

11-30-2001

## Resist Newsletter, Nov. 2001

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### Recommended Citation

Resist, "Resist Newsletter, Nov. 2001" (2001). *Resist Newsletters*. 337.  
<https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/resistnewsletter/337>



*Funding social change since 1967*

# RESIST

ISSN 0897-2613 • Vol. 10 #9

*A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority*

November 2001

## Kentucky Activists Oppose Repression

TIM MOFFETT

As the mainstream sentiment just began to admit the existence and injustice of the racial profiling responsible for such phrases as “Driving While Black,” the practice of targeting individuals for greater scrutiny because of how they look surged in popularity. Have the breakthroughs of anti-racism activists been dashed to pieces in the rubble of the World Trade Center? As so many commentators are implying, does national security justify—and even require—racial profiling?

Within 36 hours of the tragic events of September 11, more than 200 people gathered in Louisville, Kentucky to raise a strong warning against the possibilities of reactionary profiling, hatred, and violence. Deeply involved in making this possible was the Kentucky Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression. This community-based multiracial organization has taken action against specific instances of racist policies and practices, and has formed partnerships with other community groups, unions, and churches.

Members of the Alliance, and those who provide their leadership, have a wide range of social concerns, but value the concentration of the Kentucky Alliance on issues of racist injustice. Network members believe that barriers to economic and social justice that prevent a truly democratic society cannot be surmounted unless the racist policies that underlie and divide our society are broken down.



The Kentucky Alliance marches with other groups to protest the killing of an unarmed Black man by police.

The Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression began 27 years ago as part of a national organization formed to build resistance to the attacks on activists in the African American freedom movement and the civil-rights movement in the early 1970s. It was a time of pressing issues in Louisville, as elsewhere—for example, struggles over school desegregation and educational equity and the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and other hate groups in our community, increasing police abuse of African Americans and also low-income whites, and the infiltration of our Police Department by the Klan. The Alliance brought together as many people as possible to take visible action on these and other specific issues.

Over the years, the specific issues changed and our emphasis shifted in response, but the main thrust of our work

has remained the same. For example, in the late 1970s, there were constant battles against extreme racism inside our schools and violent attacks on African American families that moved into white areas. In the 1980s these situations continued, but there was also new organizing by African American citizens for equitable political power—and attacks on these initiatives. In the 1990s our work turned more and more to economic justice—against discrimination against people

of color in employment and promotion and the awarding of contracts. Police abuse and extreme bias in the court system remained central issues. Prison reform became a major concern as the population in our jails and prisons soared here, as everywhere.

### Sharing Organizational Power

From the beginning we have accepted the critical importance of true power sharing between Blacks and whites in our membership and leadership—something that is all too rare in our society and that never happens without serious effort. Our board currently reflects the community we serve by being majority African American, with 13 African Americans, 7 whites, and one Palestinian. (We are aware of our need to reach out to and involve the growing Latino community, and are just beginning

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to do that.) Nine of the board members are women. Members are mostly poor and working class (some extremely poor)—with some modest middle-class income and professional people. Three of our current board members came to the organization first as victims of racist discrimination seeking help and stayed to help others.

Especially in the last 10 years we have made a conscious effort to work in partnerships. We work with about 10 organizations on a regular basis. As a result, we enlist support from more than 70 groups for functions such as our annual Unity Dinner or political action when the Klan comes to town.

## Confronting Police Abuse

The most notable result of this coalition building has been in the fight against police brutality. Beginning in 1992, and working closely with the ACLU of Kentucky, we served as catalyst for a 30-organization coalition, Citizens Against Police Abuse (CAPA), which won a 30-year effort to get legislation mandating a civilian police review board in Louisville.

That very success is also the most dramatic reminder of how difficult it is to know whether we are seeing victory or defeat—progress or delusion. The last days of the campaign caught the attention of the entire community. Just six votes managed to

introduce the ordinance and send it to the mayor, but when he vetoed as promised an override required eight. Somehow last minute maneuvers won the two needed and the veto was overridden. A front page photo showed supporters jumping for joy. But that was 16 months ago and the Fraternal Order of Police has used legal challenges to prevent any action to put the review board in place. Now everyone seems to have other priorities, and police killings of unarmed African Americans have continued here in Louisville, though without the attention they have gotten in Cincinnati.

