

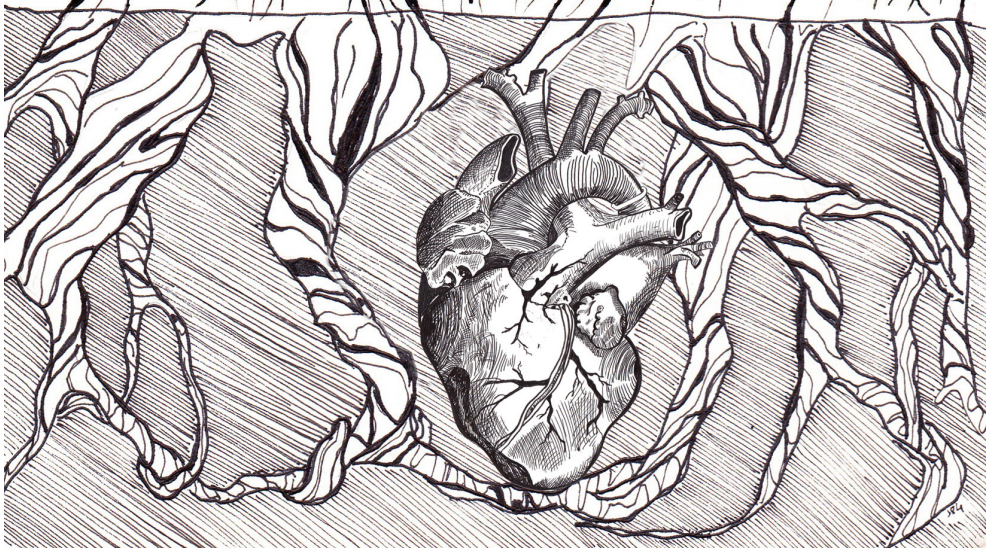
# AORTA

aortacollective.org

RESOURCE ZINE

SPRING

2014





# WELCOME!

AORTA began officially working together as a group in 2010, but the beginnings of this zine were hatched well before then! Ever since we each started facilitating trainings and workshops as individuals, we've been developing resources and engaging in critical dialogue that has, over the years, informed and refined not only our curriculum, but also how we work. We proudly present many of those resources for you, in this zine!

Through our work, we have the opportunity to connect with incredible organizers, activists, students, co-operators, artists, and rabble rousers, and we learn something new from each group! We truly believe that supporting the work of local and (inter)national organizers and educators can open up channels of communication, collaboration, shared strategies, and strategically synchronize aspects of the Left to build stronger and smarter movements.

That being said, we are so glad to present to you our Spring 2014 Resource Zine. Thanks for being a part of all of this! We welcome your input and look forward to continuing to refine these resources, as well as develop more and more!

big hearts ♥

kiran, Jenna/Golden, Tyrone, Esteban, & Lydia  
AORTA

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# ANTI-OPPRESSIVE MEETING FACILITATION

## MAKING MEETINGS AWESOME FOR EVERYONE

Inefficient and ineffective meetings can leave people feeling drained, exhausted or discouraged, rather than inspired and energized. Good meetings help build strong, effective organizations and successful projects. Even organizations with great meeting process inadvertently perpetuate barriers to full member participation and access to democratic process. This happens through group dynamics of power, privilege and oppression that often marginalize women, people of color, queer, trans and gender non-conforming folks, people with disabilities and those with limited access to the cultural cues and financial resources that come with class privilege.

Whether or not you tend to act as facilitator at meetings you attend, building your facilitation skills will help you make your meetings better, more inclusive, and more fully democratic! Here are some foundational tips and suggestions that can have big impacts on your meetings!

# WHAT IS FACILITATION, ANYWAY?

FACILITATION ENSURES THAT THE GROUP IS EMPOWERED AS A WHOLE.

- Be sure that everyone gets to participate and share ideas in a meeting, not just those who feel most comfortable speaking up and making cases for their ideas or proposals.
- Work to prevent or interrupt any (conscious or unconscious) attempts by individuals or groups to overpower the group as a whole.
- Keep an eye out for social power dynamics and work to interrupt these. Point out and address discrepancies in who is talking, whose voices are being heard.
- Help the group come to the decisions that are best for the organization/whole group. Help people keep an eye on what's best for the group, rather than their personal preference.
- Ensure the group follows its own agreed upon process and meeting agreements.

FACILITATION KEEPS AN EYE ON TIME, AND JUGGLES IT WITH THE (EVER PRESENT) NEED FOR MORE TIME.

- Offer periodic time check-ins.
- Help keep the group conversation on topic and relevant. Prevent ramblings and tangents.
- Make process suggestions to help the group along.
- Summarize discussion and note key areas of agreement, to help move the group forward.

# CONTAINERS FOR YOUR MEETINGS

Things like community agreements, an agenda, an available chart of your group’s decision making process, a place to store important topics for future conversations, next steps, etc are important foundations for a meeting-- we call them “containers.” They act as visual tools that participants and facilitators can come back to throughout the meeting to help keep the group focused, on track, on the same page. They also offer direction for moments when things get sticky or tense.

## COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Community agreements help define your role as facilitator and clarify the group’s expectations of you. One of your big responsibilities to the group is to make sure these agreements are upheld. This isn’t about creating rules-- it’s about creating and clarifying agreements and expectations that allow everyone in the group to participate. In order for these to be meaningful, they need to come from the group itself. Once a group creates its agreements, they can be used over and over. As a facilitator, you get to contribute to this list, too.

Here’s some community agreements that can be helpful in meetings, to get you thinking:

### ONE DIVA, ONE MIC

Please, one person speak at a time. (It can also be useful to ask people to leave space in between speakers, for those who need more time to process words, or are less comfortable fighting for airtime in a conversation.)

### NO ONE KNOWS EVERYTHING; TOGETHER WE KNOW A LOT

This means we all get to practice being humble, because we have something to learn from everyone in the room. It also means we all have a responsibility to share what we know, as well as our question, so that others may learn from us.

### MOVE UP, MOVE UP

If you’re someone who tends to not speak a lot, please move up into a role of speaking more. If you tend to speak a lot, please move up into a role of listening more. This is a twist on the on the

more commonly heard “step up, step back.” The “up/up” confirms that in both experiences, growth is happening. (You don’t go “back” by learning to be a better listener.) Saying “move” instead of “step” recognizes that not everyone can step.

## WE CAN'T BE ARTICULATE ALL THE TIME

As much as we'd like, we just can't. Often people feel hesitant to participate in a workshop or meeting for fear of “messaging up” or stumbling over their words. We want everyone to feel comfortable participating, even if you can't be as articulate as you'd like.

## BE AWARE OF TIME

This is helpful for your facilitator, and helps to respect everyone's time and commitment. Please come back on time from breaks, and refrain from speaking in long monologues...

## BE CURIOUS

We make better decisions when we approach our problems and challenges with questions (“What if we...?”) and curiosity. Allow space for play, curiosity, and creative thinking.

NOTE: There's a few community agreements that participants often bring up that we don't tend to use or bring with us. Two of the most common ones are “assume best intentions” and “default to trust.” The reason we don't use these is because when someone is unable to do this (say they're feeling untrusting of someone, or unsafe), having a community agreement telling to do so isn't going to change anything. Put short, these agreements aren't always possible, especially when we take into consideration that when people have been harmed by sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, they/we build up necessary tools to take care of and protect themselves/ourselves. Agreements we offer instead that capture the spirit of these are “we can't be articulate all the time,” “be generous with each other,” or “this is a space for learning.”



# THE MAGIC OF AN AGENDA

There are many different ways to build an agenda to match the style, culture, and needs of each group or meeting. However you do it, a clear and well-constructed agenda that all participants can agree to, is a crucial step for an efficient, inclusive, and awesome meeting. The facilitator's job (generally) is to both keep the participants on track to both following the agenda as well as to pay attention to when the agenda isn't working and changes need to happen. Here are some best practices regarding agendas:

Set the agenda before the meeting starts. Building it over email, through a list that is kept in an office, or at the end of the previous meeting. This helps everyone come well researched and mentally and emotionally prepared.

