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# Struggle on Three Fronts

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## Conclusion

Regardless, Love and Rage is gone. In their anger, both camps have mostly been talking over each other. The WWB side is right to point out that the accusation that most of them aren't activists is a poor substitute for a real political critique. At the same time, they engage in the same sort of sniping by class baiting the anti-WWBers, calling them the "NYC student crew," etc.

You can't build a political organization without politics. The only thing that can help us anarchist or anti-authoritarian revolutionaries is a shared set of political principles and a willingness to put these principles in practice through propaganda, activism, error, and self-criticism. Unfortunately, neither side has set out a position on all three issues consistent with the one I have outlined here. To have any chance at building a free society, a revolutionary organization needs to struggle on all three fronts. One can have a situation of dual power without the counterpower being anti-authoritarian or even with it being white supremacist. (A slogan of the Rand Rebellion in 1921 in South Africa was "White workers of the world, unite!") Likewise, one can be against white supremacy and anti-authoritarian without working toward a dual power. I welcome proposals for forming a new organization based on the positions I've set out here and with a commitment to test out these positions in the streets.

## Contents

I. Anti-Statism: The Core of Anti-Authoritarianism . . . . .	6
II. A Correct Analysis of White Supremacy . . . . .	8
III. A Commitment to Dual Power Strategies . . . . .	14
Conclusion . . . . .	22

in this devil's bargain. What is the 20<sup>th</sup> century middle class but, by and large, those persons whose parents or grandparents escaped from the working class, usually through the system of racial preferences?) What must be done to break up this deal between capital and one section of the working class? The destruction of the white race, or if you prefer, the destruction of white supremacy and its system of petty privileges. Figuring out specific programs and campaigns to do this would constitute a dual power strategy in the United States. As revolutionaries, that is the task that faces us.

When it comes to building a dual power, the size of the organization or the numbers of people participating in a campaign doesn't matter; it's the potential that matters. If our strategy is sound, the numbers will follow. (This is why building a movement of thousands isn't inherently better than building a movement of dozens. What counts is what each movement is doing and how they are doing it.) Whatever the advantages the anti-cop working group had over the anti-austerity working group (and this might be its only advantage!), it was a working group that was proposed based on an analysis of the crucial role of whiteness in preventing the creation of a unified working class and it was defended on the basis that it represented a dual power strategy.

I'm not claiming that a dual power strategy will solve all problems and end all debates. Quite the contrary: there will be all sorts of discussion, disagreements, mistakes, and blunders. When is a strategy a dual power strategy? Does this particular project have dual power potential or not? Whose analysis of history is correct? There are also situations in which we will need to engage in work that can't build a dual power, such as solidarity work. But what a revolutionary group needs to do is to ask the right kinds of questions, and to do that we need the right kind of orientation. The "mass line" and "just equals" orientations ask the wrong questions, so their answers are inevitably wrong, too.

chism. Its vision of a just world is something all of us would oppose for one reason or another. So we have to ask ourselves, are there other tendencies within the broader movement that Hamas heads that are more politically advanced? What class base is behind Hamas? Most importantly, do any historical forces exist that would strip a revolutionary situation out of Hamas's hands and into the hands of the people, clearing the way for a broad struggle against all forms of oppression? Figuring this out, and developing programs to build such forces, would constitute a dual power strategy in Palestine.

It's similar to the Civil War in the United States. Neither the North nor the South was even for the abolition of slavery, much less for a classless society. Yet as Marx himself recognized, the key to building a unified working class then was the struggle against slavery and to recognize Black people as part of the working class. Thus, he supported the North against the South, not because he wanted to help the Northern capitalists but because he recognized that the historical forces at play would likely spin out of the Northern elite's control, creating the conditions that would not only force the North to make the war an antislavery war but that would challenge the rule of capital itself. As a result, the Civil War was one of America's golden opportunities to end racism and to potentially build a society run by the working class, only the opportunity was tragically snuffed out with the ending of Reconstruction. (This argument is spelled out beautifully in Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction*, if you're interested.)

Now, let's apply this to our own situation. What are the preconditions for an anti-authoritarian revolution in the United States? A unified working class. What is preventing the creation of such a unified class today? Many things, but the number one reason historically has been white supremacy and the system of privileges that capital grants to white workers in exchange for their loyalty to the system. (A side note: contrary to Mike E.'s claims, I absolutely include the white middle class

The current split in Love and Rage has so far appeared as a struggle between two hostile camps, the "What We Believe" side and the anti-WWB side. (Although the majority position is probably in the "Who Cares I'm Outta Here" camp.) I believe it is a serious error to think of the present split strictly in terms of pro- and anti-WWB. Instead, the debate needs to focus on the key political issues that people are struggling over. While there is no hope whatsoever of saving Love and Rage, for those of us who remain committed to the idea of building a strong revolutionary organization (I do not consider the suggestion to go back to a network to be a serious one), we need to hash out our individual positions on these key issues and then see if we can build new political formations based on shared politics.

