

Oppression

from the School of the Americas Handbook for Nonviolent Action and Civil Disobedience
<http://members.tripod.com/SOAWatchLocal/LocalPages/handbook.htm#6>

To fight for peace and social justice is not only to struggle against the brutality of our foreign and domestic policies, but also to challenge the insidious institution of oppression in our daily lives.

In our various struggles against bombs, U.S. intervention, for housing, sexual freedom, etc. it is important to struggle against other forms of violence that confront us. Specifically, other violence comes in two forms that affect our lives:

1. daily physical and/or psychic violence against all people, such as rape or murder, and specifically against oppressed people;
2. psychic and attitudinal violence within our movement reflected in ways we treat each other and ourselves.

These two forms of violence are strongly interconnected with governmental policies from the making of bombs to lack of health care. It is the same system that is responsible: a system based on domination, on the belief that some people have more value than others. The same system that creates a bomb designed to destroy humans and retain property intact also deprives elderly people and disabled people of life resources and encourages individuals to compete with each other and treat each other disrespectfully.

Because we believe it is the system and all of its forms of violence that we are fighting, we must make a commitment to fight the violence that occurs around us and between us. The Oppression Section of the handbook specifically addresses these concerns, both within a societal context and within the context of interpersonal relationships.

Confronting the violence between us can be painful. Speaking of oppression or using the words such as sexism or racism can often result in people feeling guilty, or hurt or reacting defensively. Most of us benefit from some form of privilege; many of us suffer from discrimination from one or more sources. Because oppression distorts the power dynamics between us and, as a result, divides us, it is harmful to everyone. None of us alone has the power to end the institutions of discrimination. It is both the individual and collective challenge to these forms of discrimination that will lead to the social and political changes that will benefit us all.

- thanks to the International Day of Nuclear Disarmament Handbook

-"Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." Martin Luther King, Jr.

Racism

Racism, the systematic mistreatment experienced by people of color, is a result of institutionalized inequalities in the social structure. Racism is one consequence of a self-perpetuating imbalance in economic, political and social power. This imbalance consistently favors members of some ethnic and cultural groups at the expense of other groups. The consequences of this imbalance pervade all aspects of the social system and affect all facets of people's lives.

Racism operates as a strategy to divide and conquer. It helps perpetuate a social system in which some people consistently are "haves" and others are "have nots." While the "haves" receive certain material benefits from this situation, the long-range effects of racism short change everyone. Racism sets groups of people against each other and makes it difficult for us to perceive our common interests as human beings. Racism makes us forget that we all need and are entitled to good health care, stimulating education, and challenging work. Racism limits our horizons to what presently exists; it makes us suppose that current injustices are "natural" or at best inevitable. "Someone has to be unemployed; someone has to go hungry."

Most importantly, racism distorts our perceptions of the possibilities for change; it makes us abandon our visions of solidarity; it robs us of our dreams of community.

No human being is born with racist attitudes and beliefs. Physical and cultural differences between human beings are not the cause of racism; these are used to justify racism. Racist attitudes and beliefs are a mixture of misinformation and ignorance which has to be imposed upon young people through a painful process of social conditioning. "You have to be taught to hate and fear" Having racist attitudes and beliefs is like having a clamp on one's mind. It distorts one's perception of reality. Two examples: the notion that there is something called "flesh color;" the use of the term "minorities" to describe the majority of the world's people.

Racism continues in large part because an economic system which perpetuates and capitalizes on differences (whether of color, culture, creed, or sex) remains in place. That system, and those who profit from it determine the parameters and values of the educational system which continues to teach our children to "hate and fear;" of the media, which perpetuates racism in a deliberate fashion, and which denies people access to their history. "A people that does not know its history is doomed to repeat it."

There are times we have failed to act, and times when we did not achieve as much as we wanted to in the struggle against racism. Unlearning racism also involves understanding the difficulties we have had and learning how to overcome them, without blaming ourselves for having had those difficulties. The situation is not hopeless. People can grow and change; we are not condemned to repeat the past. Racist conditioning need not be a permanent state of affairs. It can be examined, analyzed and unlearned.