Some groups like a more emergent and organic style for building an agenda. If this is your group, participants can spend the beginning of a meeting writing each agenda item they'd like to discuss on an index card, and then the group can use different visual tools to select the card(s) people are most moved to talk about. The down side: you don't know what you're talking about in advance, so can't prepare, or share your thoughts in advance, if you're not able to attend.

- Review the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. Share your reasoning before asking for amendments or changes. It is important that the whole group.
- Announcements and report backs at the beginning can save a lot of time.
- Give it variety: mix up the length and type of agenda items.
- Put agenda items that will be easy successes early in the meeting. This sets a positive tone and builds momentum!
- Follow with the "big stuff."
- Break after big discussions.
- Schedule breaks for any meeting more than 90 minutes. After this length of time, groups fall into the trap of "decision fatigue," making big decisions rashly or getting stuck talking in circles on smaller decisions.
- Finish on something short and easy-- end with a good tone.
- Have the agenda on paper, so that all can see it (either on flipchart, blackboard, printed out).
- Label items with their expected actions: decision, discussion, play, evaluate, brainstorm, review, update, silence, feedback, appreciations and concerns.

## GARDEN / BIKE RACK / TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Whatever your group chooses to call it, have a sheet or on-going list to write down ideas, questions, and topics for future meetings that come up. Often in the course of talking about one topic, really important things surface that need to be addressed, but are not on the current meeting's agenda. Unless they are urgent/time sensitive, it can really help keep the group on topic to have a space to note them so that they can be incorporated into future meetings (and not forgotten about!).

## NEXT STEPS / WHO, WHAT, WHEN, PRIORITY

It can be very helpful to keep a sheet where you're taking running notes on any next steps or tasks that are coming out of the meeting. We sometimes do this in three (or four) columns: one for **who** is doing the next step or task (this could be an individual or a group), **what** it is they're going to do, by **when** they will have done it, and what **priority level** the task is (1-3, 1-5). You can end the meeting by reviewing this sheet and filling in missing details. You can also start your meetings by checking in with the sheet from the previous meeting.

# TIPS, TOOLS, TECHNIQUES

## TOOLS YOU CAN USE

Some simple tools that can drastically shift the energy of a meeting, might help you hear new voices, and invite the perspectives of quiet, introverted, or more silenced participants:

- Start the meeting off with quick check-ins (even something as simple as “three adjectives to describe how you’re feeling,” or “one thing that went well and one challenge from the week”) on how folks are doing, so you know where folks are at when they walk in the room.
- Build in a couple minutes for quiet journaling/thinking before launching into group discussion.
- Start an item off with conversations in pairs or small groups before coming back to the whole group. Often you’ll get deeper this way and end up with better, more creative ideas.
- Do a round robin/go-around to hear from everyone. (People can always pass if they’d like).
- Hosting part of a meeting with everyone standing in a circle (if they’re able) can help wake people up, decrease tensions, and support more concise statements.
- Asking participants to switch seats after a break or agenda item also helps to energize and mix things up. This can be really helpful when the group is feeling stuck.
- Taking a straw poll can help you get a quick read of how close the group is to a decision, whether or not there is unity, and which topics are key to focus discussion on. You can check in with folks whose opinions diverge most from the majority to see what’s going on for them. Straw polls can look a lot of ways:
  - Vote yes/no/maybe
  - Vote for your one favorite of multiple options
  - Vote for all the options you support (more than one is ok)
  - Rate how you feel about the proposal/idea on a “fist of five,” one finger meaning “I really do not support this,” five fingers meaning “I love this.”

- Incorporate ways of gauging people's opinions that **involve their bodies**, such as asking folks to walk to one side of the room if they are for the proposal, the other side if they're against it, and to stand in the middle if they're unsure. Then, hear from a few people from each position. Let folks move as their opinions change.

## COMMON MISTAKES (WILL HAPPEN. KEEP AN EYE OUT!)

- Not having a co-facilitator when you need one.
- Rushing the group. (Sometimes going slower takes less time in the long run).
- Not setting clear boundaries for yourself in your role as facilitator, getting pushed around by the group.
- Not taking a break when YOU need one. (When the facilitator needs a break, it's to everyone's advantage to have a break!)
- Spiraling down into group process about group process. (You know, when you spend 10 minutes deciding as a group by consensus whether you want to allot 10 more minutes of discussion to an item).
- Not leaving time and space for people's feelings.
- Becoming inflexible or unwilling to adapt the agenda/ plan to meet the group's evolving needs.
- Forgetting to get additional support-- a notetaker, logistics coordinator, someone to set up the meeting space, etc.
- Meeting for too long a time period without food, water, and/or breaks.

## RED FLAGS AND DYNAMICS TO WATCH OUT FOR

- Unhealthy, unchallenged, or unnamed power dynamics.
- People interrupting each other or the facilitator.
- People repeating or re-stating what others have said.
- Tone and body language: Do people look upset? Checked out? Bored? Angry? If you see this, check in with the group as a whole, or quietly with individuals.
- Individuals monopolizing conversation.

- Individuals or small groups bringing a fully-formed idea to the meeting, without any group conversation, brainstorming, or feedback, and wanting it passed that very day.
- Back-and-forths between individuals.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET STUCK

- Use the agenda and expected actions. Have you switched into “decide” mode when the desired action was “feedback?”
- Take a break: Have small groups work out a proposal based on what they’ve heard about the needs of the group. (What’s needed for a decision?)
- Ask questions to initiate discussion, as opposed to jumping directly into concerns. Questions assume the proposal writer(s) thought about the concern, and allow them to respond with their reasoning.
- When people are voicing concerns, ask them what can be done to meet their concern.
- Do people need a refresher of the decision making process your group uses?
- Listen for agreement and note it, no matter how small. This both builds morale and helps clarify where the group is at.
- Reflect back what you’re hearing. Practice synthesizing and summarizing.
- Break big decisions into smaller pieces.
- Don’t allow back and forths between two participants to dominate a discussion or agenda item: ask for input from others.

## FACILITATION: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Collective Visioning](#) by Linda Stout

[Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision Making](#) by Sam Kaner

[Gamestorming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers](#) by Dave Gray

[Solving Tough Problems: An Open Way of Talking, Listening, and Creating New Realities](#) by Adam Kahane and Peter M. Senge

[Visual Meetings: How Graphics, Sticky Notes & Idea Mapping Can Transform Group Productivity](#) by David Sibbet

# FIGHTING THE SYSTEMS

## DESTABLIZING SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION

Developing language and deepening analyses of how systemic oppression operates allows us to better understand how to transform ourselves and our organizations, workplaces, and communities. Here are some tools, concepts, and resources to support you in your ongoing work to map out what it looks like when systems like white supremacy, patriarchy, classism, homo and transphobia, ableism, etc influence and affect our day-to-day interactions, as well as organizational operations and practices. We hope these resources will support action and concrete changes in your work and lives.

# LEVELS & TYPES OF OPPRESSION

## INDIVIDUAL

### **Ableism**

- Using words like “crazy,” “stupid,” “lame,” “gimp,” that equate disability with brokenness.
- Not looking people with disabilities in the eye when passing them on the sidewalk, talking to them, etc.

### **Capitalism/Classism**

- An individual believing that poor and low income people don’t want to eat healthy.
- Talking to a poor or low income person as though they are less intelligent.

### **Gender Binary/Transphobia**

- Parent gender policing their child: “boys don’t cry,” “girls don’t get dirty,” “toughen up,” “don’t play with that truck, doll,” etc. (This is often based in fear/wanting their child to be safe from bullying and attacks).
- Individual refusing to call a trans or genderqueer person by the pronoun they have said they use

### **Patriarchy/Sexism**

- A feminine person feeling afraid of wearing feminine clothes, or showing skin, and instead feeling a need to wear more masculine clothes in order to gain respect or avoid harassment at work.

- Using words like “bitch,” “girls,” “pussy,” in a way that equates femininity with weakness or wrongness.