Another justice struggle in Louisville—

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# Resist Remembers Founder Ken Hale

WAYNE O'NEIL

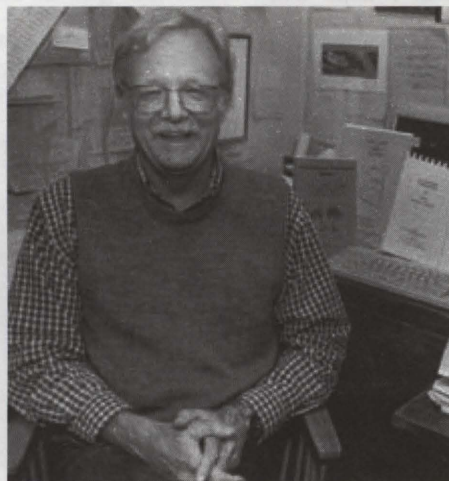
Ken Hale, a founding member of Resist, died on Monday, October 8, 2001 at age 67 after a long illness.

Ken openly joined the resistance on October 16, 1967, when as part of a national draft-card turn-in, he handed in his selective service registration at the Arlington Street Church in Boston. At roughly the same time, Ken became a member of Resist, remaining active until illness forced him to curtail his work on the Board.

Among linguists, Ken is held in awe because of the great number of languages he knew—50 or more. Although Ken actually worked very hard, he seemed to learn languages through brief exposure, in the way that we normal folks catch a cold.

Since Ken worked most particularly with the indigenous people of the Americas and of Australia, he was admired by those of us who worked with him politically for his sense of how to put his incomparable knowledge to work for social change. His extensive work on aboriginal land claims in Australia is a case in point, as is his educational work there, on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, and among the Navajo.

Ken's special importance for Resist goes back to its earliest days when Resist had a tripartite structure: a board, a staff, and a set of "area persons" who encouraged and developed grant proposals from a particular area of the country. Ken, because of his extensive knowledge, was Resist's link to Native America, and enabled Resist to support work in American Indian communities.



*Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

When asked to comment on Ken's death, Noam Chomsky (also a founding member of Resist) said, "Ken Hale was . . . a colleague whose contributions are incomparable and of immense intellectual distinction, and above all, a person of honor and courage, who dedicated himself with passion and endless energy to protecting the rights of poor and suffering people throughout the world. One of the world's leading scholars, dear to countless people, he was also one of those very few people who truly merits the term 'a voice for the voiceless.' The loss is immeasurable."

But Ken was not only "a voice for the voiceless" for he also made sure that the voices of the voiceless were heard directly: in land-claims hearings in Australia, by legislators and boards of education in the Americas, and by Resist.

We will all miss Ken's voice, but we

must continue to hear and listen to the people that Ken empowered.

*Wayne O'Neil is a long-time Board member of Resist and a professor of linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he taught with Ken.*

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**ILLEGITIMATE AUTHORITY**  
*Funding social change since 1967*  
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*Resist Newsletter* is published ten times a year by RESIST, Inc., (617)623-5110. The views expressed in articles, other than editorials, are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the RESIST staff or board.

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Newsletter Editor: Carol Schachet  
Printing: Red Sun Press

Printed on Recycled Paper with Soy Ink





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one for recognition and protection of the rights of gays and lesbians—has seen much clearer progress. The local group at the center of that effort is called the Fairness Campaign. Some of its most active leaders got their start in the Kentucky Alliance and have continued to make sure that the gay and lesbian movement remains closely interwoven with the ongoing struggle for racial justice. The Fairness Campaign has become one of the significant forces in local politics and by continuing to work closely with the Kentucky Alliance and others on racial justice issues has provided strong resistance to the forces that here as nationwide have tried to use homophobia to divide the African American community and all civil rights efforts.

### Opposing a Racist War

The Alliance planned a local event last month to oppose globalization, but was turned into a peace rally after 9-11-01. As Carla Wallace, one of those Fairness Campaign leaders who came out of the Kentucky Alliance pointed out, the war the US government is now preparing to wage is racist—not only because it is aimed at people of color throughout the world, but because the escalating cost of military spending deprives people here at home of the programs they need for survival. But she also warned that it is not enough to point a finger at the government. It is up to us as citizens to change policies that are wrong. And she said one thing we have not done effectively enough is work on the racism that exists even in peace and justice movements.

Our objective is to build an anti-racist majority in our community. You don't need everybody to achieve that, and we think we have made progress. We move toward an anti-racist majority as more white people join people of color in taking visible and vocal action against specific racist policies and practices. This provides a pole to which others can gravitate when circumstances move them to action.

