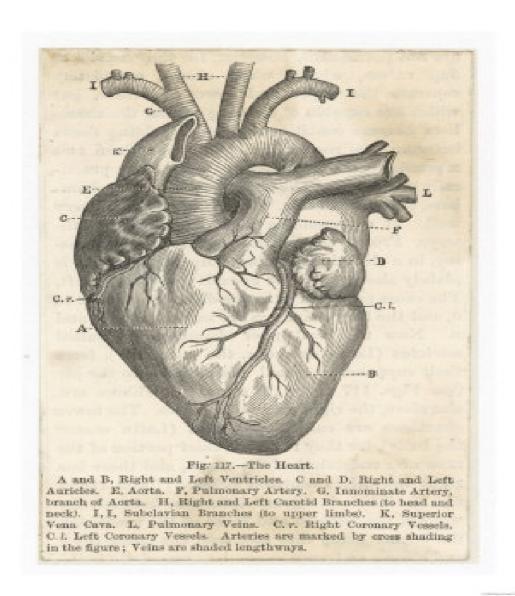
ANTI-OPPRESSION HANDBOOK ASEN TRAINING CAMP 2011



Hi, and welcome to our pint-sized anti-oppression handbook!

To give it a bit of context, it's been made for the Australian Student Environment Network's Summer Training Camp in 2011. Lots of people come to the camp through their uni enviro collectives or friends, without much experience of the concepts surrounding 'anti-oppression' issues.

ASEN has never been a single issue network. We don't want to be campaigning on "environmental issues" while ignoring social justice issues. We want to see this network grow into one that is both aware and active on issues of privilege and oppression, and which continues to challenge itself as well as having an outwards issue-based focus.

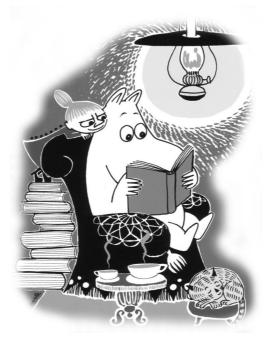
There is a danger in thinking that oppressive behaviour is always "out there" and not within our own circles. But just looking at ASEN, we see that it is dominated by white, cis-gendered, middle class university students. No doubt, these people do some amazing things! But we also want to create an environment which questions dynamics of privilege and power, and which gives voice to those who are usually silenced.

For the first time, this year's training camp is going to involve caucuses (a caucus in this context is a forum for groups of people who share a particular identity, experience, socialisation to come together and talk about issues specific to their needs, what they want to be doing, or anything they want really). Caucuses can be once-off things, or can be longer-term things. Once-off caucuses, like the ones we'll have at Training Camp, are good for creating visibility, spaces of mutual support, and connections/community. Longer term caucuses (some unions have been doing them) have all the benefits of once off caucuses, but can also do things like anti-oppression training and visibility campaigns. If people caucus at Training Camp and want to create longer term caucuses, awesome!

This is all an experiment, the early stages of a work in progress which will hopefully bring some positive changes to ASEN culture. After talking to several people about their experiences of caucuses at other events, as well as Activist Educators at The Change Agency, the organisers made a few decisions.

- * Having heard negative stories about other conferences scheduling an overload of caucuses, we chose to schedule only 3 Womyn's (trans inclusive), People of Colour, and Queer. This isn't because we see others as invalid it's because the issues of sexism, racism, and heteronormativity are ones that the organisers had heard spoken of a lot, so they seemed like a logical first-time combination.
- * There'll also be space at the camp for people to hold other caucuses. Simultaneously to the scheduled caucuses will be 'ally/solidarity' corresponding sessions.
- * The caucuses & ally/solidarity groups will meet separately so that issues/experiences can be expressed without judgement, but also together as it's valuable to learn from each other.

To accompany these sessions a couple of us thought that we'd collate some resources that we'd found helpful in getting ourselves to think more, and put them into this handbook to share with everyone. This is by no means a complete summary of anti-oppression work! It's merely something to get us started, and to avoid situations where certain people bear the load of 'educating' everyone on something which they already have to deal with every day. There's so much stuff out there books, websites, zines, blogs... it's incredible. So hopefully this handbook will inspire you to explore, learn, share, have amazing conversations, and help build more safe, free, and respectful communities for everyone:)



Privilege is: About how society accommodates you. It's about about advantages you have that you think are normal. It's about you being normal, and others being the deviation from normal. It's about fate dealing from the bottom of the deck on your behalf.