**White Supremacy and Racism**

- Someone crossing the street or locking their doors when a Black man is walking towards them.
- Acting defensive and interpreting it as personal attack when a Person of Color points out racism as it is happening.

**INSTITUTIONAL**

**Ableism**

- People with disabilities have higher rates of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness.
- Girls with disabilities are 4 times more likely to be sexually assaulted in the US than girls without disabilities.
- The deinstitutionalization of the mental health system in the 80s has led to the incarceration (rather than care of) people with experiences labeled as mental illness.

**Capitalism/Classism**

- Studies have found that wealthy districts have three times as many supermarkets as poor ones do, and that urban residents who purchase groceries at small neighborhood stores pay between 3-37% more than suburbanites buying the same products at supermarkets. (Food Empowerment Project)
- In most of the US, schools are funded by property taxes, resulting in poor and low income youth attending schools that receive much as little as 50% of the funding per pupil as schools in wealthy districts.
- Interest rates are based on previous credit, as well as accumulated wealth. Result: people with the least money to spare end up paying the highest interest on money borrowed through credit cards, loans, etc.

**Gender Binary/Transphobia**

- You need a diagnosis (need to be pathologized) in order to receive trans health care, and trans health care is not covered by most health insurance companies.
- Nationally, trans people are three times more likely to experience police violence.

- Bathrooms are gender segregated in most buildings, forcing trans and gender non-conforming people to have to choose which one to use, and putting them at risk for harassment, violence, and assault.

### **Patriarchy/Sexism**

- Masculine voices dominating in meetings, in terms of time, volume, higher esteem.
- Women and trans people often do unrecognized, undervalued work: taking notes at meetings, recognizing and appreciating people's work, taking care of co-workers, childcare, clean up, etc.
- Globally, men are dominate well-esteemed and well-paid industries (science, political leadership), and in the US women earn approximately ¾ of what men earn in a lifetime.

### **White Supremacy and Racism**

- Black men and boys are incarcerated at 6 times the rate of white men and boys in the US.
- Instructing sales personnel to follow People of Color to make sure they don't steal.
- People of Color are paid less than white people for equivalent jobs and education rates. 33% of African American children, 29% of Native American children, and 28% of Latin@ children live below the poverty line (\$20,650 for a family of four in 2007), compared to 9.5% of white children.

## **CULTURAL**

### **Ableism**

- Cultural stories that associate disability with sad, scary, undesirable.
- The myth of independence: that we can be independent, as well as that we should be independent.
- Cultural values that place people with disabilities as less valuable, important.

### **Capitalism/Classism**

- Cultural narrative that people who have access to money deserve to have it and have earned it, and those who don't



haven't worked hard enough, don't want it, it's their fault, etc.

- Cultural narrative that people's worth is based on our performance as workers: how fast or hard we work, how long we work, how much money we make, how much we contribute to the accumulation of profit.
- The value/belief that plants, animals, land, water, humans, are resources to be exploited and used for amassing profit, rather than things to be tended to, stewarded, and cared for.

**Gender Binary/Transphobia**

- The myth of the gender binary: that there is one (girl/ boy, woman/man), as well as the cultural commitment to upholding one.
- The cultural myth that gender and physical anatomy are one and the same.
- Cultural and historical narratives that either portray trans, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people as anomalies or "freaks" to be publicly displayed, or completely erase trans, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people from history.

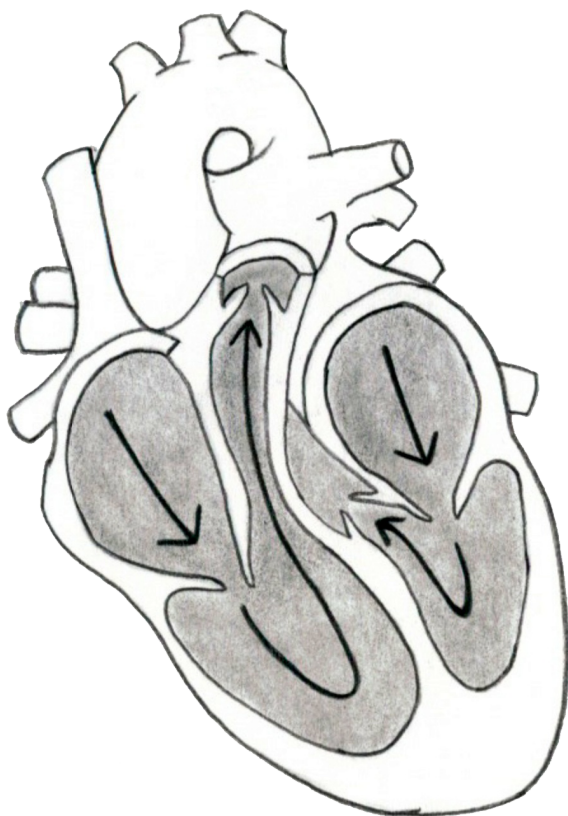
**Patriarchy/Sexism**

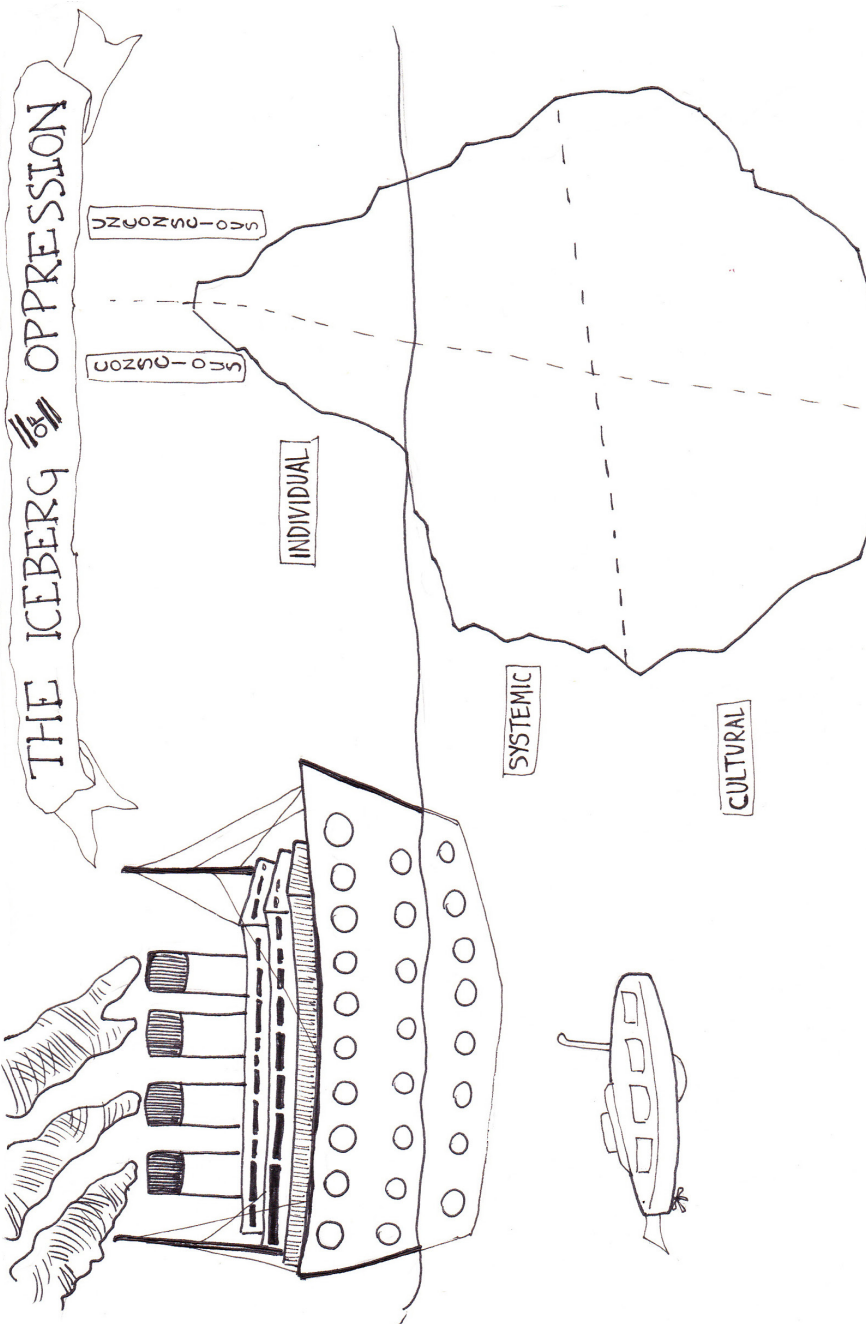
- Cultural stories that center misogyny (hatred of women), and devalue things that are feminized or feminine in our culture.
- Cultural stories that portray men as more competent, "natural" leaders, emotionally stunted, invulnerable, easy to anger, and more deserving of power.
- The myth that current expected gender roles in the US are "natural," default, or that they are static and have been/ will be the same over time. Racism in the prison industrial complex: Black boys/men are 7 times more likely to be incarcerated in the U.S. than White boys/men
- The institutional education system: Schools serving mostly poor and/or students of color have a lower rate of success and a significantly high rate of violence by peers and by police, and often create what is called a "school to prison pipeline" – where these inequities set up poor and youth and youth of color on a path towards detention centers and prisons).