Other people have recognized the need for us to move forward after the conference. However, the biggest problem with the proposals for a new organization, whether it's a revised Love and Rage (see Suzy and James's "Proposal for a New Love and Rage" as well as Laura's "Draft Resolution on Membership" in the April, 1998 *Fed Bull*) or a post-Love and Rage organization (see Chris's proposal in this issue as well as Brad's writings on cadre organization in the April, 1998 *Fed Bull*) exclusively focus on the structural problems of Love and Rage and do not address the political problems. This is exactly backwards. While I support the move of any anti-authoritarian revolutionary organization toward a tighter, cadre-type organization that is both more effective and accountable than Love and Rage's current structure, the heart of the split is over politics, and that's what we need to keep front and center.

There are three key political issues at stake, in my opinion. These three issues are anti-statism, a correct analysis of white supremacy, and the need to commit ourselves to dual power strategies in choosing and developing political projects. In the rest of this article I want to explain these three positions, the debates as they've been played out so far, and what I think is the best position on each. My vision of a new revolutionary

organization should be clear from the positions I take on these three issues.

## **I. Anti-Statism: The Core of Anti-Authoritarianism**

The center of the debate over building a “multi-tendency” organization is not about the ideological beliefs of imaginary members who might or might not join Love and Rage in the future. Rather, it is about existing members’ definition of anti-authoritarianism. For my part, the key elements that define anti-authoritarianism are a) a belief in the relative autonomy of oppressions (ie. there is no one form of oppression, like class or social hierarchy, that all other forms “really” boil down to), b) opposition to vanguardism and support for directly democratic models of political organization, c) a belief in the self activity of the masses, and d) opposition to the state, either as an “intermediate” stage in the struggle for a classless society or as the permanent political form of the new society. To me anti-statism must be a core element of any definition of anti-authoritarianism.

Anti-statism is at the center of this dispute: WWBers rightly insist on it as the core of anti-authoritarian politics, while Brad and Carolyn have been mum on whether anti-statism is a part of their definition of “anti-authoritarian.” (Chris and Jessica have been explicit in their anti-statism, but no one who signed WWB will believe them. I do believe them.) But instead of seriously debating this question, we get arrogant assertions of the superiority of “old time anarchism” from WWBers and equally dogmatic assertions of the superiority of Marxism from Brad (“Anarchism, Marxism, and Love and Rage,” April 1998, *Federation Bulletin*). WWB essentially amounts to an anarchist loyalty oath: anarchism is the truth at its core, Marxism is authoritarian at its core, therefore all persons in Love and Rage

For example, take the Palestinian struggle in Israel. Carolyn essentially argues that we should support the PLO’s strategy because the majority of Palestinians do. Our task as revolutionaries, then, is to support the PLO-led peace process while trying to figure out a way to advance the revolutionary struggle further. Kieran, on the other hand, argues (correctly, in my opinion) that the PLO is really just another gang of elites setting themselves up to be the new Palestinian ruling class. Instead, he says, we should support the creation of a renewed Intifada, one that would seize upon and further develop the anti-authoritarian spirit of the 1980s uprisings. Unfortunately, as Carolyn (correctly, in my opinion) points out, there is no social force calling for, or working toward, an anti-authoritarian Intifada. The outcome of Kieran’s strategy is that we either end up supporting the two anarchists in Palestine (we’ll probably only support one—they’ve likely had a bitter split) or howling in the wind about the need for anti-authoritarian direct action groups to overthrow the Israeli and PLO oppressors.

A dual power strategy would start by asking different questions. First, it would ask what is the precondition of the end of Palestinian oppression and freedom for all Israelis whether Jewish, Palestinian or Arab? Answer: the destruction of the Israeli state, which is essentially an apartheid state. Second, which social forces out there are calling for this? Answer: the PLO (at least they used to) and Hamas, the Islamic fundamentalist organization. Third, of these two forces, do either represent the potential to build a revolutionary dual power? Answer: not the PLO, who are setting themselves up to be the new ruling class in what will probably resemble a neocolonial relationship between a Palestinian “statelet” and Israel, but quite possibly Hamas, who resolutely call for the destruction of Israel by any means necessary. Fourth, would a struggle initiated by Hamas against the Israeli state be a struggle for freedom? Here’s where we as revolutionaries have to make some judgments. Clearly, Hamas itself is no friend of anar-