J.Betty, A primer on privilege:

brown-betty.livejournal.com/3.05643.html

"Oppression is the experience of repeated, videspread, systemic injustice... Toppression, is embedded in unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutions and rules, and the collective consequences of following those rules. It refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions which are supported by the media and cultural stereotypes as well as by the structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms."

www.beyondintractability.org/essay/natureoriginsoppression/?nid=23.81

"The first big privilege which whites, males, people in upper economic classes, the able bodied, the straight (I think one or two of those will cover most of us) can work to alleviate is the privilege to be oblivious to privilege."

www.lilithgallery.com/feminist/modern/WhitePrivilegeMalePrivilege.html



Racism 101

resistracism.wordpress.com/racism-101

An ever-expanding list of common understandings we share as anti-racists. Please feel free to submit your own entries.

- 1. White privilege exists.
- 2. Sanctuary is not segregation.
- 3. Flipping the actors does not lend clarity to an issue, nor does it mean that you have created equivalent analogies. See entry under Fallacious Flip.
- 4. People must own their feelings and expressions. Ventriloguy is not helpful in discussions of racism.
- 5. Seeking the empowerment of people of color is not the same as disenfranchising white people.
- 6. Racism is more than "individual acts of meanness." (Peggy McIntosh)
- 7. Hating white privilege is not the same as hating whitey.
- 8. Defensive responses to issues voiced by people of color are invocations of privilege.
- 9. A claim to anti-racism cannot be made based on any variation of the "black friend defense" (Mexican boyfriend, Asian wife, children of color, etc.).
- 10. Apology means say you're sorry and then shut up. No rationalization, no long explanation of your intention, no invocation of the black friend defense. And then work on making change.
- 11. The anti-racist focus should be on effect rather than intention.
- 12. Celebrations of "multiculturalism" do not address racism.
- 13. People of color are not responsible for the education of white people.
- 14. It's not all about you.
- 15. An experience you have as a white person that you think is similar to an experience related by a person of color is not a valid proof that racism doesn't exist.
- 16. "Anti-racism" does not exist without action.

My Struggle With Language

I speak English, you speak English, we speak English, they speak English, ze speaks English, ey speaks English, she speaks English, and our ancestors DIDN'T speak English. Well, dunno bout your ancestors, but mine surely didn't.

My land, my people, my culture, they have nothing to do with English. Except the fact that white Anglo's have re colonised us. We gained our "independence" from the Spanish 200+ years ago. But now our lands, our lives and our minds have been (neo) colonised by the Eurogringos (read Europeans and Anglo Americans). The ways our lives are affected by the cultural, economic and social imperialism of the first world are many, and we experience these daily. It's like maybe we freed oursleves from colonial rule, but never freed ourselves from the colonisation of our thoughts and minds. Cuz that's what we have, a colonised mentality, which is deeply affected by the past of Spanish colonialism, but also deeply affected by the present of first world neo-colonialism.

From an early age we have been told that we need to learn English. And there is an incredible amount of pressure put on us so we learn it. It's forcibly pushed through our minds. And we are given excuses such as "it's for your future" or "it will open the doors to a professional life."

But really fuck that shit, it ain't bout us, it's about feeding the hungry monster, that is, western civilization, and it's need to destroy and control our cultures, to make us embrace theirs, to make us give away our resources, our lands, our lives.

I see English as something more than just a mare Language. It's also a tool, used to assimilate, an instrument of racial patronization, as a tool to maintain western supremacy.

A lot of white people comment on how "good" my English is. They think saying that to me is a compliment. But the truth is that it ain't a compliment to me. It comes from assumptions that I won't speak "proper" English due to the fact I'm brown and immigrant. It comes from the mentality that I'll probably have some thick ass accent and they won't be able to understand me. But surprise surprise. The brown boy does speak English! And quite well too.

Cuz you know, black and brown people don't normally speak English, do we? Even though white Anglo colonial powers have colonized so many cultures, causing their disappearances and introducing new languages and cultures. So the truth is that yeah, a lot of third world nations speak English as their first language as a result of colonialism. Plus there are also a lot of people whose families migrated, but they were born here or they themselves migrated here at a really young age. Meaning they've spoken English all their lives. So it shouldn't be such a surprise that brown people can speak English.

And yeah it is very annoying to have some whitey interrupt you half way into a sentence just to tell you that you speak "good" English. BROWN PEOPLE CAN SPEAK ENGLISH, DEAL WITH IT. And I obviously know English is not my first language, but this still makes really upset. And I know that it is much more worse for POC who've spoken English all their lives, and still comments about their English.

I never hear no white people complimenting each other on their English. So there is no need of whiteys patronizing me and other brown and black peeps on the fact we speak English. Thank you very much.

One of the worst things bout whiteys giving me comments on my English, is that it feels like they are happy I can speak their language. I'm not. I feel like I've sold out. Like I'm selling out, like I'm betraying the struggles of my people. The more I notice my accent being weaker, the more I feel like I've assimilated into white Anglo culture.

I'm even forgetting how to speak my own language. I forget words, and can't express as good as I used to. And I'm told this is "normal", this is what happens. And maybe it is. But this doesn't mean I can just sit down and accept it. I feel empty, and lost. I feel like I'm on the way of loosing my culture.