- European and Christian perspectives and experiences are normalized in the design of school curriculum, text book and standardized tests.

### White Supremacy and Racism

- The cultural narrative that white folks are safer, less violent, and better citizens (prominently communicated through main stream media).
- Cultural and historical narratives that teach us to associate white European cultures with “civilization,” “order,” and “advancement” and people of color cultures with “primitive,” “backwards,” and “chaos/violence.”
- In English, “white” is associated with “clean,” “pure,” and “good” while “black” is associated with “dirty,” “disgraced,” and “evil.”





# THE TITANIC METAPHOR

We use the Titanic as a metaphor when talking with folks who work within organizations. In this metaphor, the Titanic represents your organization, NOT because we believe that our organizations are doomed to sink and those in them will come to a grizzly end at the bottom of the ocean, but rather because we think our organizations have a lot to learn from the circumstances surrounding why the Titanic sank, and why so many died. If we can look at this metaphor as a learning opportunity, it can help us to reflect upon the underlying beliefs that guide how our organizations are operating, and to see ways we can change our organizations to be more stable, responsive to changing needs and circumstances, and resilient in the face of challenges and obstacles (like icebergs of oppression!).

Ok. The left column has some heavy stuff. And really, those are only some of the reasons the ship went down and so many lives were lost. Trust us, you can keep going deeper and deeper with this metaphor. So the question is: What do our organizations have to learn from this metaphor, about how we organize and operate? About how to stay afloat and stay alive? Read the column to the right to get you thinking. We encourage you to sit with this metaphor and think even more. We've laid out some the main points that come up in workshops, but there's a lot more to be had.

*(see next page for an in-depth analysis of the Titanic metaphor.)*

| WHY IT SANK, WHY SO MANY DIED   | STAYING AFLOAT, STAYING ALIVE  |
|---|--|
| <p>Ok, so the first, most obvious one: The Titanic sank because it hit an iceberg. But what contributed to that whole scenario? The part of the iceberg they saw was the part of the iceberg that floats above the water (the individual piece, in our map of oppression). They did not see how far the shelf of the iceberg juttued out below the water; they believed the iceberg to be smaller than it actually was, and also further from the ship than it actually was underwater.</p> | <p>Often in our organizations and lives, the individual acts that support oppression are what are most visible. We chalk it up to the actions of one individual without examining what underlying values are at play in the organization that allows those actions to happen in the first place. We forget about the (bigger) part of the iceberg that is underwater, holding that individual piece afloat. As both individuals and organizations, we need to take a systemic awareness of power dynamics to addressing all instances of unhealthy power dynamics.</p>   |
| <p>They were going too fast to respond in time to the iceberg when spotted. They were trying to make a world record, which is part of the reason they were going so fast. Because of this, they were also going a more Northern route, which was shorter, but also left them more likely to encounter ice fields.</p>   | <p>As our organizations grow, we need to grow steady and strong, chart our locations, identify our destinations, and then plot our routes with care. And planning. If we see that our route has taken us into ice fields, or our situation is not what we first anticipated, we need to take the time to assess our current situation and alter our course to one that makes the most sense for us given our new knowledge and context.</p> <p>Additionally, we need to be careful of falling into the eyes-on-the-prize, work fast fast fast to meet our deadlines, accomplish our deliverables, ethic of much mission-driven work. The mission is not working ourselves to burn-out, ignoring systemic oppression as it arises, and jeopardizing the health of individuals and the whole organization. The mission is not going to be met if we sink. (They didn't end up making that world record).</p> |

| WHY IT SANK, WHY SO MANY DIED   | STAYING AFLOAT, STAYING ALIVE   |
|---|---|
| <p>Hubris: Almost everyone thought the Titanic was unsinkable, including much of its crew, as well as other ships that could have helped save the passengers of the Titanic.</p> <p>Related, they assumed they would not lacerate enough compartments in the ship to sink the ship.</p>   | <p>Maybe the most important point: We need to let go of the arrogant assumption that our organizations are unsinkable. That unaddressed systemic oppression does not affect how we operate, or is not important enough to justify slowing down our work in order to address it.</p>   |
| <p>Further related, the crew were not adequately trained in emergency and evacuation procedures. Also, the ship had far fewer life boats than were needed-- enough to hold only slightly more than half of the passengers that were onboard for that trip.</p>  | <p>We need to prepare for difficult situations before they arise, as much as possible, so that we're not scrambling to figure out how we address conflict only after conflict has arisen, or how we address sexual harassment only after someone has brought it up. The more prepared we can be, with basic guidelines for addressing difficult situations, the more we are setting ourselves up to successfully navigate difficult situations when they arise (because they will, at some point).</p> <p>Additionally, we need to value people's safety and health first and foremost. We do not want to be harming people in our efforts to attain a mission.</p> |
| <p>There was a lack of communication: It took a bit of time, but the captain of the Titanic eventually ordered the engines to be put on full speed reverse, however, the ship was found with its engines on slow forward. Somewhere the communication between captain and engine room broke down, causing the ship to slowly move forward into the iceberg, lacerating along a large chunk of its side.</p> | <p>We need to be sure our organizations have clear structures for communication, especially around situations that are more difficult to communicate about: conflict, harassment, structural power dynamics, and the manifestations of systemic oppression. We need to prioritize building communication skills, and creating venues for communication.</p>   |

| WHY IT SANK, WHY SO MANY DIED   | STAYING AFLOAT, STAYING ALIVE  |
|---|--|
| <p>There were two other ships within range of the Titanic. The most nearby one, the <i>Carpathia</i>, saw the flares go up, but did not change course to assist the sinking ship, leading to greater loss of life.</p>  | <p>This one speaks to community building, and mutual aid and support. We need to be building strong relationships with outside supports, resources, and related organizations so that when we're in a point of need organizationally, we know that our flares of distress will be answered. So that we know we have networks, alliances, and relationships that can be counted on to support our work. Similarly, we need to offer assistance to other organizations in their times of need.</p>   |
| <p>The people who had the greatest awareness of the ship's water intake were the third class, those who were below the water line, at the level where the ship was sinking. Their concerns were not listened to, because of the hubris point, above.</p> <p>Furthermore, many of the lives lost were from the third class (the poorest folks, immigrants, people of color). They were left to themselves, and crew members forgot to unlock many of the gates that kept them locked below, unable to go up to the deck and the lifeboats.</p> | <p>The people who are lower down on the ship have the best view of what's going on underwater, and how an organization is being impacted by systemic oppression. Those <i>directly impacted</i> by systems like white supremacy, patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, anti-semitism, etc have the best understanding of how those systems are impacting individuals and organizations, and ways to address this. When an organization is lucky enough to have someone speak up about what's going on, it is imperative that folks listen, believe and trust in the lived experience, and take action steps to address the impacts of these systems.</p> |

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## BOOKS, PUBLICATIONS, FILMS, AND BLOGS

AORTA is up to our ears in amazing books, articles, (maga) zines, websites, films, and organizations that we recommend you explore. While intersectionality (or the ways that systems of oppression and multiple identities are inextricably connected and reliant on one another) makes it clunky for us to organize these resources into thematic lists, we've done so for ease and organization. Once you explore any of these recommended resources, you will quickly see how they jump fervently in, out, and next to the category they've been filed under. Our hope, then, is that you will explore some of these resources and engage with them to continue to answer your questions and challenge your work.

