

Roots Deeper than Whiteness Session 2
Presentation by David Dean

- I. A Liberal vs. Radical Analysis of Racism
- II. Roots Deeper than Whiteness Identity Development Model
- III. What Happened to Us: Displacement & Racialization

Liberalism: A political orientation that seeks social inclusion as well as a moderate social safety net, but is uncritical of (and often lacks analysis of) our broader capitalist economic system.

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Capitalism: Our current global economic system, one in which a small ruling class (also called the “owning” or “capitalist” class) owns “the means of production” (the land, the natural resources, and the companies that produce the commodities and food we all need to survive).

The vast majority of humanity, being deprived of collective ownership of these things, are forced (if they can secure a job) to become wage laborers uncompensated for the true value of their work and dependent on the ruling class for their survival.

A Liberal Analysis of Racism

Racism is an independent social problem (as opposed to a tool of a larger system). Therefore the *only* power imbalance it upholds is a racial one — a white over non-white racial hierarchy. (1)

Liberal Anti-Racism: Seeks primarily to undo individual racial prejudice (as well as some structural barriers) to create a more diverse power structure (equal-opportunity capitalism).

(1) The articulation of this analysis as well as the broader framework of this presentation was supported in part by AWARE-LA's "[Toward a Radical White Identity](#)" and the scholarship of [Ian Haney López](#).

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Key issues:

- The origins and key political drivers of racism are given little attention, often creating the implicit assumption that racism is inherent or natural.
- Whites (historically and today) are seen as one homogenous group with common economic interest in maintaining white supremacy and no stake in ending it.
- Reinforces fear-based right-wing and white nationalist messaging.
- Can uplift a counterproductive culture in activist spaces.
- In many white people it elicits feelings of shame, rootlessness (a lack of identity) and political confusion.

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A Radical Analysis of Racism

“Radical simply means grasping at the root.”

“Racial conflict did not emerge spontaneously, but rather was consciously planned by the representatives of the economically ascendent class. They needed to impede working class unity so as to facilitate their own exploitative designs.”

— Angela Davis

A Radical Analysis of Racism

Racism is (at its root) *a tool* of the ruling class to create a hyper-exploitable underclass and to divide and control the entire 99%. It is used to stratify the masses into a racial hierarchy and weaken our collective power to challenge the corporate domination of all workers and the planet.

Radical Anti-Racism: Seeks to unite the multiracial 99% in a common project to stop discrimination on all levels and create a democratically-controlled and sustainable economy.

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Key elements:

- Illustrates how “nobody’s free until everybody’s free.”
- Creates a culture of solidarity in our movements.
- Not “an excuse” for the vast harms of white racism but a prerequisite for genuine growth and transformation.
- Allows us to cultivate a rooted anti-racist identity (*roots deeper than whiteness*) based on a clear understanding of our past and a clear vision of our path forward today.

Roots Deeper than Whiteness



The diagram consists of three thin, dark gray lines that originate from a single point at the top center and extend downwards and outwards to the left, center, and right, forming a wide 'V' shape. These lines serve as visual anchors for the three text blocks below.

***Knowledge of what
has happened to us
(how we've been
divided and what
we have lost)***

***Connection to a legacy
of multiracial
resistance***

***Commitment to
reconciliation and
solidarity-based
organizing today***

Roots Deeper than Whiteness



The diagram consists of three lines originating from a single point at the top center and extending downwards to three separate text blocks. The left line is diagonal, the middle line is vertical, and the right line is diagonal.

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What Happened To Us?

The establishment of capitalism as our global economic system involved two processes initiated by a small Western European elite and carried out on populations around the globe:

- 1. Displacement & Coerced/Forced Labor:** *The violent displacement of communities from their land in order to use that land for profit and to create a dependent, exploitable workforce.*
- 2. Cultural Attack & Racialization:** The replacement of traditional ethnic and political identities that placed higher value on the welfare of community and the earth... with a culture of possessive individualism and hierarchical, divisive racial identities (and gender roles).

These processes happened to indigenous peoples from Africa, Asia, the Americas *and Europe*. The difference was that we were given a superior racial identity and *relative* economic advantage (leading so many to participate in racial violence rather than multi-racial resistance). Though also developing in Europe, this new racial identity substantially deepened shortly after each European immigrant group's arrival in the United States.

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1. Displacement & Coerced/Forced Labor:

*“For the first time in human history the majority of Europeans depended for their livelihood on a small wealthy minority, a phenomenon that capitalist-based colonialism would spread worldwide.” — Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, **An Indigenous People’s History of the United States***

2. Cultural Attack & Racialization:

*“The wave of repression—or as the instigators saw it, “reform”—extended **from Scotland south to parts of Italy and eastward to Russia and Ukraine**, sweeping through both town and countryside. It targeted not only the traditional festivities held on saints’ days and the holy periods surrounding Christmas, Lent, and Easter, but almost every possible occasion for revelry and play.... In the long-term history **from the 17th to the 20th century...** there were literally thousands of acts of legislation introduced which attempted to eliminate carnival and popular festivity from European life.” — Barbara Ehrenreich, **Dancing in the Streets***

“Exposing whiteness for what it is—a foundational myth for the consolidation of capitalism—is fundamental if we are to build a genuine social movement.”

— Robin D.G. Kelley