All people come from traditions which have a history of resistance to injustice, and every person has their own individual history of resistance to racist conditioning. This history needs to be recalled and celebrated. When people act from a sense of informed pride in themselves and their own traditions, they will be more effective in all struggles for justice.

Adapted from a piece by Ricky Sherover-Marcuse, Unlearning Racism Workshops, 638 Dana St. Oakland, CA 94609

Dealing with Racism in the Movement

It should be clear that the following points are directed at the white members of the movement. This is because we feel it essential that we remember that it is in white communities - which more often have the resources and access to vehicles for change in our society than those of color - that racism continues to run rampant. As white activists we must develop programs that consistently challenge the racism in our communities, understanding that it is there, at home, that there is the most work to be done.

- Understand that many peace, social justice and anti-nuclear issues affect Third World communities in special ways.

Learn and act upon issues of special concern to Third World communities.

Integrate the concerns of these communities in your approach to progressive issues.

Develop working relationships with all groups involved with social change, including people of color.

- Don't force your agenda on other organizations.

- In planning for events, form coalitions early, which include as many groups as possible, including everyone in the decision-making.

Dealing with Racism and Classism During an Action, Arrest and jail

- Be aware of how police are dealing with Third World, gay, lesbian, and known movement people during arrest situations. Be prepared to come to the aid of anyone who has been singled out by the police and may be receiving harsher treatment than others.
- Realize that during the booking process questions that are being asked to determine whether or not people can be released on their own recognizance, are particularly discriminatory. The questions concentrate on your economic, social, sexual and prior arrest standing.
- Realize that bail is the most blatant example of classism. Those who have money get out of jail - those who don't stay in.

Racism Guidelines

Some guidelines for white people in dealing with racism:

1. If you're in a situation that a Person of Color is identifying as racist, and it doesn't appear that way to you, assess the situation again. Like many other forms of discrimination, racism occurs on a variety of subtle levels not always apparent to someone not directly experiencing the discrimination.
2. If you want to work against racism, you must put yourself in a place where it's happening. Real change of racist attitudes and beliefs does not happen in a vacuum.
3. When relating to a Person of Color, don't focus on or be obsessed with racial differences. One goal of ending discrimination is for all persons to be seen as individuals. On the other hand, pretending that color does not exist obscures one very important aspect of that individual's experience.
4. Identify for yourself ways that racism hurts you and examine ways that you have internalized misinformation about your ethnicity and cultural heritage.

- Thanks to *International Day for Nuclear Disarmament Handbook*

For the white person who wants to know how to be my friend.

by Pat Parker

The first thing you do is to forget that i'm Black.
Second, you must never forget that i'm Black.

You should be able to dig Aretha, but don't play her every time i come over.
And if you decide to play Beethoven - don't tell me his life story. They made us take music appreciation too.

Eat soul food if you like it, but don't expect me to locate your restaurants or cook it for you.

And if some Black person insults you, mugs you, rapes your sister rapes you, rips your house or is just being an ass - please do not apologize to me for wanting to do them bodily harm. It makes me wonder if you're foolish.

And even if you really believe Blacks are better lovers than whites don't tell me. i start thinking of charging stud fees.

In other words - if you really want to be my friend don't make a labor of it. i'm lazy. Remember.

- from **Movement in Black**, *Crossing Press, Freedom, CA, 1984*

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism can best be understood through a historical analysis. Persecution of Jewish people has a long history dating back about 3,000 years. Understanding how this oppression has persisted in different forms and seeing the cyclical pattern of anti-Semitism can help us recognize its continued existence and methods of functioning in today's world.

