felt that women's liberationists should support such efforts in concrete ways (as advocated in the contemporary moment, for instance, by the Republic of New Africa).<sup>130</sup>

Finally, in including an examination of 'poor and working people, and especially of women, in the US', Whitehorn maintains that she and other anti-imperialist feminists were endeavouring to highlight connections between the black freedom and women's liberation movements. She and others remember that the teachers at the Women's School who most strongly identified with the anti-imperialist movement were criticised 'for not being enough of a feminist and for not having enough of a working class awareness'.<sup>131</sup> This criticism of anti-imperialists existed alongside the assertion that SDS and the wider student-based movement provided the impetus for the women's movement. Whitehorn recalls that in 'Resistance, Repression, Rebellion' anti-imperialist feminists could discuss 'how the black revolution in the United States had given birth to the women's movement really'. Though she recognises that both the New Left and the black freedom movement had given rise to the women's movement, at the time, she says, many women's liberationists did not acknowledge that long-standing resistance struggles by African Americans (including in the abolitionist and suffrage eras) had propelled feminist movements. Such ignorance worked to divide not just the women's liberation and black freedom movements but the histories of women and of blacks.

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<sup>130</sup> Liz Horowitz, phone interviews with the author, 29 December 2011, and 23 August 2011. On the Republic of New Afrika, see Nicholas D. Kimble, 'Republic of New Africa' in *Freedom Now!* [online]: <http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/themes/blkpower/>.

<sup>131</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011. See also Liz Horowitz, phone interviews with the author, 29 December 2011, and 23 August 2011; and Laura Tillem, phone interview with the author, 14 August 2011.

In this way, the final incarnation of a black history course at the Women's School strove to 'bridge the gap between women's history and black history'.<sup>132</sup>

### *Conclusions*

By the spring of 1975, a number of the women who had founded the Women's School had left, compelled to act on other important issues. As for anti-imperialist feminists, many were aware of the growing anti-busing movement. In the course description for black history that ran in the winter/spring of 1973, the teachers referenced the leading crusader against busing (a white woman) to argue for the necessity of white women to learn black history: 'Not out of guilt, but out of excitement of taking full responsibility for our lives, we want to work to replace the Louise Day Hickses with women who don't want to step on other people, but want to work for the freedom of all people'.<sup>133</sup> Interracial tensions skyrocketed in Boston after a 1974 court ruling that mandated busing in order to rectify endemic racial discrimination within Boston's public schools. Several anti-imperialist feminists (and socialist feminists) from the school participated in efforts to defend black neighbourhoods when they began to come under direct attack by (largely white) anti-busing mobs.<sup>134</sup> The other seminal event that drew anti-imperialists away from the Women's School was the publication of *Prairie Fire* by the Weather Underground. Laura Whitehorn was chosen to tour the country and discuss the book after it was published in 1974. The book came to be seen as the culmination of the political

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<sup>132</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011.

<sup>133</sup> 'Winter 1973 Class Schedule', Box 2, Folder 107: Course and Teachers Lists, 1973, WSR.

<sup>134</sup> Laura Tillem, phone interview with the author, 14 August 2011; Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011; and Liz Horowitz, phone interview with the author, 23 August 2011. On busing in Boston, see Ronald Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

thinking and strategising of the Weather Underground, and its publication was a turning point for many white anti-imperialist activists.<sup>135</sup>

The legacy left behind by these feminists was not exactly evident at the Women's School. When an entirely new feminist cohort assumed responsibility towards the end of 1975, many were new to both Boston and the Women's School. All of them identified as socialist feminists. Many courses remained the same, for a few years at least: women's history, Marxism, lesbianism, women's health. There were also new additions such as Spanish, literature courses on Southern or black women, and 'Growing Up Female'. Noticeably absent were classes on black history in the US.<sup>136</sup>

The influence of anti-imperialist women may have been most keenly felt (though least easily measured) in the ideological impact made on the minds of the (mostly) white women who took their courses. Above all, these women aimed to teach others that racism and sexism were structures, sustained over time and constituting (along with capitalism) a larger system of imperialism. Such instruction challenged a commonly held belief amongst US whites – even among those with progressive political and social views – that racism and sexism were matters of *individual* feelings, attitudes or actions. The thinking and writing of a great many of their contemporaries, especially activists of colour, made this intervention possible. The Black Power advocates whose ideas so profoundly shaped white anti-imperialists were at pains to differentiate between individual and systemic forms of

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<sup>135</sup> Laura Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 27 July 2011; and Liz Whitehorn, phone interview with the author, 29 December 2011. See also Weather Underground, *Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism, Political Statement of the Weather Underground* (Weather Underground Communications, 1974).

<sup>136</sup> 'Bunch article': 6; and Class Schedules, 1972-1992.

racism.<sup>137</sup> Critical race theorists continue to challenge this enduring and dangerous misconception of race. Sociologist Howard Winant, for example, has recognised the importance of Black Power activists (as well as those of Brown Power, Red Power and Yellow Power) in bringing about this new understanding of racism but argues that a conservative turn in the 1970s reinstated the notion that racism related to individual beliefs and actions. Much like white anti-imperialist feminists in an earlier decade, today Winant works to generate an understanding of racism in which social structures are emphasised (albeit with a more nuanced and fluid understanding of these structures).<sup>138</sup>

Through their women's and black history courses, anti-imperialist feminists challenged the limited ways in which many white feminists had come to understand race as a social, cultural and political division. The alternative they offered and the educational contribution they made was the knowledge that race had structured US society (along gendered and classed lines) in ways that created and sustained the nation's super-power status, its empire, as well as the well-entrenched system of racial inequality. It was, indeed, such a system to which Whitehorn and others 'tried to...open white women's eyes'.

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<sup>137</sup> See for instance, *Black Power*: chapter 1.

<sup>138</sup> Howard Winant, *The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004): 41-48.

**Chapter 4**  
**An 'Exceptional Case'?**

**Pam Allen and the Roots of Radical Anti-Racism Workshops**

In her landmark book on the roots of the women's liberation movement, Sara Evans posited that movement pioneer Pam Parker Allen 'provides an exceptional case of isolation transformed into energetic leadership of the women's liberation movement', but at the same time that 'her story contains many elements common to other women's experiences'. Allen had been involved with the black freedom movement, particularly the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which, in Evans' words, had 'generated in her' an 'awareness of worth and sense of importance'. Once her participation in SNCC ended, however, she felt an 'isolation' that 'weighed crushingly', a feeling that Allen said was compounded by the fact of her husband's growing notoriety for his leadership among black resistance to the draft. Both elements – previous leftist activism and the feeling of being alone or isolated from movement activity – drew Allen and other white women's liberationists together at the end of the 1960s, yet Allen's enthusiasm for feminism was indeed 'exceptional' for the ways in which she translated it, almost immediately into feminist leadership. As soon as she learnt that women in Chicago were beginning to organise, she and one other woman volunteered to lead efforts in New York.<sup>1</sup>

Despite attention to her within early historiography of the Second Wave, Pam Parker Allen (who has since changed her name to Chude Pam Allen) appears sporadically in the movement's literature today. Some historians have remembered her, as Evans did, for her role as one of the first women to organise in the

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<sup>1</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*: 201-203, (202, all quotes). See also Debaorah A. Gerson, 'Making Sexism Visible: Private Troubles Made Public' in Chris Carlsson (ed.) *Ten Years that Shook the City: San Francisco 1968-1978* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2011): 170-182.

movement – first in New York in 1967-68 and later in San Francisco – or for authoring one of the movement's first texts on consciousness-raising groups, a long booklet published in 1970 called *Free Space*. But she also confronted problematic racial dynamics in the movement: writing a 1968 'Memo to My White Sisters' that challenged the widespread use of analogies of race and gender oppression and developing 'institutional racism' workshops for women in San Francisco.<sup>2</sup>

Having moved to San Francisco in the summer of 1968, Pam Allen organised a consciousness-raising group that ran for an impressive three years, and she maintained her connections to the larger movement by communicating and building strategy with women's liberation groups all over the country. In 1970, she helped to found a feminist free school called Breakaway. It was here that she led her first anti-racism workshops. When she moved to nearby Santa Cruz the following year, she began delivering these workshops for the local branch of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Allen's anti-racism workshops were fairly few in number, but she became known to many feminist activists as a point of contact for ideas, reading suggestions and conversation relating to racial justice.

It is this organising, specifically her work around racial justice in feminist activity, that perhaps best captures the influence of Allen's involvement in the black freedom movement and points to her driving aims within the Second Wave. That Evans and other historians largely overlook this activity has worked to obscure the extent to which a number of white women's liberationists, not just Allen, continued to

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<sup>2</sup> Evans, *Personal Politics*: 202-203, 210; *Freedom on My Mind*, directed by Connie Field and Marilyn Mulford (San Francisco: California Newsreel, 1994); Anne Enke 'Smuggling Sex Through the Gates: Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of Space in Second Wave Feminism' *American Quarterly* 55(4), 2003: 635-667 (662 ff.10); Barber, *A Hard Rain Fell*:127; Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*: 232; and Echols, *Daring To Be Bad*: 67, 73-75, 88.

fight for racial justice as they built a women's movement. This is to say that, notwithstanding Allen's position as a pioneer in the movement and her steadfast commitment to racial justice, the range of experiences that led Allen to push for racial justice within the women's liberation movement and to develop anti-racism workshops were certainly not unique to her. Rather, they indicate the myriad events, dynamics and challenges that likely impacted upon a great many white feminists' ability as well as desire to confront racism, within both their movement and in society.

This chapter explores the experiences and thinking that shaped Allen's involvement with racial justice activism and the anti-racism workshops she eventually led. Understanding that Allen was not alone as a white women's liberationist espousing anti-racist feminist politics – as the anti-imperialist feminists of the Women's School make obvious – the contours of her involvement in the black freedom movement are explored with an eye to the commonality of these experiences. To be sure, that she so quickly and energetically engaged in women's liberation and that she challenged racism within the movement from virtually its first days makes Pam Allen something of an 'exceptional case'. Her story directly confronts the notion that white feminists in the US paid no attention to issues of race and racism until challenged by feminists of colour in the 1970s. It also suggests that she was not alone in this. That her experiences were shared by many other white women's liberationists implies that the historical record has worked to obscure the anti-racist feminist politics and practices of many feminists. Moreover, the course of Allen's workshops highlights some of the ways in which activist work moved across sectors, especially from grassroots activity to institutions and from voluntary work to

paid employment. On the whole, Allen's anti-racist feminist politics and practices reveal a feminist movement with a growing interest in race-based educational efforts.

*Locating racial justice activism and education: Spelman and SNCC*

Born in 1943, Pam Parker grew up in eastern Pennsylvania, in the small village of Solebury near the New Jersey border. She moved out of state when she enrolled at Carleton College, a private liberal arts college in Minnesota where she studied religion. As with a great many young, white Northerners, Allen's college years afforded her a number of opportunities and experiences that shaped her understanding of US race relations and her racial justice activism. Her ability and desire to lead educational efforts on race and racism within the women's liberation movement stemmed in great part from the kinds of experiences that former activists and historians today point to as both common and pivotal for many young white activists, including church-based activity, involvement in SNCC and other black freedom groups, and the creation of interracial friendships and relationships. Allen does not, however, recall being afforded opportunities to explicitly engage in dialogue about race with other young activists, particularly with other whites. Thus, Allen's story suggests that the idea that she and other feminists eventually hit upon – that classes and workshops on race could provide whites the necessary opportunities to reflect on and learn about race in the US – had roots in the black freedom movement's focus on knowledge and education. In this section, I explore

several of Allen's interracial and social movement experiences for the ways in which they impact Allen's anti-racism work.<sup>3</sup>

Both the small town close to where Allen grew up and her undergraduate institution were almost wholly white in composition. She recalls going to school in Pennsylvania with very few students of colour – some African Americans and one Afro-Cuban student. The area was fairly liberal in political orientation; Allen easily garnered support from neighbours, friends and family when she joined the Mississippi Summer Project. Also liberal and white, Carleton's enrolment included very few students of colour, fewer than twenty on a campus of 1300 students.<sup>4</sup> The first time Allen lived with black people was over the summer of 1963 when, between her second and third years of college, she worked at a Christian summer camp of the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia. Along with three other young, white women counsellors, Allen lived with the church's black minister and his family. At Church of the Advocate, she provided 'Christian education' to a group of preteen and teenage girls. The other workers were mostly white college students, as well, and all of the youths with whom they worked were African American. Aside from its importance as one of her earliest interracial experiences, Allen's work at this summer camp forced her to confront the realities of poverty in the lives of her students of colour. 'I heard things I had never imagined,' Allen recalls, 'a baby

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<sup>3</sup> Chude Pam Allen, email interview with the author, 19 March 2012; 'Finding Aid', Pamela P. Allen Papers, 1967-1974, MSS 327, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI, USA (hereafter, Allen Papers); and Chude Pam Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010. On religion and the black freedom movement, see Findlay, *Church People in the Struggle*; and Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Chude Allen, Cathy Cade, and Karen Haberman Trusty, 'Exchange: Three White Women Students at Spelman, 1962-1964, A Discussion, April 2007', *Civil Rights Movement Veterans* [online] <<http://www.crmvet.org/disc/spelman.htm>> [accessed 14 March 2012]. Hereafter, the *Civil Rights Movement Veterans* website will be listed as CRM.

whose face was half-eaten by a rat, a twelve-year old friend of some of the girls who had just had twins'. Through the discussion groups she led, Allen remembers doing a great deal of learning herself, particularly about the experiences of poverty, from the young women of this group.<sup>5</sup>

Having found her experience in Philadelphia deeply meaningful and desiring 'another experience living in a black community', the following school year Allen applied for an exchange programme between Carleton and Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>6</sup> A historically black women's liberal arts college, Spelman conducted the Spelman Exchange Program in the early 1960s in which Spelman students and students from Northern, largely white colleges went on exchange to each other's schools, typically for a semester. Carleton had proven disappointing to Allen. She entered college with high hopes for having invigorating and challenging conversation but found that students were more interested in studying than discussion. She also found Carleton's rules governing male and female behaviour (*in loco parentis*) offensive, particularly given how much more regulated female students' activities were. Learning about the Spelman Exchange Program, Allen was immediately excited, thinking it would allow her to escape Carleton. On her exchange, however, she discovered that Spelman did not live up to her expectations either; *in loco parentis* was even stronger there.<sup>7</sup> She remembers:

[When I] discovered the Spelman exchange program I thought, "Wow! I can get out of Carleton and go some place that will be like the Church of the Advocate." Of course it wasn't like that at all; Spelman was much more like Carleton. I

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<sup>5</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 19 March 2012; and Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010. On Christian-based activity as an 'avenue into activism for Northern women', see Evans, *Personal Politics*: 110.

<sup>6</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Chude Pamela Allen, 'Writing Blocks and Deadly Prose', unpublished essay, in author's possession; and Allen, Cade and Haberman Trusty, 'Exchange'.

thought Spelman would be more like a poor and working class community than like a middle-class uptight white college.<sup>8</sup>

However disappointed she may have been upon discovering the similarities between Carleton and Spelman, Allen's time at Spelman – as one of thirteen white women on the campus in the spring of 1964 – was also one of challenge and discovery. Not only were her presumptions around class and blackness disrupted, but she was finding that she had a great deal to learn about race and racism in the US.<sup>9</sup>

At Spelman, Allen learnt a paradoxical lesson about racism: that it both was and was not about personal attitudes and individual acts. She later recalled that it was then that she first 'really looked at white America' and began to consider the ways in which racism was constituted of practices and processes that were larger than individual whites. In class one day, a student spoke of hating white people and told Allen that her 'personal views didn't matter'. Later, Allen wrote of this situation, '[I]t was the first time I was confronted with the idea that personal feelings and attitudes are not primary; that the social situation can override personal relationships'.<sup>10</sup> Though Allen had not found that particular class – a sociology course on 'the city' – particularly stimulating, it offered her an opportunity to be part of conversations with black students who complicated her understanding of racism. As Allen's definition of racial injustice expanded, she began to think reflexively about race.<sup>11</sup> At Spelman, Allen later reflected, she was in a situation which was 'just extremely tense, and where you are constantly, every day, finding out new things

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<sup>8</sup> Allen, Cade and Haberman Trusty, 'Exchange'. Emphasis in original.

<sup>9</sup> Allen, 'Writing Blocks'. On white Northerners in the South, see for instance Robnett, *How Long? How Long??:* 120-125; and Carson, *In Struggle:* 111-130.

<sup>10</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010.

<sup>11</sup> James P O'Brien interview, 5/21/69, tape 13, side 1, part 1, Allen Papers; and Allen, Cade and Haberman Trusty, 'Exchange'.

about yourself and areas in which you have to change. Where you are the one who is realizing that you have some wrong conceptions'.<sup>12</sup> Time and again Allen's ideas about race were challenged as she was compelled to rethink, not only her understanding of racism, but how she herself was implicated in racist practices. She found, in other words, that, as an individual white person, she was neither proof of the general benevolence of whites in the US nor divorced from the continual production of institutional and cultural racism. Thus, Allen's expanding knowledge of racism led her to interrogate the 'areas in which [she] had to change', and primary among these was her very knowledge of racism. As she recalls:

The experience at Spelman transformed me. It was here that I came to understand that I had to change; that I was both ignorant about racism and arrogant. I came to see that the issue wasn't just about ending segregation and discrimination. There was also the way we whites had absorbed racist concepts and ideas. And there was also the history; it wasn't just about attitudes.<sup>13</sup>

Aside from classroom experiences, Allen was challenged through personal relationships she developed with black students. Her engagement with other Spelman students was somewhat fraught; many Spelman students, including a woman with whom Allen became good friends, were distrustful of the Northern whites on campus. Allen understood that the animosity stemmed from segregation and dealing with racial injustice and so recalls that she 'didn't take the anti-white feelings personally'.<sup>14</sup> This distrust and antipathy had an impact, though, as it was the first time that Allen realised, as she later put it, that 'a social structure can separate people, not just literally as in enforced segregation, but personally'.<sup>15</sup> The interracial friendships that she developed within the context of Southern segregation,

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Evans, *Personal Politics*: 67.

<sup>13</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Allen, Cade and Haberman Trusty, 'Exchanges'.

<sup>15</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010.

though, were meaningful to Allen. When she made friends with black men and women during her time in Atlanta, they were profound, Allen said, because they had ‘transcended a barrier’.<sup>16</sup> Importantly, though, Allen discovered the limits to her ability to identify with her friends of colour, and this entailed a confrontation with her whiteness. Tucked in those racially transcendent times were moments that Allen remembers feeling guilty about being white. For instance, when a close, black friend of hers told her one night that ‘some white boys insulted a boyfriend of hers’, Allen ‘felt sick again that my skin was white and that I, too, was guilty’. Allen had found both richness and hardship in her new friendships, and if she had felt detached from her racial identity before, she found it impossible to escape at Spelman.<sup>17</sup>

While the Spelman-Carleton exchange was unique in that it offered a limited number of (white) Carleton students the chance to study at a leading historically black college, the programme was not unique to Carleton and Spelman, and Spelman has continued its domestic exchange programme with a host of largely white colleges and universities in the North and West. Other white women who participated in the Spelman exchanges in the early 1960s have affirmed Allen’s reflections on the opportunities the exchange afforded, the ways the experience changed their understanding of race, and the ways in which the experience propelled their commitment to black freedom. Cathy Cade, for instance, who had also been a student at Carleton and later worked with SNCC, has recalled, ‘Most of my memories of being an exchange student are of being in The Movement’, including her participation in a demonstration with other white and black students at

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<sup>16</sup> Allen, Cade and Haberman Trusty, ‘Exchanges’.

<sup>17</sup> Pam Parker [Chude Pam Allen], ‘Why I Am Going to Mississippi’ Talk to Her Church, 9 June 1964, CRM <<http://www.crmvet.org/info/chudewhy.htm>> [accessed 16 March 2012].

the Georgia State Legislature during her first week at Spelman. She remembers encountering both very positive aspects and ‘all the stresses and internalized racism’ of the black communities in which she lived and studied. At Spelman, she also became aware and ashamed of her whiteness. At Spelman, Allen and others began to shape a white racial identity rooted in race cognizance and a commitment to anti-racism.<sup>18</sup>

In one other important way, Allen’s time at Spelman transformed her understanding of race and her commitment to racial justice: she became involved in black freedom efforts. Allen joined the Committee on Appeal for Human Rights (COAHR), which had been founded by students in Atlanta when they learned of the Greensboro sit-ins of February 1960 and had organised non-violent sit-ins in Atlanta. COAHR had strong links to SNCC and was co-educational (mixed gendered) as it operated out of the consortium that brought together several of Atlanta’s historically black colleges. Aside from demonstrations, Allen’s participation in COAHR also involved her liaising with a largely white, anti-segregation student group, Georgia Students for Human Rights, which also participated in demonstrations at restaurants.<sup>19</sup> Allen continued her church-based activity, as well, and joined an Episcopal students group that held ‘discussion groups aimed at breaking through social segregation’. Though she had no direct involvement in SNCC until that time, in the middle of her Spelman semester Allen both participated in SNCC’s Spring

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<sup>18</sup> Allen, Cade and Haberman Trusty, ‘Exchanges’. On Spelman’s current domestic exchange programme, see ‘Exchange Programs’ on the Spelman College website: <http://www.spelman.edu/academics/offcampus/international/index.shtml>.

<sup>19</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010; ‘Atlanta Sit-ins (Mar-Apr [1960])’ CRM (2011) <<http://crmvet.org/tim/timhis60.htm#1960atlanta>> [accessed 15 March 2012]; and Chude Pam Parker Allen, ‘Loneliness in the Circle of Trust’ CRM (2004) <<http://crmvet.org/info/chudexp.htm>> [accessed 1 March 2012].

Conference and applied to be a teacher at a Freedom School for the Mississippi Summer Project. Staughton Lynd was to be the director of the Freedom Schools, and Allen had been taking his class on nonviolence, in which he encouraged students to apply. In fact, Allen recalls that that particular class ‘more and more took on the quality of a training session for Mississippi’. As for so many other young whites, Allen’s participation in the Mississippi Summer Project proved profound.<sup>20</sup>

During the Mississippi Summer Project, Allen was placed at the Freedom School in Holly Springs, a small town in the northern part of the state. Before arriving in Holly Springs, Allen returned home to Pennsylvania, where she appealed to her Episcopal congregation for prayers and help in meeting her financial needs for the summer (\$450). She spoke to her hometown parishioners of both the hope she held for racial change in the South and her knowledge that there was the potential for danger in what lay ahead.<sup>21</sup> Her week-long orientation in Oxford, Ohio, deepened her awareness of this danger. It was designed to do so, to prepare volunteers, as education scholar Daniel Perlstein has written, ‘for a Mississippi reality that they could not imagine’.<sup>22</sup> While some specific teaching training was provided for those assigned to Freedom Schools, Allen recalls that the orientation was critical for her and the other mostly white students largely because it ‘impress[ed] upon the white Northern volunteers the violent nature of the southern racist whites’.<sup>23</sup> The disappearance of SNCC activists James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew

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<sup>20</sup> Allen, Cade and Haberman Trusty, ‘Exchange’; Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010. Though more frequently called the ‘Mississippi Freedom Summer’ now, I refer to this event here as the ‘Mississippi Summer Project’ in order to reflect the language that Allen has used to talk about it.