And this whole issue of language has a huge impact in my life. I know that I've internalised a lot of shame and self-hatred. I've internalised a lot of racism. Internalised insecurities. Sometimes I get very worried about my accent, and if people are going to understand me. And I know they will, but I still think like that. Or for example, how I automatically correct my mother every time she "makes a mistake" when speaking English. How I feel ashamed when white people come up to me and speak in Spanish. So many different things, which make everything an struggle.



Everyday is a struggle to resist assimilation, to resist being put down by society and this culture.

And that's sometimes all i feel I can do, struggle.

Hey puffins,

So here's a rad little exercise useful for checkin' in on your own privilege. I'd like to acknowledge that I didn't design this lovely game, but was unable to find the superstar/s who did. Apologies for not crediting anyone. Also, I would also like to acknowledge that other marginalised groups have been potentially silenced here as there are very few barriers on this flower... for extra fun, try making different flowers with different privileges and barriers.

So basically the aim of the game is to colour in each petal to the extent with which you experience a privilege. For example, I'd colour in education all the way 'cause I'm at uni, whereas I'd colour in less for the sexuality petal 'cause I'm queer. Feel free to get crayon and be colour crafty in playing with your flower(s).

Lots o' love 'n smashing of structural oppression,

Zoë C.



Found on the ASEN wiki... asen.pbworks.com/w/page/11658985/Privilege-Flower

Veganism, Racism, Jeanette De Foe Culture & Identity

My family has always eaten tofu. So many delicious varieties of tofu prepared in so many different ways! But I never ate it as a kid, rejecting it as something foreign and strange that would make me foreign and strange if I were to eat it. Do you know when I really started enjoying it? When I became a vegetarian activist and saw that White people could like it too, and it didn't make them any less White.

I've spent all my life trying to assimilate. What choice did I have? I was that silent Asian kid with a constant runny nose, who couldn't run or catch a ball, who was the smallest kid in class. I got teased for "speaking funny" so I changed the way I spoke, artificially sounding as "Austrayan" as possible. I rejected so many things of where I was from - religion, language, the values of my family, and perhaps most tragically of all, many foods. I am grateful that I now have a chance to know at least some of those things again, grateful that my elders want to share their stories, lives and skills with me.

Food is never just food. At its best, it is nourishing, creative, full of love. It is there to celebrate, comfort, entice, excite. Yet at its worst, it is also destructive. Food today is mass produced; it is the product and/or cause of deforestation, factory farms, cruelty, genetic modification, genocide; it degrades land, pollutes water and air; releases carbon; and robs people of culture and identity.



So what is an ethical alternative? Veganism? Not entirely. Chances are, even a pure vegan diet relies on monoculture crops of soy, corn, wheat and palm; not to mention food miles and pesticides. So what about buying only local, organic foods? Better but too expensive for all but the wealthy. Dumpster diving? Not the healthiest way to live. Stealing? Highly stressful. Food co-ops? Awesome, but tend to reach a limited community. Permaculture gardens? Sure, we're working on that but most people I know don't have the time, physical space, or stability to create gardens they can live off entirely.

"We should eat nothing, then we can just go die,"

said a very wise friend one day before storming out of this very discussion. Ey had a point - we need to eat. So how do we make change when the system is all encompassing, when even as we want to destroy it we are so reliant on it?

I have this theory that if the system is everywhere, then to change it we can begin anywhere. So I begin with my diet -- generally speaking, it is a fairly typical mix of vegan and freegan. And I am strongly anti-Nuttelex and similar palm oil spreads as they are causing the genocide of my grandmother's people in Borneo (though it is often hard to avoid palm oil altogether).

Also, when I'm with extended family (i.e. travels to the motherland where vegetarian food is hard to come by) I will eat anything and everything. And my family acknowledges my flexibility by going out of their way to have all-vegan/vegetarian meals some days.

Veganism has always been a source of conflict for me. Yeah, I've seen the animal liberation videos. I know what animals go through to provide food, clothing and entertainment for humans. I see the parallels between the hierarchies that oppress certain groups of humans and the hierarchies that oppress non-human animals.

I believe in the sanctity of life but also in the sanctity of death. And I am sick of rejecting who I am and where I am from.

I am sick of being told by White people that the food of my culture, of my family is "disgusting". I've been told that all my life - by people who'd eat the breast of a chicken but wouldn't eat its feet, or the ribs of a pig but wouldn't eat its ears, or even ate roast chicken but said eating roast duck was "gross".

And it makes minimal difference to me hearing it from White vegans today. It's the same old shit I've dealt with all my life - same old story of White people placing a value judgement on something they don't understand. Let me explain something - eating every part of an animal (feet, ears, intestines, etc.) comes from an ethic of not wasting, from a society of scarcity where sources of food are treasured, where the work taken to produce every morsel of food is valued.