The oppression of Jews is characterized by alternating periods of apparent tolerance and assimilation, followed by periods of violent anti Jewish attacks. During the calm periods, Jews are allowed to assimilate into society and often into a visible "middle" position where they function as agents and buffers to the real power elite. Underneath this surface of relative security exist many anti Jewish attitudes and stereotypes and it often takes only a small stimulus to evoke them. When there is economic and political crises, Jews are targeted as the problem and used as a scapegoat for socioeconomic problems. The ruling class, aided by these pre-existing anti-Jewish beliefs, encourages other oppressed groups to direct their anger against the Jews rather than their real oppressors.

One way anti-Semitism is maintained is through stereotypes assigning certain specific characteristics to Jews as a group. Jews are believed to be aggressive, stingy, clannish, or pushy while Gentiles may take

initiative, be thrifty, loyal, or assertive. On a personal level some people who would immediately interrupt racist jokes think telling JAP Jewish American Princess) jokes is harmless fun.

In general, Jews know more about Christians than Christians know about Jews. In fact Christian religious holidays are national holidays, while Jewish and other religious holidays often go unacknowledged. Wishing everyone "Happy Holidays" in late December is an unintentional form of anti-Semitism. The major Jewish holidays, Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur are in the fall and Passover is in the spring. Chanukah, which is the Jewish holiday closest to Christmas, is a much more minor holiday. Significant meetings and demonstrations are regularly scheduled on important Jewish holidays while no one would think of doing the same on Christmas or Easter.

Anti-Semitism is deeply embedded in our culture as well through language, standards of beauty, communication norms, and time itself. For example, in interpersonal communication the polite, restrained, middle-class, WASP pattern is viewed as normal, as right. The communication norm for other groups, whether working class, Black, Italian, Puerto Rican or Jewish is "other" and put down. Jewish syntax, "accents," and delicious Yiddish expressions disappear just as surely as does Black English in the attempt to fit in, to "make it," and to survive.

It is difficult for any dominant group to cope with the desire of "oppressed groups" to be both equal and distinctive. This is true for Gentiles who get angry because Jews want to maintain their uniqueness without being penalized for it. Jews pursuing assimilation and invisibility as coping strategies become fearful and discounting, as well, when other Jews act "too Jewish."

One of the subtle ways Jewish oppression is manifested in the movement is through denial. People have a hard time relating to Jews as an oppressed group; rather Jews are often regarded as having all the power and money, and often being on the "oppressor's side" in any struggle. The oppression of Jews is not currently economic oppression, (although there are far more poor and working-class Jews than most people acknowledge) it is cultural, religious, and political. The issue of anti-Semitism is consistently left off the laundry list of oppressions (on leaflets, workshop offerings, and speakers). When people speak of doing outreach to different groups it's often labor, women, student, third world, and church groups, rather than religious groups.

For many, anti-Semitism has become synonymous with the Holocaust. Since the situation is clearly not that bad now, Jewish oppression is viewed as a thing of the past. Jews who raise concerns about the rise of oppression against Jews or about anti-Semitism within the movement are often perceived as raising side issues, diverting attention away from more important problems, over-reacting, bringing on the oppression by making such a big deal, or simply being paranoid. Such defensive and victim blaming reactions become part of the problem as well.

While the people of Nicaragua easily differentiate between the murderous, imperialistic policies of the US government and the people of the I State, most US Progressives can not manage to make the same distinction for the state of Israel. It is possible to be critical of Israeli national policy while supporting Israel's right to exist. It is possible to grant Jewish people, historically and currently oppressed, the right to a homeland, as we support oppressed peoples the worldover in their struggle for national liberation. It is possible to support the liberation of the Palestinian people while supporting Israel's right to exist. It is possible to see that Israel's role in the geopolitical situation is similar to "buffer" role Jews traditionally have been manipulated into: Israel does United States' "dirty work," (while receiving some privilege becomes the target of the just anger of other oppressed people, rather than the U.S., which is the real ruling power.