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*Tim Moffett works at the Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, which received a grant from Resist last year. For more information, contact them at PO Box 1543, Louisville, KY 40201; kyall@bellsouth.net.*

# Necessity of Skepticism

## Backlash and Backtrack

EDWARD SAID

For the seven million Americans who are Muslims (only two million of them Arab) and have lived through the catastrophe and backlash of 11 September, it's been a harrowing, especially unpleasant time. In addition to the fact that there have been several Arab and Muslim innocent casualties of the atrocities, there is an almost palpable air of hatred directed at the group as a whole that has taken many forms. George W. Bush immediately seemed to align America and God with each other, declaring war on the "folks" — who are now, as he says, wanted dead or alive — who perpetrated the horrible deeds. And this means, as no one needs any further reminding, that Osama Bin Laden, the elusive Muslim fanatic who represents Islam to the vast majority of Americans, has taken center stage. TV and radio have run file pictures and potted accounts of the shadowy (former playboy, they say) extremist almost incessantly, as they have of the Palestinian women and children caught "celebrating" America's tragedy.

Pundits and hosts refer non-stop to "our" war with Islam, and words like "jihad" and "terror" have aggravated the understandable fear and anger that seem widespread all over the country. Two people (one a Sikh) have already been killed by enraged citizens who seem to have been encouraged by remarks like Defense Department official Paul Wolfowitz's to literally think in terms of "ending countries" and nuking our enemies. Hundreds of Muslim and Arab shopkeepers, students, hijabed women and ordinary citizens have had insults hurled at them, while posters and graffiti announcing their imminent death spring up all over the place. The end of September, the director of the leading Arab-American organization told me that he averages 10 messages an hour of insults, threats, bloodcurdling verbal attacks. A Gallup poll released at the same time states that 49% of the American people said yes (49% no) to the idea that Arabs, including those who are American citizens, should carry special identification; 58% demand (41% don't) that Arabs, including those

who are Americans, should undergo special, more intense security checks in general.

There is little positive knowledge of the Arabs and Islam in the public sphere to fall back on and balance the extremely negative images that float around: the stereotypes of lustful, vengeful, violent, irrational, fanatical people persist anyway. Palestine as a cause has not yet gripped the imagination here, especially not after the Durban conference.

Even my own university [Columbia], justly famous for its intellectual diversity and the heterogeneity of its students and staff, rarely offers a course on the Qur'an. Philip Hitti's *History of the Arabs*, by far the best modern, one-volume book in English on the subject, is out of print. Most of what is available is polemical and adversarial: the Arabs and Islam are occasions for controversy, not cultural and religious subjects like others. Film and TV are packed with horrendously unattractive, bloody-minded Arab terrorists; they were there, alas, before the terrorists of the World Trade Center and Pentagon hijacked the planes and turned them into instruments of a mass slaughter that reeks of criminal pathology much more than of any religion.

There seems to be a minor campaign in the print media to hammer home the thesis that "we are all Israelis now," and that what has occasionally occurred in the way of Palestinian suicide bombs is more or less exactly the same as the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. In the process, of course, Palestinian dispossession and oppression are simply erased from memory; also erased are the many Palestinian condemnations of suicide bombing, including my own. The overall result is that any attempt to place the horrors of what occurred on 11 September in a context that includes US actions and rhetoric is either attacked or dismissed as somehow condoning the terrorist bombardment.

Intellectually, morally, politically such an attitude is disastrous since the equation between understanding and condoning is profoundly wrong, and very far from being true. What most Americans find difficult to believe is that in the Middle East

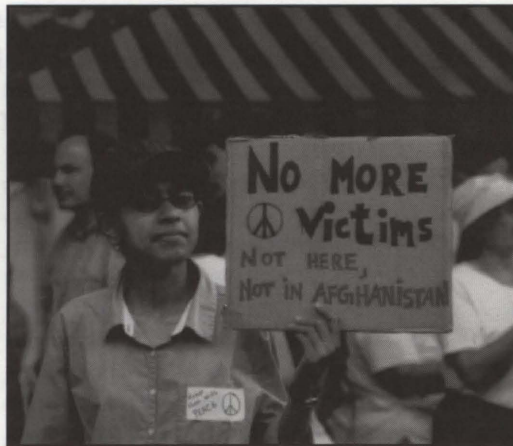
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and Arab world US actions as a state—unconditional support for Israel, the sanctions against Iraq that have spared Saddam Hussein and condemned hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis to death, disease, malnutrition, the bombing of Sudan, the US “green light” for Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon (during which almost 20,000 civilians lost their lives, in addition to the massacres of Sabra and Shatila), the use of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf generally as a private US fiefdom, the support of repressive Arab and Islamic regimes—are deeply resented and, not incorrectly, are seen as being done in the name of the American people. There is an enormous gap between what the average American citizen is aware of and the often unjust and heartless policies that, whether or not he/she is conscious of them, are undertaken abroad. Every US veto of a UN Security resolution condemning Israel for settlements, the bombing of civilians, and so forth, may be brushed aside by, say, the residents of Iowa or Nebraska as unimportant events and probably correct, whereas to an Egyptian, Palestinian or Lebanese citizen these things are wounding in the extreme, and remembered very precisely.

