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Item Type	Preprint
Authors	Calderon, J. Love;Wise, Tim
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Download date	2026-11-13 09:44:38
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/217159

CODE OF ETHICS FOR ANTIRACIST WHITE ALLIES

By JLove Calderon and Tim Wise, antiracist white allies and social justice educators.

We are persons classified as white, who oppose racism and the system of white supremacy. As such, we are committed to speaking out and challenging racial injustice, mistreatment and institutional inequity, as well as interpersonal racism whenever and wherever it exists. We are also committed to challenging our own biases, inculcated by a society that has trained us all, to one degree or another, to internalize notions of our own superiority.

As antiracist allies, we seek to work with people of color to create real multiracial democracy. We do not aspire to lead the struggle for racial justice and equity, but rather, to follow the lead of persons and communities of color, and to work in solidarity with them, as a way to obtain this goal. We do not engage in the antiracist struggle on behalf of people of color, so as to "save" them, or as an act of charity. We oppose and seek to eradicate white supremacy because it is an unjust system, and we believe in the moral obligation of all persons to resist injustice. Likewise, we believe not only that a system of white supremacy damages people of color, but also that it compromises *our* humanity, weakens the democratic bonds of a healthy society, and ultimately poses great risks to us all. Because we believe white supremacy to be a contributing force to war, resource exploitation, and economic injustice, our desire to eradicate the mindset and system of white domination is fundamentally a matter of collective preservation. Though persons of color are the direct targets of this system, we believe that whites are the collateral damage, and so for our own sake as well, we strive for a new way of living.

To do this with integrity, we believe it might prove helpful to operate with a code of ethics in mind, so as to remain as accountable as possible to persons of color, and each other, as we go about the business of challenging white supremacy. We know from experience how easy it can be to act with the best of intentions, and yet ultimately do harm to the antiracist struggle, by choosing tactics or methods that reinforce privilege and inequity rather than diminish them, or by acting within the confines of an echo chamber

of other antiracist white allies, while failing to ground our efforts in structures of accountability led by people of color.

In recent years, the number of white folks engaged in one form or another of public antiracist work, or work around the subject of white privilege (as scholars, writers, activists, and educators), has proliferated. Likewise, schools, non-profit organizations, and even some corporations have begun to look at matters of racism and white privilege within their institutions. As this work, at many different levels, expands, it is perhaps more necessary than ever that whites who are working to be strong antiracist allies take a good look in the mirror, analyze and critique what we do as well as how we do it, and ask: How can we**,** as antiracist white allies**,** operate ethically and responsibly as we go about the business of helping to dismantle white supremacy?

To this end, we propose the following code of ethics for antiracist white allies. Though it is hardly an exclusive or exhaustive list, we believe it is a start to a more responsible and responsive antiracist practice for white persons who wish to act in solidarity with people of color in the battle against racism. The code should not be viewed as a fixed or final document, let alone as a checklist or "rulebook" for responsible antiracists. It is merely a guidepost. We hope that it will lead to productive reflection, discussion, and even healthy debate among those who are engaged in antiracist struggle.

Code of Ethics for Anti-Racist White Allies

1. Acknowledge our racial privilege.

Self-reflection matters. Although there are many ways in which whites can be marginalized in this society (on the basis of gender, sex, sexuality, class, religion, disability, etc), this truth does not eradicate our racial advantage, relative to people of color. We can be oppressed in these other categories and still benefit from privileges extended to whites, as whites. Acknowledging racial privilege doesn't mean that we didn't work hard, or that there weren't barriers we had to overcome; it simply means that

our racial identity helped us along the way. Indeed, racial privilege will even work in our favor as we speak out against racism. We will often be taken more seriously in this work, *precisely* because we are white, and we should be clear on that point.

2. Develop interpersonal connections and structures to help maintain antiracist accountability.

Accountability matters. When we engage in antiracist efforts, be they public or private, we should remember that it is persons of color most affected by racism, and thus, they have the most to gain or lose as a result of how such work is done. With this in mind, we believe it is important to seek and obtain regular and ongoing feedback from people of color in our lives (friends and/or colleagues), as a way to better ground our efforts in structures of accountability. Although this kind of accountability may play out differently, depending on our specific job/position, one general principle is that we should be in regular and ongoing contact with persons in the communities that are most impacted by racism and white supremacy—namely, people of color.