On the right, overt anti-Semitic violence, like violence against other oppressed groups (e.g. bombings, vandalism, and swastika-painting) on the rise. Books are distributed claiming that the Holocaust, though only 40 years ago, never happened. Nazi and White Power groups build arsenals and establish training bases in the hills. Jews are targeted the very same people that target every other oppressed group today, including people of color, lesbians & gay women, working-class and poor people, disabled people, and old people.

All of us (whether Gentile or Jew) learned anti-Semitism. It is now a responsibility to rid ourselves of the attitudes and change institution practices and cultural patterns that intentionally or unintentionally maintain

anti-Semitism. We can start with ourselves, our friends and family! the groups we work with, and the institutions to which we relate.

*.The term Anti-Semitism was developed to refer to oppression of Jews; however, it is important to remember that Arabs are also Semitic people who are oppressed
by Felice Yeskel*

Sexism

The split which in our society divides women and men is one of the most basic ways in which human beings are devalued. Similar to how gay people, people of color, and Jews are viewed, women become the other in a society that establishes maleness as a primary reference point. As a result, women are relegated to limited roles and valued primarily for their sexual and reproductive functions, while men are seen as the central makers of culture, the primary actors in history. Such demeaning of women is reflected in language, the images in American textbooks, and on TV. Economically, women are clustered in the lowest paying, lowest status jobs. Women of color bear the burden of double discrimination. For every dollar earned by men, women only make 62 cents, a fact that remains true despite years of publicity and struggle.

Further, women live in constant fear of rape or battering, and with good reason: a woman in the U.S. is battered once every eighteen seconds (FBI). As a result of such pervasive violence against women, many women stay penned in their homes at night. In fact, the attitude that women are the property of and under the control of men is apparent in magazines and movies which portray women as objects to be violated, and in the common war custom that allows the victors to rape the women of the people they've conquered.

Women have been challenging blatant and subtle sexism and the presumption of patriarchal ("rule of the fathers") power for a long time. Feminism, the philosophy and political force that has given expression to women's voices against sexism and for a vision of a cooperative, human-valuing society, started early in the 19th century with demands and principles that matched the conditions of that time: education and voting rights for women. The current second wave has also emerged out of the historical conditions of its time: women active in social change movements of the 60s began questioning why we were always fighting other people's issues and never even identifying our own.

As a result, the feminist movement grew up in the late 60s, giving support and validation to women to achieve power over our lives, challenging sex role stereotypes and limitations, addressing economic disparities and violence towards women in its many forms, and providing a basic understanding that personal issues are rooted in political realities.

In the peace movement, feminism's contribution is immeasurable. Because patriarchy supports and thrives on war, a feminist analysis is crucial to effectively challenge militarism. The view of women as the other parallels the view of our enemies as non-human available targets for any means of destruction or cruelty. In fact, U.S. foreign policy often seems like the playing out of rigid sex roles by men trying to achieve and maintain power through male toughness. How can a cooperative, humane public policy be developed by people who have been socialized to repress emotions, to not cry, to ignore their own needs to nurture children and others?

Although the major changes in women's lives are a result of the work that women have done for ourselves, coalitioning with men to fight sexism is an important ingredient of massive and enduring change. Some men have joined women in this struggle, and from this has emerged a small men's profeminist movement that challenges the social order which depends on sexism to control both men and women. Such a movement is helping men become conscious of their own pains and needs, recognize how they dominate others, and give support to each other. As with women struggling to overcome limitations that are conditioned, men can overcome the barriers which prevent them from being full human beings as well.

-expanded from an article by Starhawk. Thanks to International Days for Nuclear Disarmament Handbook

Confronting Classism

We live in the wealthiest country in the world, but the greatest percentage of that wealth is in the hands of a tiny percentage of the population. It is environmentally and technically possible for everyone to enjoy a good standard of living if wealth were redistributed, exploitation ceased and the arms race abandoned. The inequitable distribution of wealth prevents the whole society from enjoying the full benefits of people's

labor, intelligence and creativity and causes great misery for working class and poor people.