<sup>21</sup> Allen, ‘Why I Am Going to Mississippi’. Both her home congregants and those whom she had been with the summer before at the Church of the Advocate made significant donations to Allen’s fund.

<sup>22</sup> Perlstein, ‘Teaching Freedom’: 314.

<sup>23</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010.

Goodman in Neshoba County, Mississippi, occurred while Allen and hundreds of other volunteers were in Oxford, and this tragedy underlined and made real the potential violence and danger the volunteers had been discussing all week. Not undaunted, Allen nonetheless recalled the profundity of Bob Moses' speech to all the volunteers about this disappearance. As Moses humbly shuffled his feet and spoke about how he felt, Allen recalled, '[He said], "All I can say is that I'll be there with you." And I would have gone anywhere, I would have done anything he asked me to do – I trusted him so much.'<sup>24</sup>

Allen went to the Holly Springs Freedom School with both eagerness and caution. In his history of the schools, Perlstein writes that Freedom Schools 'offered young black Mississippians an education that public schools would not supply, one that both provided intellectual stimulation and linked learning to participation in the movement to transform the South's segregated society.' They also aimed 'to help [young Mississippians] to question' their formal education, the conditions of their lives, the social and political landscape of their towns, their state and their country.<sup>25</sup> In short, the kind of education that Freedom Schools tried to offer was one in which the liberation of blacks from Southern segregation and racial domination could be both imagined and, hopefully, begun. Usually held in black churches or outside on lawns or under trees, Freedom School participants came voluntarily and in huge numbers. Over 2000 students – twice the expected number – of all ages attended the Project's 41 Freedom Schools, in a state where black high school graduation rates hovered in the single digits. While Allen's students were between fifteen and

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<sup>24</sup> Field and Mulford, *Freedom On My Mind*. Chude Pam Parker Allen, 'Would You Marry One?' CRM (2005) <<http://www.crmvet.org/info/marryone.htm>> [accessed 1 March 2012].

<sup>25</sup> Perlstein, 'Teaching Freedom': 297, 314, 316.

twenty-five years old, students at other Freedom Schools ranged in age from four to sixty years old.<sup>26</sup>

Having been only barely trained, Allen and other volunteer teachers often ‘found their own way’, as project director Staughton Lynd later recalled.<sup>27</sup> Aside from core instruction in black history, Mississippi politics and the history of the black freedom movement, teachers were encouraged to develop electives and given freedom to instruct on subjects they had been learning as undergraduates. They developed classes in art, languages, theatre, dance and typing. Aside from assisting on a theatrical production, Allen drew inspiration from her recent class with Lynd to teach a seminar on nonviolence. Even subjects that formed the core curriculum required a measure of independence and initiative from the volunteers. For instance, as a key part of the curriculum, black history incorporated the study of slavery and slave revolts, the Reconstruction era, and the creation of Jim Crow. Yet, as Allen recalls, ‘I knew nothing about black history myself’.<sup>28</sup> She had never taken a history course on African Americans nor even knew if they existed. She relied heavily on the curriculum that they had been provided, spending her nights pouring over the next day’s teaching materials and bearing in mind the emphasis in her teacher training that prioritised ‘teach[ing] students to think for themselves’.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Perlstein, ‘Teaching Freedom’: 314-316; Staughton Lynd, ‘The Freedom Schools, An Informal History’ *Against the Current* [online] 108 (Jan-Feb 2004) <<http://www.solidarity-us.org/node/477>> [accessed 7 March 2012]; Evans, *Personal Politics*: 71; Bruce Watson, *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season of 1964 that Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy* (New York: Penguin, 2010): 136-138, 227; and Chude Pam Parker Allen, ‘Letter Home: Saturday, July 11, 1964’ in ‘Three Letters from a Freedom School Teacher’ *CRM* (2008) <<http://www.crmvet.org/info/chude-fs.htm>> [accessed 1 March 2012].

<sup>27</sup> Lynd, ‘The Freedom Schools’.

<sup>28</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Lynd, ‘The Freedom Schools’; Allen, ‘Three Letters’; Perlstein, ‘Teaching Freedom’: 310-18; Watson, *Freedom Summer*: 138; and Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010.

Allen's group of students, she recalls, included 'teenage girls and young women', and their thirst for knowledge was obvious.<sup>30</sup> In a letter she wrote to her parents that summer, Allen glowed about her teaching experiences:

The atmosphere in class is unbelievable. It is what every teacher dreams about – real, honest enthusiasm and desire to learn anything and everything. The girls come to class of their own free will. They respond to everything that is said. They are excited about learning. They drain me of everything that I have to offer so that I go home at night completely exhausted but very happy.<sup>31</sup>

Allen and other volunteers told of students becoming teachers as their experiences began to shape class discussions. Another white woman teacher wrote, '[Y]ou did not have the distinction between teachers and students as you do in ordinary schools, [rather] we felt that the students had as much to teach as we did. We maybe had the facts, but they were rich in experience'.<sup>32</sup> As students and teachers explored race through the material and social contours of students' lives, they not only discovered the racial knowledge that lay at their fingertips; they learnt that, as African Americans in the South, they did not need to rely on the segregated and white-centred curriculum of Mississippi schools to get at this knowledge. As Perlstein puts it, Freedom Schools 'worked to break down the authority of whiteness'.<sup>33</sup>

Indubitably, Freedom Schools were places of both discovery and enthusiasm. They were not, however, free from problems, nor were they havens from violence and racism. Arsonists burnt a church in Gluckstadt that housed the community's Freedom School, and at another point police detained one female teacher for hours

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<sup>30</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Watson, *Freedom Summer*: 139. See also Evans, *Personal Politics*: 71.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Perlstein, 'Teaching Freedom': 317.

<sup>33</sup> Perlstein, 'Teaching Freedom': 317. See also Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, South End Press edition (Cambridge: South End Press, 2002): 247-250.

without charge.<sup>34</sup> When Allen and another white volunteer went to Oxford to speak to white sociology students at the University of Mississippi, police followed them as they drove out of town with some voter registration volunteers and then pulled them over. Writing about the incident some time later, Allen recalled, 'The sheriff held us until a green pick-up truck pulled up. I could see rifles hung prominently behind three white men.' When the sheriff allowed them to leave, the men in the truck followed them in what became a high-speed chase in which the civil rights workers finally got away.<sup>35</sup> That harassment, violence and hostility were visited upon some of the Freedom Schools and their teachers and students attested to the violent refusal of many white Mississippians to yield white domination of the area. Yet, as historian Howard Zinn has pointed out, it also illustrated the ways in which Freedom Schools challenged school systems, the state of Mississippi and the larger nation.<sup>36</sup>

Though the Holly Springs Freedom School did not suffer considerable violence or hostility, a few specific incidences along with larger patterns of white violence and recalcitrance shaped Allen's time in Mississippi and underlined lessons she had been learning about the enactment of institutional racism. Apart from the frightening car chase, Allen and the other Holly Springs volunteers were deeply affected when one of the black voter registration workers stationed there, Wayne Yancey, died in a mysterious car accident as he and another volunteer were driving back from Memphis. She and the other volunteers 'didn't know how to act or how to handle our feelings, including our fear. Some people got drunk. Others, like me, went about their work, numb and silent', she remembers. Not long after Yancey's

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<sup>34</sup> Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*: 249.

<sup>35</sup> Allen, 'Would You Marry One?'

<sup>36</sup> Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*: 250; and Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988): 73-75, 83-85.

death, the bodies of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman were discovered. It was clear that they had been murdered, and the fact of this compounded volunteers' fear of white violence.<sup>37</sup>

Allen understood her particular value as a young white woman from the North in this Southern racial justice project and how this value was linked to the on-going violence that SNCC and other racial justice groups had suffered. In an interview years later, Allen assessed it in this way:

The people who organized the Mississippi Summer Project understood that if I went to Mississippi, my parents would care, my brothers and my sister would care, my grandparents would care, my aunts and uncles would care, the people in the community would care. And people did things because someone they knew or at least someone from their community was involved.<sup>38</sup>

This personal connection factor could multiply SNCC's base of support and extend its influence and recognisability in the North. As such, it could extend to the North both the freedom struggle and knowledge of the racial aggression taking place in the South, as witnessed by countless young white Northerners like Allen. Eighty copies were made of Allen's letters home, such as the one excerpted above, and sent to her family, friends, community members and local newspapers. Even before then, as Allen and the other volunteers were taking part in orientation in Oxford, Ohio, Allen's father and grandfather contacted their Congressional representatives, as per Allen's request, and urged them to prioritise the safety of civil rights workers in Mississippi and to investigate the disappearance of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman. More than an effort to prompt a chain reaction, though, the support and

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<sup>37</sup> Chude Allen, 'Why Struggle? Why Care?' Lecture given 20 September 2005 at the Interdisciplinary Lecture Series *Letters from Mississippi and Social Justice*, Western College, Miami University, reprinted by CRM (2005) <<http://www.crmvet.org/comm/chude05.htm>> [accessed 1 March 2012].

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Field and Mulford, *Freedom on My Mind*.

response of families and communities like Allen's was significant because of its white, middle- and upper-class base.<sup>39</sup> Such support bases could and often did generate the sorts of outcomes that SNCC organisers hoped would come about through the increased participation of young whites, including greater media interest and financial support, as well as 'the sympathy of influential people in the nation's political and cultural capitals', as historian Cheryl Greenberg has written.<sup>40</sup>

'Mississippi was never just about terror and trauma', Allen has said.<sup>41</sup> She found both her teaching experiences and conversations with other civil rights workers transformational, in that they profoundly affected the ways in which she thought about poverty, race, and movement strategy. She found them humbling for the ways in which she continually learnt as well as taught. Falling in love with a fellow freedom school teacher, a black man named Ralph Featherstone, inspired new lessons for Allen about working and loving across race. While their relationship did not last the summer, Allen cared intensely for Featherstone and realised that while their relationship was significant to 'racist whites who could become violent, if they knew', its meaning to her black friends and students in the project was positive and supportive.<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding the terror she and other activists endured in Mississippi, Allen's time on the project was shaped to a much greater degree by humility and affection.

Allen certainly maximised her contribution to the black freedom struggle through her personal connections, as well as through ongoing SNCC support work

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<sup>39</sup> Allen, 'Writing Blocks'.

<sup>40</sup> Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, 'Foreword' in Cheryl Lynn Greenberg (ed.) *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998): xiii.

<sup>41</sup> Allen, 'Why Struggle? Why Care?'

<sup>42</sup> Allen, 'Would You Marry One?'

that she carried out once she returned to Carleton. Aside from garnering the financial and moral support of her home congregation and that of the Church of the Advocate, her local newspaper in Pennsylvania carried one of the letters she sent home. Allen remembers being very aware of the fact that ‘SNCC workers thought we [white Northerners] should work in the North’. When the project ended, she thus committed herself to providing support from the North, never intending to return to Holly Springs. During her senior year in college, she and the few others on campus who had participated in the Mississippi Summer Project spoke publicly about their summer experiences and the on-going efforts in the South, and they organised supplies to send to Mississippi.<sup>43</sup> In these ways, Allen was able to continue her now deepened commitment to racial justice and to SNCC in particular.

In other ways, however, upon her return to Carleton Allen felt disconnected from these recent experiences – both her time at Spelman and in Holly Springs – and struggled to make meaning of them on her own. At no point did Allen and her exchange programme peers meet to discuss their experiences, neither did Mississippi Summer Project volunteers find an opportunity to debrief and ‘prepare to re-enter what would be for almost all of us an alienating environment’. While she now feels that the organisation of such group discussions ‘would have been so helpful’, as far as she was aware there was no precedence for them, and ‘the ability to institute such groups simply did not exist at Spelman or among the organizers of the Mississippi Summer Project’ considering their limited resources.<sup>44</sup> In the end,

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<sup>43</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010; and Allen, ‘Would You Marry One?’.

<sup>44</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010. This is not to say that informal discussions around race and returning to the North did not occur; Allen points out that they did. However, no organised attempt was made to bring volunteers together to reflect on their experiences, the impact of these experiences, and the ways in which they would cope on return.

Allen surmises, 'I think people handled the transitions differently, but I think many people got lost inside'.<sup>45</sup>

Allen's own sense of 'loss' during her transition was all the more difficult because her desire to continue learning about race and race relations in the US was as strong as ever, and it was perhaps for this reason, as much as any other, that Allen began to create her own chances for interracial dialogue and critical reflection on racism. As part of her preparation for a paper she was writing on the experience of being a minority (based on her time at Spelman), Allen asked black students to meet with her and discuss their experiences at Carleton. Out of this grew a co-ed, interracial group that continued to meet and to talk about 'personal experiences' around race and racism. Later in the academic year, the group held an open meeting entitled 'Is Carleton Racist?' that Allen recalls drew a crowd of about 60, including a number of white students who downplayed racism on campus by arguing that all students mistreated each other regardless of race. Allen remembers that when she tried to challenge these white students, 'I saw I had no credibility since I was white; that my membership in this interracial group, my experiences in the South, both at Spelman and in Mississippi, didn't count'. Though she knew that the students of colour in the interracial group valued her insights, Allen's confrontation during this event forced questions that would shape her future racial justice activism: '[C]an whites teach each other about racism? Will whites listen to other whites?'<sup>46</sup>

All of these events – at Church of the Advocate and Spelman, in Mississippi then back at Carleton – conferred many lessons on Allen. She was confronted with the inescapable fact of her whiteness. 'I found it hard while at Spelman to forget I

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<sup>45</sup> Allen, Cade and Haberman Trusty, 'Exchange'; and Allen, 'Would You Marry One?'

<sup>46</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010.

was white', she reflected before leaving for Mississippi.<sup>47</sup> Later, she said that her time on the Mississippi Summer Project 'was the first time that I really looked at white America'.<sup>48</sup> As her knowledge of historical and present-day patterns of racism grew, so did both her shame at being white and her understanding of the ways in which ignorance fed racial injustice. After all, in Mississippi she had experienced 'profound moments of sharing, times when we transcended the distrust and ignorance racism had bred'.<sup>49</sup> She had, moreover, learnt that she even had the ability to teach (as well as to learn) in ways that promoted racial justice. Some of her experiences had begged the question of who could or should do such teaching, but through all of them she came to realise that she at least had the ability and the drive.

*Locating women's liberation, continuing racial justice: Breakaway*

By the summer of 1967, Allen was living in New York and feeling disconnected from the activism and energy of her college years. After graduation she had married Robert Allen, a black activist and intellectual whose home state of Georgia still outlawed interracial marriage when they wed in 1965. Robert enjoyed increasing fame at the end of the 1960s for his writing on the black freedom movement in the *Guardian*. Allen's job as a social worker, however, proved frustrating, and she lacked meaningful social justice outlets. A trip to Chicago in the summer of 1967 transformed this disillusionment into renewed energy and activism. There, Allen discovered that white women within the New Left were beginning to organise around women's liberation, and Allen promptly suggested that she organise similarly in New

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<sup>47</sup> Allen, 'Why I Am Going to Mississippi'.

<sup>48</sup> James P. O'Brien interview.

<sup>49</sup> Allen, 'Why Struggle? Why Care?'.

York. She was put in touch with Shalumith Firestone, a white feminist who at the time was relocating to New York from Chicago. With the founding of New York Radical Women (NYRW) that fall, the two women established themselves amongst New York's women's liberation pioneers, and Allen began her career as a full-time activist in that movement. NYRW contributed influential intellectual and organisational tools to women's liberation, networked with groups flowering all around the country, and led some of the movement's earliest actions, such as the 'Burial of Traditional Womanhood' in January 1968. Allen stayed with this group until the early spring of 1968, when she joined a different group of feminist activists who were just beginning to organise. It was also around this time that she wrote a couple of articles on women's liberation for the *Guardian*, the leftist weekly paper for which her husband had been writing.<sup>50</sup>

When Allen and her husband moved to San Francisco the following summer, She helped to establish another important feminist group, Sudsofloppen, which became one of the longest continually running consciousness-raising groups in the country. This nonsensical name was taken, Allen wrote, so that '[n]o notion of who or what we were could be derived from the name separate from the work and ideas we produced'.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps most significant amongst Sudsofloppen's contributions was its ideas on feminist consciousness-raising groups. In a joint paper, the group wrote:

The [consciousness-raising] group has provided the mechanism to analyze the nature of oppression on a personal level and from that perspective to a total

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<sup>50</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010; Chude Pam Allen, email interview with the author, 19 February 2013; Evans, *Personal Politics*: 202-03; Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*: 51-92; and Say Burgin, 'Understanding Antiwar Activism as a Gendering Activity: A Look at the U.S.'s Anti-Vietnam War Movement' *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13(6), 2012: 18-31 (22-24).

<sup>51</sup> Pam Allen, *Free Space: A Perspective on the Small Group in Women's Liberation*: 16-21 (quotations from 18, 19 and 21), Box 2, Folder 2: *Free Space*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 19 April 1969 [1970], Allen Papers.

socio-economic-historical analysis. From such an analysis comes the understanding of the need to commit ourselves to a struggle to win control over our own destiny, to move from the role of passive observer to that of active participant.<sup>52</sup>

Allen in particular had driven the group's attempts to share these ideas with other feminists. She authored *Free Space*, a long pamphlet that touted the positive impact of consciousness-raising and advised on small group structure. It became one of the most influential writings on consciousness-raising in the context of women's liberation.<sup>53</sup> As I discuss below, Allen used her ideas on the structure of consciousness-raising groups as she developed a format for her anti-racism classes. Moreover, consciousness-raising groups, as Allen and Sudsofloppen conceived of them, were 'a mechanism to analyze the nature of oppression' that easily lent themselves to the study of racism.

From her first days in the feminist movement, Allen thought critically about its racial politics. Only a few months into NYRW's life, she wrote a piece called 'Memo to My White Sisters in Our Struggle to Realize Our Full Humanity', in which she condemned white women's liberationists' propensity to draw analogies between racism and sexism. Written in January 1968, this little-known piece carries great significance not only because it offers a very early example of white feminist concern over the racial politics of the women's liberation movement, but also because it resonates with critiques that black feminists and other feminists of colour mounted (in a much more sustained manner) in the 1970s. As the anti-imperialist politics of the Women's School exemplifies, questions regarding the relationship of women's liberation to the black power movement had permeated the nascent feminist

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<sup>52</sup> 'The Sudsofloppen Paper', reprinted in Allen, *Free Space*: 43.

<sup>53</sup> Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*: 88.

movement, whose members took it for granted that the movement was largely, if not entirely, white. While a number of white feminists drew connections between Black Power and women's liberation based on a shared position vis-à-vis systems of oppression, 'Memo to My White Sisters' cautioned against this. Allen felt this was a racist practice, one in which she also implicated herself. She stated plainly that such parallels stemmed from white feminists' race-based guilt and their desire to excuse themselves from 'the blame for an oppressive, racist society'. More importantly, this practice eclipsed the realities of women of colour and inhibited the kinds of alliances that white feminists should have been working towards.<sup>54</sup> Reading the memo aloud at a NYRW meeting, Allen stated:

My contention is that if it is possible to make alliances within the black community it will be among poor black women. But what do we – middle-class white women have in common with them? It is this question I think we should be addressing ourselves to and not what do we have in common with the black movement. For if we fail to address ourselves to this question we will lose our most important allies – the women of color throughout the world – and I think we will also lose our chance of finding our humanity.<sup>55</sup>

For Allen, then, the race and class differences that existed between the women's liberation movement, on the one hand, and poor black women on the other, did not or should not preclude alliances. White feminists had, however, largely been thinking about their commonalities with black freedom activists in ways that focused on black men. Allen recognised that developing relationships with poor black women would

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<sup>54</sup> Pam Allen, 'Memo to My White Sisters in Our Struggle to Realize Our Full Humanity': 1 (January 1968), Box 2, Folder 5: Other Writings, ca. 1976-1971-1971, Allen Papers. On racism/sexism parallels amongst women's liberationists, see Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*: 113-114. For feminist of colour critiques that echo Allen's memo, see Combahee River Collective, 'The Combahee River Collective Statement'; and Lorraine Bethel, 'What Chou Mean *We*, White Girl?' *Conditions: Five, The Black Woman's Issue* (Fall 1979): 86-92. Benita Roth argues that black and Chicana feminists initiated movements at roughly the same time as white feminists, though they developed different kinds of feminism that white women often knew little about. See her *Separate Roads to Feminism*.

<sup>55</sup> Allen, 'Memo to My White Sisters': 3.

not be easy. Her memo continued:

To think in terms of relating to poor black women and to the women of the third world, we must first face the issue of racism in ourselves. We must face it and accept its existence in all of us and learn how to deal with it first in ourselves and then in our white sisters of all classes. And at the same time we need to address our class bias and begin to deal with this. For we can never enter into alliances with other women if we continue to define our goals in middle-class, materialistic terms.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, Allen felt that in order to create a multiracial, cross-class feminist movement, white women needed to recognise the racist and classist dynamics that existed within them as individuals and in the movement at large. For Allen, only a feminist movement that addressed itself to poor women and women of colour could create just and humane change for all women. In this memo and elsewhere, Allen confronted practices and patterns within the feminist movement that she felt were problematic or unjust in terms of race, and key to her understanding of the movement's racial politics was her sense that whites had a great deal to learn about racism, that race-based ignorance negatively impacted women's liberation. If her time at Spelman and in the Mississippi Summer Project provided Allen with the intellectual tools and experience to later carry out anti-racism seminars, her first couple of years in the feminist movement instilled in her the passion and the urgency necessary to begin them.<sup>57</sup>

Allen carried her questions about white women and racial ignorance with her as she moved to San Francisco in 1968. She became embroiled in debates and projects surrounding women (particularly white feminists), education and race. She spoke at conferences on the burgeoning women's studies movement about the need

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*: 3.

