

Recovering an identity

Recent books discuss antiracist whites

Everyone needs heroes and role models. This truism applies to white antiracists as aptly as to anyone. Over the past several years people have begun to call for a new examination of the lives of historical and contemporary white antiracist figures, and now an assorted collection of books on this topic is emerging.

Inspired by a student who knew the name of John Brown, but did not realize the radical abolitionist was white, historian Herbert Aptheker in 1993 released a history "concentrating on the appearance of [antiracism] among white people." At the time, he found there was "no single book devoted to the subject."

Times change. Aptheker was careful to acknowledge the leading role of people of color in antiracist struggles. So, too, are many subsequent authors approaching the same topic. Cynthia Stokes Brown presents four full-length biographies of white antiracists in her 2002 book, *Refusing Racism*, and several more mini-sketches in the book's Appendix. Brown covers the 19th and 20th centuries. Becky Thompson takes a more contemporary, though still historical look, at white antiracism from the 1960s to the present moment, analyzing in detail its connections to the women's movement and recent social justice initiatives. Also covering the 1960s is David L. Chappell, who examines the impact of both antiracist and racist Southern whites. Those who persist might locate a copy of the 1968 book, *Voluntary Servitude: Whites in the Negro Movement*, by C.J. Levy.

Discussion of recent trends, and autobiographical accounts of contemporary activists, can be found in *Whites Confront Racism*, by Eileen O'Brien; *Becoming and Unbecoming White*, edited by Christine Clark and James O'Donnell; and *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, by Mab Seagrest.

Re-published during the 1990s were some significant early autobiographical accounts, including two highly readable books by Lois Mark Stalvey: *The Education of a WASP* and *Three to Get Ready*, and the classic penetrating analysis of Southern society, *Killers of the Dream*, by Lillian Smith.

Books about white antiracists

Aptheker, Herbert. *Anti-Racism in U.S. History: The First Two Hundred Years*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1993.

Brown, Cynthia Stokes. *Refusing Racism: White Allies and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2002.

Chappell, David L. *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Clark, Christine and James O'Donnell. *Becoming and Unbecoming White: Owning and Disowning a Racial Identity*. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin and Garvey, 1999.

Levy, C. J. *Voluntary Servitude: Whites in the Negro Movement*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968.

O'Brien, Eileen. *Whites Confront Racism: Antiracists and Their Paths to Action*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001.

Seagrest, Mab. *Memoir of a Race Traitor*. Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1994.

See Bibliography, back page

New Members Join Center Board

At the Center's annual meeting two new members joined our board. In this issue of the newsletter we feature Sandy Bernabei.

Sandy has 20 years experience as a social work addiction specialist. She was the Director of the Council on Alcoholism and other Drug Dependence in Rockland County-New York. She founded and was Director of the Chemical Dependency Training Institute for Addiction Specialists. There she designed training curriculum infused with an antiracist agenda.

Until June 2002 Sandy served as Director of the Alcohol and Substance Awareness Program at Barnard College, Columbia University where she instituted an annual week of dialogue on race relations and was a founding member of an anti oppression peer education program. She worked with students to repeal the racist New York State drug laws, and for Black Heritage month, she spearheaded an "Honoring Malcolm X" commemoration attended by over 600 people. A permanent plaque was installed recognizing his last public speech given in the Barnard College Gymnasium. She most recently retired from the field of addiction to devote herself full time to challenging whiteness and its role in sustaining structural racism.

According to Sandy, "The profound, tenacious and massive denial around the issue of the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs mirrors the profound, tenacious and massive denial around the issue of unearned white privilege. I believe, there is a direct link between the growing epidemic of alcohol and other drug abuse and the denial of the ongoing impact of structural racism in our nation. Alcohol has been used as a national agent of oppression since our inception."

Sandy recently founded Antiracist Alliance, Inc. (ARA), a support network and training exchange for those in pursuit of racial justice.

Antiracistalliance.com is a web-based curriculum on whiteness. ARA offices are located in Westchester County and New York City. She is currently working with social work educators to bring an antiracist agenda to social work practice. She can be reached at ssbernabei@aol.com and welcomes the opportunity to hear from members of the Center.

In our next issue we will feature our other new board member, Mathilda Catarina.



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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How to contact us

Center for Study
245 West 4th Avenue
Roselle, NJ 07203

Phone: (908) 241-5439, **Fax:** (908) 245-4972

Email: contact@euroamerican.org

Web site: <http://www.euroamerican.org>

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embers - new and renewing since last issue

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New from Paul Kivel

Six years ago Paul Kivel's book, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*, first appeared. Hard to believe, since it is now a classic, appearing in countless bibliographies and "must read" lists for white people aspiring to be antiracist.