Classism is the systematic oppression of poor people and people who work for wages by those who have access to control of the necessary resources by which other people make their living. Classism is also held in place by a system of beliefs which ranks people according to economic status, "breeding," job and level of education. Classism says that upper class people are smarter and more articulate than working class and poor people. It is a way of keeping people down, it means uppermiddle class and wealthy people define for everyone else what "normal" or "acceptable" is. Many of us have come to accept this standard as the norm and many of us have bought the myth that most of the country is middle class.

Criteria for determining class identity is subject to debate, being variously defined by origins, workforce status, income and/or outlook. For example, some consider all who derive their income from wages members of the working class; others exclude that percentage of the workforce which constitutes the professionals and managers whose incomes are high enough to provide a stake in the capitalist system.

Depending on the breadth of one's definition, 70-85% of the population can be considered working class. This is true despite the fact that the individuals themselves might identify as or with the middle class. These individuals, however, are not beneficiaries of middle class privileges.

Class affects people not only on an economic level, but also on an emotional level. Classist attitudes have caused great pain by dividing people from one another and keeping individuals from personal fulfillment or the means to survive. Consequently, the process of rejecting such attitudes and their accompanying misinformation is an emotional one. Since people tend to hurt each other because they themselves have been hurt, and since most forms of oppression are accompanied by economic discrimination, class overlaps with many other social issues, all of which move as we unravel how we've been hurt.

The stereotype is that poor and working class people are unintelligent, inarticulate and "overly emotional." A good ally (a nonworkingclass committed supporter) will contradict these messages by soliciting the knowledge and histories of poor working class people, being a thoughtful listener, trying to understand what is being said, and not criticizing how the message is being presented or responding with automatic defensiveness. Distrust, despair and anger are common consequences of oppression; it is the test of a true ally to remain undeterred. When these flare up and to refrain from withdrawing support at such points. When targets of oppression believe the lies about ourselves, we are "internalizing our oppression." To begin to undo the damage caused by classism, it is useful for everyone to examine our own feelings about money, education, privilege, power, relationships, culture and ethnicity. This advice applies to organizations as well.

For general discussion:

As a movement, who are we and who are we trying to reach in terms of class? How? To whom do our literature and events appeal? How are poor people's needs being met in our organizing? What steps are being taken to change people's attitudes about classism? Are poor and Third World people invited to participate in organization planning? What is being done to reach and involve organized and unorganized workers? What are we doing to support poor, workingclass and people of color in their struggles?

The situation for poor and workingclass people in our movement and organization:

Is classism evident in who does what work in the organization? Are poor and workingclass people facilitators, spokespeople and/or media contacts and leaders, and not just relegated to cleanup crews and collating mailings? Are organizing expenses paid upfront, or promptly reimbursed?

Meetings and events:

Make meetings and events known and accessible to poor and working-class people. Be aware of how the length, time and frequency of meetings affects full-time workers, especially those who parent. Arrange for transportation.

Routinely provide childcare and sliding scales. Ask people what they need to be able to attend meetings and events. How does income-level and class composition affect the development of resources, the dates of demonstrations, the levels of commitment and power working people can have, the events sponsored? What are the cultural offerings? Who are the speakers and entertainers?

Process:

- * Make sure that process isn't actually being used to tell poor and working-class people how to behave by "proper" etiquette.
- * Is consensus being used so that decisions favor those who can stay the longest, or who are used to getting their own way and will block to do so?
- * Watch that group hugs and rituals are not imposed - allow people to interact with each other in whatever ways feel comfortable to them.

Civil disobedience (CD):

Does class determine who is able and who is unable to commit civil disobedience? How can we make it economically possible for those who want to commit CD to do so? How do we keep CD from being a movement privilege, with activists who can afford to tally arrest counts granted subsequently more political prestige? How do those who are arrested relate to the regular prison population, (taking into account how class figures in their treatment).