**ABLEISM** \*See *Deconstructing Ableism* on page 38.

## CAPITALISM/CLASSISM

[Where We Stand: Class Matters](#) by bell hooks

[Without a Net: The Female Experience of Growing Up Working Class \(Live Girls\)](#) edited by Michelle Tea

[Bridging the Class Divide](#) by Linda Stout

[The Revolution Will Not be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex](#) ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence

[How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America](#) by Manning Marable

[Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South](#) by Vijay Prashad

[Twilight of Inequality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy](#) by Lisa Duggan

## GENDER BINARY/TRANSPHOBIA

Trans Student Equality Resources, an organization with great resources

Vikki Law: *Resisting Gender Violence without Cops or Courts*, a youtube video

"Why Misogynists Make Great Informants: How Gender Violence on the Left Enables State Violence in Radical Movements," by INCITE: Women and Trans folks of Color Against Violence

[The Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology](#) ed. by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence



Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide by Andrea Smith

The Angela Davis Reader ed. Joy James

Feminist Theory from Margin to Center by bell hooks

Sister/Outside by Audre Lorde

Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of the Law by Dean Spade

## QUEERNESS

*United in Anger: A History of ACT UP*, a documentary

*Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity* by Matilda Bernstein Sycamore

*Tidal Wave*, an economic report by Queers for Economic Justice

Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBTQ People in the United States ed. Joey Moguel, Andrea Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock

Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex ed. Eric Stanley and Nat Smith

*Dismantling Hierarchy: Queering Society* by Andrea Smith, available at [Tikkun.org](http://Tikkun.org)

“Gay Rights as Human Rights: Pinkwashing Homonationalism” by Maya Mikdashi, available on *Jadaliyya ezine*

## WHITE SUPREMACY & RACISM

“What is White Supremacy,” an essay by Elizabeth ‘Betita’ Martinez, available at [CollectiveLiberation.org](http://CollectiveLiberation.org)

*Yellow Apparel: When the Coolie becomes Cool* -- a documentary on cultural appropriation, available for free on youtube

Dismantling Racism: A Resource Book for Social Change Groups by the Western States Center

The Cost of Privilege: Taking on the System of White Supremacy and Racism by Chip Smith

Killing Rage: Ending Racism by bell hooks

Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice by Paul Kivel

Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination by Robin D.G. Kelley

The Possessive Investment in Whiteness by George Lipsitz

# INFILTRATION:

HOW THE VALUES OF OPPRESSIVE SYSTEMS TEND TO ARISE IN ORGANIZATIONS (AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT)

## RED FLAGS AND INDICATORS

### **Racism and white supremacy : race, culture, ethnicity**

- the assumption of white as the norm, universalizing white experience
- talk about needing to “pull” people of color in, or “reach out” to people of color to “diversify” the organization, rather than needing to change the organization’s culture, build skills and analysis so that people of color will want to/be willing to join (and stay in) the organization
- leadership or public face of the organization is disproportionately white
- organization is majority or predominantly white
- higher turnover of people of color
- lack of adequate translation for folks who don’t have English as a first language
- the assumption that “we don’t have racism here”
- deracializing: removing or not including race in discussions, not recognizing or addressing the impacts of race on the organization and the people in it
- challenging the creation or existence of people of color spaces, not understanding the need for them
- conversations dominated by white people, white voices held in higher esteem
- downplaying or ignoring organizational concerns raised by people of color

### **Patriarchy and male supremacy: gender, sex, transphobia**

- policies and bylaws that use gender binary language (he/she) rather than gender neutral pronouns (they/them)
- office space or work space has gender segregated bathrooms
- leadership or public face of the organization is disproportionately male/masculine presenting
- masculine voices dominate at meetings

- masculine opinions are held in higher esteem
- cis men feel more entitled to propose changes to policies or practices in order to get their needs met
- organization is majority or predominantly gender privileged men
- higher turnover of women and trans people
- women and trans people do the majority of the unrecognized and undervalued work: taking notes, cleaning, answering the phones, taking care of co-workers, recognizing and appreciating people's work
- masculine people restating words, statements, ideas of women, trans, and gender non-conforming people in meetings, or not listening to what women, trans, and gender non-conforming people are saying
- challenging the creation or existence of women and trans spaces, not understanding the need for themselves
- health benefits do not cover trans health care
- refusal to refer to people by their preferred/requested pronouns
- certain tasks considered "macho" or "manly" and treated with more respect

### **Capitalism: class, income, wealth**

- childcare not provided for meetings
- food not provided at meetings (especially long meetings or ones that fall during meal hours)
- meetings held outside of work hours (in evenings or on weekends)
- low paying jobs, with the assumption that people will be able to coast off their partner's jobs
- not providing health benefits, retirement plans
- expectation to work more than 40 hours/week, or long hours to "get the job done"
- people who have more money considered more trustworthy, valuable, legitimate, intelligent
- assuming that everyone has the same class background and needs the same money (equality)
- devaluing life experience, placing higher value on institutional education, or conflating institutional education with "intelligence"

- universalizing middle class experience: assuming it as the norm

### **Ableism: mental, physical, and emotional ability**

- only full time workers get health benefits
- undiversified work structure with no room or options for people with disabilities
- no options for part time work
- if you can't work, you don't get paid
- if you can't work fast or "hard" enough, you aren't hired, or should quit/leave
- not providing health benefits, retirement plans
- expectation to work more than 40 hours/week, or long hours to "get the job done"
- using the word "crazy" in ways that equate it with wrong, bad, or broken
- casual use of the word "retarded," and "lame" as unpopular, bad, or negative
- work values that build burnout culture, with no support provided when people are unhealthily stressed or burned out (they often instead are shut out or devalued)
- not prioritizing wheelchair accessible spaces, scent free/reduced spaces
- the strict and exclusive value of physical labor over other work

### **Homophobia and heteronormativity**

- assumption of straight as the norm
- lack of recognition or visibility of queer people, assuming people are straight
- offhanded comments, jokes that equate gay with bad, weak, lesser, gross
- questions to queer people: "Why don't you have a boyfriend?"
- statements to queer people about their gender expression: "You'd look so good in a dress."
- low paying jobs, with the assumption that people will be able to coast off their partner's jobs
- higher turnover of queer people

- health benefits don't cover same sex partners, or only cover spouses
- harassing or socially ostracizing people with non-normative gender behaviors

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Who are the leaders of the organization? How did they get there?
- Who do people go to to get questions answered?
- Who are the 'experts'?
- Who holds the power in the organization? Whose opinions and voices matter most?
- What are the assumptions of needs of folks in the space?
- What is the division of labor in the organization?
- What types of knowledge and skills are valued? Which are not valued?
- Are there types of work that are unpaid? What types are they?
- What language is used around sexuality?
- How is gender identity talked about and addressed?
- Are there people who speak english as a second language in the organization? If so, what structures, if any, exist for language development, interpretation and translation, to ensure their full and knowledgeable participation?

# TACTICS FOR INTERRUPTING AND CHANGE-MAKING

## **Exit surveys.**

High turnover is usually a red flag that there's something going on within the organization that's leading people to feel unsatisfied, uncomfortable, or unwilling to stay with the organization. This can be structural, interpersonal, or both. When this turnover is greater in some groups of people (women, people of color) than others, that's an even more sure sign that there's something the co-op needs to be addressing. Be sure to capture why people are leaving the organization. Collect exit surveys from all members that leave the organization, to help capture the factors contributing to people's decisions to leave. You can even contact folks who have been gone from the organization for a while to see if they'd be willing to offer input retroactively.