<sup>57</sup> For another example of Allen addressing problematic racial politics in the feminist movement, see 'Interview with Pam Allen and Julius Lester', WBAI Radio, 5 May 1968, Box 2, Folder 5: Other Writings, ca. 1967-1971, Allen Papers.

to study racism and offered to the countless individuals who wrote to her reading lists on white supremacy or women of colour writings. She also co-organised a feminist free school and led seminars on institutional racism and white supremacy there, as well as at other alternative education sites and at local branches of the YWCA. Allen's experiences as a student at Spelman and a Freedom School teacher enabled this work, as did her politically-charged marriage to Robert, who by 1970 had established himself as a leading activist in black draft resistance and a key thinker in the black power movement. Importantly, Allen also had experience with free schools; she and Robert had attended New York's Free University, where they took a class on experimental films.<sup>58</sup>

As with the Detroit Industrial Mission and People Acting for Change Together, Allen felt it was imperative that white feminists study racism because its existence and perpetuation rested with whites. Though they may be largely ignorant of institutional racism in the US, whites were directly implicated in it. 'The responsibility for racism lies with white Americans historically and today,' Allen wrote in the syllabus to her YWCA workshops.<sup>59</sup> Of course, this sentiment reiterated Black Power's emphasis on institutional white racism, just as the very existence of Allen's anti-racism workshops functioned as a response to the imperative that whites organise against racism within white communities. Allen's experiences at Church of the Advocate and Spelman and with SNCC had also taught her a great deal about whites' responsibility vis-à-vis racism. However, it was Allen's witnessing of racial ignorance within the feminist movement that drove her to provide anti-racist

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<sup>58</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Pam Allen, 'Suggested Readings for Beginning the Study of White Supremacy': 1-2, 16 September 1971, Box 2, Folder 5: Other Writings, ca. 1967-1971, Allen Papers.

education for women. In a letter to a feminist friend, Allen wrote:

In essence I am approaching white women now at the point I think they are weakest – their understanding of white supremacy. It now seems to me that a women's movement cannot occur until white women commit themselves to overcoming racism in themselves and the world. Without that we have a white supremacist movement which calls itself women's liberation.<sup>60</sup>

Clearly, Allen perceived the white feminist movement's dominant racial politics similarly to anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School. White women's 'weak' knowledge of racism ('white supremacy') deeply worried Allen, who, like anti-imperialist feminists, feared that racial ignorance would support racial domination in the name of gender equality.

Out of these concerns and experiences, Allen began to provide anti-racist workshops within the women's liberation movement in and around San Francisco. As I discuss below, Allen led a great many of these at YWCA chapters and was paid for this work. She started out, however, at a feminist free school called Breakaway. Breakaway got its start in the fall of 1970 when Allen and six other feminists first established a 'program of women's studies'. In their first pamphlet, the founders made a point of situating this 'educational project' by embedding it within San Francisco's women's liberation movement.<sup>61</sup> The group had been meeting and organising smaller events since the spring. All had been friends and active in feminist projects and consciousness-raising groups in the city, and several belonged to Sudsofloppen. Some had come to women's liberation from the black freedom movement. Cathy Cade, for instance, who attended Spelman on exchange and graduated from Carleton two years ahead of Allen, had engaged in SNCC support

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<sup>60</sup> Pam Allen, Letter to Su Negrin, 10 August 1971, Box 2, Folder 3: Free Space Correspondence and Articles, 1969 October – 1974 April, Allen Papers.

<sup>61</sup> 'Breakaway: A program of women's studies, fall 1970', Box 4, Folder 9: Activities, Breakaway Conferences, 1970-1973, Allen Papers.

work during the early 1960s. Others would come to make a name for themselves within the feminist movement, such as Allen with her work as a both an early organiser and author of *Free Space*. Judy Syfers also became known in feminist circles around the country after publishing 'Why I Want a Wife' in 1971 in *Notes from the Third Year* which was picked up in the first issue of *Ms. Magazine* in 1972.<sup>62</sup>

The connections amongst Breakaway founders in some ways reflected what Shirley Goek-lin Lim was to refer to much later as 'the old-girls network, the same-o, same-o circles, telephone trees, college connections', the kind of exclusivity that could at least, in part, account for a lack of race and class diversity amongst the Breakaway women as well as the larger movement.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, the founders recoiled from the potential for notoriety through Breakaway. They had always planned to disband as *the* organising cohort for the school as soon as it was up in running, hoping that others would find enough usefulness in the project that they would volunteer to continue it. Writing to Breakaway students a few weeks after classes had begun in October 1970, co-founder Tanis Walters put it bluntly: 'Breakaway as such no longer exists. The seven women who have made up the Breakaway staff have disbanded, as we have planned to do from the outset. Breakaway is now the women taking the seminars.' Another letter to students, just ahead of the fall term's general de-briefing meeting, explained that the co-founders chose to disband in this way 'because we didn't want to become an established

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<sup>62</sup> Cathy Cade, 'Caught in the Middle' in Faith S. Holsaeart, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson and others (eds) *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010): 195-209; Chris Carlsson and Lisa Ruth Elliott, *Ten Years that Shook the City: San Francisco, 1968-1978* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2011): 177; and *Notes from the Third Year: Women's Liberation* (New York: Quarto, 1971): 13-14.

<sup>63</sup> Shirley Goek-lin Lim, "'Ain't I a Feminist?' Reforming the Circle' in Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow (eds) *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998): 450-466 (452).

elitist organization', and that the general meeting would provide an opportunity for students to both report back on the classes and determine if there was enough interest and ability amongst themselves to continue Breakaway.<sup>64</sup>

Other women did indeed continue Breakaway, and some of the founders actually went on to teach in subsequent Breakaway terms. This on-going enthusiasm for feminist educational projects reflected a regional surge in feminist energies in and around education. Early growth around the women's studies movement began in California, where in 1969 a group of students and faculty at San Diego State University and local feminist activists began to organise as a 'Women's Studies Committee' to become part of the university. As historian of the women's studies movement, Marilyn Jacoby Boxer, has written, these women's studies pioneers envisioned a feminist programme greater than academic engagement; their vision included 'components labelled research, publication, child care, storefront, cultural center, and recruitment and tutorial'.<sup>65</sup> By the spring of 1971, women's studies was well enough established within free school networks and on college and university campuses that feminists at the University of California Santa Cruz were calling for a 'California wide Women's Studies conference' where women's liberationists could converge to discuss how to develop women's studies 'so as to best serve the needs of women'.<sup>66</sup>

Both of these endeavours reflected the deep connections, indeed overlap,

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<sup>64</sup> Tanis Walters, letter to students, 28 October 1970, Box 4, Folder 9: Activities, Breakaway Conferences, 1970-1973, Allen Papers; Letter to students, 'Re: General Breakaway Meeting, Monday Jan 18 1971', 6 January 1971, Box 4, Folder 9: Activities, Breakaway Conferences, 1970-1973, Allen Papers.

<sup>65</sup> Marilyn Jacoby Boxer, *When Women Ask the Questions: Creating Women's Studies in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998): 9.

<sup>66</sup> Lucy Moore and Amy Kesselman, letter to Breakaway: 1-2, Box 4, Folder 9: Activities, Breakaway Conferences, 1970-1973, Allen Papers.

that existed between feminist activist and feminist academic communities in the earliest days of institutional women's studies. Allen and other Breakaway founders were aware of these developments and communicated to varying extents with women involved with them and with other feminist free schools around the country, and within this rich milieu of women's studies, Breakaway launched alternative feminist education on the West Coast. Breakaway, the founders wrote in their first pamphlet, 'is an educational project within women's liberation in San Francisco. Breakaway is for women who want to teach and study about themselves, their oppression, and their history. To do this, we are having seminars by, for, and about women'. Open only to women, Breakaway's organisers asked that potential students accept as true the fact of sexism. 'Seminars will begin with the understanding that women are oppressed', the fall 1970 course catalogue advised.<sup>67</sup>

Allen and the other founders named Breakaway after the 'breakaway phenomenon', a term to describe the sensation of feeling detached from the Earth while at high altitudes. The founders used this concept as an analogy for re-considering gender relations and socialisation practices:

Breakaway Phenomenon: an astronaut is trained to obey orders from control center, but it has been found that beyond the earth's atmosphere conditioning tends to drop away – familiar commands become ineffectual in the exhilaration of a newfound sense of freedom.<sup>68</sup>

Appearing a year and a half ahead of the Cambridge-based Women's School and on the other side of the country, Breakaway's classes appeared remarkably similar to those of its East Coast counterpart. Of the twelve classes that ran that first term – from 5 October to 14 December – some were based around skills such as drawing,

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<sup>67</sup> 'Breakaway: A program of women's studies, fall 1970'.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

auto repair and practising ‘verbal aggression’; others reflected contemporary preoccupations of the white left – ‘Method and Economics’, ‘Population’, and ‘Human Ecology’, for instance. The school also boasted woman-centred classes, such as those on women’s history, lesbianism and sexism. The founders all taught on these first classes. At \$5 per seminar, Breakaway’s offerings were pricier than those at the Women’s School would be; however, the founders assured students that ‘other arrangements can be made’ if the fee proved too steep. Class fees went towards operational costs, but Breakaway founders had more than finances in mind when they opted to charge students. These feminists felt they had worked very hard to create a free school and design and lead classes; charging for the classes, they thought, would help to ensure that enrolees turned up for classes.<sup>69</sup>

Amongst the diverse programme of classes was Allen’s on ‘Institutional Racism’. Because the founders had always planned to pass the school on to others – if they had found it useful – Allen only led this seminar once. One of the other founders, Linda Daucher, taught Breakaway’s ‘Institutional Racism’ class when it reconvened in the spring of 1971, and the following year yet another founder, Tanis Walters, led a course called ‘Institutional Racism and Sexism’ when Breakaway was re-organised in Berkeley that year. Daucher and Walters built on Allen’s work, though they modified the course somewhat over the years. Of the one hundred students who first enrolled at Breakaway, nine white women took Allen’s ‘Institutional Racism’. Allen recalls that, for these women, a concern around anti-racism and the women’s liberation movement brought them to the seminar. That is, these women wanted the movement to emphasise racial justice to a greater extent

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*; Tanis Walters, letter to students, 28 October 1970; Allen, email interview with the author, 29 November 2010; and Chude Pam Allen, email interview with the author, 19 March 2013.

than it had been.<sup>70</sup>

Allen's was a reading-intensive seminar. Tellingly, the blurb that ran for 'Institutional Racism' in the course catalogue said little about the actual content or focus of the class and instead provided full citations of what she required students to read. This emphasis on reading was borne out of Allen's steadfast attempts to differentiate between racism and sexism, particularly in the context of a majority-white movement. White women's liberationists, Allen felt, could not understand these two systems of oppression in similar ways, as they had been attempting to through, for instance, repeated analogies of racism and sexism. At the California-wide women's studies convention held in Santa Cruz in 1971, Allen led a 'White Supremacy Workshop' which collectively called on those at the conference to more deeply consider, and educate themselves about, racism. Demonstrating Allen's huge influence, as well as her experience in feminist anti-racist education, the group's public statement to the largely white conference outlined the reasons white feminists could and should develop different approaches to understanding these systems:

As white women our approaches to understanding sexism and racism have to be different. As women we are the direct victims of sexism. The roots of our realization and understanding of sexism are in our personal experiences and feelings because those experiences and feelings are what we live. From examining our own lives, we can go on to a systematic study of sexism in all its institutional forms and complexities.

But we are not the victims as white women of institutional racism. Therefore we cannot trust our feelings and experiences because we do not carry within us the reality of racist oppression. So to understand racism we have to start from the other end – an approach opposite that to sexism. That is, we have to study. We

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<sup>70</sup> Course catalogues, 'Breakaway: Spring 1972' and 'Berkeley Breakaway, Summer 1972', Breakaway Conferences, 1970-1973, Series: Activities, Allen Papers; 'Breakaway: A program of women's studies, fall 1970'; Tanis Walters, letter to students, 28 October 1970; and Chude Pam Allen, email interview with the author, 17 May 2012.

have to learn about the mechanisms of racism – its history and institutions.<sup>71</sup> Thus, in Allen's view, while they may turn to consciousness-raising groups could interrogate gender relations or patriarchy, white women's different relationship to the system of racial oppression required that they begin with the experiences and histories of others. Such a position implied – or perhaps took for granted – that white feminists harboured a great deal of ignorance around race and racism. They could rely on neither personal experiences nor current knowledge of racism, presumably because the latter was not present. Allen, along with women from her 'White Supremacy Workshop', thus established ignorance as the key impediment to white women's ability to build a racially just feminist politics. The antidote they identified, 'study', had by this time already been attempted by Allen, whose reading-heavy format at Breakaway signified her distinction between study and consciousness-raising.

This enthusiasm for studying institutional racism was tempered by the awareness that educational efforts had their limits. In their statement at the women's studies conference, Allen and others cautioned:

We know that an intellectual understanding of sexism does not necessarily make one less sexist. Studying institutional racism does not guarantee that as individuals we will be less racist. But, intellectually we will have a far greater comprehension of the condition of our Third World sisters on the one hand, and on the other hand a greater comprehension of ourselves – how our own world view has been conditioned by the ideology of white supremacy.<sup>72</sup>

Allen and others recognised that such study was not, in and of itself, a means to a more just world. Yet, without making explicit the ways in which it could or should link

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<sup>71</sup> The White Supremacy Workshop 'Statement Made to Women's Studies Conference' (University of California at Santa Cruz, April 17-18, 1971): 1-2, Box 2, Folder 5: Other Writings, ca. 1967-1971, Allen Papers. Emphasis in original.

<sup>72</sup> The White Supremacy Workshop, 'Statement Made to Women's Studies Conference': 2.

to feminist action, they implied that knowledge of racism would have a positive ideological impact on the women's liberation movement.

Though keen to differentiate between white feminists' approaches to understanding racism and sexism, Allen came to rely on the small group process that she and Sudsofloppen had developed and which she described at length in *Free Space*. With four fairly distinct steps, this was a methodical, almost regimented approach. It began with a process called 'opening up' in which an individual's personal experiences and feelings were shared. This was followed by 'sharing', which allowed other individuals to respond to the first individual's account. In *Free Space*, Allen wrote that the purpose of this second step 'is to arrive at an understanding of the social condition of women by pooling descriptions of the forms oppression has taken in each individual's life' and to eventually understand that 'the situations described are not personal at all...but rather have a root in the social order'.<sup>73</sup> From this point, participants could enter the third stage, 'analyzing', wherein they began to think more deeply about why and how these oppressive relations manifested themselves, as well as 'possible ways of fighting that oppression'.<sup>74</sup> The final step in Allen's small group process was called 'abstracting', and it involved synthesising the analytical findings and creating priorities in terms of both the issues and possible strategies for resistance. In *Free Space*, Allen emphasised the need to put 'some distance' between 'us and our concerns' in order to 'look at the totality of the nature of our condition...[and] begin to build (and to some extent, experience) a vision of our human potential'.<sup>75</sup> Specific and personal experiences had thus been

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<sup>73</sup> Allen, *Free Space*: 16-18 (18).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*: 19.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*: 21.

crucial, in fact foundational, to the method that Allen and Sudsofloppen had developed. When enacted with care, this method ensured that analysis around women's oppression was born from women's actual experiences.<sup>76</sup>

Allen adapted this consciousness-raising method to the historical and contemporary study of racism in California and the larger US. Rather than rely upon the experiences of a woman present for the 'opening up' material, Allen incorporated the personal story of an American Indian whose tribe had been native to the area that became northern California. *Ishi in Two Worlds* is a 1961 biography of the only surviving Yahi Indian who, having found his way into the world of white California in the early twentieth century, ended up at the University of California San Francisco for the last few years of his life. Written by Theodora Kroeber, the wife of one of the anthropologists who worked with Ishi, this book sets Ishi's life in the larger context of the history and social realities of the Yahi and other Californian tribes, including the many kinds of violence that white settlers had continuously perpetrated. In this way, *Ishi*, as Allen recounts, 'makes the reader a witness to the genocide of a tribe'. Allen used Kroeber's account of Ishi – whose actual name was lost with his tribe – in order to personalise racism. The 'opening up' of his story provided the kinds of details and experiences that Allen's white feminist students could use later to build ideas about historical and institutional practices of racism.<sup>77</sup>

As Allen recalls, *Ishi* also prompted 'sharing'. In consciousness-raising sessions, this had been the moment when women shared stories of identification

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<sup>76</sup> Chude Pam Allen, email interview with the author, 14 December 2010; and Chude Pam Allen, email interview with the author, 8 May 2012.

<sup>77</sup> Theodora Kroeber, *Ishi in Two Worlds: A Biography of the Last Wild Indian in North America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); and Allen, email interview with the author, 14 December 2010.

with the woman who had ‘opened up’, and though Allen felt white women could not rely only on their own racialised experiences to arrive at an understanding of racism, she did not bar discussions of personal feelings. She remembers making room for women to share their thoughts and feelings in relation to the readings and the stories they told. In fact, throughout her seminars – at Breakaway, the YWCA, and elsewhere – Allen consistently drew attention to the ways in which addressing ignorance around issues of race and racism constituted emotional and difficult experiences.<sup>78</sup> Part of the power of racial ignorance had been its ability to shelter whites from the truth of violent and oppressive practices that whites enacted upon peoples of colour throughout US history.<sup>79</sup> In the syllabus for some of her YWCA seminars, Allen addressed this dynamic:

White Americans are almost totally ignorant of the history of racism in this country. We have not been taught a true history in our schools and few of us have any awareness of the pervasiveness of white supremacy throughout all parts of our country. Discovering the truth can be painful.<sup>80</sup>

The pain wrought by the rectifying of this ignorance had to be addressed, Allen felt. The women who took her seminars – especially the all-white group at Breakaway – needed space to relate and ‘share’ their feelings, before they could productively move on to other histories and stories. Allen remembers this being especially true with *Ishi*. None of the women, including Allen, knew anything about the history of American Indian genocide, and the details of Kroeber’s book shocked many of them. Allen recalls that when she first read the book, she had been ‘unprepared for [the]

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<sup>78</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 14 December 2010; and Chude Pam Allen, email interview with the author, 23 May 2012.

<sup>79</sup> See also Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, ‘Introduction’, in Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (eds) *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007): 1-10 (1).

<sup>80</sup> ‘Suggested Readings for Beginning the Study of White Supremacy’.

horror' of the lynchings, mass murders, relentless displacement and subsequent food shortages – 'episodes of extermination' as Kroeber referred to them. She and her Breakaway participants needed space to contend with the distress brought about by this new information, by this personal story. As Allen recalls it, then, *Ishi* was 'the catalyst' for both 'opening up' the study of institutional racism in the US and prompting women to 'share' their feelings with regard to this history. Addressing white women's ignorance (including her own) around racism proved an emotive as well as an intellectual enterprise.<sup>81</sup>

It was important to Allen, however, that this emotional space not generate or allow for guilt or shame. Questions around white guilt had arisen within the women's liberation movement, as they had in the New Left. Su Negrin, a white feminist friend of Allen's from New York, responded to a letter from Allen – the very one which introduced this section – by stating that 'women's weakest point is their understanding of male (not white) supremacy', and she warned that 'there is danger and destructiveness when guilt insinuates itself in struggle'.<sup>82</sup> Allen had felt ashamed and guilty of being white at times, particularly during her time at Spelman when she first 'really looked at white America'. She also acknowledged that race-based guilt often came quite naturally to whites: 'We [white women's liberationists] are white and we have, of course all of the guilt feelings and all the problems of racism that any white group has'.<sup>83</sup> She was, however, also wary of the effects of indulging such feelings. Allen wrote to Negrin that she had witnessed the ways in which this kind of

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<sup>81</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 14 December 2010; Allen, email interview with the author, 23 May 2012; and Kroeber, *Ishi*: 56-100 (56).

<sup>82</sup> Su Negrin undated [August 1971?] letter to Pam Allen, Box 2, Folder 3: Free Space Correspondence and Articles, 1969 October – 1974 April, Allen Papers.

<sup>83</sup> Julius Lester with Pam Allen 'Interview with Pam Allen and Julius Lester'.

guilt inhibited critical engagement amongst activists and hampered the larger movement. To move beyond this, she said, she took a 'historical-analytical' approach in order to ensure that white women 'acquire[d] correct knowledge'. Importantly – and this is the key point which Allen tried to make to Negrin – she was interested in getting women's liberationists to both learn about white privilege and institutional racism and to move beyond the guilt associated with this knowledge.<sup>84</sup>

However unavoidable guilt and shame might have been, Allen felt they were unproductive feelings and not conducive to the kind of action or engagement that she felt should result from studying. In her YWCA syllabus she offered a cautionary note:

[T]he purpose of studying white racism is not to create self hatred. Feeling bad doesn't change anything and the point of our study is to learn so that we may begin to change ourselves and act intelligently in support of the struggle of Third World people to change racist America.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, Allen believed that guilty feelings inhibited both the kind of racially aware growth that white women needed to do as individuals and their collective ability to stand in solidarity with racial justice struggles. The 'sharing' process prompted by stories like Ishi's allowed her seminar participants to air their emotional responses, and it provided space for Allen to navigate conversations around the usefulness of particular emotional responses over others.

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<sup>84</sup> Pam Allen letter to Su Negrin, 19 September 1971, Box 2, Folder 3: Free Space Correspondence and Articles, 1969 October – 1974 April, Allen Papers. Women's liberation movement historian Winifred Breines has contended that 'the notion of "white skin privilege" was generated by and used to generate guilt' (*The Trouble Between Us*: 112). Her dismissal of the concept of white privilege demonstrates a shocking disengagement from the vast and studied literature that has been produced around the concept over the past many decades, often by feminists and former women's liberationists. See for instance Peggy McIntosh, 'White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack' *Peace and Freedom*, July/August 1989: 10-12; and Mab Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor* (Boston: South End Press, 1994).

<sup>85</sup> Suggested Readings for Beginning the Study of White Supremacy': 2. See also Allen, letter to Su Negrin, 19 September 1971.

The next book that ‘Institutional Racism’ students read and discussed was Carey McWilliams’ *Brothers Under the Skin*. Originally written by the white journalist in 1942 at the height of wartime tensions, the book surveyed the US’s largest racial groups in an effort to highlight discrepancies between the nation’s democratic ideals and purportedly anti-imperialist efforts, on the one hand, and the facts of racial domination and discrimination on the other. *Brothers* briefly several racialised groups: Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and African Americans.<sup>86</sup> Drier and less personal in tone than *Ishi*, it allowed Allen to move her participants on to the stage in which they began to analyse the larger patterns of institutional racism. Though dated and ‘difficult to read’, McWilliams’ book nonetheless contained invaluable information and raised important questions.<sup>87</sup>

In particular, Allen used this book – as well as *Ishi* – to expand the black-white paradigm and encourage seminar participants to more deeply consider other peoples of colour as they began to make assessments about the US racial landscape. As the classes at the Women’s School and the workshops of the Detroit Industrial Mission demonstrate, a number of anti-racist whites often developed frameworks that operated within this binary and thus privileged the histories and struggles of blacks over those of Chicanos, American Indians, Asian Americans and Puerto Ricans. Allen remembers that it was not until she and her husband moved to California that they made a conscious effort to study race outside of this dominant black-white paradigm. By that time – the summer of 1968 – Chippewa activists in Minnesota had established the American Indian Movement, and the following year, a

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<sup>86</sup> Carey McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1942): 3-7.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Suggested Readings for Beginning the Study of White Supremacy’: 2. Allen, email interview with the author, 14 December 2010

group of American Indians representing around fifty different tribes took over the island of Alcatraz, less than two miles offshore of San Francisco, in an attempt to create a central cultural location for indigenous peoples in the US. The Asian American Movement, largely led by Chinese- and Japanese Americans, got its start in the late 1960s, and a number of this movement's activists participated in the momentous Third World Strike at San Francisco State College over the 1968-69 school year, in which black, Chicano and Asian American students demanded and won a student-run Ethnic Studies programme. Moreover, the Chicano movement's firm base had been in California, where for example El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Atzlán formed at the University of California Santa Barbara in 1969.<sup>88</sup> This is all to say that by the late 1960s several concurrent movements for racial justice had begun to explode the black-white paradigm and many of these had a particularly strong presence in California, practically in Breakaway's backyard.