3. Be prepared to alter our methods and practices, when and if persons of color implore us to do so.

Responsive listening matters. It's not enough to be in contact with people of color as we go about our work. We also need to be prepared to change what we're doing, if and when people of color suggest there may be problems, practically or ethically, with our existing methods of challenging racism. Although accountability does not require that we agree with and respond affirmatively to every critique offered, if people of color are telling us over and again that something is wrong with our current practices, accountability requires that we take it seriously and correct the practice. And all such critiques should be seen as opportunities for personal reflection and growth.

4. If we speak out about white privilege, racism, and/or white supremacy, whether in a public forum or in private discussions with friends, family or colleagues, we

should acknowledge that people of color have been talking about these subjects for a long time, and yet, have been routinely ignored in the process.

Giving credit matters. Because many white people have tuned out or written off people of color, when a white person speaks about social and racial injustice it's like a huge "a ha" moment happens, and that white person oftentimes is put on a pedestal. We should make sure people know that whatever wisdom we possess on the matter is only partially our own: it is also the collective wisdom of people of color, shared with us directly or indirectly. Likewise, beyond merely noting the general contribution of people of color to our own wisdom around matters of race, we should make the effort to specify those persons/groups of color from whom we've learned. Encourage others to dig deeper into the subject matter by seeking out and reading/listening to the words/work of those persons of color, so as to further their own knowledge base.

5. Share access and resources with persons of color whenever possible.

Networking matters. As whites, we often enjoy access to various professional connections, resources, or networks, from which persons of color are typically excluded. The ability to act as a "gatekeeper" comes with the territory of privilege. The only question is, will we help open the gates wider, or keep them closed? As allies, we should strive to share those connections and resources with persons of color whenever possible. So, for instance, we may have inroads for institutional funding or grant monies that could be obtained for people of color-led community organizations. We may have connections in media, educational institutions, or even the corporate world, which if shared with persons of color could provide opportunities for those persons of color to gain a platform for their own racial justice efforts.

6. If you get paid to speak out about white privilege, racism, and/or white supremacy, or in some capacity make your living from challenging racism, donate a portion of your income to organizations led principally by people of color.

Giving back matters. Although it is important to speak out about racism, and to do other types of antiracism work (organizing, legal work, teaching, etc.), and necessary for people to be paid for the hard work they do, whites who do so still have to admit that we are able to reap at least some of the financial rewards we receive because of racism and white privilege. Because so much of our own understanding of race and racism comes from the collective wisdom of people of color, from whom we have learned (especially at the grass-roots level), it is only proper that we should give back to those who have made our own "success" possible. Although there is no way to ascertain the real value of the shared and collective wisdom of people of color on the understanding that white allies have about racism, it seems fair to suggest that *at least* 10 percent of our honorariums, royalties, salaries, or other forms of income, should be shared with people-of color-led organizations with a commitment to racial and social justice. It would be especially helpful if at least some of that money goes to the kinds of locally based organizations that have a hard time getting funding from traditional sources.

The premise of this code is simple: White people have a moral and practical obligation to challenge racism in a responsible and responsive manner. To this end, we believe that the principles of self-reflection, accountability, responsive listening, and resource sharing are important starting points for whites who are engaged in any kind of efforts to eradicate racism and white supremacy. We hope that this code, devised merely as a set of suggestions and guideposts for white allies, will prompt constructive dialogue and discussion regarding how white allyship can best be developed and deployed for the purpose of building true multiracial democracy.

Please join the conversation and offer up your thoughts as to how antiracist white allies can become stronger in the fight to eradicate white supremacy.

A note about how this code was created:

The initial code concept was created by JLove, who then joined with Tim and together they wrote the first draft of the code. That draft was sent out to a multi-racial, intergenerational group of activists, organizers, educators, artists, and everyday people who care deeply about social and racial justice. Input was given and the authors took key

insights and common themes and incorporated them into the editing process. We thank everyone who took the time out to bring their wisdom and expertise to the table for this accountability work.

JLove is white woman author, activist, and producer dedicated to liberation for all people and the planet. Her fifth book, **Occupying Privilege**, featuring conversations of power, love, and struggle with today's cultural icons drops soon!