People are often more willing/able to be honest about their decisions and the factors contributing to them *after* they've left the organization, when they have less concerns about how their honesty will impact their job stability, pay, or social relationships. So, it can be helpful to ask people for this information after they've left.

## **Ongoing individual and organizational education.**

Offer educational opportunities for the whole group, to catalyze discussion, build trust, and facilitate ongoing conversations with the membership. Also, be sure to remember that the work is not the workshop-- a good workshop will leave your organization with a better understanding of the work you need to be doing as an organization to better address systemic power dynamics within the co-op. It should leave you with a long list of work to do!

## **Clearly define roles and expectations.**

Ensure all jobs (esp ones that often get overlooked and then pushed to women, such as note taking, cleaning, phone answering, etc) are included and accounted for and assigned. They can be assigned to one job role, or they can intentionally be rotated between all workers or groups of workers.

## **Develop policies for addressing conflict, tension, and hurtful behavior.**

You don't want to be doing this during a flare-up, when any policies or practices you adopt can feel very personal to whoever is involved in the current conflict. As a group, decide *how* you want to address these moments, *when/where* you want to address them

(in meetings, through a specific committee, one on one), and by *whom* you want them to be addressed. Note that conflict, tension, and hurtful behavior are slightly different and you may want to choose to address them differently.

### **Identify, encourage, and intentionally develop leadership, especially among people from marginalized groups.**

Being surrounded by the values of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, and ableism, it's very easy to internalize these values, even when they are hurtful to you. For this reason, people of color, women, trans and gender non-conforming people, poor people, disabled people may not recognize their own leadership skills, or strengths, even though they may seem very apparent to you. When building leadership, don't just leave people to self-identify and step up into roles by their own volition. When you do, you will be more likely to get folks who feel comfortable in leadership or entitled to leadership positions. Take a moment as an organization to identify where, and kinds of leadership, you see in the organization.

Also, intentionally build and develop leadership in your organization. Ways to do this:

#### **Mentorship**

Working in teams or pairs, buddies, experienced leaders exercise restraint and train others, make space for potential leaders to ask the group or individuals for assistance and feedback

#### **Skill Building**

- have a budget for professional development
- cross training
- pairing
- rotation of tasks
- mentorship
- breaking down skills rather than just doing them

#### **Education**

- Make sure everyone one know how the organization is structured, and how to bring up proposals and change things
- Robust orientation: to organizational structure
- Develop manuals, written materials to refer to
- Power: democratic decision making is not about getting your way, it's about thinking together and coming up with the best decision for the group. It's about compromise.

# THE WAY WE DO THE THINGS WE DO

## HEALTHY PEOPLE BUILD HEALTHY WORKPLACES

How do we sustain our vision for change and not get lost in the day-to-day grind? How do we prevent burnout and a frenetic pace of work when there is so much to get done? How can we build real care and support into our workplaces? We use a radical mental health framework to explore ways to integrate the values of promoting mental and physical health and wellness and preventing burnout into work, be it non-profits, worker co-ops, organizing collectives, or community groups.

## PREVENTATIVE MEASURES AND BEHAVIORS

### **Use person-first language.**

Say “someone with schizophrenia” or “someone who has schizophrenia” vs “schizophrenic.” This language recognizes that we are all people, not diagnoses. Also be aware of stigmatizing language that can be hurtful, such as “crazy.”

### **Define your boundaries as an individual, and as a community.**

Know in advance what you are capable and willing to do, and how much support you are able to give. Knowing when to call for support as an individual, and as an organization, is important and can keep the whole community healthier.

### **Build in regular opportunities for check-ins.**

“Checking in slows us down, reminds us our existence is so much bigger than the meeting at hand, and encourages us to bring more of our whole selves to the practical tasks before us.” (from *Friends Make the Best Medicine*, the Icarus Project) Allow people to share where they're at emotionally, how their week's been, etc. Allow people to pass if they want.

### **Respect someone's decision to take or not to take medication.**

This can be hard. But remember, it's their body. You can offer yourself as a resource or offer to help them do research about the medication(s) they may or may not be taking but ultimately the decision is theirs.



**Provide regular awareness and education opportunities.**

This can look like a lot of things. Examples are:

- Provide a list of resources inside and outside the mental health system that are available in your area and nationally. Post in bathrooms, put on coffee tables, out on other public areas where people can read and take them.
- Coordinate workshops, discussion, peer support groups.
- Postings and information about what mental health issues and diagnosis look like can help dispel myths and stigma.

**Provide sober spaces.**

Places full of intoxicated people can be triggering or feel unsafe for people. Make an effort to provide sober spaces for people to go if they're feeling this way. Have open dialogues about needs for sober spaces.

**Don't ignore situations.**

Waiting until something or someone has gotten out of hand is a lot harder than addressing issues, concerns, worries, etc when they begin to arise. Starting conversations can be difficult, but doing it early can save everyone pain and stress.

**Clearly communicate with someone when their behavior could be hurtful.**

Often times, someone who is hurt by someone's behavior may not feel comfortable bringing it up. If you recognize that a person's behavior could be hurtful, consider it your responsibility to bring it up so that someone else who may feel more triggered, hurt, or self-conscious about it doesn't have to.



## BURNOUT. WHAT DOES IT LOOK AND FEEL LIKE?

Now, we understand that we don't all feel all these things. But we phrased most of these feelings and ways of being in the "we" form. Look through these. How many of them can you relate to?

### **It affects how we feel emotionally. We may feel...**

- guilty
- helpless
- harried
- cranky
- irritable
- lost
- tired
- zoned out
- impatient
- detached
- hopeless
- self critical
- overwhelmed
- isolated
- misunderstood
- less creative, and have less creativity about solutions
- a fear of the future
- worried about money
- like life is harder

### **It affects how we feel physically.**

- headaches
- fatigue
- sleeping problems
- digestion problems
- decreased memory
- decreased appetite
- anxiety

### **It affects our personal lives.**

- Our personal lives swing out of balance
- We stop cooking
- We don't answer personal emails, calls, and texts
- We lose our sense of humor
- We lack long term vision, hopefulness
- Everything feels like a big deal

### **It affects our work.**

- We can't look at work emails
- We have no motivation, inspiration
- We don't want to do even small tasks

- (Even small tasks feel like a big deal)
- Apathy
- Procrastination
- We may begin searching for another job
- Job neglect
- Absenteeism
- Facebook, youtube, etc invade our work days
- We have difficulty focusing and staying on task

**It affects our relationships with others.**

- We think others are jerks to us
- Others may be nervous to approach us or talk to us
- We blame others
- We complain
- Our relationships suffer
- We can't be with people
- We can't relax
- We get more distant
- We feel boring

**SO, WHAT CAN WE DO? AS ORGANIZATIONS, WORK-PLACES, COMMUNITY GROUPS**

**Take time off! Together.**

Give yourselves chances to know each other as more than co-workers or co-organizers. Create spaces to build friendships, get to know each other's whole selves, and share non-work related experiences.

- Schedule regular (weekly, monthly) lunches, happy hours, brunches, etc
- Picnics
- Parties
- Hangout outside of work or organizing

**Meetings: Make them better!**

We're in them so often. Why shouldn't they be great, re-energizing, minimally neutral?

- Open up meetings with check-ins
- Close meetings with check outs
- Go outside/meet outside
- Rotating responsibility for providing food at meetings
- Learn about neat and interesting facilitation tools
- Add stretching, dance-breaks, and other opportunities to get your bodies moving
- Retreats-- informal and formal (business)



### **Inspiration, growth, networking:**

Offer opportunities to attend conferences or workshops as part of work, rather than in addition to it. If you prioritize internal education, you can bet that your whole co-op/organization/group will feel the benefits.