For Allen, it was crucial that the black-white paradigm give way to a larger understanding of the many racialised groups that experienced institutional racism in the US, particularly in the context of California's multiracialism. Through her and her husband's concerted efforts to investigate race beyond this dominant conceptualisation, Allen came across *Ishi* and *Brothers*. By beginning with histories of non-black racialised groups in her seminars, Allen began to challenge the tendency to view race in black and white terms and educate participants on histories that were presumably even less familiar to them than those of African Americans.

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<sup>88</sup> James Wilson, *The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America* (New York: Grove Press, 1998): 394-396; William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993): x, 1-19; Carlos Munoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso, 1989): xi-xiii; and Daryl Joji Maeda, *Rethinking the Asian American Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 19.

Allen felt McWilliams' chapter on American Indians, for instance, complemented the localised history found in *Ishi* particularly well as it added a necessary analytical component as well as 'an overview of the national policy towards native Americans [sic]'.<sup>89</sup> McWilliams' attention to Chicano and Asian-American history, Allen felt, was also invaluable; it educated all of them, she remembers, on the ways in which whites across the country often worked together to maintain domination over many different peoples of colour in different locales (through alliances that were anti-black and anti-Asian, for instance).<sup>90</sup>

Both *Ishi* and *Brothers* had limitations, though. Published decades after the death of both Ishi and the year after Kroeber's husband, Alfred Kroeber, passed away, there was some distance between *Ishi* the book and Ishi the man. Moreover, Ishi's story was mediated entirely through a non-indigenous perspective. Consequently, Allen urged students to exercise caution and critique with both *Ishi* and *Brothers*. These writers had 'done valuable research but they should be read with the awareness that all white Americans, including ourselves, have been imbued with white supremacist notions'. Allen advised that writings by peoples of colour 'should be primary in any study of white supremacy' because any works about race written by whites possibly exhibited racism. However, Kroeber and McWilliams' books carried examples of racism that were particularly conspicuous, she said, 'because the rhetoric and approach to racism' in the contemporary moment had changed greatly.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> 'Suggested Readings for Beginning the Study of White Supremacy': 2.

<sup>90</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 14 December 2010; and Allen, email interview with the author, 8 May 2012.

<sup>91</sup> 'Suggested Readings for Beginning the Study of White Supremacy': 1- 2.

Though she was perhaps more upfront about it, Allen's caution with writings by whites on race found resonance with many who ran anti-racism workshops at this time. White anti-imperialist feminists in Cambridge, People Acting for Change Together and the Detroit Industrial Mission all developed seminars around contemporary black writings. Allen's insistence, then, that writings by people of colour be prioritised was a principled position that found widespread support among anti-racist whites. Yet, in her Breakaway seminars, the first three books students read were written by white authors. This disjuncture likely stemmed from the complex, overlapping purposes that Allen demanded of the texts – that they discuss regional histories (*Ishi* and *Brothers*), breach the black-white binary (*Ishi* and *Brothers*), and follow her consciousness-raising format.

As 'Institutional Racism' participants moved on to their third reading, they began to focus more on the contemporary moment and on African American experiences. A collection of essays pulled together by white, Christian doctoral students at Stanford University, *Institutional Racism in America* explores the contours and several examples of institutional racism in the US in relation to blacks. The collection explicates the institutionally racist patterns found within the economy, education, the police and justice system, and the political system. For example, the ways in which whites exploit blacks as consumers and all but exclude them from access to entrepreneurialism, as well as the cloistering of African Americans in low-paid employment, frame an analysis of the economy and institutional racism. Racism in education is understood through the processes of centralised white control of largely black schools and the institutionalisation of race-based ignorance

in curriculum developed almost entirely by whites.<sup>92</sup> With this book, Allen recalls, she attempted to move students ‘to the question of how racism is embedded in the society’s institutions’, and at the same time, she maintained the analytical stage of this process but did so in a way that extended historical thinking into the present.<sup>93</sup>

Although both *Ishi* and *Brothers* certainly described practices of white supremacy and violence, it was with *Institutional Racism* that a more explicit focus on whiteness as a site of power in the contemporary moment began to shape Allen’s seminars. In the first place, the writers spoke self-consciously about their whiteness in ways that Kroeber and McWilliams had not. Racial reflexivity had led them to write the book; as they began to understand the ‘urgent’ need for change in white communities, the contributors ‘became convinced that effective white action could only come from intelligent and careful analysis of racism and its effect on both black and white people’. Thus, in the second place, they connected their cognizance as a racially dominant group to the need to take action against that system of racial domination. For them, as with Allen and so many others, this action first had to take the form of re-learning the meaning of race in the US, and addressing the race-based ignorance that kept them from effectively working against racism.<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, the book described the processes that allowed whites to maintain positions of domination over African Americans. This is to say that, with regard to racial inequalities, it assigned agency to whites (and white-dominated practices and institutions) rather than explaining these inequalities by myopically exploring the

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<sup>92</sup> Knowles and Prewitt, *Institutional racism in America*.

<sup>93</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 14 December 2010.

<sup>94</sup> Knowles and Prewitt, *Institutional Racism*: vi-vii.

conditions of contemporary black life.<sup>95</sup> In ways that presaged Terry's *For Whites Only*, the authors of *Institutional Racism* reoriented the dominant white understanding of race by articulating racism as an issue rooted in white communities:

A new realization is dawning in white America. Under the insistent prodding of articulate blacks plus a few unusual whites, the so-called "Negro Problem" is being redefined. It's possible the racial sickness in our society is not, as we have so long assumed, rooted in the black and presumably "pathological" subculture but in the white and presumably "healthy" dominant culture.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, in this extended analytical stage of Allen's 'Institutional Racism' class, Breakaway participants were invited to think through the ways in which practices and institutions created and maintained within white communities and culture – and grounded in historical practices of genocide, dislocation, slavery and exploitation – produced institutional racism and racial inequalities.

The final reading that Allen required and which set the framework for understanding the US's racial landscape invited critical thought on these practices and institutions but framed them in the context of colonialism. Allen's husband had written *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* in 1969 after they moved to San Francisco in 1968 and had begun reporting on the creation of the Third World Liberation Front during the Third World Strike at San Francisco State College. *Black Awakening* examines multiple contexts – from the localised happenings in San Francisco to global anti-colonial struggles – and argues for an understanding of Black Power that is both historically grounded and rooted in multiple, connected social and political contexts, all of which are drawn together by an expanding consciousness of the colonial situation of peoples of colour. It takes a critical look at

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<sup>95</sup> See especially Knowles and Prewitt, *Institutional Racism*: 9-13. See also the Moynihan Report: Office of Policy Planning and Research, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington: United States Department of Labor, 1965).

<sup>96</sup> Knowles and Prewitt, *Institutional Racism*: 4.

the black power movement and raises questions about the ways in which white, capitalist efforts to co-opt it reflect neo-colonial processes.<sup>97</sup>

For Pam Allen, *Black Awakening* allowed her Breakaway students to enter the process of 'abstracting', of identifying larger patterns and dynamics of institutional racism and their connections with other systems of domination, particularly capitalism.<sup>98</sup> As Allen recalls the structure of her seminar and *Black Awakening's* place within it:

By the time we got to this book, the participants should have been clear that even though a person of color's personal experience wasn't enough to understand racism, neither was just learning the history of discrimination and oppression. This book showed it was important to also understand the forces at work to maintain the subjugation of people of color.<sup>99</sup>

Robert Allen's book, thus, interjected the historical and personalised studies presented by McWilliams and Kroeber, allowing Allen to draw students back to view larger processes at work on US racial formations. It also built on and extended the discussions in *Institutional Racism*, which had largely provided something of a catalogue of institutionally racist practices. Yet it also furthered the trend begun with *Institutional Racism* to bring African Americans into focus for Breakaway students. Allen invited her husband to speak to the class about his book and the larger black freedom movement. Crucial to his analysis and to Allen's attempts to push students to 'understand the forces at work' in racial domination was an awareness of the colonial aspects of black experience in the US, an understanding of African

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<sup>97</sup> Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America: An Analytic History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969); 'Suggested Readings for Beginning the Study of White Supremacy': 3; and Robert Allen, 'Reflections on the Writing of *Black Awakening*', Keynote Address, Robert Allen Celebrated: A 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute to *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* Conference, University of California-Berkeley, 10 April 2009 [online] <<http://voxunion.com/realaudio/coupradio/RobertAllenaudio.mp3>> [accessed 28 May 2012].

<sup>98</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 14 December 2010.

<sup>99</sup> Allen, email interview with the author, 14 December 2010.

Americans as an 'internal' or 'domestic colony'. While white anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School attempted to teach from this perspective throughout their black and women's history courses, for Allen this understanding needed to be arrived at more slowly. Hers was a telescopic approach, one in which an individual account of racial domination laid groundwork that could gradually be built upon until a much larger picture could come into view. The complex interactions between capitalism, neo-colonialism and racism could be arrived at and understood in abstractions only if racism had first been humanised and historicised.<sup>100</sup>

### *Conclusions*

After her semester of 'Institutional Racism' at Breakaway, Allen went on to provide classes for local YWCA branches in Santa Cruz (where she and her husband moved for a short while), San Jose, Marin County and San Francisco. By the time she led her first YWCA anti-racism seminar, she had already begun to collaborate with Robert on a book they wrote together called *Reluctant Reformers* (1974), on racism in various US social reform movements. Allen's key contribution to the book was in researching and writing the chapter on the woman suffrage movement. She observed a number of striking similarities between that movement and her own. She wrote of the former, 'Feminism came to mean predominantly (although not solely) the fight of white women to be included in the rights and privileges of a racist society'.<sup>101</sup> Many of these white women also 'equate[d] their condition abstractly with slavery' in ways that 'obscured some white women's collaboration in black

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Robert Allen, with Pamela P. Allen, *Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1974):121-164 (128).

women's enslavement and hid the very real differences between the discrimination felt by middle-class white women and the exploitation suffered by the female slave'.<sup>102</sup> Allen had already called attention to these dynamics – the promotion of racial injustice through the guise of gender equality and the drawing of parallels between racism and sexism – as manifested in the contemporary feminist movement, but her new historical understanding of them prompted her to include the study of the woman suffrage movement within the anti-racism classes she held for the YWCA in 1971, just as anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School would.<sup>103</sup>

Allen's move to the YWCA coincided with a reorientation in that organisation's relationship with racial justice. At its 25<sup>th</sup> National Convention in Houston in 1970, the national association adopted 'The One Imperative', developed by the National Conference of Black Women of the YWCA, committing itself to 'the elimination of racism wherever it exists and by any means necessary'.<sup>104</sup> This was to be the organisation's key goal for the next three years, though the YWCA has included the elimination of racism within its mission statement ever since. Some local histories have indicated the different and highly contextualised ways in which YWCA chapters responded to the One Imperative. Brianna Theobald's exploration of the Lincoln, Nebraska YWCA suggests that despite the claims of the national association (and some of its historians), local branches like Lincoln's did not 'lead' in racial justice efforts in the 1970s following this imperative. Rather, as a liberal feminist organisation serving a largely white, middle-class clientele, the Lincoln

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*: 138.

<sup>103</sup> Pam Allen, Letter to Su Negrin, 10 August 1971; and 'Women and Racism Seminars' registration sheet, Box 4, Folder 10: YWCA Activities, 1971, July-December, Allen Papers.

<sup>104</sup> Dorothy I. Height, *The YWCA's One Imperative: Eliminate Racism* (New York: Bureau of Communications, YWCA National Board, 1971): 2.

YWCA struggled concurrently with feminists of colour and white feminists around the country; as their ideas and energies focused more and more on the intersections of race and gender in the late 1970s and early 1980s, so too did the Lincoln YWCA.<sup>105</sup> Tanya Pluth's examination of the Portland, Oregon, YWCA reveals that this branch did engage in efforts to implement the One Imperative earlier in the 1970s, including the staging of "racial consciousness groups" and "rap sessions" in 1974 that might have shared some similarities with Allen's workshops.<sup>106</sup>

Allen's own YWCA classes had come about after she learnt of the One Imperative and offered to provide two six-week workshops on anti-racism for the Santa Cruz YWCA. These were a 'refreshing change from women's liberation' activity, Allen wrote to a friend, because the 'middle class white women with liberal-left leanings' who took them engaged in 'little rhetoric and much more down to earth talk' which also pushed Allen 'to set out [her] politics minus rhetoric'.<sup>107</sup> Buoyed by this experience, she pitched an ambitious proposal to lead workshops on white supremacy for the San Francisco and San Jose YWCAs, work for which she insisted on payment. Allen's proposal was realised, and in the latter half of 1971 she led seminars that both followed on from her Breakaway class and incorporated new ideas about racism in the woman suffrage movement.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Brianna Jo Theobald, "By Any Means Necessary": The Lincoln, Nebraska, YWCA Confronts Racism, 1970-1984' (University of Nebraska-Lincoln: Unpublished MA thesis, 2010): 15-18.

<sup>106</sup> Tanya Pluth, 'The One Imperative and the Portland YWCA' *Journal of Women's History* (2003) 15(3): 209-214 (209). Notwithstanding these excellent localised histories, greater research into the grassroots implementation of the One Imperative is needed but necessitates far more space than is available here.

<sup>107</sup> Pam Allen, Letter to Su Negrin, 10 August 1971.

<sup>108</sup> 'Application to Lead Seminars on White Supremacy for the YWCA in San Francisco and San Jose' enclosure to Daphne Hughes, YWCA Bureau of Personnel and Training, 25 July 1971, Box 4, Folder 10: YWCA Activities, 1971, July-December, Allen Papers.

On the surface, it would seem Allen's work with the YWCA brought her full circle to the Christian-based racial justice work of her college years, albeit with an expanded focus on anti-racist feminism. Her move to the YWCA also signalled the ways in which paid anti-racism education workshops had begun to be taken up by mainstream organisations and institutions. By the early 1970s, DIM had already been riding the wave of this surging trend for some time, even if they came to remuneration somewhat reluctantly. Corporations like those with whom DIM worked may have come to this trend because of the financial incentive it posed and in order to better comply with affirmative action and equal opportunity laws. As long-time anti-racism trainer Patti DeRosa has pointed out, these proved to be powerful motivations for companies over the past several decades.<sup>109</sup> Large advocacy bodies like the YWCA perhaps came to anti-racism workshops more slowly, and given the unevenness with which local groups implemented racial justice priorities like the One Imperative, they may have occurred through more grassroots means, like Allen's application to lead them.<sup>110</sup>

Yet, as Allen's story demonstrates, these workshops had their roots in the experiences that developed critical analyses of the US's racial landscape – in activist experiences like Allen's with Christian-based organisations, the Mississippi Summer Project and SNCC support work. They also stemmed from those social movements, including the women's liberation movement, where activists like Allen witnessed a need for a deeper understanding of racial injustice and attempted to connect issues around race to the work of the movement. Allen's experience

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<sup>109</sup> Patti DeRosa, 'Social Change or Status Quo?'

<sup>110</sup> On inconsistencies in implementing the One Imperative, see Theobald, "By Any Means Necessary": 15.

illustrates the ways in which anti-racism workshops were grounded in the lessons, experiences and analysis of the long black freedom movement and were pivotal to white racial justice activists' continuing struggles against racism in the black power era. For Allen, and possibly many other white women, the women's liberation movement was an important new site in which to *continue* racial justice work. Though the move to this new arena required a different tack, again, experiences within the black freedom movement could be drawn upon for this. Her experiences regarding race-based education – church-based activism, studying at Spelman, teaching at a Freedom School – indelibly shaped her attempts to address white feminists' racialised ignorance. These experiences were not unique to her, however exceptional she may have been in mobilising them in particular ways. Though Allen's story certainly reveals white women's ignorance of racism – the point at which Allen said they were 'the weakest' – it also reveals that the experiences that shaped her workshops were shared by other white women's liberationists, whose continuing involvement in racial justice within the feminist movement may have been similarly obscured within the historical record. As such, Second Wave racism may be both an empirically important aspect of the movement and a phenomenon exacerbated through historiographical elision of workshops like Breakaway and figures such as Allen.

**Chapter 5**

**'To fight our own demons as well as those of others':  
Reflexivity in the Early 1980s Workshops of Black and White Men Together**

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, anti-racism workshops had become increasingly common both inside and outside of social movements. Aside from their normalisation within activist circles, the increasing professionalisation of anti-racism training had led to a proliferation of workshop materials. The rise of professional educators and organisational development specialists saw a boom in workshop designs, exercises, how-to guides, and facilitator trainings – all aimed at promoting education around race and racism.<sup>1</sup> These newer materials were definitively linked to the black freedom movement and feminist activists who had pointedly addressed white racial ignorance through 'new white consciousness' workshops and free school classes; many among the new experts, including Pat Bidol and Judith Katz, drew heavily from the ideas of and their experiences with these bodies.<sup>2</sup> Even if they developed through socio-historical analyses that were central to the ideology of Black Power, the workshop materials of the late 1970s and early 1980s tended to frame workshops with regard to the 'personal', by using individuals' own experiences to begin to paint a larger picture of racism and race relations in the United States.

Within this milieu, activists had access to an ever-increasing reservoir of resources that they could apply to their own efforts in racial justice education. As a generally less radical reincarnation of the early 1970s heyday of gay liberation, the gay rights movement of the early 1980s in many ways had faced similar

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Taxel, 'Justice and Cultural Conflict: Racism, Sexism, and Instructional Materials' *Interchange* 9(1), 1978: 56-68; and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, 'How to Behave Sensitively: Prescriptions for Interracial Conduct from the 1960s to the 1990s' *Journal of Social History* 33(2), 1999: 409-427 (415-416).

<sup>2</sup> Katz, *White Awareness*; and Patricia Bidol, *From Racism to Pluralism* multimedia kit (New York: Foundation for Change and Council on Interracial Books, 1984).

transitions as those which occurred within the world of anti-racism training. If much of the latter had become professionalised, scholars have pointed out that many within the former had moved towards 'gay assimilationism'.<sup>3</sup> The early history of the interracial gay men's organisation Black and White Men Together reveals a complex understanding of both trends. Begun in 1980, BWMT, still in existence today, spent its earliest years addressing patterns of racial discrimination within LGBT communities and the wider gay rights movement, often in ways that highlighted how 'gay assimilationism' reproduced race and class inequalities and divisions. Amongst the organisation's strategies was the development of a manual for use in anti-racism workshops. Derived from the increasing body of workshop resources, *Resisting Racism: An Action Guide* (1984) formed part of a larger plan that aimed to create a racially aware gay male body politic. The workshops it yielded approached the study of racism from the perspective of individual experiences, asking participants to consider themselves and their experiences deeply in order to elucidate the machinations of racism. Whereas the workshops of DIM and PACT and the race-based classes of the feminist free schools drew on historical and contemporary studies of peoples of colour, racism and race relations, new workshop material developed during the late 1970s and early 1980s suggested that one's own life could illuminate – and thus begin to redress – the racial ills of the day. BWMT's workshops suggested that personal experiences of the present – as much as those of the past – required investigation in order to arrive at full awareness of racial injustice. This move towards introspection denoted a methodological shift in anti-racism workshop practices within social movements. Specifically, it signalled a turn towards reflexivity, and towards studying and understanding the self in relation to

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<sup>3</sup> Shane Phelan, 'The Shape of Queer: Assimilation and Articulation' *Women and Politics* 18(2), 1997: 55-73.

race and racism in an intentional and sustained way. The overarching methodology of BWMT workshops suggested that not only were such examinations useful in addressing race-based ignorance and injustice but that they were foundational to anti-racist praxis.

*BWMT's founding and early racial justice activism*

Black and White Men Together got its start from a 35-year-old white man named Michael Smith. Smith was a 'handsome, no-nonsense activist', a fellow BWMT member once wrote, who was 'something of an individualist, though not a glory seeker'.<sup>4</sup> Before he passed away in 1989, he had been a businessman and composer, and in the early 1980s he immersed himself in gay media. He served as editor for *Quarterly*, a periodical that began as BWMT's newsletter in 1980 but soon expanded and became 'devoted to promoting Gay and Lesbian Third World and interracial interests'.<sup>5</sup> In 1982 he wrote an article about his then-partner, African American baseball great Glenn Burke, in which Burke came out as the first openly gay professional baseball player in the US.<sup>6</sup> Smith was vocal about racism in LGBT communities and media, and he often confronted whites through the *Quarterly*. In 1982, he wrote a two-part article called "'No Blacks": Racism in the Gay Press' that blasted publications across the country for perpetuating racist

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<sup>4</sup> Thom Beame, 'Interview: BWMT Founder – Mike Smith', in Mike Smith (ed.) *Black Men/ White Men: Afro-American Life & Gay Culture*, 1999 edition (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1999): 187-195 (187). 'Michael J. Smith' biographical note, *Black Men/ White Men*: 237.

<sup>5</sup> Michael J. Smith, 'Foreward' in Michael J. Smith (ed.), *Colorful People and Places* (San Francisco: Quarterly Press, 1983): 4. Mike Smith, 'Finally': 35, *Quarterly*, No.18, Summer 1983, Box1, Folder 15: *Quarterly* – National Newsletter, Men of All Colors Together Boston Records, 1980-1999, M68, Archives and Special Collection, Northeastern University, Boston (hereafter, MACT-Boston Records); and 'Finding aid to the Black and White Men Together Records, 1981-2006': 5, 2012, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California, Los Angeles  
<<http://cdn.calisphere.org/data/13030/b1/c87s7pb1/files/c87s7pb1.pdf>>.

<sup>6</sup> Michael J. Smith, 'The Double Life of a Gay Dodger', *Inside Sports* (October 1982): 57-63; and Luca Prono, 'Burke, Glenn' entry in, *Encyclopaedia of Gay and Lesbian Popular Culture* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2008): 43-45.

practices within their pages.<sup>7</sup> The following year he wrote another article that both challenged gay white men's claims of racial victimisation and outlined his understanding of the special place of the *Quarterly* within the gay press. Several white readers had accused the *Quarterly* of carrying an "anti-White" tenor'. Smith defended the magazine's writers of colour, who he said had 'never once...said they don't care profoundly about getting along with White people. (Of course, they don't have much choice, do they?)'. The *Quarterly* was, moreover, a 'refuge' for anti-racist whites, he wrote, that allowed them to 'escape the hollowness of racial superiority and be regarded as individuals, capable of being more than White...[as well as] refuel, check our bearings, see how we're doing unlearning society's brainwashing'.<sup>8</sup>

Smith was unabashed about his sexual preference for black men and believed that 'interracialists' like him – that is, individuals who were attracted to people of other races – were as diverse and normal as individuals who experienced same-gender attraction.<sup>9</sup> By his own account, Smith's motivations to start an interracial gay men's group in 1980 lay in a desire to meet other gay men seeking interracial relationships, particularly white and black men. Smith said that it was difficult for interracialists to find one another: 'White men who are into Black men are isolated in the gay community. The only time we recognized each other before [BWMT was founded] was when we'd lock horns over a trick in the bar.'<sup>10</sup> Despite stressing the creation of supportive environments for mutually

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<sup>7</sup> Mike Smith, "'No Blacks": Racism in the Gay Press', reprinted under the same title in Smith (ed.) *Black Men/White Men*: 159-162.