I am sympathetic to the principles Kieran and Mike use to critique popular movements. I am especially sympathetic to the “ruthless criticism of everything existing” (to steal a phrase from Marx) that such principles tend to produce: if anyone can find an authoritarian and anti-democratic streak in any movement, it’s [Kieran]. But their application of these principles to every struggle is formulaic and ahistorical. Because social formations (including, alas, the Zapatistas) hardly ever fight on behalf of all the anarchist principles Kieran and Mike uphold, Kieran and Mike end up calling for the creation of such formations. Thus, the principles really offer no effective guide as to the practicalities of how to intervene in a struggle. Kieran and Mike end up with a series of platitudes about how a struggle should build “independent, direct action groups” without any meaningful suggestion how to do it, without indicating which actual players in the struggle are most likely to build them, and without any explanation for why such anti-authoritarian groups haven’t been built yet — or if they have, why they’re so small. The “just equals” position on strategy tends to end up, as Carolyn points out, as a moral principle simplistically applied to every situation.

Kieran argues that the anti-authoritarian spirit is within all of us. That may be true, but his organizing strategy does not explain why the “egoistic” side of human nature, as he puts it, (I personally don’t believe in the anti-authoritarian/egoistic split he does, or in a “human nature,” period) seems to win out over the anti-authoritarian spirit every time. Nor does he offer a way to help the anti-authoritarian spirit win next time. Without a strategy that helps us choose our struggles according to our best judgment of what has the best chance of building a democratic dual power, we’re going to end up either taking the lonely moral high road, as Kieran and Mike do, or the crowded reformist low road, as Carolyn does. From a revolutionary perspective, both — manto steal a line from Carolyn — are roads to nowhere.

must pledge allegiance to anarchy and shake their fists at any hints of creeping Marxism. But Brad’s supposed defense of the multi-tendency” position just flips the good guys and bad guys around: now it’s Marxism which is the only element of Love and Rage that has been structured, coherent, organized, and effective, while anarchism has been nothing but tlaky, ineffective, and bourgeois.

The only way out of this mess is to completely reject the dichotomy that WWB establishes (anarchy good, Marxism bad) and that Brad ultimately shares (Marxism good, anarchy bad). The way out is to focus on the real issue at hand, the differing conceptions of anti-authoritarianism and the role of the state in each. The WWB signers are correct to point out that the critique of the state is traditionally an anarchist tenet (though anarchists have no monopoly on critiques of the state). They are also right to point out that Brad and Carolyn have conspicuously evaded the question of anti-statism. I agree with them that our opposition to the state must be unambiguous and that it is reasonable and appropriate to challenge comrades who in some way feel that a state is part of the long term revolutionary struggle.

But it is wrong to make this a dividing line issue when a full debate has not even begun on the question. WWB emerged in the context of a broiling split within the New York local. Those of us not in New York, however, didn’t have a fucking clue what was going on there. Some of us knew there were problems but few of us outsiders knew the political differences at hand because no one in New York reported them in the *Fed Bull*. So, when WWB did come out it was an unexpected bombshell. The consequence, intended or not, was to cut off debate on the question of anti-authoritarianism and to make it a “dividing line question without a full and free debate before-hand. Thus, what WWB amounted to for many of us was a loyalty oath, not an invitation to debate.

What a revolutionary organization needs, then, is not a pledge to anarchy nor a watered-down definition of “anti-authoritarianism” but a collective agreement about the content of anti-authoritarianism. This content, I maintain, must contain the elements I outlined above (though my definition is probably not exhaustive). In particular, it means a resolute opposition to the state and an agreement that any activism we engage in will work to weaken state power. Once we have that, whether one comes to such politics through anarchism, council communism, indigenism, anti-imperialism, or a creative interpretation of Star Trek’s Prime Directive is irrelevant. These politics imply a “multi-tendency” organization in the sense of bringing together multiple ideologies and orientations all unified by a common definition of authoritarianism and an agreement that it has nothing to do with freedom.

