

Hundreds confer on white privilege

For so many years one could barely speak the words "white privilege" in public without invoking contentious glances from (generally) white people. Now in the space of a single month two conferences have taken on white privilege as a topic, bringing together, in total, well over a thousand students, activists, and leaders. Not the least of those attending each event were several members of the Center. Here are two reports from members, one at length from Iowa, and a briefer report from Massachusetts.

Whiteness in Iowa?

The very thought of a conference on white privilege in Iowa invites a snicker. After all, at 94% white, Iowa is the fifth whitest state among the fifty in our nation, trailing only Maine (97%); Vermont (97%); New Hampshire (96%); and West Virginia (95%). But these folks are serious. And while perhaps superficially surprising to outsiders, it's not such a big stretch. A simple view of racialized imagery on the Des Moines evening news confirms that white privilege operates in Iowa much the same as elsewhere.

Give credit to Eddie Moore, Jr., Director of Intercultural Life at Central College of Pella, Iowa. Moore founded the conference two years ago at Cornell College, another Iowa school. Now in its third year, the conference has moved along with Moore to Central College.

One is struck by the degree of white institutional support being given to the conference. Moore, who is African American, has crafted a delicate and visionary balance between traditional institutional concerns and an activist agenda that places the examination of white privilege within and among discussion of the experiences and concerns of other racialized groups in the United States.

This correspondent was somewhat disoriented by the large banner hung in the plenary hall.

Surely the part that said "3rd Annual Conference on White Privilege" was understandable enough. But the corporate logo of Comfort Inn centered prominently below the text—a clear claim of corporate sponsorship—suggested that whiteness can assimilate anything, including its own critique. Then again, comfort and white privilege are not so foreign to one another after all.

But such cynicism on the part of this jaded, and admittedly white male, critic of white privilege was challenged in other ways. Tim Wise and Jennifer Holladay, as keynote speakers, went directly to the point of discussing white privilege and the need to work against it. But it was the president of the college, David Roe, who, though not as sophisticated in his analysis as the keynoters, gave me pause. Seeing him, another white man in his prime as a holder of institutional power, my simple hope was that he would be brief and ceremonial, and let the more knowledgeable speakers take over. He didn't speak long, but he began with seemingly simple self-reflection and then moved into a deeper acknowledgement of the need to examine white privilege that was humble and real. It took me back to a time in the early 1960s, before the civil rights legislation of that era, when white people in responsible positions began to publicly admit the faults of white supremacy under which they were raised. It's no accident Central College hosts the conference. Word had it that the college was proactive in bringing the event to their campus. The president, done with his speaking duties, continued as a participant throughout the two-day event. Though we never spoke, late on Friday afternoon, the second and final day, I sat as a fellow participant in the same workshop with him.

Of the 900 people attending the conference,

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Overcome fear; find a new home

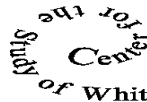
Look into the consciousness of the typical white United States citizen and you're likely to find she or he has taken a principled stand on racism, in the name of colorblindness. Our typical colorblind white person may be expected to believe racism is something bad people do as individuals, that race talk of any sort is racist, and that since white supremacists no longer control the status quo, racism is only an occasional problem at best.

For those who are members of the Center, and others who have looked beyond this philosophy of colorblindness, it's readily apparent that colorblindness masks and protects a racist structure embedded in the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of society itself. The question is, what to do about it?

At the recent Iowa conference on white privilege, Tim Wise drew upon James Baldwin's observation that white people are afraid to challenge racism because we fear being turned away from the welcome table, i.e. loss of family, friends, and social standing in white society. Tim suggested white antiracists need another welcome table. Later Victor Lewis put forth the belief that social change is held back more by lack of courage than by lack of knowledge. No one, he felt, should get more knowledge until they begin to act on what they already know. The time is coming—indeed it may be at hand—not simply to understand the complacency and comfort of the white cultural mass of colorblindness, but to actively confront it.

Colorblindness is not the polar opposite of white supremacy. Antiracism, working in multiracial coalition, dismantling racial structure—these things comprise the opposition to white supremacist formations. Intentional race-conscious efforts that reveal, name, and undermine racial oppression, inequality, dominance and privilege are what's needed. Colorblindness, once a forward-reaching stance, has fallen into stasis as guardian of the racially structured status quo.

Doubtless many colorblind white people will be disturbed to find they are not in the vanguard of improving race relations. Nonetheless, we must tell them so, and in no uncertain terms. There is an emerging community of white antiracists working and living in community with people of color. It's time we assert the moral primacy of our stance and let the colorblind community know we're building another table.



Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc.

The *Membership Newsletter* is a publication of the Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc. sent exclusively to its members 4 times per year. The Center for the Study of White American Culture is a multiracial organization whose mission is to define and examine white United States culture and to address its role in, and impact on, the greater American culture.

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nearly 400 were from outside Iowa. Considering that Central College has a student population of 1,300, a significant portion of the college was also present. Workshops ranged from discussions of white privilege, mixed among views of other groups such as "The State of Black Iowa," "Asian Stereotypes in the Movies," "American Indian Identity," "The State of Hispanic/Latino Girls in Iowa," and "Interracial Dating." As one would expect, the workshop leaders were, as a group, as diverse as their topics. The participants, taken in their entirety, were a predominantly white group, though a significant number of visible people of color were present. Women were in the clear majority, though men were also present in significant numbers.