<sup>8</sup> Mike Smith, 'Finally': 35, *Quarterly*, No.18, Summer 1983, Box 1, Folder 15: *Quarterly* – National Newsletter, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>9</sup> Beame, 'Interview: BWMT Founder – Mike Smith': 194. Sociologist Jason Lee Crockett many years later referred to racial attractions in sexual relationships as 'racial sexual preference'. See, Jason Lee Crockett, *Narratives of Racial Sexual Preference in Gay Male Subculture* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Arizona, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Beame, 'Interview: BWMT Founder – Mike Smith': 192.

attracted black and white gay men, comments like this from Smith suggested that his organisational and sexual pursuits were not politically neutral, and many charged that they were in fact characterised by racist objectification. To Dr John Bush, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Dartmouth and one of BWMT's longest standing African American members, Smith and a number of other white men were motivated by the desire to more easily find black sexual partners. He remembers that Smith 'was totally dedicated to sex with black men. He, like many others, felt that they were especially endowed'.<sup>11</sup> Throughout its existence, many black gay men outside of BWMT have also read Smith and his group as little more than a sex club started by white men with racist, colonialist ideas about black men's bodies. Thus, Mike Smith's intentions with BWMT were, at the very least, viewed with circumspection by many black gay men from the outset. Concerns and criticisms of the group have ebbed and flowed but never wholly disappeared.<sup>12</sup>

As it turned out, though, the founding meeting demonstrated wide appeal. Smith had run an ad in the national gay magazine, the *Advocate*, calling for an interracial gay men's group. Originally from Culver City, California, Smith had been living in San Francisco for many years, and it was there that the group first formed. In May 1980, the founding meeting of what would become BWMT-San Francisco was held and attracted 70 people. The name Black and White Men Together was thought to be 'a bold public statement – [which stated that] Black Gay men and White Gay men can come together and share intellectually,

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<sup>11</sup> Dr John Bush, email interview with the author, 4 January 2013. See also Terry Rowden, 'Black and White Men Together, National Association of' entry in, *Gay Histories and Cultures: An Encyclopaedia*, Volume 2, George E. Haggerty (ed.) (New York Garland Publishing Inc, 2000): 122.

<sup>12</sup> Nina Schjelderup, *Oral Histories of Black Gay Men a Black Transgender Person in the San Francisco Bay Area* (unpublished MA thesis, San Jose State University, 1994): 20; and Dave Frechette, 'Convention in the Shade' *New York Native* (December 1984): 101, Box 3, Folder 27: Scrapbook, MACT-Boston Records.

socially, emotionally, physically'.<sup>13</sup> It has, however, also been a constant source of internal and external dissension. Early on, many members charged that the name did not accurately reflect membership and worked as an impediment to the involvement of individuals who identified as neither white nor black.<sup>14</sup> Starting in 1987, a number of chapters changed their names to Men of All Colors Together, or even People of All Colors Together for those who decided to open their doors to women. Smith, however, was adamantly opposed to changing the name of what became the parent organisation, the National Association of Black and White Men Together (NABWMT). Today, this body's name remains Black and White Men Together in no small part, sociologist Jason Lee Crockett has argued, because of 'the conditions of a large trust fund Smith left to the national organization (i.e., that access to the funds was contingent on keeping the name BWMT)'.<sup>15</sup>

Over the summer of 1980, word spread about the new organisation, and individuals placed ads to form new groups in Boston, New York, Chicago and other cities. Men from southern Florida to eastern Kansas, from the Mile High City to the City of Brotherly Love, did the same, and BWMT grew by leaps and bounds in its first year. In 1981, it boasted 28 affiliated chapters and eight non-affiliated chapters. It had even gone international, with BWMT-Toronto and (the short-lived) BWMT-Dalston and Hackney chapter in England. Members represented a wide range of ages, though chapter leaders were typically in their

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<sup>13</sup> 'BWMT-Milwaukee' Flier, Box 1 Folder 8: Brochures and Fliers, 1981, Undated, Black and White Men Together-Milwaukee Records, 1981-1991, Milwaukee Mss 208, [University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries' Archives Department / Milwaukee Area Research Center](#), Milwaukee. (Hereafter, BWMT-Milwaukee Records.) 'Michael J. Smith' biographical note, *Black Men/White Men*: 237; and Crockett, *Narratives of Racial Sexual Preference*: 62.

<sup>14</sup> James Credle, email interview with the author, 22 Jan 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Crockett, *Narratives of Racial Sexual Preference*: 65-66. 'Welcome Men of All Colors Together!'; and, Ollie Lee Taylor, 'NABWMT Convention: "Celebrating Our Life, Liberty and Happiness" Conference Report': 12-13, Box 1, Folder 11: Convention Planning, Correspondence, 1986-1987, BWMT-Milwaukee Records.

30s. By and large, BWMT attracted middle-class black and white men. If BWMT had raised suspicions and prompted frustrations for many, it had also, as Crockett has observed, 'identified a well-established interest' for many others.<sup>16</sup>

Well-established as that interest might have been, the larger intentions at play were not clear. While the creation of different chapters and the national body is often remembered as stemming from desires to confront racism in gay communities, Smith had provided no clear directive for chapters, which meant that they were free to shape their own distinctive agendas. 'First and foremost, the groups belong to those who care enough to participate', Smith said in 1982, 'if they want to be activist-minded, fine. If they choose to make it a fuck-club, hey, that's their business.'<sup>17</sup> This lack of organisational direction, especially during its earliest years, may have served to strengthen criticisms of BWMT. Perceptions of it as a 'social sex club' abounded. Sometimes members' (or former members') experiences confirmed these ideas. One black man recalled attending BWMT meetings with his white partner in 1980 in the Bay Area, but he said 'all the white men were hitting on [my partner]' and the two eventually left the group.<sup>18</sup> According to a former New York chapter member, Liddell Jackson (African American), sexual pursuits were in fact central to the founding of many, perhaps even most, chapters. He recalls:

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<sup>16</sup> Crockett, *Narratives of Racial Sexual Preference*: 62. Untitled article, *Quarterly*, No. 9 (Spring 1981), Box 1 Folder 15: *Quarterly* – National Newsletter, MACT-Boston Records; BWMT-Milwaukee Business Card, Box 1, Folder 8: Brochures and Fliers, 1981, BWMT-Milwaukee Records; Beame, 'Interview: BWMT Founder – Mike Smith': 193-194; John Bush, email interview with the author, 9 January 2013; Michael Smith, 'Interview – Gerald Mallon' *Quarterly* No. 20 (Winter 1983): 19-24 (19).

<sup>17</sup> Beame, 'Interview: BWMT Founder – Mike Smith': 194. On BWMT and its chapters as founded to challenge racism in gay communities, see for example Willis Bivins, 'History', 22 July 2009, *BWMT-Atlanta* [online] <<http://www.bwmtatlanta.org/about.php>> [accessed 6 January 2013]; 'About Us' *Men of All Colors Together-New York* [online] <<http://www.mactny.org/>> [accessed on 20 November 2010]; and Jennifer Brier, *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009): 53.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Schjelderup, *Oral Histories of Black Gay Men a Black Transgender Person*: 20.

Now of course the original idea behind Black and White Men Together was to be a mixer. Black and white men getting together, meeting each other, and going to have sex with each other. That was the idea, the original idea.<sup>19</sup>

Many chapters felt compelled to respond to these realities and perceptions in their promotional materials. A 1981 pamphlet of the Milwaukee chapter asserted, 'We are not an organization which provides opportunities to cruise. We are not an organization of persons exploiting others. We are an organization of singles and couples who meet in friendship and love, in mutual respect and honor.'<sup>20</sup>

Milwaukee's founders, and those of many other chapters, had a number of motivations and initiatives in mind. November 1980 saw the founding of the Milwaukee chapter by a white gay rights activist named Alyn Hess. He had moved to Milwaukee in the 1960s when he was in his 20s and remained there, immersed in the gay rights movement, until his death in the spring of 1989. He helped to found the Gay People's Union and several projects that stemmed from it, including a hotline and a clinic for those suffering from sexually transmitted infections. A white friend of Hess, Mike Lisowski, has recalled that when the two met in 1977, they 'talked about [their] mutual interest in Black men' and began a support group for interracial couples that did not last long, 'but when BWMT came along, we jumped in'.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, John Bush helped to found the Boston

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Benjamin Shepard, *Queer Political Performance and Protest: Play, Pleasure and Social Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2010): 59

<sup>20</sup> 'Black and White Men Together – What's it all about?' Pamphlet, Box 1, Folder 8: Brochures and Fliers, 1981, Undated, BWMT-Milwaukee Records. BWMT-Milwaukee and other chapters still makes this point explicit, see, 'Membership and Officers' *BWMT-Milwaukee* [online] <[http://nabwmt.org/milwaukee/bwmt\\_join.htm](http://nabwmt.org/milwaukee/bwmt_join.htm)> [accessed 10 November 2010]. In the encyclopedic collection *Gay Histories and Cultures*, Terry Rowden wrote an entry that recoups this historical reputation: 'Although often vilified as a collection of self-hating blacks and exoticising white racists, especially in its earlier days, the organization Black and White Men Together has for almost two decades been one of the best-known, most often criticized, and most misunderstood collectives in the contemporary gay world ... the group's popular image bears little relation to its reality' (122).

<sup>21</sup> 'Memorial', *BWMT-Milwaukee* [online] <[http://nabwmt.org/milwaukee/bwmt\\_memorial.htm](http://nabwmt.org/milwaukee/bwmt_memorial.htm)> [accessed 10 November 2010]; 'In Memoriam: Alyn W. Hess', *In Step* (13-26 April 1989): 8; Michael S. Lisowski, 'Alyn W. Hess: In Remembrance', *Wisconsin Light* (8-19 April 1989): 6-7

chapter, which had its first meeting in June 1980, after a friend of his from Philadelphia told him about BWMT. Bush, who later was involved in the creation of the Black Studies Program at Dartmouth, grew up in a largely white neighbourhood and worked in the largely white world of the US academy. His early years with BWMT constituted a time, he recalls, when he ‘began to better understand black thinking, the black struggle, [and] black achievements’. He and other early members of the Boston chapter felt they ‘could help make a difference’ with the ongoing black freedom struggle.<sup>22</sup>

Leading up to the first national convention in San Francisco in 1981, many chapters began to draft their statements of purpose and, in the process, to discuss one of the central debates throughout BWMT’s history – whether or not the organisation should fulfil ‘social’ or ‘political’ functions.<sup>23</sup> However, many groups developed aims and activities that demonstrated the ways in which ‘political’ and ‘social’ were not distinct, oppositional or mutually exclusive categories. Time and again, they showed how the political could cut through social occasions, as well as how the social functioned in political work. As S.J. Fisher, a member of BWMT-Boston, wrote in 1985:

And what haven’t I said about the old political/social groaner? Everything, because purity at either extreme does not exist, not in the Socialist Worker Party nor the Club Med nor BWMT. Those who come for the social functions will stay for the picket line (if there’s any chance Mr. Right will be there too), and those who come for the picket line may well be found able to force themselves to endure the Valentine’s Day Party (in order to recruit more picketers). In short, the balance of activities will reflect the concerns of the members.<sup>24</sup>

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(6); Crockett, *Narratives of Racial Sexual Preference*: 62; and ‘BWMT-Milwaukee’ Flier, Box 1 Folder 8: Brochures and Fliers, 1981, Undated, BWMT-Milwaukee Records.

<sup>22</sup> John Bush, email interview with the author, 4 January 2013; John Bush, email interview with the author, 9 January 2013; and Meeting Minutes, 10 June 1980, Box 1, Folder 12: Meeting Minutes, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>23</sup> Untitled article, *The Network News*, October 1981: 3-4, Box 1, Folder 9: Eastern Regional Network – BWMT, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>24</sup> S.J. Fisher, ‘Some Notes from One of Our NA Reps’, *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 4 No. 10, April 1985: 5-6 (6), Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletters – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

In the end, most chapters aimed to provide outlets for socialising and activism, as well as to support interracial relationships. The Milwaukee group, for instance, pointed out that ‘Black men who find White men attractive and White men who find Black men attractive have special interests and needs which are often overlooked, even derided, by the Gay community at large’, and BWMT-Milwaukee would strive to provide a place for such men to ‘share ideas and companionship’. Yet it held fast to a ‘long-term goal of educating its members and the Gay community against [*sic*] racism and prejudice’, particularly through its ‘example of [interracial] camaraderie’.<sup>25</sup> In this way, the Milwaukeeans actually indicated the ways in which, their ‘social’ and ‘political’ goals intertwined.

Members in Boston crafted their ‘Statement of Purpose’ in 1981 which laid out similar aims to Milwaukee but with an emphasis on interpersonal and regional engagement:

[T]o offer an opportunity for socializing between black and white gay men in an atmosphere which is conducive to forming friendships and which provides support for on-going relationships  
 [T]o encourage the examination of our personal feelings regarding race and to provide a supportive forum for exploring them together  
 [T]o actively engage in the struggle for racial understanding in Boston and the New England area, especially in the gay community.<sup>26</sup>

The Boston chapter’s statement suggests that what was usually understood as the more ‘political’ objectives of individual chapters often related much more to racial justice than homophobia, with an emphasis on localised racial awareness efforts. Though today many of the earliest BWMT members disagree about the extent to which different chapters were truly motivated by these aims, a great

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<sup>25</sup> ‘BWMT-Milwaukee’ Flier.

<sup>26</sup> Boston BWMT Newsletter: 2, Vol. 1 No. 6 (1981), Box 3 Folder 1: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1981, MACT-Boston Records.

many chapters eventually led or participated in localised racial justice efforts including anti-racism workshops.<sup>27</sup>

Though some members understood that the political/social distinction was illusory, others believed it could quite clearly be seen amongst the chapters. Some wanted the organisation to become more engaged in localised grassroots efforts against discrimination and injustice; they certainly felt that others needed to focus much more on the 'political' potential of BWMT. From very early on, BWMT-New York developed a reputation for being especially 'political'. Liddell Jackson remembers his chapter self-consciously fashioning itself in this way. BWMT-NY felt that most other chapters had adopted mostly 'social' tacks, and he says his group chose a different path: 'Within weeks of its formation, the New York chapter started saying, it's not just about getting together and meeting and finding who you were going to sleep with that night, this is a rare opportunity. We should actually talk about this.'<sup>28</sup> The group's view, Jackson recalls, was that 'you have to fight for your right to party'.<sup>29</sup> James Credle, who helped to found the New York chapter and served as the black co-chair of the National Association, recalls that the 'personal is political' has been a guiding principle 'for us in NY and about half of the other chapters'.<sup>30</sup> Within his chapter's first year, members of the group organised consciousness-raising groups, a speakers bureau that provided speakers to other organisations in the area, and 'a series of public forums in racial discussions...to make the general society more aware of

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<sup>27</sup> For competing accounts on chapters' motivations, see for instance, Shepard, *Queer Political Performance and Protest*: 59; 'History', 22 July 2009, *BWMT-Atlanta* website; and Victor Hoff, 'Celebrating interracial and interethnic relationships: National Association of Black and White Men Together 2012 convention' *LGBT Weekly* [online], 14 June 2012 <<http://lgbtweekly.com/2012/06/14/celebrating-interracial-and-interethnic-relationships/>> [accessed 20 December 2012].

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Shepard, *Queer Political Performance and Protest*: 59. See also Hoff, 'Celebrating interracial and interethnic relationships'.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Shepard, *Queer Political Performance and Protest*: 37.

<sup>30</sup> James Credle, email interview with the author, 22 January 2013.

racism'.<sup>31</sup> Though other chapters recognised the radical potential of a group like BWMT, New York was perhaps the earliest to harness it.

Other chapters took note of BWMT-New York's particularly political outlook and its flurry of activities, and Jackson has recalled that his chapter unintentionally scared others at the 1981 convention. The differences among chapters prompted 'heated discussion regarding whether the organization would be primarily social or educational and political', as Bush recalls.<sup>32</sup> Though Bush maintains that this issue 'was never fully resolved' and chapters continued on their different paths, the convention's 300 delegates composed a mission statement for their new national organisation, the International Association of BWMT (later, the National Association of BWMT), that seemed to reflect the activities of many chapters:

[IABWMT is] a Gay interracial organization committed to fostering supportive environments wherein racial and cultural barriers can be overcome and the goal of human equality realized...[by engaging] in educational, political, cultural, and social activities as a means of dealing with the racism, sexism, homophobia, and heterosexism in our communities and in our lives.<sup>33</sup>

Members also mandated that the chapters and the national body be headed by two chairpersons of different races, one black and one white, to ensure racial parity within leadership.<sup>34</sup> Relatively early in its existence, then, BWMT articulated a need to challenge a multiplicity of oppressions, and the organisation

<sup>31</sup> Untitled article, *The Network News*, October 1981: 3; Shepard, *Queer Political Performance and Protest*: 59; James Credle, email interview with the author, 22 January 2013; and Abram J. Lewis, "'Within the Ashes of Our Survival": Lesbian and Gay Antiracist Organizing in New York City, 1980-1984', *Thinking Gender Papers*, UCLA Center for the Study of Women, UC Los Angeles, 2010: 3.

<sup>32</sup> John Bush, email interview with the author, 4 January 2013; untitled article, *The Network News*, October 1981: 3-4; S.M., 'Oppression – Another Side', *BWMT-Milwaukee Newsletter*, 17 July 1982, Box 1 Folder 25: Newsletters, 1982, BWMT-Milwaukee Records; Shepard, *Queer Political Performance and Protest*: 59; and James Credle, email interview with the author, 22 January 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Crockett, *Narratives of Racial Sexual Preference*: 62-63. John Bush, email interview with the author, 4 January 2013. Because it has been its name for most of its existence, I will refer to the national organisation as NABWMT, even when discussing those years (1981-86) it went by IABWMT.

<sup>34</sup> Crockett, *Narratives of Racial Sexual Preference*: 63; and James Credle, email interview with the author, 22 January 2013.

attempted to prefigure the just community it envisaged with its policy on power equity. Before long, those members who took on leadership roles with the NABWMT – including Mike Smith and John Bush – would begin to push the organisation to focus on issues of racial justice so that it became central to the organisation’s sense of itself and its place within LGBT communities. When chapters were celebrating their third anniversaries in the spring and summer of 1983, Bush reflected:

This “peculiar” organisation [BWMT] has had difficult times finding a place in the gay world, as well as the non gay world, for several reasons. Probably the most significant one being that the group is composed of blacks and whites, oppressed and oppressors, and the combined forces dare to state openly that they intend to establish and cement relationships between the two groups, and to fight against racism in the society.<sup>35</sup>

Over its first few years, some of the more active chapters and members developed projects aimed at challenging racism within their communities, usually within LGBT communities. Often, these addressed racialised exclusions within gay communities, media and social establishments. Individual members, like Smith and BWMT-San Francisco’s black co-chair Thom Beam, wrote essays that outlined the practices that worked to exclude African American men in particular from gay magazines, nightclubs and baths, neighbourhoods, and social organisations.<sup>36</sup> The *Quarterly* sometimes served as a vehicle for BWMT’s critiques. In an attempt to challenge racist hiring practices within gay social establishments, it reprinted an ad placed in *Cruise Magazine* by an Atlanta gay bar called The Saint, which included a photograph of the bar’s 38-strong, all-white staff. Underneath the photograph, the *Quarterly* stated:

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<sup>35</sup> John Bush, ‘On Being Together Three Years...Or More’ *Eastern Region Network News*, Issue 7, May 1983: 2, Box 1, Folder 9: Eastern Regional Network - Black and White Men Together, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, “‘No Blacks’: Racism in the Gay Press’; and Thom Beame, ‘Racism from a Black Perspective’ in Michael J. Smith (ed.) *Black Men/White Men*: 57-63.

Two-thirds of Atlanta's residents are Black, but...they ain't at the Saint. What are the odds, all 38 jobs to Whites, 0 to Blacks? Less than one in a trillion. ...But that's not what's phenomenal. WHAT'S PHENOMENAL is nearly every Gay bar in the country is just like the Saint.<sup>37</sup>

Members also highlighted the exclusions of peoples of colour at major LGBT events, such as Gay Pride celebrations and the 1987 March on Washington. As a veteran member and national co-chair, Bush's frequent public addresses continuously highlighted the ways in which, as he told Seattle's 1985 Gay Pride attendees, 'white gay men and lesbians have...discount[ed] Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans and Blacks, as being legitimate members of the gay community'.<sup>38</sup>

Among BWMT's more well-known efforts was its work against entrance discrimination in gay bars, or 'carding'. BWMT viewed carding as a particularly pernicious issue because of the special, even political, role gay bars played in gay life. Gay bars perfectly exemplified the ways in which the social and political could merge. As NABWMT's first black co-chair, Charles Stewart, explained, 'Most gays come out in bars – it is their first contact with the gay world. So the bar plays a big role for many people....Carding really is a gay issue.'<sup>39</sup> In October 1982, Joe DeMarco, a founder of BWMT-Philadelphia, wrote an article blasting carding at gay bars and baths for the Philadelphia paper *Gay News*. Reprinted in Smith's *Black Men/White Men* the following year, 'Gay Racism' reached a wide readership and shone a light not only on carding but on white gay men's racist

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<sup>37</sup> *Quarterly*, No 19, Fall 1983: 10, Box 1, Folder 15: *Quarterly* – National Newsletter, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>38</sup> John Bush, 'Today Is the Day to Act' address to Seattle Gay Pride, 1985, reprinted in John E. Bush, *My Father's Faith: Essays for the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Beyond* (Xlibris, 2008): 76-78 (78).

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Art Guerrero, 'Racial Discrimination Still Plagues Gay and Lesbian Community: Black and White Men Together Strive For Model of Integration' *Frontiers* (15-22 May 1985), [online archive] <<http://www.frontiersla.com/Channels/30th/Story.aspx?ID=1744356>> [accessed 16 January 2013].

assumptions about black men in gay social establishments.<sup>40</sup> ‘The Philadelphia gay male community,’ DeMarco wrote, ‘has never really come to grips with problem of racism in its midst....The most visible form of discrimination in the gay community is at the bars – our most public and popular gathering places.’<sup>41</sup> Through the stories of a number of black gay men from the area, DeMarco constructed a narrative of black gay patronage at gay bars. Herb J. described his attempt to enter the bar *Odyssey II* over the summer. When he provided his driver’s license for the bouncer, Herb J. said, ‘The doorman said it was unacceptable....Then, right in front of me, young, White gays were let into the bar. So I asked again if we could go in. We were refused. I would have called the police, but my friends didn’t want to press charges.’<sup>42</sup> In DeMarco’s article, men described the different ways in which they coped with what one man, Alan C., referred to as the ‘frightening [and] questioning looks, the ‘why are you here?’ expressions’ from white patrons, as well as racist come-ons.<sup>43</sup> While some chose safety in numbers and never went to gay establishments on their own, others confronted racist behaviours directly. For instance, Donald described how white men often paid him no attention in gay bars – particularly if the men were in groups of friends – though if they saw each other at a bath later, away from their friends, the white men would approach him for sex. In response, Donald said, he would ‘remind them that they were not interested in me at the bar, and now, I’m not interested in them. If you won’t deal with me in the light, you won’t get me at night.’<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Joe DeMarco, ‘Gay Racism’, reprinted in *Black Men/White Men*: 109-118; and ‘Joe DeMarco’ biographical entry, *Black Men/White Men*: 233.