Be aware of how police are dealing with people of color, gay, lesbian, and known movement people during arrest situations. Be prepared to come to the aid of anyone who has been singled out by the police and may be receiving harsher treatment than others.

Realize that during the booking process questions that are being asked to determine whether or not people can be released on their own recognizance, are particularly discriminatory. These questions concentrate on your economic, social, sexual and prior arrest standing.

Realize that bail is the most blatant example of classism. Those who have money get out of jail-those who don't stay in.

- from articles by Donna Warnock and Laura Briggs

Agism *

Agism is action based on the belief that one age group is inferior to another. The action becomes oppressive when it is backed with power and resources (e.g. money and media). Agist beliefs are legitimized by theories (often "scientific") and myths, and serve to keep target ages out of competition for jobs and other resources.

We all experience agism in this age-segregated society. We learn to believe that people who are very young and very old are physically and mentally inferior to those who are in the "prime" of life and that young adults have the greatest strength, particularly men. This belief, a pay-off for exploitation of their labor and their bodies, also reflects our throw-away mentality, which puts top value on the new (young) adult, and the useful (able to find employment). Young women are defined at the height of their "beauty" as sex objects.

Agism is so powerful for girls that many believe they will never grow up or grow old.

Agism intensifies all of the other 'isms." During the long period of childhood (itself a relatively modern phenomenon), we keep our young dependent, helpless, and almost totally devoid of rights while we socialize (brainwash) them into rigid patterns of behavior according to class, sex and race. In school, which they must attend, they are tracked into career lines at an early age with little account of individuals' speed of learning or lack of opportunities. This oppression of the young denies them access to their own dreams, visions, creativity, spirituality: their own reality.

For women, agism intensifies all of the atrocities of sexism, racism and class oppression. Old women (as defined by census, 62 and older) are the poorest sector of the population, with ever-diminishing expectations. Yet every year the population of poor old women increases.

Older women are expected to provide a background for the activities of younger women and men, but rarely play lead roles. They are often discounted, and are virtually invisible, leading to the painful, common and incorrect assumption that older women are not doing anything, or have not been active at anything effective. Yet a great deal of the work of the anti-war movement has been carried by older women. If not totally invisible, older women are depicted as destructive witches (another distortion of peoples' history), or they are patronized.

A lot of agism stems from the resentment that younger people feel toward the entrenched power of older people. Agism provides a way to avoid principled struggle over valid questions of class, power and leadership.

Every generation wants to believe that they hold the key to the "revolution," yet the ignorance of history and our inability to talk to each other across generations means that each generation starts out repeating the same mistakes. The expectations that older men will be powerful and older women nurturing makes it difficult for some older people to share and to learn. Agism keeps us divided, ignorant and ineffective

. *This particular spelling is preferred by author.

- from two articles by Marjory Nelson Thanks to International Day of Nuclear Disarmament Handbook

Homophobia

Homophobia: fear of homosexuality

Historically, lesbians and gay men have been forced to live separately out of fear of psychological or physical attack or reprisals. This invisibility hurts us all: it perpetuates stereotypes about gays; it divides us; and it serves to minimize the accomplishments and contributions of gay people. The fear of being considered gay limits and distorts everyone's life choices and relationships. Men are often afraid to get close to their male friends because it might imply gayness - and might even reveal a half-suspected gay dimension of themselves. An essential prop for sexism, in keeping people within their accustomed sex roles, is this fear of homosexuality, or homophobia. Because of this, women's liberation and men's liberation depends partly on gay liberation.

In movements which encompass people from a wide variety of political and religious backgrounds, prejudices that lead to negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men remain unchallenged as long as we remain invisible.

These unexamined prejudices result from historical condemnation of homosexuality. Gays have been attacked on all fronts: by psychiatry (which only ten years ago ceased identifying homosexuality as a mental illness); organized religion (which identified gayness as a "sin and abomination"); the Right (the Moral Majority has targeted gays); and the Left (which viewed gayness in Marxist terms as evidence of capitalist decadence). The list is extensive and horrifying, yet repression towards gays is often trivialized and our concerns dismissed as inconsequential.