In other words, there is a dialectic between specific US actions on the one hand and consequent attitudes towards America on the other hand that has literally very little to do with jealousy or hatred of America’s prosperity, freedom, and all-round success in the world. On the contrary, every Arab or Muslim that I have ever spoken to expressed mystification as to why so extraordinarily rich and admirable a place as America (and so likeable a group of individuals as Americans) has behaved internationally with such callous obliviousness of lesser peoples. Surely also, many Arabs and Muslims are aware of the hold on US policy of the pro-Israeli lobby and the dreadful racism and fulminations of pro-Israeli publications like *The New Republic* or *Commentary*, to say nothing of bloodthirsty columnists like Charles Krauthammer, William Safire, George Will, Norman Podhoretz, and A. M. Rosenthal, whose columns regularly express hatred and hostility towards Arabs and Muslims. These are usually to be found in the mainstream media (e.g., the editorial pages of *The Washington Post*) where everyone can read them as such, rather than being buried



A protestor in Boston expresses the hopes of many peace activists after September 11, 2001 at a rally on October 14. Photo by Ellen Shub

in the back pages of marginal publications.

But what is nevertheless encouraging, despite the appalling general media performance, is the slow emergence of dissent, petitions for peaceful resolution and action, a gradually spreading demand for alternatives to more bombing and destruction. This kind of thoughtfulness has been very remarkable, in my opinion. First of all, there have been very widely expressed concerns about what may be the erosion of civil liberties and individual privacy as the government demands, and seems to be getting, the powers to wire-tap telephones, to arrest and detain Middle Eastern people on suspicion of terrorism, and generally to induce a state of alarm, suspicion, and mobilization that could amount to paranoia resembling McCarthyism. Depending on how one reads it, the American habit of flying the flag everywhere can seem patriotic of course, but patriotism can also lead to intolerance, hate crimes, and all sorts of unpleasant collective passion. Numerous commentators have warned about this and, as I said earlier, even the president in his speech said that “we” are not at war with Islam or Muslim people. But the danger is there, and has been duly noted by other commentators, I am happy to say.

Second, there have been many calls and meetings to address the whole matter of military action, which according to a recent poll, 92% of the American people seem to want. Because, however, the administration hasn’t exactly specified what the aims of this war are (“eradicating terrorism” is more metaphysical than it is actual), nor the means, nor the plan, there is considerable uncertainty as to where we may be going militarily. But generally speaking the

rhetoric has become less apocalyptic and religious—the idea of a crusade has disappeared almost completely—and more focused on what might be necessary beyond general words like “sacrifice” and “a long war, unlike any others.”

In universities, colleges, churches and meeting-houses there are a great many debates on what the country should be doing in response; I have even heard that families of the innocent victims have said in public that they do not believe military revenge is an appropriate response. The point is that there is considerable reflection at large as to what the US should be

doing, but I am sorry to report that the time for a critical examination of US policies in the Middle East and Islamic worlds has not yet arrived. I hope that it will.

Perhaps a reflective community of conscience and understanding may grow in the United States, but speaking as a Palestinian, I must also hope that a similar constituency should be emerging in the Arab and Muslim world. We must start thinking about ourselves as responsible for the poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, and repression that have come to dominate our societies, evils that we have allowed to grow despite our complaints about Zionism and imperialism. How many of us, for example, have openly and honestly stood up for secular politics and have condemned the use of religion in the Islamic world as roundly and as earnestly as we have denounced the manipulation of Judaism and Christianity in Israel and the West? How many of us have denounced all suicidal missions as immoral and wrong, even though we have suffered the ravages of colonial settlers and inhuman collective punishment? We can no longer hide behind the injustices done to us, anymore than we can passively bewail the American support for our unpopular leaders. A new secular Arab politics must now make itself known, without for a moment condoning or supporting the militancy (it is madness) of people willing to kill indiscriminately. There can be no more ambiguity on that score.