<sup>41</sup> DeMarco, ‘Gay Racism’: 109-110.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*: 110-111 (111).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*: 111-114 (111).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*: 113.

DeMarco suggested a multi-pronged approach to ending 'gay racism'. After recognising and discussing these issues through 'a series of all-male town meetings', he proposed that BWMT together with 'various community groups' develop 'a plan of action...to put a stop to discrimination at all public gathering places' and insist upon 'open access to bars and baths'.<sup>45</sup> Though it is unclear if and how this plan was picked up, BWMT certainly began to devote a great deal of energy to researching and responding to the kinds of discrimination that DeMarco discussed. Several East Coast chapters led the way in anti-carding initiatives. The Atlanta chapter was influential in the passage of a city ordinance that prohibited the requirement of excessive identification in 1984, as was the Los Angeles chapter in a 1985 Hollywood ordinance.<sup>46</sup> For its part, BWMT-Philadelphia worked in coalition with other gay rights groups to study and report on patterns of institutional and individual racism within gay bar culture in 1986.<sup>47</sup>

Many years before this study, by the fall of 1981 in fact, other East Coast chapters, including Boston, Washington, DC, and New York, had all begun planning surveys into entry discrimination in bars. BWMT-Boston's Political Action Committee felt that such work was amongst the most important efforts they could carry out. They published the 'Boston Bar Study' highlighting extensive discrimination against black men in 1984. Though Bush, who headed the project, cannot recall it making an immediate impact, he says that in conducting it, BWMT-Boston ensured that discriminating bar owners knew their practices were no secret. What is more, the project was highlighted in local press

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*: 117.

<sup>46</sup> Guerrero, 'Racial Discrimination Still Plagues Gay and Lesbian Community'; and Allen Cook, 'BWMT Founder Seeks Cure for Gay Racism' *Gaze* (2 December 1984): 2, Box 3, Folder 27: Scrapbook 3, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>47</sup> John E. Bush, 'Harpers Ferry Is Still Here', address to BWMT-Kentucky, reprinted in John E. Bush, *My Father's Faith: Essays for the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Beyond* (XLibris, 2008): 35-38 (37).

coverage. The chapter then set about developing a 'Discrimination Response System', a hotline to which people could report discriminatory practices in bars that would then be investigated.<sup>48</sup>

The New Yorkers' 'Discrimination Documentation Project' also received good coverage in the local press and was successful in its efforts against three discriminatory bars. In one case, against a Lower Manhattan establishment called The Union Club, the bar owners agreed to all the demands set forth by BWMT-NY, who had four African American members face discrimination in an admission 'test' in August 1983. BWMT's demands included an apology for and the cessation of discriminatory practices, compensation in the form of a donation to the Discrimination Documentation Project, and 'the hiring of Third World people as bartenders, waiters, bouncers, etc.'<sup>49</sup> Attesting to the power of the New Yorkers' name-and-shame strategy, the bar's owners reached a settlement with BWMT-NY just a few days ahead of the group's planned press conference and demonstration at The Union Club, originally scheduled for 13 October. The Washington, DC, chapter also met success when it challenged discriminatory carding. It approached its case against a local gay bar, Badlands, differently, however. It had established a Discrimination Response System in 1983, through which it learnt of this and other establishments' carding practices. It filed a

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<sup>48</sup> John Bush, email interview with the author, 14 January 2013; Boston BWMT Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 5, Oct 1981, Box 3, Folder 1: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1981, MACT-Boston Records; BWMT-Boston, 'Black & White Men Together Boston Bar Study, 1984', Box 1, Folder 3: Boston Bar Study, 1984, MACT-Boston Records; and John Bush, 'Things Which Lie Ahead or Need to Be Done', *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No. 3, November 1984, Box 3, Folder 4: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1984, MACT-Boston Records; and Lewis, "'Within the Ashes of Our Survival'": 4. LGBT groups of colour also carried out efforts to investigate and challenge carding at gay bars in the early 1980s. See, Chong-Suk Han, 'They Don't Want to Cruise Your Type: Gay Men of Color and the Racial Politics of Exclusion', *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 13(1), 2007: 51-67 (59).

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Charles Michael Smith, 'Discrimination at the Union Club', *New York Native* (November 1983): 4; Lewis, "'Within the Ashes of Our Survival'": 4; Han, 'They Don't Want to Cruise Your Type', 59; and Charles Henry Fuller, 'Black and White Men Confront Racism' *Gay Community News* (16 February 1985): 6, 10.

complaint with the Office of Human Rights, which it dropped after Badlands 'agreed to contribute \$5000 to a Gay operated anti-discriminatory program'.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, BWMT chapters successfully used a variety of techniques – research, press coverage, policymaking and protest – in their attacks on discriminatory practices at gay bars. Beyond the 'immediate successes' of these anti-carding efforts, as scholar Abram Lewis has pointed out, such 'work also represented a larger demand for white gay accountability'.<sup>51</sup> Lewis focuses on the New York chapter and its work against pending legislation aimed at cutting back on welfare, against police brutality amongst racialised gay communities, as well as its activism around discriminatory practices in bars. In all of this, he argues that BWMT-NY's work struck at the overlap of emerging neoliberal practices and LGBT movements and the resultant racialised and class exclusions.<sup>52</sup> That is, some members, in New York and elsewhere, used BWMT as a vehicle to critique patterns of racial injustice within emerging 'homonormative' practices, including but not limited to white-dominated gay capitalist enterprises that relied upon racialised exclusion in the creation of gay spaces.

In this way, some chapters' work to address gay-supported gentrification complemented their work against carding. The gentrification of previously low-income, black-majority neighbourhoods by middle-class, (largely) white gay men and lesbians reflected processes in place since the early post-war period but which accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>53</sup> BWMT's efforts in this area were never as extensive as its work to challenge carding practices, and it was not an

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<sup>50</sup> Smith, 'Discrimination at the Union Club': 4

<sup>51</sup> Lewis, "Within the Ashes of Our Survival": 4.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*: 1, 6.

<sup>53</sup> Charles I. Nero, 'Black Gay Men and White Gay Men: A Less Than Perfect Union' in Carlos L. Dews and Carolyn Leste Law (eds) *Out in the South* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001): 115-126.

issue around which chapters easily cohered. However, it clearly troubled the ways in which white-dominated LGBT communities not only created but profited from patterns of race- and class-based marginalisation. In 1982, for instance, the Bostonians assembled a panel on 'Gentrification/The Housing Situation: Do Gays Have a Responsibility', which called attention to patterns developing in Boston's South End. Tensions and rents had escalated in this area's largely black neighbourhoods; as white gay and lesbians began to settle there in increasing numbers, black and low-income residents were being displaced.<sup>54</sup> Spearheaded by Craig Jackson, the white chair of the Political Action Committee, the panel, as Bush recorded, 'almost wrecked the group'.<sup>55</sup> Some members worked in real-estate development, and many left the group after the panel. Tom Plant, who had been active in the group since its founding and became its black co-chair in 1985, defended the panel and the stance taken by BWMT-Boston:

At first I thought we can't be losing membership over political situations. But clearly we have to take a stance on some things. I think what was happening in the city needed to be addressed. It's still not being addressed [now in 1985].<sup>56</sup>

Plant's ruminations on the event, two and a half years on, are telling for how group cohesiveness was understood in relation to collusion with racism and class inequalities; demands 'for white gay accountability' could not bend to an imagined sense of togetherness. Plant believed that LGBT communities could not ignore the racially discriminatory practices perpetuated for gay profiteering in the name of solidarity. Many others in the organisation must have agreed. The

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<sup>54</sup> Fuller, 'Black and White Men Confront Racism': 6.

<sup>55</sup> John Bush, 'BWMT/Boston - A Brief History': 1-2 (1), *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 2, No. 11 (1983), Box 3, Folder 3: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1983, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Fuller, 'Black and White Men Confront Racism': 6.

panel won BWMT-Boston an Action Award at the NABWMT national convention that year.<sup>57</sup>

The Boston chapter's challenge illustrated a larger, if problematic, tendency within BWMT that related to the uneven investment of its members in the organisation's racial justice ethos. The obvious commitment and practice of many white members notwithstanding, anti-racist practice and critique was often driven by African American members. Bush was often frustrated with both the NABWMT and BWMT-Boston. He felt that both lacked the dedication needed to fight racism effectively. He was known for his persistent attempts at urging deeper involvement from members and greater outreach to black gay men.<sup>58</sup> Racial parity in leadership did not always lead to equity in drive or workload, and as Plant admitted in 1985, 'Sometimes...the Blacks tend to be more active and politicized'. This had to do, in part, Plant thought, with the need for black people to lead in these efforts, yet it was also related to the differing relationships to racial knowledge engendered by race and class:

The white members tend to be more in the establishment, meaning they are well-established financially, and tend to be more conservative. Whereas, many Black members are either students or they're upwardly mobile, so still feel very vocal and less afraid to take chances. They know the situation. They've been in contact with racism. Though some whites say they don't have direct experience with racism, my contention is they do every day. All they have to do is pick up a newspaper to be confronted by racism.<sup>59</sup>

Plant was clear in his view that, aside from their (literal, financial) investment in approaching racial injustice cautiously, white members' ignorance of racism meant that responsibility tended to fall on black BWMT members to enact the organisation's anti-racist practices.

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<sup>57</sup> Bush, 'BWMT/Boston - A Brief History'.

<sup>58</sup> John Bush, interview with the author, 4 January 2013; and Taylor, 'NABWMT Convention: "Celebrating Our Life, Liberty and Happiness" Conference Report'.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Fuller, 'Black and White Men Confront Racism': 6.

Yet the issue of white initiative in the group's racial justice efforts was not uncomplicated. In a 1983 interview that Smith conducted with Dr Gerald Mallon, who had co-founded BWMT-Philadelphia and was then the white co-chair of NABWMT, the two discussed feeling a double bind at work in white members' 'contributions'. White men like themselves recognised that 'the visibility and empowerment of people of color is of paramount importance', Smith said, but in 'grow[ing] in our understanding of issues of race' and persistently undertaking and supporting BWMT's anti-racism activities, 'we can't help but increase our visibility and, by extension, our credibility, our authority'.<sup>60</sup> Added to this, Mallon said, was the risk that outsiders may then read BWMT as 'White-dominated groups'.<sup>61</sup> Many white BWMT members were in fact deeply involved in BWMT's efforts to challenge racial injustice. Gerald Mallon, for instance, as I describe further below, did the lion's share of the work on BWMT's anti-racism manual.

What had become clear, however, was the need to focus racial justice energies inside BWMT itself, as well as in the larger gay rights movement. This work would need to address not only white racial ignorance but internalised racism. It would need to be relevant to both people of colour and white individuals, and to people inside and outside of BWMT. It was in this vein that BWMT's anti-racism workshops developed. As one of BWMT's key workshop developers, Mallon, stated:

[B]y their very nature as interracial organizations, BWMT chapters must help their members to actively resist the dynamics of racism in their lives. In addition, BWMT [chapters] can serve invaluable roles in their local communities, by acting as resources in the continual confrontation with racism. This guide is designed to serve as an aid to both of [these] goals.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Smith, 'Interview – Gerald Mallon': 20.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*: 21.

<sup>62</sup> Gerald L. Mallon, 'Introduction' in Mallon (ed.), *Resisting Racism* 1991 edition (National Association of Black and White Men Together, 1991): 12-13 (12), Box 2, John L. Kavanaugh Papers, 1970-2011, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

### *Resisting Racism*

In 1984, NABWMT published its comprehensive anti-racism manual, *Resisting Racism: An Action Guide*. The year before, NABWMT had created an Education Committee which it had 'enjoined...to develop educational materials related to the goals of the NABWMT – namely, supporting the termination of cultural and racial inequality'.<sup>63</sup> To these ends, the committee researched and wrote on 'racism and the gay experience' and created *Resisting Racism*.<sup>64</sup> Edited by Dr Gerald Mallon, who was also the white co-chair of NABWMT at the time, *Resisting Racism* became BWMT's key resource for consciousness-raising sessions and the implementation of anti-racism workshops. Because BWMT also made it available for purchase, the extent of the manual's impact – particularly beyond LGBT communities – is impossible to discern. Its second printing in 1985 confirms its initial appeal, and a revised edition published in 1991 attests to the continuing significance of anti-racism workshops for LGBT communities and BWMT's role in addressing this need.<sup>65</sup>

The original 1984 manual was a lengthy manuscript divided into three parts: workshop outlines, resource materials, and bibliographies. The resource materials section included a number of writings that were necessary to workshop design, helpful in the general facilitation of workshops, or which formed workshop exercises. It included, for instance, an 'Assessment Checklist for White Racism', which asked white individuals to consider a list of rationalisations often relied upon by whites as they 'tried to make sense of out of the relationship between

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<sup>63</sup> Mallon, *Resisting Racism*: 9.

<sup>64</sup> John Peterson, 'Racial Discrimination in the Gay Community: An Analysis' in Gerald L. Mallon (ed.) *Resisting Racism*: 134-141 (134).

<sup>65</sup> Joseph DeMarco, 'BWMT Issues Racism Manual' *Gay News* (26 July 1984): 12, Box 3, Folder 27: Scrapbook, MACT-Boston Records.

the races, the evolving Black consciousness, and the nature of whiteness'.<sup>66</sup> Two exhaustive bibliographies rounded out the manual – one a general list on 'Race and Racism' readings and the other related specifically to 'Race, Racism and the Gay Male Community'.<sup>67</sup> The workshop outlines included fourteen designs for individual workshops, accompanied by facilitation directions and suggestions for follow-up activities. While most of the workshops were appropriate for a multiracial audience, several were explicitly directed at white audiences, and a few had different components for white participants and participants of colour. The designs were intentionally assembled to move from workshops on individual racism to sessions on institutional and cultural racism.<sup>68</sup>

The first series of suggested workshops were developed to examine racism from a 'personal' perspective. Participants were asked to reflect on and discuss experiences from their own lives in order to come to a wider understanding of race and racism. Often described in terms of the 'personal', in a way that may have linked the workshops with the feminist ethos 'the personal is political', the process of asking participants to relate their individual experiences and histories to these workshops was also a methodological choice, one that can be understood through the feminist practice of reflexivity. As feminist geographer Kim England explains, '[R]eflexivity is self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher'.<sup>69</sup> Reflexive learning or research asks that the researcher acknowledge power relations within their practices by putting his/herself 'under scrutiny', specifically 'what she brings to her field and how her specific social self and background' come to bear on the

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<sup>66</sup> Mallon, *Resisting Racism*: 71-72 (71).

<sup>67</sup> DeMarco, 'BWMT Issues Racism Manual'.

<sup>68</sup> DeMarco, 'BWMT Issues Racism Manual'; and Mallon, *Resisting Racism*: 17-68.

<sup>69</sup> Kim V.L. England, 'Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research' *The Professional Geographer* 46(1), 1994: 241-256 (244).

meaning or knowledge that is being made.<sup>70</sup> Participants in BWMT workshops were learners, even researchers, into the realities of race and racism in the US, and the process set out in *Resisting Racism* suggested that learning should be fore-grounded through processes of reflecting that linked the individual to the object of study: race and racism. The ‘personal’ might have provided the empirical content of many workshops, but the overarching principle of BWMT’s manual – moving from personal reflections to examinations of cultures and institutions – indicates that reflexivity was also an important methodological practice. As Bidol explained in one of her workshop designs that appeared in *Resisting Racism*, ‘Before attempting to move from the individual level to the institutional level, it is helpful for participants to be aware of their own prejudices and feelings’.<sup>71</sup>

This reflexive approach can be seen, for instance, in a workshop design developed by BWMT-New York titled ‘Consciousness-Raising on Racism’. The primary purpose was to ask participants to reflect on their lives in order to uncover the machinations of racism. Participants broke into small groups and were asked ‘to explore the presence of racism in our personal lives and to actively confront and struggle against it’. In classic consciousness-raising fashion, they took place in a ‘testimony go-round on topic related to racism’ that was chosen in advance from a list provided in the workshop design.<sup>72</sup> The list included 61 suggestions including topics related to black-white social relations, race or racism and other forms of oppression, to participation in and the dynamics of BWMT, sex and sexual objectification, family and friends, and

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<sup>70</sup> Rachel Wasserfall, ‘Reflexivity, Feminism and Difference’ *Qualitative Sociology* 16(1), 1993: 23-41 (24).

<sup>71</sup> Pat Bidol, ‘Workshop #10: Personal Awareness Inventory’ in Mallon (ed.), *Resisting Racism*: 44-45 (44).

<sup>72</sup> MACT-NY [BWMT-NY], ‘Workshop #2: Consciousness-Raising on Racism’ in Mallon (ed.) *Resisting Racism*: 25-27 (25).

homophobia. Once individual members ‘testified’ about a topic, their small group discussed the general themes that emerged and ended with a brief ‘criticism and self-criticism’ session before feeding their findings back in a larger group session.<sup>73</sup> Other workshop designs reveal similarly reflexive patterns: participants explored processes of racialisation, patterns of racial injustice and resistance, and modes of socialisation through a recognition of their own experiences within a larger racial order. Two workshop designs adapted from Pat Bidol’s work relied on this process. ‘Racial Autobiography’, as discussed further below, was a workshop that aimed to ‘increase awareness of one’s attitude toward one’s own and other racial groups’, including identifying what factors and experiences contributed to such attitudes.<sup>74</sup> In the other workshop, ‘Personal Awareness Inventory’, participants filled out a ‘Stem Statement’ that indicated when they first became aware of being a member of a racial group and the point at which they were ‘most aware of being [their] racial group’, what their ‘racial group’ meant to them and how they generally felt about their ‘racial group’.<sup>75</sup> First in pairs, then in small groups, and finally in the full seminar, participants derived meaning from the feelings and statements they shared about their personal lives.

As the workshop turned towards a more focused examination of institutional and cultural racism, participants were asked less about their individual lives and experiences and instead focused on institutions. For instance, for one of Mallon’s workshops, ‘Racist Ads in the Gay Media’, participants were given advertisements from ‘the gay media’ and put into teams in order to debate whether or not a particular ad was racist. The debate was judged by a group of participants who were to come up with ‘criteria to use in judging the behaviors of

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*: 25.

<sup>74</sup> Pat Bidol, ‘Workshop #11: Racial Autobiography’ in Mallon (ed.), *Resisting Racism*: 46-48 (46).

<sup>75</sup> Bidol, ‘Workshop #10: Personal Awareness Inventory’: 44.

the debaters'. Following the debate, the facilitator led 'the total group in a discussion focusing on the behavioral manifestations of racisms'.<sup>76</sup> The implication here, it seems, is that the particular ways in which participants defended or criticised an ad's racial implications (participants 'behaviors', in other words) could highlight how gay media might defend its racially unjust practices and how activists could effectively challenge them. Another workshop, called 'How to Look for Institutional Racism' and adapted from the Racism and Sexism Resource Center, allowed participants to choose an institution to examine for evidence of institutional racism. Here, participants explored the racial landscape of a particular company, organisation, or group by learning about, for instance, its employment and promotion track record and how it recruited for job openings.<sup>77</sup> Quite similar to the kinds of questions that the Detroit Industrial Mission asked of interviewees prior to 'New White Consciousness' training, these lines of inquiry opened up an analysis of how racialised power relations became entrenched within large institutions and organisations.

Questions of race-based ignorance and whiteness were central to the manual's very existence. In the introduction to the 1991 version, Mallon highlighted the falseness of colour-blind rhetoric and the hollowness of racial ignorance:

If you are under the false impression that racism no longer exists, or that it doesn't exist as a factor in your life, I must point out to you that this evil continues to be interwoven into the very fabric of our society and our lives. You only need to look at the de facto segregation that exists in our schools, in our workplaces, and in our social institutions to see its ugly spectre...Look at the ways that health care differs among racial groups. For example, look at how AIDS information and care affects the white community and the African

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<sup>76</sup> Gerald L. Mallon, 'Workshop #13: Racist Ads in the Gay Media' in Mallon (ed.) *Resisting Racism*: 50.

<sup>77</sup> Racism and Sexism Resource Center, 'Workshop #17: How to Look for Institutional Racism' in Mallon (ed.) *Resisting Racism*: 59-61.

American community. Far more Blacks are dying from inadequate treatment and others are not getting the information they need to prevent the disease.<sup>78</sup>

While evidence of racial inequality could be seen in so many facets of life, indeed in all of the institutions that structured people's lives, that it often was not seen, known or challenged, however, had grave consequences. As Mallon argued:

Racism is affecting all of us in the most brutal of ways. It's killing us. It's killing our spirits; it's killing our dreams, and it's killing our bodies. To ignore this reality or lay the responsibility for action on someone else, perpetuates its existence. We must not attempt to ignore it, but rather we must do all in our power to resist it and confront it now!<sup>79</sup>

Through *Resisting Racism*, BWMT thus confirmed that racial ignorance was fundamental to the contemporary state of racial injustice in the US; that this ignorance affected LGBT communities as much as straight communities; and that the kinds of educational endeavours advanced in *Resisting Racism* would be a necessary aspect of the fight against racism.

While it was not oriented solely towards whites, like the workshops of People Acting for Change Together and the Detroit Industrial Mission, BWMT's manual aimed to highlight the roots of racism within white communities and institutions. Whereas PACT and DIM relied upon histories of peoples of colour as well as contemporary understanding of racism by academics and activists, *Resisting Racism* asked people to consider their own experiences to construct a wider understanding of race relations and of racial inequalities in the US. This included the experiences of both white and black individuals. The manual was at pains, however, to get participants to consider how black individuals' experiences generally constituted attempts at 'coping' with racism, while white persons' experiences could normally speak to the perpetuation of white privilege and

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<sup>78</sup> Mallon, 'Introduction' in *Resisting Racism*: 12.

<sup>79</sup> Mallon, *Ibid.*: 12.

domination.<sup>80</sup> This approach was far less academic than those of the feminist free school classes, yet ironically, the methods of *Resisting Racism* stemmed from the feminist ethos of ‘the personal is political’. Historical analysis was largely relegated to the bibliographies, however.