Food is never isolated so by criticising my food you are criticising my culture and you are offending me.

Oh sure, I can just hear the standard vegan response: "But I love Indian/Chinese/ [insert other ethnic vegetarian food here]." I feel likethrowing up. It's classic cultural appropriation.

Just think about all the cultures that have been stolen or destroyed by colonisation, globalisation, assimilation, genocide, destruction of land, migration (whether coerced or voluntary) and shame. And now those same people (myself included) who benefit from the theft and destruction of particular cultures can enjoy the foods from them, picking and choosing which bits fit into their lives (i.e. the vegan ones), ignoring any deeper meaning, not even needing to acknowledge that it's there.

My culture is alive. It's not necessarily the same culture of my parents or grandparents, not the same culture of another immigrant from Singapore; but it's growing, adapting and it is what it is. My culture isn't just within me; it is me. Yet the way vegans see it sometimes makes it seem inanimate. It feels like objectification.

To objectify a person is to see that person as only something: only a body, only an intellect, only the fulfilment of your needs. And to objectify a culture is to see it as something isolated — as just a language, just a song, just a spirituality, just a food — and to ignore that it is part of something greater, part of something you will never understand. It is part of something within me and cannot be pulled out no matter how many languages of my ancestors I never speak.

I'm not saying people (vegans and non-vegan alike) shouldn't eat foods from other cultures because cultures change, mix, form, and fade all the time. But I'm wondering whose terms we're doing it on - is one culture dominating another? Stealing it? Objectifying it? Or are the cultures being shared consensually and on equal terms?

I don't know what the answer is for the vegan culture that is formingamongst activists, and I feel like it's limiting to suggest it's one thing or another. I know that many of my White friends have become vegan as a rejection of their own meat-eating cultures which they see as damaging, but I think there is a difference between rejecting your own culture, and rejecting someone else's culture, especially if that culture has been systematically destroyed to privilege you.

I don't know what the answers are, not even for myself. Maybe there are no answers and we just need to go on eating and living in whatever way we do. We can't have it all figured out but we can think about it. And on one hand it's complicated, but on another it's very simple — our bodies and our hearts speak to us and tell us how things should be.

FALL IN LOVE NOT IN LINE

So, you think you're an ally?

Ok. Ok. So I know a lot of the interactions in this zine sound shockingly un-radical, shockingly faucked up. I know that a lot of it sounds like shit that would never happen in a "radical" space, an "anarchist" space, an "activist" or "collective" space and blah, blah blah. But it does, fellows. It happens all the time. And, while you may not use the same words or the same phrases or respond in exactly the same way as the men in this zine, there's still a whole bunch of shit you're doing that's reinforcing the same dynamics and upholding the same patriarchal structure.

So, if you're thinking, "yeah, maybe stupid guys think that way. But I'm radical. Sure, I'm a man. But I'm an ally. I'm a supporter of somen's issues. I don't need to read this kinda stuff. I'm waaaaay ahead of that", take a good, long look at yourself and your interactions. Ask your partner and your friends and the women in your community to take a look at you as well. I know plenty of men in the "radical/activist" scene who consider themselves to be allies and supporters who are fucking up every day. The sad truth is, I've spent the last few years visiting and living in heaps of different community houses, collective, spaces, infoshops, radical libraries, anarchist crews, etc. and NONE OF THEM ARE ON TOP OF THEIR SHIT, at least not in this department. Women are still being put down, invalidated, talked down, talked over, silenced, dismissed, second-guessed, stereotyped, made to feel uncomfortable, made to feel unsafe, used, abused, harassed, assulted and raped. This problem is happening here and now. We didn't win our right to live free from domance when we won our right to vote, and we didn't automatically become equals when we become anarchists or radicals or activists or whatever you want to call it. The playing field still ain equal, fellows.

So, pay attention! Listen! Learn! And change!