The stereotype of lesbians as manhaters originated from men feeling threatened by women choosing women as lovers over men, feelings that reflect a cornerstone tenet of a sexist society: Women are the property of men and under their control. In recent years, the advent of the lesbian rights movement has allowed for the emergence of a lesbian separatist philosophy, held by a small part of the lesbian Population.

For many lesbian separatists, the basic premise of this philosophy is the building of a culture, institutions, and relationships with women independent of men, rather than in opposition to men. This philosophy is based on the desire to not have to expend energy constantly dealing with sexism and general societal hatred of women. This concept of separateness is not unique to lesbians and has, in fact, had parallel voices in almost every major liberation movement. Misunderstanding of this philosophy, however, has resulted in the broadening of the manhating stereotype so that, frequently, it is used to discount women's criticism of sexism or the desire of women to meet separately from men. It is crucial that this stereotype be confronted and not used as a cover for dismissing strong women.

Another common stereotype surrounds the relationship of lesbians and gay men to children. This stereotype covers a wide range of ideas, from right-wing moralistic fears that gays are child molesters and recruiters, to a common heterosexual assumption that gays can't have children or don't care for children. Some states have adopted policies preventing lesbians and gay men from being foster parents. Many thousands of lesbians and gay men have made the decision to have children or became parents during previous heterosexual relationships. Many more have ongoing personal relationships with children or have jobs involving children such as teaching, health care, or child care. The treatment of lesbians and gay men by the police and jail authorities' is another concern. Gay people are often verbally or physically abused by police and as a result feel especially vulnerable to police and jail.

In jail, those who are affectionate(or who participate in homosexual acts are frequently maligned b) other prisoners or cited for excessive physical contact", which may result in harassment and forced isolation.

Punishment and the threat of punishment for homosexual behaviour is a major tool used to separate prisoners from each other. B) preying on existing anti-gay sentiment, the prison authorities can succeed in creating a climate of fear, and provoking verbal and physical harassment, thereby squelching prisoner organizing. In actions involving civil disobedience, visible lesbians and gay men are often subject to specific violence by police. It is important that all CDers join together to guarantee safety during arrest and/or placement in the general jail population. Our unity can prevent the prison authorities from using homophobia as a "divide and conquer" tool.

- by *Non-Nuclear Family Thanks to International Day of Nuclear Disarmament Hand book*

Disability Awareness

People with disabilities breathe, eat, learn, teach, work, loaf, get parking tickets and go on vacation. And yes, people with disabilities make love, raise families, come out, organize, get arrested for civil disobedience, laugh, cry, pay taxes, and resist taxes. There is perhaps one important difference between people with disabilities and people who are temporarily able-bodied. If the environment were designed by and for people with disabilities, the disabilities would be comparatively less important. Underlying the barriers in architecture and communication are powerfully restrictive attitudes that permeate our society.

Steve Hoffmann participated in the June 21, 1982, blockade of Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in Livermore, California. He is an individual who uses a wheelchair due to a severe disability. As a disabled individual in a situation involving mostly able-bodied people, he has the following unique impressions to offer of his experience:

How did you decide to participate in civil disobedience?

Civil disobedience has always been one of my attachments to reality. If I didn't have that it would be a lot more difficult for me to function as an individual with a sense of humor. In New York City, by law, in order to ride the subway:

1. I needed a special permit.
2. I needed an able-bodied escort.
3. I wasn't allowed to ever change cars on the train. That law, obviously, conflicted not only with my morality, my mobility, and my right as a taxpayer, it was also not a just law. And the reality of riding the subway, worrying about being stopped at any moment by a transit cop kind of taught me to distinguish between right and wrong and the law, which are two different things.