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*Edward Said is a Palestinian activist and a professor at Columbia University. This article is excerpted from CounterPunch: Complete Coverage of 9/11 and Its Aftermath, www.counterpunch.org.*



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# How Durban Succeeded

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DANI MCCLAIN

Richard Wright wrote that there was something “extra-political” about the 1955 Bandung Conference, the meeting where African and Asian anti-colonial freedom fighters turned heads of state created the identity of a non-aligned “third world.” Wright wrote that the elusive force “smacked of tidal waves, of natural forces.” Although you’d never guess it from the pessimistic coverage the recently concluded World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) received, there was a similar sense among many delegates that something meaningful was taking place, more so outside the Durban convention center than within.

Hours before the WCAR was scheduled to conclude, the draft resolution remained rejected by the official European Union and Palestinian delegates. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) described the conference as “stormy” and reported on the controversy surrounding the rejection of the Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) Declaration by Mary Robinson, the UN Commissioner for Human Rights. But in the surrounding streets, restaurants and hotel lobbies, NGO delegates were carrying on as they had all week.

Daniel Edwin J. Das, an independent writer who works with the Indian National Coalition for Dalit Human Rights, was adamant that despite widespread claims that the Arab countries had “hijacked” the conference—a questionable choice of words to say the least—the conference was a disaster only to some.

“Maybe for the governments of the world, Durban was a failure. Maybe for the media of the world, Durban was a failure because it focused on Israel and the United States. But for the people of the world, it has been a major success. We have been able to build links amongst ourselves—Dalits, Africans and African descendants, Palestinians, indigenous people.”

The sentiment among many NGO delegates was that the US government had worked to ensure the conference’s failure by working desperately to distract the world’s attention from the substantive work that many of them had set out to do.

NGO delegates struggled to keep up with the latest plot twists as the Bush ad-

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In the tents set up outside the highly secured convention center . . . people did just what the obstructionist forces feared they would: they talked.

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ministration first threatened not to send a delegation, grudgingly sent a low-level delegation and finally added insult to injury by pulling out days into the proceedings. But after getting over being hoodwinked and bamboozled by the US government’s tactics, delegates went about the business of milking the gathering for all it had to offer.

In the tents set up outside the highly secured convention center, at the tables where organizations made their literature available, while marching in the streets or waiting in the interminable lines for conference accreditation, people did just what the US government and other obstructionist forces feared they would: they talked. They exchanged ideas and words of support. They attempted to learn from each other’s struggles. They acknowledged and discussed the issues they faced back home that had brought them there to Durban.

Even within the official conference program there was a safe haven from the measured wording and political jockeying needed to get particular language into the Declaration and Program of Action that would be the conference’s only tangible product. The Voices Special Forum on Comparative Experiences of racism, organized by the International Human Rights Law Group and the South Africa Human Rights Commission, put a human face on the issues of racism discussed, from the Rwandan genocide to discrimination against the Roma in Eastern Europe. Over the course of the week, 21 people from all over the world testified before a panel of UN officials as to their personal experiences with racism, telling stories that showed the systemic effects of racial discrimination.

Saikou Diallo, the father of Amadou Diallo, who was killed in February 1999 by New York City police officers, spoke about losing his son to the racist US criminal justice system. Monica Morgan testified as a representative of the Yorta Yorta people,

who are indigenous to Southeastern Australia. Morgan spoke about the “stolen generation,” over a hundred thousand children who were removed from their indigenous families and held in detention centers or Anglo-Australians’ homes where they were “trained to be domestics, brainwashed to be assimilated and violated.”

Ana del Carmen Martinez reported the atrocities she has suffered as an Afro-Colombian displaced by the civil war and drug interdiction efforts funded by the US government in the name of its “war on drugs.” Delegates sat in silence as Martinez described being forced to watch paramilitaries tie up a neighbor and dismember him before killing him, a warning to the members of her community of what they would face if they attempted to return to their native lands. The municipal stadium turned refugee camp where she was taken and forced to live for four years was so overcrowded that 1,200 people slept on the basketball court. There was no running water, no toilets.

“We saw our oppressors in the street. We felt tremendous fear. Our children could not go to school. We began to suffer from illnesses we had never had in the past. Our bodies and those of our children became marked by this fear. We only know how to work the land; it is part of our culture. They blamed us for everything, even our lack of hygiene. There are many sad children. But we laugh, we sing, we celebrate. Joy is resistant. Our souls are not for sale.”

Hopefully, the people in attendance at Durban will build on the momentum established there, carrying home the shared experience of the “conference within the conference” and the extra-political alliances formed to their communities, where the real work begins.