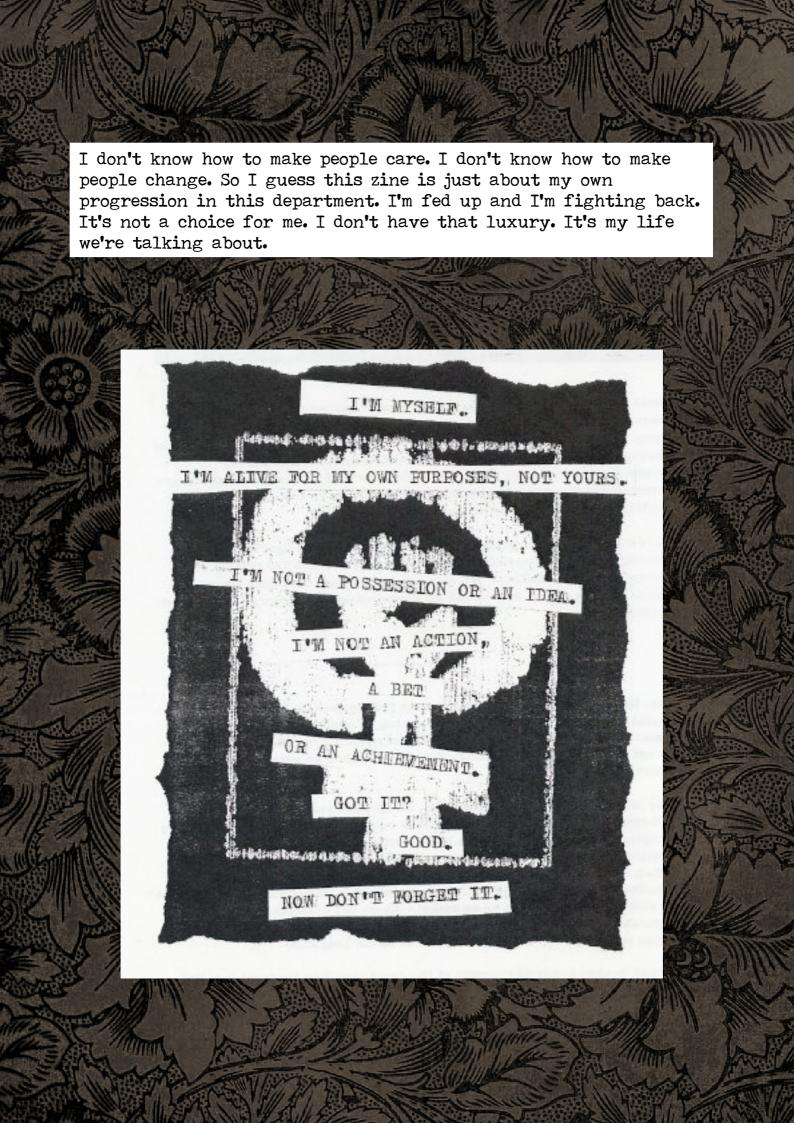


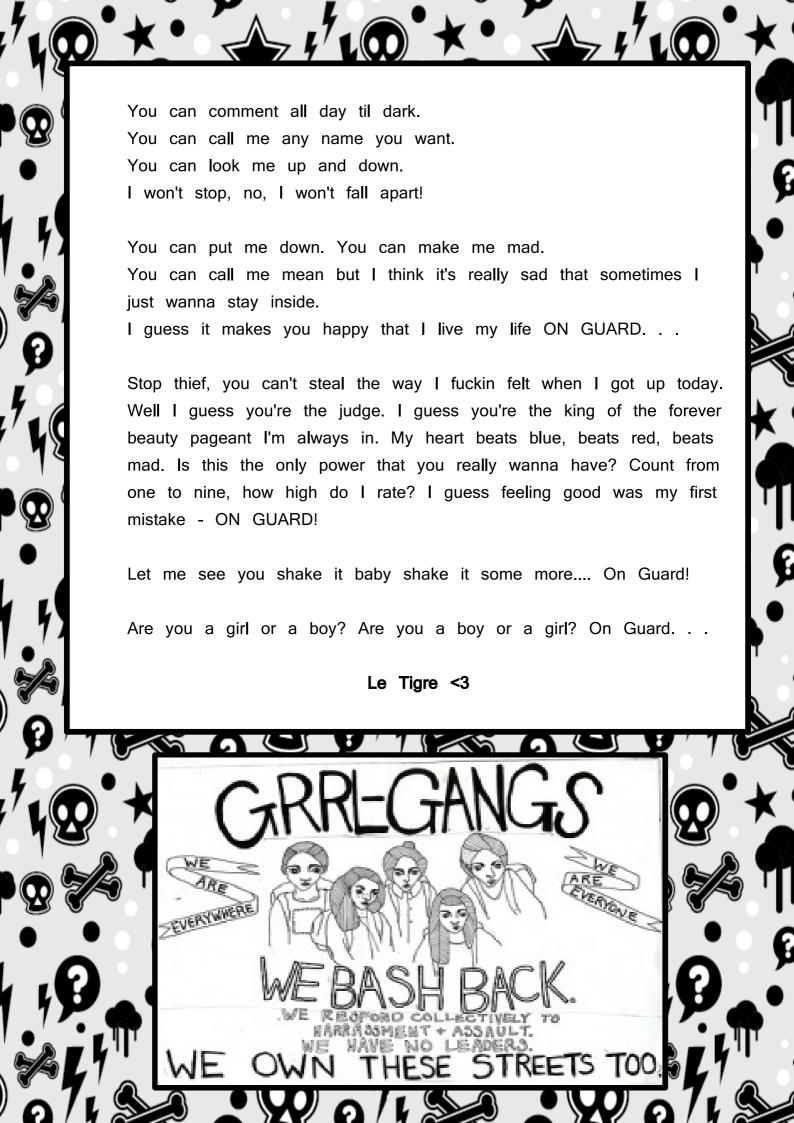
Where's the Disconnect?