"I could almost believe that there isn't anyone too severely disabled that s/he couldn't participate in jail solidarity. And that's good. Because when the authorities deal with people with severe disabilities, it taxes the whole system more. But making that right to civil disobedience a reality is another matter. Because, for the disabled individual, it means risking control over your daily routine and not knowing if your needs will be cared for. I think able-bodied people need to be more conscious of what those needs are - to be more readily available to help but without being solicitous and overprotective. And I think that kind of consciousness comes with having ongoing relationships with disabled individuals.'

Accessibility

Meetings

1. To include individuals with physical disabilities, hold meetings in ramped buildings (sloping 12 to 14 feet for every 1 foot rise), with entrances and bathroom stalls at least 32" wide. There should be grab bars on the sides and/or in back of the toilet.
2. Set up the room with wide aisles and leave spaces for wheelchairs among the other chairs. Make sure there are sturdy wide chairs for large people.
3. For visually disabled people, make available any written or visual materials on tape (or in Braille) or minimally, be prepared to have any written materials read aloud. This accommodation will also be useful for people who can't read or have difficulty reading.
4. Arrange for a sign language interpreter to be present.

5. Plan and facilitate meetings with an effort to avoid draining people's bodies and spirits by providing food, adhering to time limits, and taking breaks.

Marches

1. When planning the march route, bear in mind accessible transportation. If accessible public transportation is not available, make arrangements (including financial compensation) with agencies or individual owners of vans with lifts. This accessible vehicle can be used as a shuttle from march start to demonstration site.
2. For those who do not wish or are not able to walk the whole route, places along the route should be designated where they can join.
3. Plan routes that are flat or gently sloped and solid (not muddy, rocky).
- 4 ' Research accessible public restrooms along the route and point them out on a map.

Demonstrations

1. Make sure the stage is accessible by renting a set of portable ramps (to ramp a few steps only) or a truck with a lift.
2. Designate a specific space in front of the stage for people with disabilities and their friends/affinity groups to guarantee the best visibility for deaf and hearing-impaired people, people with visual impairments, and people who use wheelchairs.
3. Provide sign language interpretation and publicize this fact on your publicity. A program longer than two hours requires at least two interpreters.
4. Remember to maintain wide aisles where possible and to provide tapes of any written materials (e.g. programs).
5. Provide accessible portable toilets.

General Communication

To facilitate communication between hearing people and people with hearing disabilities where there is no sign language interpreter, have only one person speak at a time. Further, hearing people should face the person with a hearing impairment, and move their lips naturally, and remember not to shout. Even though lip-reading is only about 30% effective, it is better than nothing. If you don't know sign language, you can still use gesture and facial expressions to emphasize your meaning. Also, have paper and pencil available in case you get stuck.

People who cannot speak clearly need their listeners to slow down and pay close attention. Ask the person to repeat or spell what he or she said rather than pretending you understood.

People with visual disabilities need verbal descriptions to provide missing information.

People who learn slowly or differently need concepts to be organized and simple - summarize frequently. This will help clarify issues for everyone.

Arrest and Jail Concerns

Jail is an especially stressful situation where everyone, including people with disabilities, has no control over her/his daily routine. Each person should assess whether going to jail is the most appropriate role for her/him and, if so, what s/he can do in the jail situation to minimize the stress.

Both prior to, and once in jail, each person should assess all available options, including the option to post bail. If the jail situation becomes too stressful and a person chooses to "cite out," that decision should be understood and accepted by those choosing to remain in jail.

Affinity groups should strategize ways to remain together when the jail authorities try to separate out the disabled people and ways to handle inaccessible jail buses and jail living quarters.

Individuals with hidden disabilities should have special dietary and/ or medical needs put into prescription form by a medical doctor. Plan with affinity group supporters a means to guarantee that these prescriptions will be delivered in jail.

- by Myke Johnson, with Bruce Rose Thanks to C.D. Handbook National Lesbian and Gay March on Washington