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*Dani McClain attended the WCAR on behalf of the Lindesmith Center-Drug Policy Foundation. This article is reprinted with permission from Alternet.org.*



# Confronting Privilege and Power

## “Challenging White Supremacy Workshops” Train Activists

MICKEY ELLINGER

Bombs from US military forces are falling on Afghanistan. A band of white teen agers killed an Arab-American storekeeper is killed in Reedley, California. US intelligence and police forces hold hundreds of immigrants from the Middle East in detention with no charges and no access to lawyers or the press. Arab-American truck drivers have disappeared from the highways, afraid that fear and anger after the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington put them at risk. And in San Francisco, California, the orientation session of Challenging White Supremacy Workshop’s “Becoming an Anti-Racist Activist” drew to an early close so that people could join the anti-war demonstrations, determined to keep anti-racist activism at the center of the movements for peace and justice in this difficult time.

The Challenging White Supremacy (CWS) workshop is an anti-racist training workshop for grassroots social justice activists who want to challenge white privilege and work for racial justice in all their social justice activism. Workshop participants (between 30 and 40 each 15-week session) are mostly activists from a wide range of environmental justice, queer rights, immigrant rights, global justice and other progressive organizations and campaigns. The workshop, open to anyone from the SF Bay Area’s progressive community, addresses how predominantly white social justice organizations can embrace an anti-racist agenda in their work.

CWS calls its work challenging white supremacy rather than challenging racism, and defines white supremacy as an historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and people of color by white people and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege. The workshop focuses on the institutional and systemic basis of racism and how it functions even in the movements for social justice and in the attitudes and behavior of white social justice activists.

### Workshops Teach History/Action

The CWS’s mission can be summed up as “Learn from history, don’t repeat it.” Workshops have been inspired by many organizers and educators of color, including Robert Allen, author of *Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States*. Allen argues that the white supremacy of major US progressive movements — abolition, women’s suffrage, labor, the Progressive movement, and elements of the radical left—not only shut out people of color from their vision of equality, but in doing so weakened and undermined both their own movements and the multiracial grassroots movements that strove for unity.

History lessons start at the top (“How Mother Earth Became a Piece of Real Estate”), then look at the construction of the white supremacy system in the US (“Strategy of the Slave Owners”), and the personal (“Family Histories/Herstories”, in which each participant seeks his or her own family’s story of coming to or being in the US and how oppression, exploitation and privilege played out). Two sessions explore the relation of capitalism and white supremacy, and one extra-long session that discusses the relation to patriarchy, heterosexism and the gender binary system. Another (“Shinin’ the Lite on White”) focuses on white privilege.

Six sessions feature presentations by organizers of color that highlight the legacy of the liberation movements within the US—Black liberation, Chicano/a Latino/a liberation, indigenous movements, and Asian/Pacific Islander liberation, as well as an overview of white supremacy and power analysis. The workshop concludes with sessions on racial justice organizing and creating one’s own anti-racist agenda.

### Naming and Overcoming Barriers

The workshop’s method is rooted in understanding the real history of the United States. But its main focus is on today. Using the strategy of analyzing with an anti-racist lens, participants look at the social justice movements of which they are a part, the barriers to developing an anti-racist

agenda and how to overcome them.

Working for racial justice and challenging white privilege are two sides of the same coin; participants confront how they are marked by white privilege and how that privilege interacts with class and gender issues for them. This is hard and emotionally difficult work, which is the work of a lifetime, not a semester.

Beginning in 2000, the politics of CWS were implemented in a new form aimed at the growing movement of global justice. Inspired by Elizabeth Martinez’ essay “Where Was the Color in Seattle?,” CWS trainers Sharon Martinas (CWS co-founder) and Chris Crass developed a popular six-week short course. An ongoing discussion group grew out of this course and some members developed a four-hour consciousness-raising workshop that has become the CWS road show, presenting more than two dozen workshops for groups ranging from United Students Against Sweatshops to United for a Fair Economy and the Ruckus Camp.

As CWS has expanded from its original format of one or two 15-week workshops a year, its organizational infrastructure has also transformed. CWS is now coordinated by a collective of trainers, small group organizers and curriculum creators working to build enough institutional stability to allow it to grow.

Besides the formal organization, CWS is helping to build anti-racist community in the San Francisco Bay Area. At this writing, there are two ongoing discussion groups (“discos”) of former participants, frequent dinner get-togethers, even an occasional bowling party. Workshop participants are active in anti-war organizing throughout the Bay Area, ranging from demonstrations and teach-ins on the Berkeley campus to a house party for peace and justice to raise money for underserved communities in New York City.