The conference sponsors seemed impressed and moderately surprised that so many people came from across the country to attend the event. Indeed, it was a little surprising that so many people were there in total. But the Annual Conference on White Privilege is developing a reputation. Over its short life, many well-known speakers and trainers have attended. Furthermore, the event is staged reliably. You can put it on your calendar for next year. So word is getting out.

The Center's own conference series on whiteness always suffered from a lack of institutional support. We were unable to keep it going as an annual event. Instead, we have taken a longer tact, and thus are working toward the White Antiracist Convention. But it has long been my personal belief that there is room for many, many more conferences and other related events with the purpose of addressing whiteness, white privilege, and white culture from the standpoint of developing a positive role for white Americans in a multiracial future. Our country now has another full-fledged conference series. Will another Center for the Study of White American Culture also arise? It's not a matter of if, but when. And when it does, we will see the ongoing move for social transformation broaden once again.

Jeff Hitchcock is Executive Director of the Center, and member of the Steering Committee for the White Antiracist Convention.

Students organize in Massachusetts

By Sandy Bernabei

Four hundred antiracist student activists met at Hampshire College in Amherst Massachusetts for a free conference on "Understanding Whiteness, Recognizing Privilege."

On Saturday April 27th and Sunday April 28th, Kimberly Cook, conference organizer, realized her senior thesis vision to gather prominent antiracist leaders together for the purpose of challenging young people into action. Slam Poets, writers and artist proceeded keynote speakers: Enoch Page, Tim Wise, Peggy McIntosh and Robert Jensen who spoke passionately about their works.

Participants found it hard to chose from the wide range of workshop topics including: Men and Whiteness, Solving for the White X: Applying Malcolm's Lessons, Theoretical Sisterhood, Spending White Privilege to Challenge White Privilege, Interrupting Our Complicity with Whiteness, Igniting Revolution with the Spoken and Written Word.

The conference inspired a core of youth to continue the work of dismantling the destructive power of whiteness.

Sandy Bernabei is a member of the Center, a member of the Steering Committee for the White Antiracist Convention, and operates a web-based curriculum on whiteness at www.antiracistalliance.com

Lifting the White Veil due soon

Our publishing trade name of Crandall, Dostie and Douglass, Books sounds too much like a professional partnership and practice. After much research and on the advice of our attorney, we have included the word "Inc." in the name and filed papers with the State of New Jersey. We expect to have proof of the filing returned to us soon. Prepublication work continues on marketing materials, letterhead, and arrangements for warehousing and processing orders. We still project that the book will be available in July, possibly August, around the time of our next newsletter.

In the meantime, it is too early to reveal details but we are in discussion with an author for our 2003 release, and have plans for assembling an edited book for 2004.

What you can do

Here are some steps you can take to support this effort:

1. Send donations, payable to "Center for Study" and earmarked for the "white antiracist convention." See address below.
2. Contact us. Here's how...
 - U.S. Mail:** White Antiracist Convention
245 West 4th Avenue
Roselle, NJ 07203
 - Email:** WhiteAntiracism@euroamerican.org
 - Fax:** 908.245.4972
 - Send us your contact information.
 - Are you an individual activist? An authorized representative of a group?
 - Share with us your answers to the following questions:
 - Who are you?
 - What do you do?
 - Where are you located?
 - What is your objective?
 - How do you see yourself impacting racism?
 - How do you see yourself and your organization fitting into the 2003 convention?
 - If you would like an invitation to the leadership conference this November, let us know why, and what you envision you can bring to the process (we need vision, resources, experience, enthusiasm, willingness to work).
 - Let us know if you are interested in working in your locality as part of a larger, coordinated network. Think of how local organizing efforts might develop ad hoc organizations or events that can tie into the convention process.
3. Check out the the convention website at: www.euroamerican.org/conf/wac2003-intro.asp
 - Tell other people about the website and the convention.
 - Link to the site.
 - Read the Statement of Purpose and give us your name and brief comment (12 words or less) to be added to a list of people who endorse the statement. The list will be displayed on the website.

European Dissent hosting 2002 event

The 2002 White Antiracist Leadership Conference will be hosted by European Dissent in New Orleans. The conference is limited by invitation to 100 persons. Invitees will include members of the Advisory Council, additional white antiracist leaders, and people of color who support the development of white antiracism. We are also looking for a cross section of activists from around the country, and from different sectors of society. The conference takes place on November 15 & 16.

The conference is intended to be a planning session. Participants will engage in exploration, discussion, and dialogue with the purpose of creating an organization that will carry out the work needed to organize the 2003 convention itself.

If you are interested in participating, please see the item under **What You Can Do** on this page regarding how to contact us and what we would like to know.

Fundraising report

Funds raised to date:	\$1634.09
Expenditures:	\$412.75
Goal for November 2002:	\$7,500.00

Advisory Council – New Members
White Antiracist Convention

Joycelyn Landrum-Brown
Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Program on Intergroup Relations

Victor Lee Lewis
Center for Diversity Leadership, *Color of Fear* participant

Peggy McIntosh
Wellesley College Center for Research on Women

Eddie Moore, Jr.
Founder, Annual Conference on White Privilege

Catherine Wong
Univ. of Massachusetts–Boston, Counseling & School Psychology