Now New Society Publishers has released an updated and expanded version, with new content ranging from "examining how the New Economy has left behind so many people of color, to analyzing the 2000 election debacle, to detailing the rising Arab American prejudice since September 11."

The format, however, remains the same, with exercises and study questions interspersed with the text. Short, easily readable sections cover a broad gamut of topics. Within each section Kivel identifies a thorough set of issues and dynamics that underlie racism, white culture, and how white people think, feel, respond and behave vis-à-vis people of color. *Uprooting Racism* might appropriately be called a handbook, with a comprehensive, value-laden perspective of use to both the novice and seasoned activist.

UPROOTING RACISM: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice. Paul Kivel. New Society Publishers, May 2002. ISBN 0-86571-459-2. Paperback, \$17.95. Available from the publisher at 1-800-567-6772 or www.newsociety.com.

New from Judith Katz

The Inclusion Breakthrough, co-authored by Center board member and white awareness pioneer Judith Katz and her colleague, Frederick Miller, provides both insight to diversity practice in Fortune 500 corporate settings, and a roadmap for fostering greater change and inclusion. Katz and Miller together built the firm of Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group from a two-person practice in the 1980s, before the term "diversity" was even used, to the leading diversity consulting firm in the world today with a thriving practice of 50+ professionals. Written in a style and tone favored by the business community (where "leveraging," for instance, is a favored word) *The Inclusion Breakthrough* presents a clear conceptual model for practitioners, with stages and substages outlined in detail. But the book is at its best in the examples it offers from the authors' practice. Although the authors say little about whiteness, per se, the underlying theme of the book is how to change a white male organizational culture to one inclusive of the broader range of differences and experiences among people in U.S. society.

THE INCLUSION BREAKTHROUGH: Unleashing the Real Power of Diversity. Frederick A. Miller and Judith Katz. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2002. ISBN 1-57675-139-2, Paperback, \$24.95. Available from the publisher at 1-800-929-2929 or inclusionbreakthrough.com.

Lifting the White Veil

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For more information, go to www.euroamerican.org and click the "Read Lifting the White Veil online FREE" graphic in the left-hand column of the main page.

Queries and manuscripts wanted

We continue to look for our next book. We also are seeking manuscripts for our WHITENESS PAPERS series of articles. Please send queries and manuscripts to the Center. See our contact information on page 2.

White Antiracist Convention update

Over the course of the past three months the Center has begun a dialogue among members of the Advisory Council for the White Antiracist Convention. Discussions have taken place via monthly conference calls, together with an email listserv. Earlier in the year the Center appointed a Steering Committee, and this committee has been facilitating the communication process, and providing logistical support as the effort moves forward.

Significant buy-in by organizations

It now appears the White Antiracist Leadership Conference will take place as anticipated, in New Orleans on November 14 through 16, 2002. Although there was never a question that the event would be a key part of the process of planning the Convention, it takes time to obtain the commitment of people across the country to help prepare for and attend the event. It's that commitment that has emerged in the past three months. We now have a critical mass of leaders and activists, both white antiracists and people of color, who are taking ownership of the process. Although the process is still incubating, it's clear the Center is no longer the only organization bringing resources to the table. We are seeing a commitment from European Dissent in New Orleans, along with Community Change, Inc. and Women's Theological Center in Boston. Notably, all three of these organizations have been involved in past conferences as well. Along with organizational buy-in we've experienced a commitment to participation from individual activists.

November meeting: small and focused

The evolving consensus of this group is that we need to limit our size in New Orleans to 50 people or less in order to have a sufficiently small group for detailed discussion and planning. In addition, that small group needs to be representative of a broad cross-section of activists. There is a special concern for incorporating young activists and organizers, and achieving representation from across the country. There is also a concern that those attending are worker types, not simply visionaries, who are committed to building a movement, and who want to enter into serious dialogue about how to do that using the idea of a convention as a vehicle, and who are ready to

emerge from the conference with a plan of action. We are no longer calling for open applications, although those who have already contacted the Center will be invited to the event. Other invitations are being given by word of mouth from various members of the Steering Committee and Advisory Council.

Fundraising an ongoing concern

Some organizations, including the Center, will be soliciting funds via mailings. Although we are operating at low cost, we are incurring expenses and need to develop financial support starting now until the actual Convention event takes place next year. Look for a separate mailing soon on this concern.

Planning for the planning

A special planning meeting will be held in Boston in September to design the New Orleans weekend process. Given that many people are traveling from around the country, many on shoe-string budgets, we want to make optimum use of our time together. Look to our Fall newsletter to provide an immediate report on the outcomes from the conference.

Bibliography, from page 1

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Thompson, Becky. *A Promise and a Way of Life*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

(Forthcoming) Thompson, Cooper, Emmett Schaefer, and Harry Brod. *Just Living: White Men Challenging Racism* (Foreword by James Loewen). Duke University Press, 2003.