

# Mid-Atlantic Gathering of White Anti-racist Groups

## Dates

Friday evening and Saturday, March 11 & 12, 2005

## Location

Plainfield Quaker Meetinghouse  
Plainfield, NJ

## Reason for gathering

To support and encourage the development of white anti-racist organizing in general, and to address the following needs of white anti-racist groups:

- Connecting
- Networking
- Creating community
- Building skills
- Sharing and comparing experiences
- Becoming visible
- Furthering our work

## Who is invited?

### White people

White participants must be part of an organized white anti-racist group. This is because we want to encourage organizing among white anti-racists rather than simply enabling individualized journeys.

An organized white anti-racist group is one that:

- a. has 3 or more white people as members
- b. has a mission statement that includes the responsibility for white people working against racism as a central part
- c. has met at least 3 times

Groups must register with the conference. Then one or more members of the group may attend.

Members of the Mid-Atlantic group emerging from 2002 White Anti-racist Leadership Conference held in New Orleans are grandmothers in, but are encouraged to also fulfill the registration criteria when they can.

### **People of color**

People of color who have a political and/or personal relationship with white participants and/or the groups they represent. The relationship may be of any form, but we anticipate it might include offering guidance, accountability, and perspective. We also anticipate the relationship includes a concern for enhancing the ability of the white anti-racist working group to sustain itself and work effectively against racism.

### **Region**

We consider the Mid-Atlantic to include the following states: Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, DC. However, we welcome enrollment from any groups who otherwise meet the registration criteria and want to attend

### **Planning Process**

There will be two parallel processes, one for white people and one for people of color.

Each group will govern its own process, select its own leadership, determine its own program, with the following provisions:

- a.** Leadership of the two groups commit to keeping in regular contact with each other throughout the planning and actual event to discuss mutual concerns, coordinate logistics, explore opportunities for joint programming, and identify problems and conflicts and seek resolution of such. Jorge Zeballos is coordinator for participants of color. Jeff Hitchcock is coordinator for white participants.
- b.** If at any time the group for people of color determines by its own process that something in the conference program, process, etc. is in need of change, or that something must be added to the program, and this cannot be accomplished by mutual agreement between the group for people of color and the group for white people, then the group for people of color has the right to halt the process (the planning, or the actual event) until the problem is resolved.

Joint sessions may take place as mutually decided. They may comprise a large part, or a small part, of the overall conference, depending on how plans develop.

## Registration

**Only groups can register.** Registration consists of contacting the registrar (Jeff Hitchcock) and providing the following:

- The name of your group
- A contact person and contact information
- Your mission statement
- A description of when you have met
- Any other items of interest that describe your group
- Agreement that your group can be listed as a co-sponsor

Jeff can be reached by any of the following:

**Phone:** 908.241.5439 (leave message)

**Fax:** 908.245.4972

**Email:** [jeffhitchcock@euroamerican.org](mailto:jeffhitchcock@euroamerican.org)

**Snail mail:** Center for Study , 245 West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Roselle, NJ 07203

Registered groups can enroll an unlimited number of their members. This includes people of color who have worked, if not as members, in association with the group.

White participants will be charged a proportionate fee calculated, in total, to cover conference expenses. Expenses will be kept to a minimum. We anticipate a fee in the range of \$5 to \$25 per person. Participants of color may register for free.

## Lodging and meals

We anticipate holding the event at a facility in the central New Jersey area that will allow us to prepare and serve food. We may also be able to obtain a place for sleeping bags. The planners will assemble a list of area hotels and other places such as Bed & Breakfast facilities.

## Program

The planning committee will develop the program. We anticipate some structure and an agenda to facilitate the process, but also flexibility to discuss issues and concerns as they arise. In broad strokes, we anticipate doing the following:

### **Friday night:**

Discussion theme: The things that divided us. We are united by a race and by a broad perspective. Our perspective is that racism needs to end. We see racism and we are working to undo it. Yet as we unite around a broad perspective, historic

fissures come into view. Class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic origin, and many others we know. How do these fissures shape our experience? How do historic conflicts along these lines of privilege and oppression shape our experience today? How do we work to heal some of pain these conflicts bring? How do we measure our resources to promote structural change in these areas, while focusing our resources on anti-racism?

## **Saturday**

Roll call

Reports from registered groups

Topic/issue centered discussions and presentations

Discussion of future directions

Closing ceremony

## **Past context, current situation, future direction**

This conference is a direct outgrowth of the White Anti-racist Leadership Conference held in New Orleans in November 2002. At that time the 50+ participants from across the United States divided themselves into regions in order to continue organizing after the conference ended. The Mid-Atlantic region has remained in touch through a listserv. Individual members have pursued local projects, some of which have been multiracial in character, and some of which include white anti-racist organizing.

Jeff Hitchcock and Jorge Zeballos attended that conference and have initiated the present conference project.

White Organizers Working for Racial Justice and Equity, a group that has been meeting for around 18 months in the central New Jersey area, will host the conference. Bonnie Cushing and Jeff Hitchcock are members of the group and comprise the white members of the planning committee at present. Additional groups that register for the conference will be considered co-sponsors.

Planning is currently being done as a single process by Bonnie, Jeff and Jorge. We anticipate adding additional planners, and as the process expands, we may make greater use of planning caucuses as already described.

We hope to have a nice gathering of more than one group, and expect at least three. We do not have other expectations as to size. A small gathering among friends and colleagues, or a large gathering of people from several groups, each would be satisfying.

This is an initial effort, and its value lies in collegiality and community-building, and not numbers per se.

We are operating on a short lead time in providing details of date and registration. However, this is an idea we have circulated informally for several months. Not everyone will be able to attend, we realize. However, we do anticipate that groups will be able to appoint at least some available representatives from among their members.

The outcome of the conference will depend on the conference itself. However, we do not envision this as a singular event. It is something that can be repeated on an annual (or other) basis. We view the conference as a beginning.

Even though we cannot anticipate the outcome, Jorge and Jeff are involved in organizing a White Anti-racist Summit at the White Privilege Conference in Pella, Iowa on April 26-30. The summit itself takes place on April 30. We offer the possibility of a tie-in to that event from our regional conference in the form of making a report.

### **What if I'm not a member of a group?**

We recommend you take action consistent with the conference purpose by doing one of the following:

1. Locate a white anti-racist group, and contact them regarding participation in the conference.
2. If you are white, start a white anti-racist group yourself. We have set out our definition of a "group" so that a single, motivated person can organize a group in time for the conference. Consider your workplace, your neighborhood, your faith community, your school and campus, your professional association, and/or multiracial anti-racist organizations for social change as possible settings in which you might organize an independent group, or a caucus, or affinity group, or an auxiliary of white anti-racists.

If you would like help with either of these two suggestions, or have any other questions, please feel free to contact any members of the planning committee.

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