*Mickey Ellinger works with Challenging White Supremacy, which received a grant from Resist in April. CWS can be reached at 2440 -16th Street Box 275, San Francisco CA 94103; cws@igc.org.*



# The Freedomwalk

## An Annual Exercise in Undoing Racism

ELIZABETH DEDE

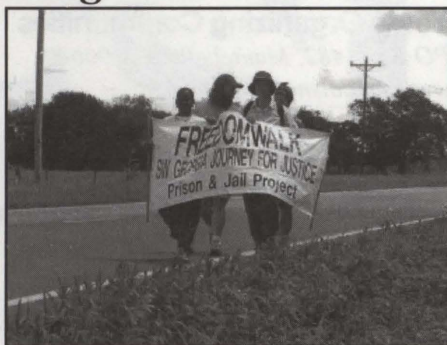
Since 1996, the Prison & Jail Project has led a sojourn through Southwest Georgia. The Freedomwalk is not a trip on a tour bus; it's not a visit to honorable, historic sites. Instead, it is a humble 85-mile journey that calls attention to abuses in the Southwest Georgia criminal justice system. The stops include prisons built to house 1500 "criminal aliens;" courthouses where harsh sentences are passed; small, suffocating jails, which meet no standard of building, health, plumbing, or fire code, and yet imprison human beings—mainly young, African American men as they await their trial and sentencing.

US Department of Justice numbers show that Georgia rates first among all states with 6.8% of its adults in prison, jail, on probation or parole. Three of every four Georgia prisoners are African Americans. In many of the state's 150 county jails, 9 of every 10 prisoners are African American. The Freedomwalk visits many of those jails.

### 1999

We walked through Smithville, Georgia, a town of 800, with 75% of the population being African American, yet the political and economic power is in the hands of white people. We heard stories of police abuse, including an African-American city council representative who was stopped and told by the police that he could not walk on the streets after dark. One young African-American man told of having the door to his house broken down at 3 a.m. by a probation officer who demanded a urine sample for a drug test.

Shortly after some African-American women from Smithville joined the walk, we were confronted by the white police chief who told us that he would arrest us for parading without a permit if we continued. We asked to see the ordinance and determined that it was unconstitutional. One of the women said, "Chief, this is our town and our Freedomwalk, and you'll just have to arrest us." If left on our own, we white people probably would have taken the van through town to avoid the hassle. We were arrested, and in court the charges were



Walkers call attention to prison abuses and racism during the 85-mile trek through Southwest Georgia. Photo courtesy of the Prison and Jail Project

dropped because the judge found that the ordinance was unconstitutional. The women of Smithville, empowered by this experience, have now joined together to establish the Smithville Neighborhood Freedom Center, an organization that provides a safe place for youth to gather, a sounding board for issues such as police harassment, and a center for political organizing.

### 2000

Along the highway towards Richland, we were met by our friend Sarah Jackson, her daughter, and her niece. While we are all now familiar with the phrase, "Driving While Black," Sarah has been harassed, brutalized, and arrested for "Walking While Black." She is an active spokesperson for her rights and the rights of her people, and is targeted as a result. Sarah met us, walked with us, and hosted us for a meal at her church, where we were all able to forget about our tired feet, and moved by her courage.

By the last day of the walk, our group stretched out along the highway, marching with new energy. As we entered the town of Butler, we were met by a daughter and a cousin of Maceo Snipes, and they walked with us to the courthouse. There we honored Maceo Snipes and his family, and remembered a little-known and shameful event in the racist history of Georgia.

Maceo Snipes was a decorated WWII veteran. He returned to his hometown determined to have the rights of freedom that he had fought for in other parts of the world and for other people. In 1946, during the first primary election open to African-American voters, Maceo Snipes dared to

become the first African American to vote. The next day, he was dragged from his mother's porch by four white men and shot to death. The white men were found not guilty by reason of self-defense. Maceo Snipes' family fled in terror, unable even to bury him. The final rally of Freedomwalk at the Taylor County courthouse, and the presentation to his daughter of a plaque honoring Maceo Snipes, brought many of the family back together again for the first time.

### 2001

When the Freedomwalkers heard about the horrific attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the hijackings of four commercial jets, we were just leaving Camilla, Georgia. There, on the courthouse lawn, we heard of the Camilla Massacre which took place on September 19, 1868. That day began as a peaceful Republican Party political rally during Reconstruction. A heavily armed force of white men fired on the crowd. At least 12 African Americans were killed and more than 40 others were wounded as they fled the town.

