

The following first appeared as a semi-private message on a listserv, but the WACANupdate has requested and received permission from the author, Sharon Martinas, to reprint it here.

I have little direct experience with organizationally confronting violent white racism, but here are some things I remember from folx who have done so in the 1980's. So take what you can use and leave the rest.

** Assume that the major motivating factors for the violence are hate and fear of Black people (primarily).

** Assume that racist white violence is, as SNCC organizer Rap Brown once said, "as American as apple pie."

** Expect that the actual perpetrators will likely be individuals and groups who themselves feel relatively powerless in the overall white power structure, and 'direct violent action' is valued as a 'manly' or 'patriotic' or 'courageous' thing to do to make themselves feel more 'powerful.'

** Expect that perpetrators will most likely act in groups. They tend to be cowardly if directly confronted as individuals.

** Assume that the perpetrators know, as the KKK knew about the White Citizens Leagues,' that the frontliners will be protected and backed up by the dominant white institutions, especially the media and the police, and often their own families.

** Assume that the majority of 'good white people' will be shocked by the violence, but will need to be organized to speak out against it, lest they too be isolated in their own white community. Mostly they will express their shock by distancing themselves from the perpetrators or making excuses, 'well, I always thought he was a troubled boy, but...'

So what can we do depending on our communities and our circumstances? Here are just a few ideas: As always, take what you can use and leave the rest:

++ I believe it was the Southern Poverty Law Center that wrote a manual about 20 years ago titled, 'When Hate Groups Come to Town.' Google a copy if you can. It was an excellent 'mainstream' community organizing model for what conscious people can do in their community.

++ I believe that Political Research Associates, which has extensively researched the history and strategies of how the racist, sexist, homophobic right wing was organized

since 1968 for the Republican party. Learn the history and their tactics. Check with 'psychological' interpretations of this racist violence.

++ If any stories come out in the media, amplify them with op-eds, letters to the editor, talking in to local talk shows. Don't let the accounts of violence get buried or 'not in our town.' Identify ourselves as white, always, speaking against racism. Prepare yourselves for the white lash, which may come.

++ In conjunction with local organizations, churches of color, set up anti-violence hot lines. With counselors to listen to those violated, and also for the violators.

++ If you can, go to speak where the 'relatively powerless' may be -- in suburban white high schools, in community organizations and services supporting the unemployed and those without hope of a future, in churches especially, or places that support returning veterans. Try to confront lovingly the psychological habit of 'displacing' people's personal distress by acting against people of color.

++ Train peer counselors in these 'violence prone' populations to work one on one with those who share the same experiences of feeling 'dispossessed' in 'their own' nation.

???? I know that prosecution as a 'hate crime' may work to satisfy a community's belief that it is addressing 'the problem,' but I suspect that a perpetrator motivated by racist desperation will simply become a more accomplished murderer in a prison situation. I am a prison abolitionist, so to me, sending people to prison does not make a community safe or secure -- certainly not from violent white supremacy, since that is what every prison has perfected to a fine murderous art.

Let's keep sharing. We live and learn... xxx sharon