Oh yeah, and I've noticed this fucked up trait in many men of either denying that the problem exists (at least to the extent that it does)or writing if off as less important than other issues (this heappens heaps in "radical/activist" spaces). Well, folks, it's all connected. The abuse of the planet is connected to the abuse of women. The power of the state over people is the same as the power of men over women. Sure, I care more about fighting for the natural environment than fighting for human rights. I care more about the forests than most of the people in the world. But it's my sex that seems to be the base for everything. I have to feel safe before I can feel passionate. Half the time I'm so busy dealing with engendered fear and trauma that I don't have thestrength of the will left to work on the things that I love. One in three women are raped in their lifetimes! Most of the women I know have dealt with some form of sexual assult within the last year! That's the reality for us. But it always seems like gender is the last issue to be talked about, focused on and changed.

So, where's the disconnect here? How are we, as a movement, fighting state repression and not fighting gendered oppression? When are we going to start caring enough about the other half of the population to actually mnake suretheir lives are safer and that they're not still getting fucked over and raped and murdered? This is political, fellows! It's political and it's personal! It's a reality for us. It hits home on all fronts. Sali's murder was the catalyst for me, but this shit's been brewing for years. It's about time we all did something about it. And the only way you can sit back and theorize or philosophize your way our of doing anything to change is if you're on the side that isn't afraid to walk outside alone after dark, if you're on the side that doesn't freeze up every time you pass a construction site or live in constant fear that someone you're close to is going to physically or sexually assert their power over you.

If any of this seems confusing, it's because I'm confuseed. I'm really fucking confused. And if it seems angry, ti's because I'm angry. I'm fucking pissed. And if it seems urgent or like I'm drawing lines or making ultimatums, well, I am. This is urgent. It's really fucking urgent. It's been urgent for a long time, but now it's really hitting home. I don't have the luxury of time to sit around and wait for a slow change in the realms of gendered violence. And if the brutal rape and murder of one of our own - a sister and comrade - doesn't light a fire of change under your ass, then something is seriously wrong with that.





Where's your gender at?

QK, so first's first- I Wanna make the difference between "gender" and "sex" clear. I'm not a girl, and I'm not a boy either, but I was born With a female anatomy.

the Way I see it is that the social construct of binary gender (girl/boy, Woman/man) in the anglo-english/australian culture I grew up in is quite separate from our physical sex/anatomy.

Gender involves these categories of personal attributes being assigned to correspond With the two accepted types of anatomy (Which, btw, aren't as distinct as people think), but there's no real causal relationship.

So through this social construct (gender) people are oppressed - We're seen as "deviant", "Weird", "Weak", the "lesser other" if We express p arts of ourselves that don't fit with the gender We have been assigned according to our perceived anatomy. We are coerced to fit into a social gender norm Whether We like it or not.

And I don't like it. I don't fit neatly into the tiny box I Was assigned.

And the more I talk about it, the more I realise that

so many of us feel like this.

But this is MASSINE, gender permeates so much of our social interations, it's way more than just the odd time you have to choose between Ms/Mr on a form. Where do we start?

Well one thing I've found really useful is looking at the language I use. In english, someone's gendered right from the get-go through pronouns (e.g. she/he), and in the dominant culture people get no choice — in just a split second of looking at someone's body their gender is assumed, and along With it comes so much social baggage. how they should talk, what they like to do, how they should dress, how they should dance:

it's already decided before they even get to open their mouth.

But every now and again, someone Will ask me (preferably one-on-one) "What pronoun do you Want me to use for you?"

And I can tell them that I prefer gender neutral* pronouns, and they'll try their best to do that for me, and for once I Wont feel so choked and anxious about being boxed in as a 'she'.

(not that preferring she is a bad thing at all, lots of people like it for lots of reasons, it just doesnt fit me)

So that's Why I War d to Write this for Germinate Coz this isn't just about abunking oppressive social constructs;
it's about consent, community, and respecting eachother
and our self-expression.