- Offer support for further learning
- Prioritize available money for education
- Encourage making connections with local/state/international collectives and similar groups
- Sponsor inter-coop/inter-organizational workshops
- Make a small library of books, articles, zines, films, blogs available to your group

### **Time Off! (again)**

- Provide time off/flexible scheduling
- Provide the ability to work feasible hours
- Have several people trained on jobs so others can vacate when needed
- It's great to have paid sick and vacation days, for flexible reasons (respond to realistic and unique needs and desires of the real people who make up your organization!)
- Vacation rotation
- Sabbaticals!

### **Communication**

The culture and practices of how people communicate with each other makes up the foundation of how it feels to work and organize in any space. It's important to dedicate time, energy, and education to gaining skills and learning about the varied needs and strengths of your communication styles and your co-organizers.

- If you feel off, or your co-worker seems off, check in with them
- Practice nonjudgemental communication
- Collective evaluation—checking in as a whole team or organization
- Have a session of “real talk” – where folks can vent, dish, and get honest
- Encourage and affirm honesty about what work loads and skill sets people can take on (i.e. division of labor based on skills, interest, and capacity is ok!)
- Share appreciations for others' work and efforts informally and formally
- Make space for the group and individuals to check in about each other's their lives/total beings

## Work

The actual nitty-gritty of what makes our amazing visions and projects GO! Here are some tips and thoughts about generating equitable, creative, and fair ways of balancing the work load.

- Equitable distribution of grunt work
- Defined role to notice what details fall between the cracks, and to pick up those pieces!
- Clearly define responsibilities/expectations: accountability methods, decreasing resentment, common space cleaning, identify work that needs to be done
- Prioritize and build in mechanisms for support
- Celebrate collective and individual achievements!!!
- Have ways for interns and volunteers to plug in to create leadership and educational opportunities and to take some tasks of your to-do list
- Offer variety in the type of work each person is doing, so things are engaging, fun, and new
- Have structures in place for a team/organization to respond to crises or unexpected changes – this makes it possible for people to actually deal with crises in their lives and doesn't hurt the organization
- Recognition of amount that a position or person is actually working
- Allow space for dreaming but keep ambitions realistic
- Infuse levity and fun into work and spaces as much as you can
- Try to laugh together

## Healthcare

Healthcare is a need for all people and families, and for some more than others. In the U.S. access to healthcare is harder and less possible. Organizations can work hard to get creative and figure out how to support workers and organizers in getting physical and mental healthcare.

- Offer health stipends
- Offer tech stipends to be used for computer upgrades, ergonomic computer equipment, and more
- Health benefits
- Barter for massage
- Have connections with local networks of social workers and counselors to link workers up with free or low cost therapy
- Ever get asks for people to volunteer? If they have the skills, ask them to make/donate teas, herbs, tinctures, balms, salves to the organization



- Offer trade or group discount rates with a local community acupuncture clinic
- Find volunteers and folks who support your work who are nurses, doctors, and street medics. They're out there!

### **Space**

Space defines reality – or at least, we think so. Where you spend your time, do your work, have meetings, greatly impacts the quality of your time working and the actual projects and ideas you generate. Why not make it really nice?

- Have a stable/well organized workspace
- Practice neatness in community/shared spaces
- Plants!
- Consider painting a wall a bright or soothing color
- Hang up posters, art, inspiring quotes, and pictures of friends, family, and movement elders you admire
- Go to a few garage sales together and have some fun picking out cute coffee mugs, interesting lamps, and cool fabric to help decorate your space

## **ORGANIZATIONS**

These organizations are great resources for more information and support related to mental health.

### **The Icarus Project**

We are a network of people living with experiences that are commonly labeled as bipolar or other psychiatric conditions. The Icarus Project envisions a new culture and language that resonates with our actual experiences of 'mental illness' rather than trying to fit our lives into a conventional framework.

[www.icarusproject.net](http://www.icarusproject.net)

### **The Radical Psychology Network**

The Radical Psychology Network seeks like-minded psychologists and others to help create a society better able to meet human needs and bring about social justice. We want to change society's unacceptable status quo and bring about a better world.

<http://www.radpsynet.org/>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“On Collaboration: Working With Each Other” by Mia Mingus from her blog, *Leaving Evidence* <http://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2012/08/03/on-collaboration-starting-with-each-other/>

“Sabbatical Your Life” by Adrienne Maree Brown from her blog, *The Luscious Satyagraha* <http://adriennemareebrown.net/blog/2012/07/10/sabbatical-your-life-workshop-report-back-from-amc2012/>

“The Transformative Power of Practice” by Ng’ethe Maina and Staci Haines. 2008.

*Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche* by Ethan Watters

*Friends Make the Best Medicine: Navigating the Space Between Brilliance & Madness, A Harm Reduction Guide to Coming Off Psychiatric Medicines*, by the Icarus Project (available for free download from their website)

*Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill* by Robert Whitaker

*Maps to the Other Side: The Adventures of a Bipolar Cartographer*, by Sascha Altman DuBrul

# DECONSTRUCTING ABLEISM: RESOURCES AND READING

People with disabilities often face discrimination from individuals and systems built without them in mind that prevent them from being able to participate in or access spaces, resources, employment, or housing. In our deconstructing ableism workshops we examine the systems of oppression that affect people with mental, physical, and emotional disabilities, and how those systems function. We give participants with excerpts from many of the resources below, but are still in the process of developing our own substantive materials that reflect and share the work and learning that goes on in our workshops. We encourage you to explore the resources and readings we have gathered for you here until then!

## BOOKS, BLOGS, AND OTHER READINGS

[Beyond Ramps: Disability at the End of the Social Contract](#) by Marta Russell

*brownstargirl*

Blog of Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, a queer disabled Sri Lankan writer, teacher and cultural worker.

<http://www.brownstargirl.org>

especially this piece on being scent-free:

<http://www.brownstargirl.org/1/post/2012/03/fragrance-free-femme-of-colour-realness-draft-15.html>

[Building Radical Accessible Communities Everywhere \(BRACE\)](#)

Great blog filled with writings, subtitled videos, resources, and information about Radical Accessible Mapping Project (RAMP) Vancouver.

[Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity](#) by Simi Linton

*Cripchick*

Blog of Stacey Milbern, a powerchair-roaring disabled queer woman of color activist and writer.

<http://blog.cripchick.com/>

[Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation](#) by Doris Zames Fleischer

[The Disability Studies Reader](#) edited by Lennard J. Davis

[The Examined Life: Judith Butler & Sunaura Taylor](#), a short film available on youtube by Astra Taylor

[Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation](#) by Eli Clare



*Leaving Evidence*, a blog by Mia Mingus

The Blog of Mia Mingus, a queer physically disabled woman of color, Korean transracial and transnational adoptee writer, organizer and community caretaker.

<http://leavingevidence.wordpress.com>

[My Body Politic: A Memoir](#) by Simi Linton

[The New Disability History: American Perspectives](#) edited by Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky

[No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement](#) by Joseph P. Shapiro

[Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment](#) by James I. Charlton

[The Ragged Edge: The Disability Experience from the Pages of the First Fifteen Years of The Disability Rag](#)

edited by Barrett Shaw

*Ragged Edge Magazine*

Has thousands of articles, and regular new updates from the Inclusion Daily Express, an international disability rights news service.

<http://raggededgemagazine.com/>

[Understanding Disability: Inclusion, Access, Diversity, and Civil Rights](#) by Paul T. Jaeger and Cynthia Ann Bowman

[Voices from the Edge: Narratives about the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) by Ruth O'Brien

*Selections from the above resources are also included in the **Additional Resources** section on subsequent pages.*

## ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

### **Access Living**

Access Living is a change agent committed to fostering an inclusive society that enables Chicagoans with disabilities to live fully—engaged and self-directed lives. Nationally recognized as a leading force in the disability advocacy community, Access Living challenges stereotypes, protects civil rights, and champions social reform.

