

AWARE-LA

Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere - Los Angeles

~ www.awarela.org ~

Why a Theory of Social Change

AWARE-LA believes that working to dismantle white supremacy and achieve racial justice on a broad scale will require work at multiple levels, including our own personal transformation as individuals, learning new skills to engage others interpersonally, creating organizational infrastructure to build anti-racist power, and shifting culture. To this extent, AWARE-LA has developed a Theory of Social Change that addresses these various expressions of white anti-racist efforts, providing “DNA” for our organization so that different wings of our work – Saturday Dialogue, White People 4 Black Lives, Unmasking Whiteness – can operate in semi-autonomous ways towards the same essential goals. This is long-term work that requires white anti-racists to both follow the lead and vision of people of color led organizations as well as take leadership in engaging and moving the white community.

In actively engaging white people around racism, we believe it is important to have an analysis of the larger, systemic issues we are trying to challenge. Much of the actual exchange and process in our Saturday Dialogues happens at the personal and interpersonal levels - taking in and integrating new information, sharing and processing complex feelings, learning and practicing new strategies and skills for talking to other people. This tends to give individual participants what they are most acutely looking for when they come to the Dialogue, and ideally it helps them both continue to engage people and issues in their spheres of influence and stay connected to AWARE-LA. Organizationally, however, we have a responsibility to act beyond the interpersonal dynamics of racism and strategize ways of challenging white supremacy at the institutional and cultural levels.

Our Theory of Social Change aims to name those strategies and articulate the particular outcomes we hope to achieve. This document, however, is not intended to draw an exclusive organizational “political line.” In other words, we maintain an open tent as far as the political affiliations and ideologies that people walk in with. As long as an individual is committed to openly exploring their white identity, is committed to working for racial justice with an intersectional lens and practice, and will follow our guidelines for communication, they are welcome at our Dialogues. They may be an anarchist or a capitalist, a liberal or conservative, a revolutionary activist or reform-minded advocate - if they reject racism and are genuinely willing to self-reflect about their own participation in it, we want them engaging in the conversation with us.

Lastly, a Theory of Social Change shouldn't discourage those who don't immediately understand it. It is not a diagnostic exam. Rather, it is a leadership development tool. As someone becomes increasingly invested in the organization and seems open to taking on responsibility or stewardship of its work, the Theory of Social Change can help them become clear about the ship they are helping to steer. When it comes to coordination and bottom-lining, the most important consideration is making sure that leaders know what is expected of them on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Other documentation will clarify roles, responsibilities, and duties. A Theory of Social Change, however, can help leaders and members keep an eye on the broader goals and vision of the organization.

See below for AWARE-LA's Theory of Social Change.

GOALS

Create a just, sustainable, and multicultural world by participating in a broad-based nation-wide multiracial movement for transformative social justice (encompassing the intersecting concerns and demands of racial, economic, environmental, feminist, religious and trans-centered movements). We take responsibility for creatively and assertively challenging white supremacy through the following strategies:

STRATEGIES

Consciousness-Raising

We strive to educate white people about the realities of racism and release people of color from this burden.

Personal Transformation

We strive to support white people in making a long-term commitment to working for racial justice.

Community/Culture

We strive to provide a compelling and viable path of anti-racist culture and community that offers an alternative to reactionary responses to shifting demographics, economic crises, and national security fears.

Organizing

We strive to build an infrastructure that can connect people eager to participate in change-making and build anti-racist power.

OUTCOMES

White people develop a systemic and historical understanding of racism and white supremacy.

White people recognize internalized racism and dominant white culture.

White people have access to community that is rooted in anti-racist values.

We actively participate in local struggles for social justice.

White people come to understand how privilege operates in our daily lives and recognize the impact on people of color.

White people develop a healthy and positive sense of anti-racist identity.

White people develop the potential to form mutually accountable alliances with people of color.

We build an active base of white anti-racists to be mobilized for larger movements for justice.

White people develop tools and skills to interrupt racism and shift racist dynamics in familial, social, professional, and activist spaces.

White people increase personal capacity to take effective action and show up for racial justice in a variety of ways.

White people develop values that can be conveyed and transmitted to other white people.

We drive a wedge into white complacency and neutrality and compel white people to choose racial justice.

White people establish a practice of calling in other white people to racial justice.

We shift resources and investment from hierarchy, domination, supremacy and oppression to community, self-determination, equity, and freedom.

We leverage privilege in strategic ways that agitates the power structure and increases people power.

We provide a leadership structure and development process that creates a sustained pool of volunteers.

We increase capacity for national movement building among white anti-racist grassroots groups by providing resources, models, and leadership.