*my fave pronoun is ey/em/eir. There are lots of binary-alternative pronouns tho you can check out this site for more infogenderneutral pronoun. Wordpress.com



Some further reading:

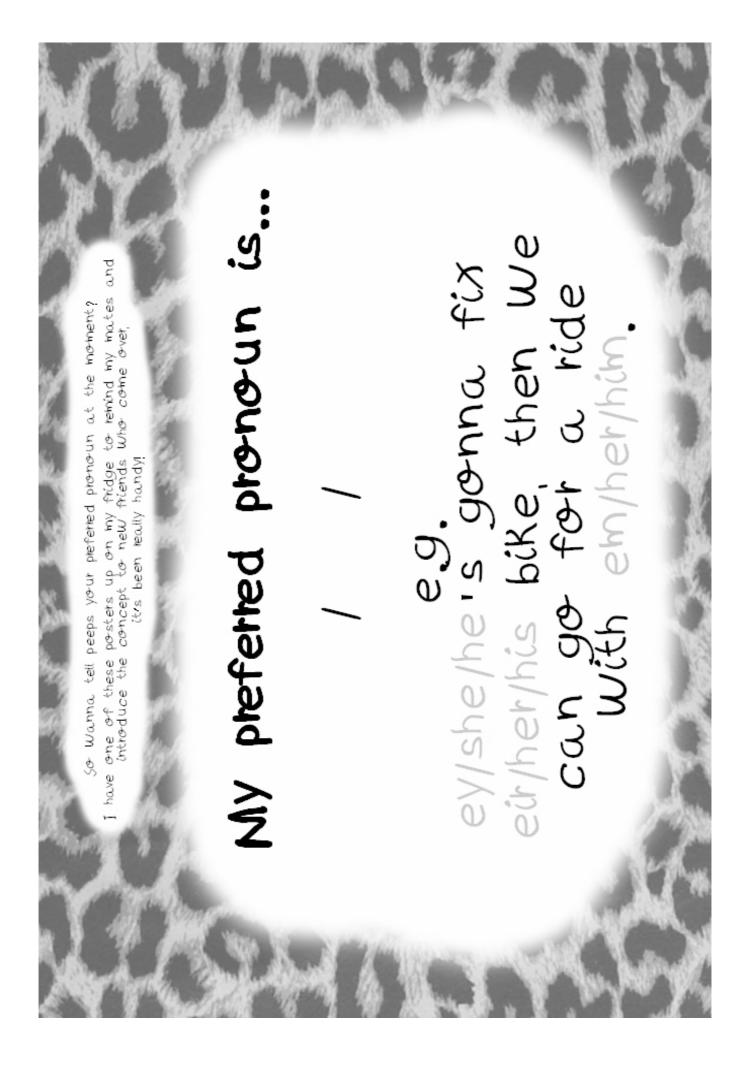
7im tum zine zinelibrary.info/timtum-trans-jeW-zine

That's revolting

WWW.mattildabernsteinsycamore.com/thatsrevolting.html

Queer Zine Archive Project
WWW.qzap.org

GenderFork genderfork.com





On Learning About Class

from: www.trainingforchange.org

<u>Class is hard to learn about.</u> In the U.S., it's obscured by messages like "We're all middle class." Among academics, it's obscured by the lack of consensus among social scientists on how to define it. Among activists, it may be obscured by resentment, or guilt, or worry about "am I a classist?" So let's cut ourselves some slack. Class is hard to learn about.

<u>Class can be learned about.</u> With patience, we can

- learn information about others' experience of class
- notice what goes on inside ourselves about class.

The usual way people have conversation about current topics is by trading opinions. This workshop gives us a chance to go beyond opinions -- to listen from the heart. The experiential activities give a chance to listen and to observe, and get some clues about others' deeper experience of class. With any luck, we'll hear some stories that express an authenticity that defies easy generalization.

Noticing what goes on inside ourselves about class is essential because the culture has sent us many messages about class since we were little. Many of those messages were subtle, like a raised eyebrow or a turning aside, messages like "the things not talked about in our family," as well as the things talked about. We all have a lot of data, but we may need to learn to access it. Attentive, emotionally receptive listening to the stories of others supports this process.

Attentively noticing what goes on inside builds our awareness. Especially noticing the places where there's a kind of electrical charge, where there is reaction, where there is defensiveness, provides clues to the inner coding which scripts our class behaviors.

<u>Like in learning anything, it helps to assume we don't already "know it all."</u> In fact, it helps to assume that there's been a lot of mis-information and bias in our lives, and we might have a lot to learn.

Keep your focus on the group you're learning about, rather than your own group. In this fictional dialogue you can see the advantage of stepping outside a preoccupation with your own class:

Approach A

Working class person (WCP): "We have a tendency to see a job that needs to be done, and we just go ahead and do it. It's not that we're martyrs; we just know it needs to be done and we know how to do it, so we do it."

Middle or owning class person (M/OCP): "Oh, but I know a lot of people in my class who are just the same. They also notice tasks undone, and plunge into the work. Frankly, I think some of them are workaholics! (Chuckle) They're just so responsible!"

Approach B

WCP: "We have a tendency to see a job that needs to be done, and we just go ahead and do it. It's not that we're martyrs; we just know it needs to be done and we know how to do it, so we do it."

M/OCP: "And how do you think that tendency shows up in activist work, say when you were involved in organizing that protest about school funding?"