After the Freedomwalkers received word of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, we talked about whether we should stop the Freedomwalk. For all of us, though, the walk seemed like the only peaceful response we could make. We knew that we were surrounded by people calling for swift retaliation, but we saw the connection between the oppression of jail and prison and the oppression of war.

So we kept on walking. We remembered those who were murdered in Camilla because they called for a change in power. They were freed slaves who wanted to share in the economic resources. They wanted to have representation in the political structures of their time.

We kept on walking for those who are in jail and prison today. We need to stop locking away so many of our people, primarily young African-American men, in jails that are substandard and inhuman.

We kept on walking for those who were killed in the terrorist attacks. We kept on walking for freedom and justice, both here in Georgia, and throughout the world.

*Elizabeth Dede works at the Prison & Jail Project, which received a multi-year grant from Resist. For more information, contact them at PO Box 6749, Americus, GA 31709-6749.*



# GRANTS

RESIST awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in activism for social and economic justice. In this issue of the Newsletter we list a few grant recipients from our October 2001 allocation cycle. For information, contact the groups at the addresses below.

## TARAL Education Fund

PO Box 684602, Austin, TX 78768  
[www.taral.org](http://www.taral.org)

The Texas Abortion Rights Action League (TARAL) Education Fund formed in 1989 to educate Texans and train grassroots organizers on reproductive rights issues. TARAL advocates the right of all women to access sexuality education, short- and long-term contraception, adequate pre- and post-natal care, and legal abortion. They document women's ability to access reproductive services throughout Texas in order to develop strategies for expanding this availability. TARAL developed a handbook on options for preventing pregnancy and making decisions regarding unintended pregnancies.

Resist has awarded TARAL \$1,600 for a Spanish language translation of their handbook on women's options for pregnancy prevention.

## Youth Organizing Communities

PO Box 1482, Montebello, CA 90640  
[www.schoolsnotjails.com](http://www.schoolsnotjails.com)

Youth Organizing Communities is a youth-driven organization fighting for educational justice and an end to California's Prison Industrial Complex. YOC's leadership comes directly out of the communities in which they mobilize. They emphasize a strong connection between educational injustices and California's criminalization of youth. In calling for schools not jails, YOC organizes communities around the demand that "education is a human right."

Resist's \$2,300 grant help fund a youth development and training component in relation to media activism.

## Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine

170 Park Street, Bangor, ME 04401

Since 1988 the Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine has served as a resource and support center for local grassroots peace and justice organizations. As an organization, they work to cross traditional activism categories by building a social change community. They publish

*Peace & Justice News & Views* as a monthly resource through which organizations can broaden their outreach.

Resist funded them \$2,300 for continuing support for their peace, social justice, and environmental programs.

## Committee Opposed to Militarization and the Draft

PO Box 15195, San Diego, CA 92175  
[www.comdsd.org](http://www.comdsd.org)

A Resist grantee since 1989, COMD works on both a local and national scale to oppose the military institution, as well as its social and economic impact nationally and abroad. Since 1984 COMD has worked in a coalition to educate youths in local high schools about the draft, alternatives to the military, and opportunities for anti-military activism. They currently monitor military legislation and disseminate this information through their newsletter *Draft Notices*.

Their latest \$2,300 from Resist will go towards office equipment and printing costs for their newsletter.

## Civic Media Center and Library, Inc.

1020 West University Avenue, Gainesville, FL 32601

[www.civicmediacenter.org](http://www.civicmediacenter.org)

The Civic Media Center was formed in 1993 as a public archive and clearinghouse for independent non-corporate print and recorded material. It has since grown to become a local center for progressive community education and organizing. The library and archives focus on materials that challenge dominant ideologies, political and social norms. In addition to their print resources, the center serves as a community organizing space for the larger community and as an umbrella organization for local small activist and artistic projects.

Resist's grant of \$2,300 will provide six months salary for a new outreach/fundraising coordinator to focus on long-range organizing projects, including a low-frequency radio station.

## Join the Resist Pledge Program

We'd like you to consider becoming a Resist Pledge.

Pledges account for over 30% of our income.

By becoming a pledge, you help guarantee Resist a fixed and dependable source of income on which we can build our grant-making program. In return, we will send you a monthly pledge letter and reminder along with your newsletter. We will keep you up-to-date on the groups we have funded and the other work being done at Resist.

So take the plunge and become a Resist Pledge! We count on you, and the groups we fund count on us.

Yes! I'll become a RESIST Pledge.

I'll send you my pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ every month/quarter/six months/year (circle one).

Enclosed is an initial pledge contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

I can't join the pledge program now, but here's a contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to support your work.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Donations to Resist are tax-deductible.

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