<http://www.accessliving.org/>

### **Actual Lives Austin**

Actual Lives Austin has been making theatre with a focus on the lived experience of disability. Now in its seventh year, Actual Lives continues to be Central Texas' own and only ensemble dedicated to

crip theatre with attitude.  
<http://actualives.org/>

**ADAPT**

ADAPT is a national grass-roots community that organizes disability rights activists to engage in nonviolent direct action, including civil disobedience, to assure the civil and human rights of people with disabilities to live in freedom.  
<http://www.adapt.org/>

**Center for Independent Living**

The world’s first organization run by and for people with disabilities, the Center for Independent Living (CIL), founded in 1972, supports disabled people in their efforts toward independence. CIL encourages people with disabilities to make their own choices and works to open doors in the community to full participation and access for all.  
<http://www.cilberkeley.org/>

**Chemical Injury Information Network (CIIN)**

Support/advocacy organization dealing with Chemical Injury.  
[www.ciin.org](http://www.ciin.org)

**Creating Collective Access**

A network of crips and our allies/comrades who are working together to create collective access.  
<http://creatingcollectiveaccess.wordpress.com/>

**Debra Lynn Dadd**

Resources to help consumers make environmentally wise, non-toxic choices about products we use daily.  
<http://www.debralynddadd.com/>

**Eli Clare**

White, disabled, and genderqueer, Eli Clare happily lives in the Green Mountains of Vermont where he writes and proudly claims a penchant for rabble-rousing.  
<http://eliclare.com>

**Inclusion Daily Express**

International disability rights new service.  
<http://www.inclusiondaily.com/>

**Sins Invalid**

Sins Invalid is a performance project that incubates and celebrates artists with disabilities, centralizing artists of color and queer and gender-variant artists as communities who have been historically marginalized.  
<http://www.sinsinvalid.org>

# ABOUT AORTA

**AORTA is a collective of educators** devoted to strengthening movements for social justice and a solidarity economy. We work as consultants and facilitators to **expand the capacity of cooperative, collective, and community based projects** through education, training, and planning. We base our work on an **intersectional approach to liberation** because we believe that true change requires uprooting all systems of oppression.

## AORTA POINTS OF UNITY

- We recognize that our process is political. We strive to enact and model our principles and vision through our process.
- We support the existence of democratically run, non-hierarchical communities, organizations, cooperatives and collectives.
- We recognize there are many forms of privilege and oppression, and that they intersect. We embrace the interconnectedness of our liberation. We believe all topics need to be addressed from an intersectional lens. This is always a part of what we offer.
- We value resource sharing amongst other anti-oppression organizers.
- We contribute to a just political network by directly linking resources and services with the communities that need them.
- We understand intergenerational work to be a key part of movement building. We nurture intergenerational practices that bring together children, youth, adults and others.
- As humans, we embody both the systems of oppression that we live in and the strength and resilience of our communities. We will be forgiving of each other and create space for honest, deep engagement and healthy communication, both within AORTA and within broader movements.
- We value intimacy, depth, and trust in our work together and intentionally keep AORTA small in order to support this.
- The work is not the workshop. Training is one piece of a broader movement building process that requires many different types of work from community organizing to direct action to art creation and beyond.
- Personal and organizational change are interconnected. Our work will involve analysis and development at both individual and organizational levels.
- Our work is movement building. We are intentionally and



strategically building alliances, relationships and networks between varied organizations within our movement. This involves constant work at the individual, organizational, and structural level.

- We believe care for self, others, and community is crucial to sustainable organizing. We will make extraordinary efforts to support mental, emotional, and physical health and well being. We support each other in creating realistic work loads and stepping back as needed in order to sustain long-term organizing.
- We stand in alliance with struggles that uphold collective liberation and cooperation. These struggles are grounded in racial, gender, economic, environmental, and disability justice; trans and queer liberations; anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist politics.
- We believe that individuals and organizations can be transformed. Significant change comes slowly and requires work. The changes that happen quickly are often superficial or temporary. Deep changes come after resistance, denial, and pain have all been worked through.
- We work with groups that are both targets and agents of oppression while recognizing that we all hold multiple identities and positions within interlocking systems of oppression and privilege.
- We recognize that uprooting and understanding systems of oppression is a continual process. Therefore, we maintain a commitment to constantly challenging and building our social justice and political analysis.
- Core skills in organizational operations, development, and growth are an important part of our training menu, alongside analysis and political education. We incorporate an anti-oppression analysis into all the workshops that we offer.
- We prioritize longer workshops over shorter workshops because we want to allow for depth of analysis, strategies, and relationship building.
- We assume our own power, and maintain our humility. We honor our elders, political ancestors, and contemporaries.
- We believe in the importance of leadership development to support long term efforts. We need as many leaders as possible. We prioritize the development of leadership among youth, communities directly impacted by injustice, and historically oppressed communities.

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT AORTA

“They were extremely adept at facilitating the group’s self-learning and empowerment through the use of popular education and their warm and engaging approach ensured that we all left the workshop feeling an increased feeling of community, power, and love. The AORTA training (as we call it) definitely represented a turning point in our community.”

Close2Home, Dorchester, MA

“AORTA is not a magic wand, its more like Olivander’s wand shop where you can get help finding the right magic wand to help you along the way.”

Common Ground Center, Vermont

“Excellent facilitation, deeply transformative concepts and strategic conversations about how to apply our learnings left me feeling inspired, resourced, and grateful.”

Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB)

## SERVICES

- ♥ Retreat and Meeting Facilitation
- ♥ Workshops and Trainings
- ♥ Conflict Resolution and Mediation
- ♥ Co-op, Board, and Organizational Development
- ♥ Anti-Oppression Audits
- ♥ Strategic Planning
- ♥ Consultation

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# NOTES / CONTACTS

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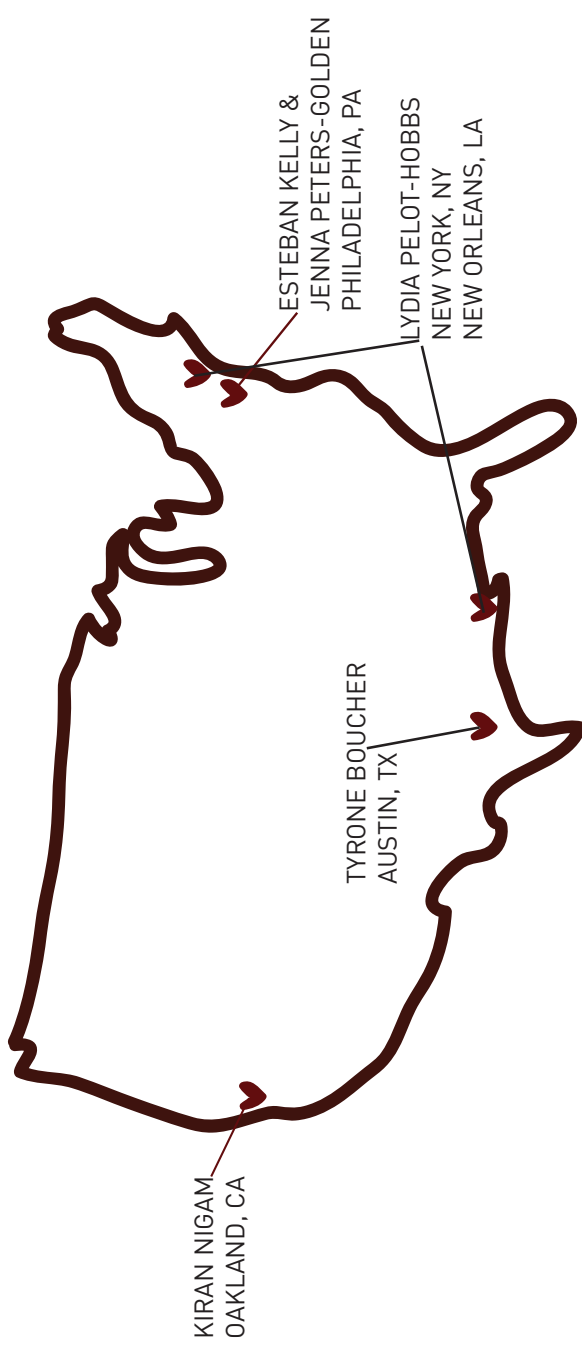
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