WCP: "Well, that's a good example, because I was interested in being one of the speakers that night -- it'd be my first time -- and several of my friends were pushing me on it, but then when the night came I saw there wasn't anybody taking care of security in the back of the auditorium. Well, I just went ahead and did security."

The middle/owning class person in Approach B, by taking a learner's attitude toward the working class person, can discover an important dynamic in mixed-class groups. By listening from the heart, the middle/owning class person finds out how to support empowerment and leadership development in the working class person. The frequency of Approach A is one reason why the activist groups of middle class people so often stay in a ghetto of their own making.

On one level Approach A could be called simple self-absorption, simply a matter of individual ego. Consider the bigger picture: the characteristic self-absorption that men often show which renders women in a meeting less easily heard, and whites show in a group where people of color are rendered invisible, and heterosexuals show in a group where queers are overlooked. *Self-absorption is characteristic of people with higher rank.*

By examining this one behavior we find a clue to how oppression is unintentionally sustained in groups working for a better world.

Notice the blaming and rise above it.

When we discover our own classism we may become defensive, or we may feel guilty. Either way, it's about blame. It's OK to notice that, and then to decide not to wallow in it. *Nobody, including you, asked to be born into class society and be corroded by classism.* Our opportunity is to become aware of our conditioned responses, to take responsibility for our behavior and work to change it, and to choose to pay attention to something else -- like working to change the system!

Accessibility: How do we rate?

Here are some questions from Cripchick's blog (which you can find here: (blog.cripchick.com/archives/2910). How does this compare with the groups you're involved in?

Are there some you're doing great at, and others you haven't even thought of? Why is that? What other questions can you think of?

childcare

do you have childcare so parents can come? will kids be safe and have programming so parents don't have to worry about them?

sliding pay scales

do you have different payment options? if people can't afford your event, can they volunteer their time or services instead?

gender-neutral bathrooms

with a long history of trans and genderqueer people being harrassed and in danger when they go into bathrooms, do you have bathrooms where gender does not matter? a lot of times gender-neutral bathrooms are single-room bathrooms where disabled people can also go in with their personal attendants or parents can take their kids. this is helpful for everyone.

food options

do you ask about people's allergies or if they need vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc?

· wheelchair and other mobility-related access

is Point A far from Point B for folks that walk? what physical barriers are there?, if you're going to close meeting room doors, are they heavy?, are there chairs for people? are the chairs wide enough that everyone can be comfortable? it's cool to be creative about making things work but know that if basic access requires a lot of energy, people may not come.

structured schedules and awareness of time

always be aware of time. if you are planning an event, it's important that people know the schedule and you try your hardest to stick to it. many autistic people cannot participate if you don't do this. for disabled people who have to schedule out transportation, bathroom trips with personal attendants, etc, a schedule that is always changing means they will miss programming (don't assume people can stay a hour later if you're late on schedule!) if there must be schedule changes, be clear about them so people know.

alternative formats

if people request it, are your documents available in large print, braille, on a cd, or in another language? did you set aside money for ASL (or other languages) interpreters so people can request them? do people know that they can ask for these things?

audio description

is everyone saying their name before they speak? if you giving directions, do you know how to explain it to a person with a visual impairment? if you are watching a movie, does it have audio description or are you prepared to describe what is happening visually? if it is a multi-day event, can you arrange a time where people can go on a tour of the buildings so they know where everything is?

accessible language

does everyone know what you are saying? are you using word everyone knows and if not, can you explain those terms? do your documents and presentations have pictures that explain what is happening?

understanding different learning styles

are you using a variety of different formats? (e.g. media wise— documents, videos, audio, pictures. Presentation styles—large group, small group, interactive activities, art-making, etc?) are your rooms big enough that people can walk around or stand during your presentation if they want to?

access to quiet space

if you are hosting an event, do you have a space where people can go if they need to be alone? do you have flexibility so people can step back if they are getting overstimulated or tired? (for safety at youth events, this works well with a "buddy system" so people can tell someone they are taking a break). it is also helpful to have another lounge where people can go take a mental break and socialize. (this also helps clears up congestions in hallways)

commitment to being anti-oppression

are you committed to creating an environment where people feel safe? allowing people to make comments that are racist, sexist, heterosexist, ableist, classist and more make it hard for people in these groups to participate. try to understand the historical context behind what you say

trigger warnings

if you are about to use a really graphic image, phrase, or story, do you let people know? are there kids there? people in your audience may be survivors of abuse or have PTSD, better safe than sorry.

identities and experiences

are you respectful of people's preferred gender pronoun, disabilities (not all disabilities are visible, go by what folks say instead of assumptions), and backgrounds? remember that no one ever owes you an explanation for who they are.





REMEMBER

YOUR HEART

IS A WEAPON

THE SIZE OF

YOUR FIST.

KEEP FIGHTING

KEEP LOVING