

Tools for White Guys who are Working for Social Change and other people socialized in a society based on domination

Chris Crass

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1. Practice noticing who's in the room at meetings – how many gender privileged men (biological men), how many women, how many transgendered people, how many white people, how many people of color, is it majority heterosexual, are there out queers, what are people's class backgrounds. Don't assume to know people, but also work at being more aware – listening to what people say and talking with people one on one who you work with.

2a. Count how many times you speak and keep track of how long you speak.

2b. Count how many times other people speak and keep track of how long they speak.

3. Be conscious of how often you are actively listening to what other people are saying as opposed to just waiting your turn thinking about what you'll say next. Keep a notebook so that you can write down your thoughts and then focus on what other people are saying. As a white guy who talks a lot, I've found it helpful to writing down my thoughts and wait to hear what others have to say (frequently others will be thinking something similar and then you can support their initiative).

4. Practice going to meetings or hanging out with people focused on listening and learning – not to get caught in the paralysis of whether or not you have anything useful to say, but acting from a place of valuing other people's knowledge and experiences.

5a. Pay attention to how many times you put ideas out to the group you work with.

5b. Notice how often you support other people's ideas for the group.

6. Practice supporting people by asking them to expand on ideas and get more in-depth.

7a. Think about whose work and what contributions to the group get recognized.

7b. Practice recognizing more people for the work they do and try to do it more often. This also includes men offering support to other men who aren't recognized and actively challenging competitive dynamics that men are socialized to act out with each other.

8. Practice asking more people what they think about events, ideas, actions, strategy and vision. White guys tend to talk amongst themselves and develop strong bonds that manifest in organizing. These informal support structures often help reinforce informal leadership structures as well. Asking people what they think and really listening is a core ingredient to healthy group dynamics,

think about who you ask and who you really listen to. Developing respect and solidarity across race, class, gender and sexuality is complex and difficult, but absolutely critical – and liberating. Those most negatively impacted by systems of oppression have and will play leading roles in the struggle for collective liberation.

9. Be aware of how often you ask people to do something as opposed to asking other people “what needs to be done”: logistics, child care, making phone calls, cooking, providing emotional support and following up with people are often undervalued responsibilities performed by people who are gender oppressed (biological women and trans folks).

10. Struggle with the saying, “you will be needed in the movement when you realize that you are not needed in the movement”.

11. Struggle with and work with the model of group leadership that says that the responsibility of leaders is to help develop more leaders, and think about what this means to you: how do you support others and what support do you need from others.

This includes men providing emotional and political support to other men. How can men work to be allies to each other in the struggle to develop radical models of anti-racist, class conscious, pro-queer, feminist manhood that challenges strict binary gender roles and categories. This is also about struggling to recognize leadership roles while also redefining leadership as actively working to build power with others rather than power over others.

12. Remember that social change is a process, and that our individual transformation and individual liberation is intimately interconnected with social transformation and social liberation. Life is profoundly complex and there are many contradictions. Remember that the path we travel is guided by love, dignity and respect – even when it brings us to tears and is difficult to navigate. As we struggle let us also love ourselves.

13. This list is not limited to white guys, nor is it intended to reduce all white guys into one category. This list is intended to disrupt patterns of domination which hurt our movement and hurt each other. White guys have a lot of work to do, but if we white guys support and challenge each other, while also building trust and compassion we can heal ourselves in the process.

14. Day-to-day patterns of domination are the glue that maintain systems of domination. The struggle against capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism and the state, is also the struggle towards collective liberation.

15. No one is free until we are all free.

Thanks and love to my comrades in the Bay Area gender privileged men’s group of the Ruckus Society and the men’s group (biological and transgendered men) of the Challenging White Supremacy Collective.

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