

## Comments by Jeff Hitchcock on group memberships among Summit III participants

May 3, 2007

Hey, that's a nice report, Peter. It makes me recall all those things we did, even now as the event is fading.

One thing that impressed me took place at Day Two of the summit. At one point about halfway through the day the facilitator asked off-the-cuff "How many people here are not in a group?" I think people generally understood "group" to mean a group working for racial justice that incorporates an understanding of white anti-racism into its work, or something like that. Out of more than 40 people, only three raised their hands. The rest of the assembled group assured them they were welcome.

I was impressed by the sheer number of people who were in groups. Last year we took an explicit count of groups and with half the size we had something like 17 groups represented. This year the summit more than doubled in size and the group count may have gone up even more. Some people belong to two groups!

Not everyone there on their own may have raised a hand. People seemed to sense that the norm and expectation was that you be part of a group. This is a different flavor of white anti-racist presence. In past projects I have been involved with, the norm has always been the opposite. People who show up are expected to be individuals, and not members of white anti-racist groups. Even when the focus of the project has been to assemble white anti-racist groups, there has been a need to explicitly repeat and publicize the frame.

At Day Two of the summit, it wasn't like that. Summit planners had discussed the idea of group representation, and its importance, but we didn't put a lot of time into publicizing group membership as a requirement. For

instance, it doesn't appear in the summit flyer. WACAN did not place any emphasis on group membership in its promotional efforts. Possibly other groups in the planning committee did, but no intentional coordinated effort was made by the summit to recruit group representatives.

The people who came, stayed all day. Planners had made it clear informally and by a poster on the day of Day Two that anyone could walk in. The conference had several other workshops going simultaneously throughout the day, so there were other places for WPC people to be. We were open to people coming and going, but that didn't seem to happen much.

Many of the people in the room I knew, but there were just as many who I have not met. We were a pretty resourceful group. I wish we had more time together. But we did a lot of work, and the facilitation by the Day Two team (AWARE, Y-Step, Episcopal church) kept us moving smoothly into significant topics.

I have had a chance to skim and lightly read parts of the synthesized notes compiled by AWARE. I can see that this is a document that is deserving of study for the next year or two. Over the summer I hope to read through it more carefully. It seems to me a significant step forward in a white anti-racist consensus. It brings to my mind WPC5, when Diane Finnerty, with Eddie's encouragement, organized the white anti-racist caucus. Later she put out this document.

Diane's list is still a great resource. But there was no consciousness at the WPC5 white caucus of people belonging to white anti-racist groups back home. Some may have, but the normative expectation was that people were there as individuals. At WPC8 the summit captured a different level of preparedness where the norm was one where it was understood participants are representing groups back home.

Word is people generally felt WPC8 was one of the best conferences. I have to say, it reminds me of WPC5 in that

way. That was an all around cool conference too. WPC8 was fine!

Thank you AWARE for doing the compilation from the summit, including all the work that you put into the design and facilitation of the Day Two process. Also, thank you for the timeliness of this document.

--Jeff