BWMT possessed two assets that proved crucial to the creation of *Resisting Racism* – its prior experience with consciousness-raising groups and its experienced and knowledgeable contributors. Consciousness-raising and rap groups formed part of most chapters’ first activities. For most groups, these sessions focused on racism and interracial relationships, though they often also addressed homophobia. So popular and significant had rap groups been for the Milwaukee chapter, that in the fall of 1981 it organised two simultaneous series of rap sessions that ran for eight weeks. Topics included ‘earliest personal experiences of racism’, ‘racism in interracial relationships’, and ‘do blacks who are involved with whites have to give up black culture?, or vice versa’.<sup>81</sup> The New York chapter’s consciousness-raising sessions also began early in the group’s life and reflected an even broader range of topics, including questions related to capitalism and sexism. What the historian of BWMT-NY, Abram Lewis, has written of the significance of consciousness-raising sessions to this group is probably typical of many other chapters:

CR sessions gestured both towards the group’s interest in building safe, affirming spaces for black gay men and its “personal is political” ethos rooted in second wave feminist strategies. CR sessions were also part of a larger project of community education.<sup>82</sup>

This ‘larger project’ also included events in addition to rap groups and consciousness-raising sessions. It entailed discussions with other multiracial or

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<sup>80</sup> Mallon, *Resisting Racism*: 17-21, 31-35, 54 (32).

<sup>81</sup> ‘General Guidelines for RAP Groups’ and Letter to BWMT-Milwaukee members (undated [1981]), Box 1, Folder 8: Brochures and Fliers, 1981, undated, BWMT-Milwaukee Records.

<sup>82</sup> Lewis, “‘Within the Ashes of Our Survival’”: 3. See also, James Credle, email interview with the author, 22 January 2013.

people of colour-led organisations, as when the leader of Boston Asian Gay Men and Lesbians, Siong-Huat Chua, spoke at a BWMT-Boston membership meeting on the problems with many white-led anti-racism efforts, including workshops, within LGBT communities.<sup>83</sup> All of these activities indicate that BWMT was experienced in its educational efforts and had a membership that had considered what was necessary in terms of anti-racism education in its communities – even if many felt much more needed to be done around anti-racism education.

Some members had been especially concerned with developing materials necessary to address race-based ignorance and problems, and these individuals poured themselves into the Education Committee's creation of *Resisting Racism*. The committee included members who had research expertise and experience in facilitating anti-racism workshops, and who were passionate about challenging racial injustice. Mike Smith had been writing about and speaking out against racism within LGBT communities for some time, and he had also begun delivering 'Unlearning Racism' workshops. Bush's experiences with race-based education were also long-standing, if largely institutionally based; he created one of the comprehensive bibliographies included in the manual. Chair of the Education Committee and BWMT-Los Angeles member, Dr Jon Peterson, put his research skills to use by accepting primary responsibility for one of the 1983-84 Committee's core undertakings: a research paper on 'Racial Discrimination in the Gay Community', which was then published as part of *Resisting Racism*. Finally, Dr Mallon (Ed.D.) was an educator and planetarium director until his death in

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<sup>83</sup> Craig Jackson, 'Beyond – Beyond Racism', *Boston BWMT Newsletter*: 1-2, Vol. 5, No. 7 (January 1986), Box 3, Folder 6: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1986, MACT-Boston Records.

1991, and he put his passion for education and knowledge of pedagogy into the creation of several exercise and workshop outlines for *Resisting Racism*.<sup>84</sup>

Also vital in the creation of the manual was the proliferation of anti-racism workshop materials that had occurred throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. By the 1984 printing, not only had many professional educators and trainers like Judith Katz and Pat Bidol emerged and produced a wealth of material, but organisations like the Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators had been founded to create similar pedagogical resources.<sup>85</sup> Aside from individual members' writing and specific workshop materials, *Resisting Racism* drew from all of these sources. Thus, it occupied a liminal space, a position between the emerging professional world of anti-racism training and on-going grassroots efforts to create a more racially aware white body politic. Its contributors were highly influenced by the anti-racism training material produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s; however, their material was more indicative of the professionalised training.

Significantly, *Resisting Racism* rarely raised questions about gender, at least not explicitly so. BWMT as a whole seems to have seldom considered gender relations as part of their racial justice politics during the early- and mid-1980s. This is not to say that individual BWMT members or chapters were unconcerned with gender inequalities or notions of femininity and masculinity. White New Yorker Mitchell Karp, for instance, wrote of being keenly aware of his identity as a white man and how this implicated him in both institutional racism and institutional sexism. He urged other white men, particularly BWMT members,

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<sup>84</sup> Beame, 'Interview: BWMT Founder – Mike Smith': 188; John E. Bush, 'Bibliography on Race and Racism' in Mallon (ed.) *Resisting Racism*: 152-156; and Peterson, 'Racial Discrimination in the Gay Community'.

<sup>85</sup> Katz, *White Awareness*; and Taxel, 'Justice and Cultural Conflict': 68.

to ‘accept that we, as human beings, are simultaneously “symbols” and “individuals”:

What does it mean to be a symbol? It means that we lose that which characterizes us as individuals. This loss of individuality is extremely threatening. In a society such as ours in which people desperately cling to their individuality, recognizing our symbolic roles is heresy. I believe that this reluctance to acknowledge our roles as symbols has been the bane of the lesbian and gay movement. If we do not consider our roles as symbols, we will never have any incentive to generalize beyond ourselves or to bond with others. In addition, unless we, as white men, are willing to acknowledge our role as symbols of the privilege historically and currently enjoyed by white males, we will never confront institutional racism and sexism.<sup>86</sup>

In Karp’s analysis, challenges to racial and gender injustices were inhibited by whites’, and particularly white men’s, ‘failure to resolve the contradiction between our status as negative symbols in the eyes of our potential allies and our perceptions of ourselves as progressive people’.<sup>87</sup> This intervention related to notions of representation – how one could be representative of a larger system of racial oppression, for instance – but it also touched on ideas of accountability. White men often denied responsibility for racism and sexism, Karp seemed to say, by invoking ideas of individuality and denying their relationship to historical and contemporary systems of oppression.

Questions of gender relations seemed to be as important as those of racial relations for Karp. Though it is unclear who drafted it, his chapter’s workshop outline was in fact the only one in *Resisting Racism* that explicitly raised issues of sexism, gender relations and notions of masculinity. Included in BWMT-NY’s consciousness-raising exercise were the suggested topics: ‘Sexism: How do we relate to women?’, ‘Racism and sexism: The interconnections’, and ‘Attitudes towards effeminacy among Black and White men’.<sup>88</sup> Undoubtedly,

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<sup>86</sup> Mitchell Karp, ‘The Challenge of Symbolism’, *Review of Law and Social Change* 14, 1986: 943-947 (943-944).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*: 944.

<sup>88</sup> MACT-NY [BWMT-NY], ‘Workshop #2: Consciousness-Raising on Racism’: 27.

other workshop outlines prompted similar questions and themes, but it is significant that, in BWMT's quest to create more racially just communities, the connections between systems of gender and racial oppressions were not more openly and persistently considered. Within the pages of *Resisting Racism*, gender was not a central consideration.

When *Resisting Racism* was first published, BWMT chapters developed different relationships to the manual and to anti-racism workshops. All of them, however, received encouragement from the national leadership, officers of NABWMT, to make concerted efforts to study racism in the years 1984-85. Under the guidance of John Bush, a three-pronged programme was devised and promoted. The first and second phases involved study of *Resisting Racism* and other texts from the manual's bibliographies, while the last entailed 'using the knowledge acquired to conduct racism workshops in the larger community'.<sup>89</sup> To assist with the latter effort, BWMT-NY founder and former NABWMT white co-chair Henry Weimhoff offered to provide seminars on 'How to Conduct Racism Workshops' for chapters and for the regional networks, that had begun to form over the previous two years. Though some chapters did not follow this programme, most initiated workshops or study of some kind, and several attempted this precise plan. These included several of the East Coast chapters that had already developed reputations for being 'political' (such as Mallon's group in Philadelphia), as well as some chapters that wished to do more to combat racism, like those belonging to the Heartland Regional Network (of the

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<sup>89</sup> NABWMT Board Memo, Issue 17, February 1985: 5, Box 2, Folder 10: NABWMT, Board memos, 1985; and, Letter from John E. Bush to Alyn Hess, 25 July 1984, Box 1, Folder 18: Correspondence, Incoming, NABWMT, 1983-1988, BWMT-Milwaukee Records.

upper Midwest and Rustbelt).<sup>90</sup> The Boston chapter also began a programme of study – unsurprisingly, the same plan propounded nationally by its own John Bush. Though unique in terms of leadership, it elucidates a number of issues that other chapters ran into as they began to address racial ignorance and discrimination through education.

In October of 1984, BWMT-Boston held its first discussion group based around *Resisting Racism*. The call for participation that went out in the chapter's newsletter stated that the group would be meeting twice a month with the aim to analyse the manual and to 'determine how to apply its principles to actual situations we face in Boston'.<sup>91</sup> The group began its work by defining 'words that were bound to come up again and again' – bias, bigotry, prejudice and racism.<sup>92</sup> Guided by definitions provided in a workshop outline written by Mallon, the group felt it particularly important that they establish that racism included 'enforcement or perpetuation of prejudice through power', reflecting the continuing significance of Black Power thinking. The group felt this definition was important mostly because of what it required from anti-racist activists. Working from this definition, they said, meant that racism was always seen as:

[A]n action rather than just a feeling...racism always has an effect. It is not merely enough to create enlightenment and understanding; practice must be changed as well. Understanding the concept of racism in this way also makes clear that actions must be taken, if racism is to be resisted.<sup>93</sup>

Such an understanding seemed especially important given the fact that so few members had actually attended the discussion group. Only four individuals had

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<sup>90</sup> NABWMT Board Memo, Issue 17, February 1985: 2, 5; and 'Schedule of Events for BWMT-Milwaukee's 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Heartland Regional Networking', *BWMT-Milwaukee Newsletter*, October 1985, Box 1, Folder 28: Newsletters, 1985, BWMT-Milwaukee Records.

<sup>91</sup> 'Resisting Racism Discussion Group' *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No.4 (October 1984): 5, Box 3, Folder 4: Boston BWMT Newsletter - 1984, MACT-Boston Records; and Bush, 'Things Which Lie Ahead and Need to Be Done': 6.

<sup>92</sup> 'Resisting Racism Discussion Group', *BWMT Boston Newsletter*, (November 1984): 3.

<sup>93</sup> 'Resisting Racism Discussion Group', *BWMT Boston Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No. 5, (November 1984): 3, Box 3, Folder 4: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1984, MACT-Boston Records.

attended, three of whom were African American members. One participant admonished the chapter in the subsequent newsletter. Though short notice might have been to blame for some no-shows, he wrote, the lack of participation on the part of white members led blacks in the group to ask ““Why should we as blacks participate in this discussion on resisting and understanding racism if the white members of the group don’t show much interest?””<sup>94</sup> The group hoped that future meetings would involve greater participation, especially from white members, but their own definition of racism, which they also printed in the newsletter, suggested that the discussion group was struggling to create an ‘enlightened’ membership, let alone an active one.

These frustrations were not aired for naught, as it turned out. Future meetings had white majorities, and time was split between discussion and planning actions to be taken by the group. The group evolved to become the Racism Task Force/ Discussion Group.<sup>95</sup> It continued to select workshop activities from the manual. At a December 1984 meeting, the group followed an exercise (originally created by Pat Bidol) called ‘Racial Autobiography’, which aimed to ‘create awareness of how attitudes and behaviors are acquired’.<sup>96</sup> It asked individuals to create timelines of their lives that marked experiences that affected their understanding of other races, their own race, and their own racial prejudices. These ‘autobiographies’ were then shared in small groups, as participants described the emotions involved and the significance of these experiences. Small groups attempted to identify commonalities and then fed back

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<sup>94</sup> ‘Resisting Racism Discussion Group’, *BWMT Boston Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No. 5, (November 1984): 3.

<sup>95</sup> Craig Jackson, ‘Report from the Boston Racism Task Force/Discussion Group’, *BWMT Boston Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No. 6, (December 1984): 1-2, Box 3, Folder 4: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1984, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>96</sup> Mallon, *Resisting Racism*: 46-48 (46); and, Craig Jackson, ‘Report from the Boston Racism Task Force/Discussion Group’, *BWMT Boston Newsletter*, (December 1984): 1-2.

to the larger group, which, with the guidance of a facilitator, noted commonalities within a racial group and differences amongst racial groups. One participant, Craig Jackson, noted that most members felt that the ‘experience of re-examining our lives was well worthwhile’ and that many felt joining BWMT was an important life moment in terms of racial understanding, because it served as ‘an important “family support group”...[that] examine[d] questions of race’.<sup>97</sup> During the ‘action’ segment of this same meeting, participants decided to challenge a local LGBT bookstore that had been selling greeting cards that made light of slavery. The members had previously attempted to ‘challenge the store’s policy of selling [these cards]’, which they said depicted a ‘racist “slave auction”’. Glad Day Bookstore continued to sell the cards, however, so members wrote a letter of protest from BWMT-Boston to the bookstore and sent copies to local LGBT newspapers.<sup>98</sup>

The following month, the Racism Task Force/Discussion Group brought their efforts to bear on the larger chapter. They designed a mini-workshop to take place at the January 1985 membership meeting and encouraged all members to attend.<sup>99</sup> They chose a workshop outline called ‘Inventory of Racial Experience’, designed by educator and organisational change scholar Frederick Jefferson. The exercise was discussion-based and required racially separate caucuses: a white and a black caucus, the latter of which included a Puerto Rican member, Nelson Rivera. Members from each caucus reported back to the chapter in the following month’s newsletter. Again, the workshop required that participants consider personal experiences, this time in response to specific prompts. Of the

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<sup>97</sup> Craig Jackson, ‘Report from the Boston Racism Task Force/Discussion Group’, *BWMT Boston Newsletter*, (December 1984): 2.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*: 2.

<sup>99</sup> ‘January Happenings’, *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No. 7 (January 1985): 3, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

twelve statements provided in the ‘inventory’, the black group addressed two: ‘discovering that being Black made a difference to others’ and ‘discovering deep resentment and distrust of other Blacks’.<sup>100</sup> Bush reported that most men in the group had ‘learned early on (before the age of 9) that being Black made a difference’ and that this lesson came from a number of sources – family, other African Americans, or ‘white society’. Most, however, agreed that this message ‘was easier to accept when told by parents’.<sup>101</sup> The group felt there were two key lessons with regard to the second prompt: that the resentments that most black participants felt ‘were especially manifested in class differences’ and that intra-racial resentment may not be as strong within non-black ‘minority groups’. Rivera had indicated that he ‘did not understand how minorities of the same race could have resentments towards each other’. Although far too brief, Bush concluded that the exercise ‘was timely and profitable’.<sup>102</sup>

The white caucus chose three prompts: ‘treating Blacks differently from Whites’, ‘trying consciously to be especially good, kind, helpful, or loving to Blacks’, and ‘being angry at other Whites for what they were doing to Blacks’. As Craig Jackson reported, they found that the first two stimulated similar responses including one important finding: that most had altered their behaviour in an attempt to not appear racist. This pattern created a ‘double standard’, they found, or ‘what some members of the group called “liberal racism”’.<sup>103</sup> Jackson summarised that the group identified positive and negative aspects of this ‘double standard’. It could be ‘patronizing [and] reinforce the superiority of Whites

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<sup>100</sup> John Bush, ‘Inventory of Racial Experience: Being Black’, *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No. 8 (February 1985): 2- 3 (2), Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1985, MACT-Boston Records; and John Bush, email interview, 9 January 2013; and Katz, *White Awareness*: 117.

<sup>101</sup> Bush, ‘Inventory of Racial Experience: Being Black’: 2.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*: 3.

<sup>103</sup> Craig Jackson, ‘Being White’, *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No. 8 (February 1985): 3-4 (3), Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

through “condescending behavior” on their part’, as well as work to create ‘lower standards’, for black students for instance, that proved ‘detrimental in the long run’. At the same time, some participants, particularly the educators in the group, felt that a ‘double standard’ could be ‘helpful’ insofar as it allowed teachers, for instance, to ‘take into higher account the verbal skills of Blacks [in order to] provide the extra educational encouragement Blacks may need because of racism’.<sup>104</sup> The suggestion here seemed to be that the effects of institutional racism sometimes demanded that black individuals be ‘treated differently’ than white individuals. The group also felt that whites stood to benefit from engaging more intently with black individuals. On the question of anger towards other whites, the group discussed a distinction between ‘racism perpetuated by institutions and/or persons with power, and racist attitudes or acts done by ordinary people’. Some felt that anger towards the former, such as the Reagan Administration, was ‘perfectly justifiable and necessary’, but that in regards to the latter, an angry response ‘may only hinder or make impossible the necessity and our ability to educate’.<sup>105</sup>

This exercise represented the first time, Craig Jackson noted, that BWMT-Boston had split into racially separate caucuses. The very different work of each caucus was revealing of the reasons such a separation might be necessary in the context of consciousness-raising. The black/multiracial and white groups had opted to focus on very different discussion points: the former largely exploring intra-racial dynamics, while the latter examined how whites acted across racial lines. Within the black/multiracial group, the points of identification amongst members touched upon notions of both class and race, exemplifying The Combahee River Collective’s suggestion that black consciousness-raising would

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*: 3.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*: 4.

expand the feminist notion of 'the personal is political' by 'dealing with the implications of race and class'.<sup>106</sup> The white group, on the other hand, struggled to understand the political implications of its dominant ways of relating to black individuals. Even as group members struggled to make sense of the complicated relationship between individual behaviour and institutional racism, they revealed problematic notions, of racial superiority and racist generalisations, that demonstrated why separate caucuses may be useful and necessary. Despite many individuals' trepidation about splitting into different groups, in the end, Craig Jackson wrote, 'most felt...the separate groups had been an effective means to discuss the issues at hand'.<sup>107</sup>

Over the following couple of months the Racism Task Force/Discussion Group continued to meet, to identify areas for racial justice action and to work through *Resisting Racism*, but by April the newsletter had stopped carrying announcements about its upcoming meetings. In that newsletter, Bush connected the suspension of the group to a general lack of involvement in BWMT, and he implored members to re-engage with BWMT:

Perhaps you're wondering why there are so few events scheduled this month (one to be exact). So few people have been coming to past events that leaders are losing interest in scheduling them. The racism discussion group has been postponed for lack of interest, and we only had two people at our last poetry reading. If you want BWMT/Boston to do things together, you have participate, and you have to tell us what interests you.<sup>108</sup>

BWMT soon began to bounce back. The following month saw it hosting several events, including a fundraising yard sale, an 'antiracist rainbow contingent' at the

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<sup>106</sup> Combahee River Collective, 'The Combahee River Collective Statement': 276.

<sup>107</sup> Jackson, 'Being White': 4.

<sup>108</sup> John Bush, 'Not Many Events This Month?', *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 4 No. 10, April 1985: 10, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

Boston Gay Pride celebration, its fifth anniversary celebration and an Eastern Region Network Meeting.<sup>109</sup>

Though the Racism Task Force/Discussion Group did not reappear, and in fact would not be revived in the future, the rest of the 1985 newsletters hinted at the ways in which this group's efforts had morphed more than they had faded. In May 1985, Craig Jackson wrote of plans to build coalitions with other 'progressive lesbian and gay groups that specifically address racism' in order to assess how they could 'work together to achieve our common goal of ending discrimination against people of color, particularly within the gay community'. These other groups included the Black Men's Association (BMA), El Comite Latino de Lesbianas y Homosexuales de Boston (The Boston Committee of Latino/a Lesbians and Gays), and the Lesbian/Gay Council of the Rainbow Coalition.<sup>110</sup> Jackson spoke of the historical, ideological, and tactical differences that punctuated this kind of coalition-building:

While it may seem that this should be relatively easy to do, the opposite is true. Issues of race, sex, and sometimes class have divided us in the past and still are a problem. BWMT and BMA have radically different approaches to ending racism. BWMT feels there is a need for cross-cultural unity and understanding; BMA, on the other hand, strongly emphasizes cultural separation. Similar differences have come between lesbians and gay men in the past, and both blacks and whites have also often been insensitive to the special needs of Hispanics and other minorities in our society.<sup>111</sup>

Jackson explained that the groups had decided to 'have a "Joint Dialog" and cultural presentation to begin to bridge these gaps [and] to address further ways in which we can work together'.<sup>112</sup> This coalition went on to host several 'Inter-group "Dialog"' sessions where individual groups communicated their ideological

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<sup>109</sup> *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 4 No. 11, May 1985: 1, Box 3, Folder 5: BWMT Newsletter – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>110</sup> Craig Jackson, 'Building Coalition for Change – Plans for a "Joint Dialog"' *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 4 No. 11, May 1985: 5, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletters – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*: 5.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*: 5.

and cultural underpinnings, and in the fall of 1985 they organised a ‘Candidates Night and Fund-raising Party’ for the upcoming Boston city elections.<sup>113</sup> BWMT explored coalition-building outside of LGBT communities, too. It reached out to other leftist groups, for instance when it co-sponsored ‘A Night of Solidarity’ with the National Lawyers Guild, Amigas Latinas En Action Pro Salud (Latina Friends in Action for Health), and others in order to ‘shar[e] our struggles, our successes, and our visions’.<sup>114</sup>

Beyond work to build LGBT racial justice coalitions, the AIDS crisis, always a concern for BWMT, became of far greater significance during 1985. In 1983, both the Boston AIDS Action Committee and the National Association of People with AIDS had formed. The latter drafted its significant manifesto, ‘The Denver Principles’, which eschewed the label ‘victims’, as ‘a term which implies defeat’, and declared ‘we are only occasionally “patients,” a term which implies passivity, helplessness, and dependence upon the care of others. We are “People With AIDS.”’<sup>115</sup> Media coverage of and academic research into HIV/AIDS lagged behind these activist responses somewhat, but reporting and research rose exponentially during 1985-86, causing at least one BWMT-Boston member to reach out to his comrades.<sup>116</sup> In July 1985, the same month that Rock Hudson publically acknowledged that he lived with AIDS, one Boston-BWMT member,

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<sup>113</sup> *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 4 No. 12, June 1985: 5; and *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 5 No. 4, October 1985: 1, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletters – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>114</sup> ‘A Night of Solidarity – Food, Music, and Sharing Our Lives’, *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 5 No. 5, November 1985: 3, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletters – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>115</sup> ‘The Denver Principles’. Available at *ACT-UP New York* [online] <<http://www.actupny.org/documents/Denver.html>> [accessed 27 February 2013]. See also, Max Navarre, ‘Fighting the Victim Label’ *October* 43, Winter 1987: 143-146 (144); and AIDS Action Committee, ‘About AIDS Action’ [online] <<http://www.aac.org/about/>> [accessed 27 February 2013].

<sup>116</sup> On media coverage and academic research into HIV/AIDS, see Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism and the Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996): 79-104; and Trevor Cullen, ‘HIV/AIDS: 20 Years of Press Coverage’, *Australian Studies in Journalism* 12, 2003: 64-82 (65-68).

‘Charles’, wrote a commentary that urged fellow members to take the threat of AIDS seriously. Drawing on a recent article in the *Advocate*, he wrote:

AIDS–1985 – It is a rapidly changing, frightful and too often fatal disease that is affecting all of our lives, directly and indirectly. This is a time for all of us to take more than a second look at the way we live and socialize sexually as gay men. Too many of us fluff off the articles that appear in every gay publication that we receive....We fluff them off as something that is happening, but not to us....Come on guys, we deserve happy and fruitful lives with our current or future Mr. Right, so let’s all practice SAFE SEX, let’s realize the risks we are taking and make the attempt to be extremely careful.<sup>117</sup>

In the September newsletter ‘Charles’ continued his style of meta-reporting on AIDS, indicating not only that ‘a gay man having casual sex is at several hundred times greater risk [of contracting HIV] than a heterosexual man or woman’ but that the infection rate had been doubling each year.<sup>118</sup> Meanwhile, BWMT-Philadelphia had taken the initiative in creating a ‘rap record’ called ‘Respect Yourself’ that sought to reach black and Latino communities who, it was believed, did not think AIDS is a major problem for them. Sent to every BWMT chapter, the Philadelphia group urged the others to seek out ways to get the record played, even as a public service announcement, on radio stations and in other media outlets.<sup>119</sup> By mid-November, the Boston chapter had also formed an AIDS Committee. Following the example of the Philadelphia group, but obviously in line with BWMT’s larger focus on racial justice, this committee and its participants decided to concentrate their efforts within communities of colour, particularly African Americans communities. Although they aimed to work widely with people living with AIDS, members decided to work to promote the ‘Respect Yourself’ record and to work closely with ‘minorities’ primarily to ‘educate minorities about

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<sup>117</sup> Charles, ‘Comments from a Brother Who Cares’, *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 5 No. 1, July 1985: 3-4, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletters – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>118</sup> Charles, ‘AIDS – 1985 (Continued)’, *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 5 No. 3, September 1985: 5-6, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletters – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>119</sup> ‘AIDS Rap Record Available for Distribution’, Vol. 5. No. 4, October 1985: 2, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletters – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

AIDS' and to 'identify minority AIDS patients with the purpose of ministering to their needs'.<sup>120</sup>

Interestingly, it was as BWMT-Boston began to move towards anti-racism coalitions and AIDS-based efforts that the larger LGBT community of Boston first officially acknowledged and rewarded the chapter's racial justice work, including its much earlier endeavours. In November of 1985, the Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance awarded BWMT-Boston their Barbara Deming Service Award in recognition of their 'work in addressing issues of racism in and outside of our community'.<sup>121</sup> The Alliance noted a range of BWMT activities, particularly the 1982 Boston Bar Study and subsequent Discrimination Response System, its forum on gentrification, and its 'current involvement in coalition building'.<sup>122</sup> John Bush, who had just won NABWMT's First Annual Des Pascavis Spirit Award for his 'spirit and commitment' to BWMT, noted that 'even though there are only a few of us still attempting to work to promote the ideals of BWMT [here in Boston], the outside community is aware of our efforts. That helps to make it all worthwhile.'<sup>123</sup>

### *Conclusions*

As scholars of AIDS activism now observe, in the mid-1980s BWMT was one of the few national LGBT organisations to 'not[e] a lack of HIV education and

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<sup>120</sup> John Bush, 'BWMT/Boston Is Forming an AIDS Committee', *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 5 No. 6, December 1985: 3, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletters – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>121</sup> 'BLGPA Community Recognition Dinner', Vol 5. No.4, December 1985: 4, *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>122</sup> John Bush, 'Awards Given to BWMT/Boston and Individual Members', Vol. 5 No. 6, December 1985: 3, *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletters – 1985, MACT-Boston Records.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*: 3.

service programs by and for gay and bisexual men of color'.<sup>124</sup> During the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, BWMT responded to the growing AIDS crisis by developing racially inclusive spaces to discuss and raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, attempting to ensure that AIDS responses and organising addressed communities of colour as well as white gay men, and developing its own educational and outreach efforts to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS.<sup>125</sup> Indeed, by 1986, the NABWMT had set as its priorities 'AIDS minority educational outreach' and 'networking with other civil rights groups'.<sup>126</sup>

For its part, BWMT-Boston had clearly already begun addressing these concerns since its *Resisting Racism* workshops had fizzled out in the spring of 1985. This is not to say that the move from anti-racism study to coalition-building and AIDS educational efforts was a clear and intentional one on the part of members. Nor is it true that the ever-worsening AIDS crisis diverted energies away from racial justice activism in general or anti-racism workshops in particular. Clearly, a racial justice imperative underlined all of these activities. Other, perhaps less obvious connections seemed to have existed, too. The transition to racial justice coalition-building and 'minority'-centred AIDS activism, it seems, was in fact an apposite if also unintentional extension of the reflexive study on race and racism that the group had been carrying out. The overarching philosophy of *Resisting Racism* implied that inward examination should undergird one's engagement with cultural and institutional racism. While its workshops

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<sup>124</sup> Stewart Landers, Him Pickett, Leo Rennie and Steve Wakefield, 'Community Perspectives on Developing a Sexual Health Agenda for Gay and Bisexual Men' *AIDS and Behavior*, April 2011, Volume 15, Issue 1 Supplement: S101-S106 (S102). 'Racism Discussion Group', *BWMT Boston Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No. 9, (March 1985): 3, Box 3, Folder 5: Boston BWMT Newsletter – 1985, MACT-Boston Records; and Jackson, 'Beyond – Beyond Racism', 1-2.

<sup>125</sup> Jennifer Brier, *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009): 53-54, 71, 77; Ollie Lee Taylor, interview with the author, 19 January 2013, Columbus, USA and Leeds, UK; and Shepherd, *Queer Political Performance and Protest*: 60-61.

<sup>126</sup> Letter to Calvin Hernton from Alyn Hess, 1-2 February 1987, Box 1, Folder 11: Convention Planning, Correspondence, 1986-1987, BWMT-Milwaukee Records.

during the fall of 1984 and winter of 1985 can easily be seen in line with the former aspect, the reflexive imperative, BWMT-Boston's coalitional and AIDS-based work corresponded to the latter.

These connections were perhaps best illustrated by John Bush in his address to a 1985 New York conference on 'The Economics of AIDS: Blacks and Gays Competing for a Shrinking Pie'. In his talk, Bush argued that there were many groups in the US who had to compete for a diminishing pot of public funds – not just African Americans and LGBT communities – but, because this competition grew primarily out of the militarisation of the federal budget, these groups were in fact competing with the Pentagon, not with each other. To say that African American and gay communities were competing for AIDS funding 'tends to be inflammatory and sensational', Bush noted, and did not help to promote 'progressive coalitions which can challenge the wealthy in this country'. He concluded his remarks by stating that white activists, including LGBT individuals, who wanted to create coalitions with African Americans around AIDS activism should 'begin with a personal and collective examination of process and then proceed with honest endeavour'.<sup>127</sup> Thus, in this address, Bush situated personal reflection on racism as needing to precede coalitional activism, and he invoked several of the key dynamics that characterised much of BWMT's work during its earliest years. His assessment of the militarised federal budget nodded towards the current within the organisation that was critical of gay assimilationism. It hinted at both earlier gay liberationist critiques and presaged later queer critiques of LGBT participation in the Armed Forces.<sup>128</sup> Bush also commented on

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<sup>127</sup> 'Are We in Competition with Each Other?' *Boston BWMT Newsletter*, Vol. 5 No. 7, January 1986: 4, Box 3, Folder 6: Boston BWMT Newsletters – 1986, MACT-Boston Records. Emphasis in original.

<sup>128</sup> From the gay liberation movement, see for instance, Carl Whitman, *The Gay Manifesto* (New York: Gay Liberation Front, 1970), available at *Against Equality* [online]

the kinds of interracial and coalitional work that he felt should be arising in response to the AIDS crisis, work that his organisation was beginning to perform in earnest. Finally, he spoke of the importance of reflexivity in interracial and racial justice activism and the need for individuals and groups to reflect on their own investments in, and relationships with, the anti-racist struggles at-hand. For Boston and other BWMT chapters, *Resisting Racism* workshops were the spaces where this reflexive work could happen.

Today, Bush recalls that these workshops were not easy endeavours. By his recollection, this work 'to liberate the mind' came to a 'frustrating' halt in no small part because it required that 'we fight our own demons as well as those of others'.<sup>129</sup> Far more so than DIM, PACT, Breakaway and the Women's School, the anti-racism workshops of BWMT demanded self-criticism and introspection of its participants. Without necessarily eschewing the kinds of historical study that these other groups and institutions carried out, BWMT workshops centred on participants' own experiences, motivations, relationships and knowledges as they worked to address race-based ignorances and injustices. Significantly, BWMT has never entirely abandoned anti-racism workshops. In 1996, it established its Multiracial/Multicultural Institute, which became NABWMT's 'primary program initiative'. Later re-named the Bush-Mallon Institute, this entity carried on the work begun by Bush and Mallon in the early 1980s to address racism within

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<[http://www.againstequality.org/files/refugees\\_from\\_amerika\\_a\\_gay\\_manifesto\\_1969.pdf](http://www.againstequality.org/files/refugees_from_amerika_a_gay_manifesto_1969.pdf)> [accessed 27 February 2013]. See also, Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention, *We Like Our Queers Out of Uniform* (San Francisco: LAGAI, 1990), available at *Faggotz.org* [online] <[http://faggotz.org/againstequality/We\\_Like\\_Our\\_Queers\\_Out\\_Of\\_Uniform.pdf](http://faggotz.org/againstequality/We_Like_Our_Queers_Out_Of_Uniform.pdf)> [accessed 27 February 2013]; and Queers for Economic Justice, 'A Military Job Is Not Economic Justice: QEJ Statement on DADT' *Queers for Economic Justice* [online] <<http://q4ej.org/military-job-is-not-economic-justice-qej-statement-on-dadt>> [accessed 27 February 2013].

<sup>129</sup> John Bush, email interview with the author, 4 January 2013.

LGBT organisations, including BWMT.<sup>130</sup> Still operating today, the Bush-Mallon Institute utilises trained workshop facilitators within BWMT ranks to deliver half-day workshops, a number of which can be run online. The Institute's most popular workshop, called 'Finding the I in the Middle of Racism', might in fact be the best indication of BWMT's on-going attempt to approaching racial ignorance and injustice through reflexive means.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> NABWMT, 'John Bush Gerald Mallon Institute for Social Justice' *NABWMT* website <<http://www.nabwmt.org/images/malloninstitute.pdf>> [accessed 20 January 2013]; and Ollie Lee Taylor, phone interview with the author, 19 January 2013.

<sup>131</sup> 'John Bush Gerald Mallon Institute for Social Justice'. Ollie Lee Taylor, email interview with the author, 1 March 2013.

## Conclusion

This thesis has historicised a particular form of white racial justice activism during and beyond the Black Power era. Through the register of the workshop, the case studies explored suggest that race-based education was a significant, perhaps even primary, way in which white activists responded to the Black Power imperative that they organise against racism in white communities. The anti-racism workshops in this study indicate that what scholars now call a racialised 'epistemology of ignorance' was a central target in white racial justice activism – up to and beyond Catherine Jones' critical article in the late 1990s. When faced with the challenge to fight racism in white communities, white activists found that the undoing of racism would involve, in part at least, a reconceptualisation of the racial landscape of the US. Though Jones would later criticise workshops for failing to produce palpable changes in racist systems, where workshops seem to have been truly powerful was in their epistemological effects, in the transformations they sought and often brought about in whites' understanding and awareness of racial realities. Like the attempts of radical activists of colour to challenge ignorance, anti-racism workshops represented epistemic resistance to racism.

The case studies presented here elucidate complex and multifaceted motivations in the establishment, design and participation of anti-racism workshops, as well as the limitations of these attempts at the particular racial frameworks they adopted. Aside from a commitment to racial justice, activists challenged racism within their own communities and social movements. While DIM, PACT and white women's liberationists were at pains to engage with whites, the first two

organisations worked with white communities traditionally left outside of social movement activity, the 'groups in the society never reached by black people', as Carmichael and Hamilton referred to them.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, anti-imperialist feminists in Cambridge, Pam Allen in San Francisco, and BWMT members across the country sought to challenge racism within their own ranks – usually white racism but also internalised racism – in order to create more effective organisations.

Institutions, organisations and individuals participated in anti-racism workshops for a number of complex reasons. On the surface it would seem that many of DIM and PACT's workshop participants, for instance Borg & Beck and Robichaud High School, approached these organisations because of concerns about racial tension. However, their anxieties were attached to significant political and social shifts occurring in and outside of Detroit, including processes of deindustrialisation and black uprising. BWMT activists were driven to challenge racism at a personal level, but this was not unrelated to the desire to confront the existence of racism within larger LGBT communities. As for those who participated in race-based classes at the Women's School and Breakaway, their motives for participation are the least clear. However, the recollections of anti-imperialist feminists in general and Pam Allen in particular indicate that there was indeed a hunger to learn about race and racism in the US. After all, they kept signing up for race-based classes at the Women's School and revived Allen's class once she had finished teaching it.

Each chapter also recounts the different approaches that activists adopted to challenge racialised ignorance. For BWMT, before wider communities could be

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<sup>1</sup> Ture and Hamilton, *Black Power*. 81.

approached, activists needed to think reflexively about racism and to challenge processes of racial socialisation as they manifested in their own thinking. The feminist free schools, PACT and DIM all brought a more socio-historical approach to their workshops. Pam Allen had a particularly methodical approach to the study of race and racism. She used a consciousness-raising model to move students from a personal story, through analysis and abstraction, to arrive at a complex understanding of race relations in the US. While she opened up stories of several different racialised groups, anti-imperialist feminists at the Women's School, like many BWMT activists, focused largely upon the histories of African Americans and whites, yet they used classes on women's and black history to reach a wider audience. Perhaps more aligned with BWMT's reflexive efforts than feminists' free school classes, PACT and DIM were innovative workshop designers. Staff at DIM developed important theoretical tools, while PACT staff and volunteers pioneered the creation of workshop plans and exercises. For these organisations, anti-racism education entailed mobilising the skills and knowledge of trained facilitators who then engaged with participants communities to highlight individual, cultural and institutional forms of racism.

Finally, these case studies highlight the limitations to educationally-based racial justice efforts. DIM's work with one large industrial client speaks to how, when participants' attempts to translate their heightened knowledge of racism into racially just policies, their attempts still faltered as they collided with other forms of structural racism. For PACT, a move towards sophistication or professionalism insinuated anxieties around volunteers' knowledge and ability to lead educational training. While PACT volunteers' persistent calls for further training indicated a certain level

of enthusiasm, they also suggested the slipperiness of positioning racism as an issue of knowledge and ignorance: how was one to know when they had 'overcome' racialised ignorance? Related to this was a question that cut across these different workshops; how to verify the effectiveness and importance of anti-racism workshops. For, how could one measure 'man's mind'? A hindrance for BWMT revolved around the simple but persistent problem of maintaining interest in workshop participation, particularly when anti-racism education was not the sole activity or aim of the group. Moreover, several groups, including DIM, PACT and the Women's School, worked within black-white paradigms that often obscured the histories and contemporary realities of other racialised groups. What is more, only anti-imperialist feminists and Allen considered the intersection of race with other sets of power relations. Gender relations were not considered in the racial frameworks of DIM, PACT and BWMT.

Middle-class activists featured prominently in this study. Most of the women's and gay liberationists had grown up in economic comfort, were highly educated or were working professionals (like university professors). The majority of PACT's volunteers and staff, as well as DIM's staff, were in white-collar employment. Notwithstanding popular assumptions about poor whites being to blame for racism, this should not suggest that middle-class whites were more concerned with racial injustice than working-class or poor whites.<sup>2</sup> Rather, that so many activists in this study were middle-class signals, first and especially in the case of DIM and PACT, the burgeoning sphere of professional anti-racism training and, second, the reality

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<sup>2</sup> On assumptions about poor whites and racism, see for instance, David Reynolds, 'White Trash in Your Face: The Literary Descent of Dorothy Allison' *Appalachian Journal* 20(4) (1993): 356-366 (360); and Melissa L. Grunow-Chávez, "'Trash Rises': Class Consciousness and the Transcendence of 'White-Trash': Assumptions in Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina*", *American @* 2(1) (2010): 51-65 (51-52).

that those with a middle-class background were in the majority within all post-war social movements. While scholars have debated why so many activists were middle-class, what seems clear is that the kind of university education afforded to activists like Terry, Allen and others prompted political participation and that middle-class activists' 'belief in political agency' similarly spurs their engagement in social movements.<sup>3</sup>

One other important similarity between the workshops was a focus on whiteness. Whether workshop facilitators addressed corporate managers, radical feminists or each other, people were asked to reflect on whiteness as a system of racialised power relations that was inextricable from – or responsible for – racial injustice in the US. Some organisers, like DIM and PACT, made very explicit connections between whiteness and racism. As Bob Terry wrote, 'The racial problem in American society is not a "black problem." It is a "white problem."<sup>4</sup> For others, examinations of whiteness arose within discussions of institutional or cultural racism. In Allen's 'Institutional Racism' class, for instance, whiteness was brought to the fore when students began to read and discuss the book *Institutional Racism in America*, which, like Terry's *For Whites Only*, explained racial inequalities in the US

<sup>3</sup> Darren E. Sherkat and T. Jean Blocker, 'The Political Development of Sixties' Activists: Identifying the Influence of Class, Gender, and Socialization on Protest Participation' *Social Forces* 72(3) (March 1994): 821-842 (838). See also, Roberto Fernandez and Doug McAdam, 'Multiorganizational Fields and Recruitment to Social Movements' *Sociological Forum* 3(3): 327-382; Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988): 35-65; Myra Marx Ferree and Beth Hess, *Controversy and Coalition: The New Feminist Movement Across Four Decades of Change* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 1-24; and Nella Van Dyke, 'Crossing Movement Boundaries: Factors that Facilitate Coalition Protest by American College Students' *Social Problems* 50(2) (May 2003): 226-250. Importantly, scholarly inquiry into post-war social movements has also overlooked working-class activists. For instance, Bernice McNair Barnett has pointed out that scholarship on black women activists has been shaped by a 'middle class orientation that excludes, ignores, or makes inconsequential the experiences of poor and working-class women, a large percentage of whom are Black'. See her 'Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement: The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race, and Class', *Gender & Society* 7(2) (June 1993): 162-182 (164-65).

<sup>4</sup> Terry, *For Whites Only*:15. Emphasis in original.

by highlighting white people's historical and contemporary domination of institutions like the education and criminal justice systems. The Women's School named and challenged whiteness in less direct ways. By centring women's history classes on the lives of black and working-class white women, they countered notions that the category 'woman' equated to white and middle-class women, and that such classes would or should focus on the struggles and achievements of white, middle-class historical figures such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Margaret Sanger. Their pedagogical practices attempted to not only racialise whites but to illuminate a larger system of racialised power relations.

This thesis thus suggests that the work of these activists needs to be located alongside the work of other late twentieth-century thinkers in the field of critical whiteness studies. While this field has been tracing academic understandings of whiteness for some time, it has largely ignored activist knowledge of whiteness and overlooked the importance of social movements and activist organisations to the development of critical knowledge on whiteness. The case studies presented here, however, confirm that the black freedom, women's liberation and gay liberation movements were rich with analyses of whiteness and that such thinking was central to the development of anti-racism workshops.

This case studies in this thesis show that anti-racism workshops served as sites of epistemic resistance. Anti-racism workshops were influential and effective largely in terms of the hard-to-trace processes of challenging ignorance and creating knowledge. Activists did, however, work to both prompt epistemic transformations in individuals and political reform. Workshop leaders were not interested solely in consciousness-raising, nor did they see it as disconnected from the larger work of

building more racially just social movements, communities, companies and institutions. Rather than trace the impact of these workshops, this thesis has focused on the particular sets of knowledge on race that different activists and organisations promoted in their workshops. To gauge the impact of these workshops, though, one could look to the actions taken by various groups during and after workshops. The attempts by BWMT-Boston to halt the sale of racist greeting cards at its local gay bookstore speak to the impact of their workshops, while the establishment of a 'pluralistic camping model' and the 'New Perspective on Race' teaching curriculum highlight the legacy of PACT.

Moreover, the circulation of racial frameworks developed in these workshops, and indeed the practice of anti-racism workshops, can be easily seen. Take, for instance, an example of the US government's use of anti-racism workshops: the Pentagon's establishment of the Defense Race Relations Institute (DRRI). Towards the end of the 1960s, when race relations became an increasingly important matter for the Department of Defense. On military bases and posts around the world, there were episodes of violence as the result of racial tensions. Military researchers and leaders were distressed by young African American enlistees, who they felt exhibited more 'militancy' than their predecessors. At the same time, many enlistees of colour faced racially motivated violence and intimidation, as well as institutional racism. For instance, the test every recruit had to take and which directed their career path, the Armed Forces Qualification Test, was culturally biased towards

whites, and thus, men of colour were disproportionately represented in both combat troops and among the US's Vietnam War dead.<sup>5</sup>

As part of its efforts to curb racial tensions and inequities, the Department of Defense directed that all military personnel undertake 18 hours of race relations education annually. In June of 1971, the DRRI was established at Patrick Air Force Base in Florida in order to train the employees who would carry out these workshops at installations around the world. From 1971 to 1974, 2500 military personnel went through DRRI's weeks-long training to become race relations instructors and equal opportunities managers.<sup>6</sup> These initiatives signaled the Defense Department's recognition that the military's race-based problems related, at least in part, to racialised ignorance. In the early 1970s, the DRRI adopted a surprisingly radical racial framework that was approved by the high-ranking officials who comprised the board that oversaw the efforts of DRRI. Central to this framework was the theorising of none other than Bob Terry. Participants learned about the histories of peoples of colour in the US, and as they began to theorise the meaning of race and the work of anti-racism, Terry's definition of racism (as 'power' plus 'prejudice') and his concept of 'new white consciousness' were foundational. While it is unclear if this framework remained after the DRRI overhauled its racial framework in the mid-1970s, what is clear is that Terry's epistemological influence was brought to bear on thousands of individuals at the DRRI from 1972-74.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, DRRI's establishment indicates that by the early 1970s it was well understood in larger US society that educational efforts were necessary to the challenging of racism. Activist-led anti-racism

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<sup>5</sup> James Westhieder, *Fighting on Two Fronts: African Americans and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1997): 37-41; and Burgin, 'The Workshop As the Work': 42-44.

<sup>6</sup> Burgin, 'The Workshop As the Work': 45-46.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*: 48-49.

workshops *did* have an impact all over the country, and DRRI's racial framework demonstrated this. Race-based education and the study of power, knowledge and ignorance had become central to anti-racism projects around the nation, whether they took place within social movements or government institutions like the Armed Forces.

Unfortunately, the obfuscation of anti-racism workshops (whether in the military, in feminist free schools or elsewhere) and other modes of white resistance to racial injustice within the historical record also works to further racialised ignorance in ways that are productive of racial inequalities and injustice. For, as Becky Thompson and Eliaine O'Brien have argued, without the knowledge of whites' continuing participation in racial justice, not only is the racial composition of historical struggles contorted, but the multiracial potential for contemporary struggles is forestalled.<sup>8</sup> By unearthing these histories of white racial justice activism, we can work to both challenge racialised ignorance around the 'place' of whites in race-based movements *and* help to galvanise today's struggles.

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<sup>8</sup> O'Brien, *Whites Confront Racism*: 2; and Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*: xv, 365.

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