## II. A Correct Analysis of White Supremacy

Wayne thinks that questions of race are “negotiable” (see “What We Think” in this *Fed Bull*). I disagree. A revolutionary organization in the US absolutely needs unity on two matters relating to race. First, its members must agree on a political analysis that places white supremacy at the center of American history. Second, members must agree that developing strategies to fight white supremacy must be at the heart of all our key political work. Agreement on these two principles is not, in my mind, negotiable. Instead, they form the basis of the politics of the organization I want to help build after Love and Rage. Wayne disagrees on both counts. He does not believe that an analysis of white supremacy should be at the center of our politics beyond a general critique of “authoritarianism,” of which racism is one form. As a consequence, he sees no compelling need to make the struggle against white supremacy central to our activism. I’m sure he’d be happy if someone

system, to fight to win them (acting in tandem with reformist groups such as unions and liberals when appropriate), and to link reform struggles to a broader revolutionary strategy. The mass line perspective says we should determine our position on various struggles (strikes, student movements, national liberation struggles, etc.) based on the desires of “the majority” of the masses involved in the struggles. In other words, how we intervene in such struggles should be based on our assessment of what the masses want. But revolutionary politics are by definition minority politics. The revolutionary is in the minority until the barricades go up, the police attack, and the people who had been “neutral” choose to fight for the new society rather than cling to the old one. When one organizes based on what the majority “wants,” what one generally ends up doing is supporting “the politics of the possible.” Hence Mike E’s criticism that the end result of such a strategy is social democratic liberalism is on point here. In that what we revolutionaries want is something much more, it is also (potentially, at least) deceptive to work on behalf of the “majority position” in order to undermine it. Hence Kieran’s criticism that mass line is manipulative is on point as well.

You might also notice that the content of the revolutionary struggle is something Carolyn’s articles hardly touch on, even though we all know that “revolutionary movements” often have as much to do with winning freedom as ice skates have to do with winning basketball games. To their credit, the content of the revolutionary struggle is precisely Kieran and Mike E’s concern. However, their “just equals” approach suffers from other flaws. Mike and Kieran argue that we should judge all struggles according to a set of basic anarchist principles. We intervene by locating a group or tendency that most closely approximates these anarchist principles or, if none exists, we go in there and try to establish a beachhead of such principles to appeal to the “anti-authoritarian spirit” present in the peoples’ hearts.



against both the left and the right in their quest to ensure the peaceable and steady accumulation of capital. As revolutionaries, we never want to make the mistake these progressives made in using RICO, even if it makes our struggle against the right more difficult.

A dual power strategy is about building campaigns that no institution of official society — whether it be the state, capital, conservatives, or liberals-can seize upon and steer toward their ends. In so doing, we not only destabilize official society, we show that the self-activity of the working class is the seed from which a truly free society will grow and flower. Unfortunately, such thinking does not seem to guide our activism. Instead, we have tended to choose our activism based on what many of us are already doing (such as prison and Zapatista and antifascist work in '95) or by what seems to be “hot” issues nationally (such as “anti-austerity” work in '97).

One result of this is that the debate over activist strategy surrounding WWB has focused on a false dichotomy between the “mass line” strategy versus the “just equals” strategy. The debate between these two positions is partly over how we as activists relate to the masses of “ordinary people (i.e. non-revolutionaries). On this question I think it is obvious that whatever our organizational or leadership skills (such as they are), we are of the masses and not apart from them and should look at everything from that perspective. I don't think anyone even disagrees with that. But the debate is also about how to build a revolutionary organization, and on this question both sides are wrong. Each, in their own way, skirts around the real question of activism: how to build an anti-authoritarian dual power that has the potential to build a classless, stateless society.

For an example of the mass line side's errors, take Carolyn's articles “Road to Nowhere” and “Strategy Without Teeth” in the last two *Fed Bulls*. Carolyn argues that the revolutionary task is to figure out which reforms can be extracted from the

took the work on, but it's one sphere of struggle among many, which members may or may not choose to focus on.

My general position on white supremacy is spelled out in the “Draft Resolution (on White Supremacy)” published in the last *Fed Bull*, so I won't repeat it here. However, I want to respond to recent criticisms of my position on white supremacy by Wayne (“What We Think Are the Issues,” this *Fed Bull*) and Bill Meyers (“Multi-racial Muddling,” April 1998 *Fed Bull*). Both Wayne and Bill are intelligent people, so I cannot believe that they have grossly misrepresented my (and others') analysis of white skin privilege because they don't understand it. I must assume that they deliberately choose to distort and disregard the analysis of white privilege because it challenges their essentially class-reductionist position that divisions among the working class ain't all that strong and that racism, however evil, is a secondary issue in the broad scheme of things.

For example, Bill claims that the theory of white skin privilege is aimed only at white people. This is flat-out wrong. If anything, it's people of color who have done the bulk of the work analyzing the system of white privilege and agitating against it. White folks are the newcomers. As numerous people from Sojourner Truth to W.E.B. Du Bois to Malcolm X have pointed out, the struggle against white supremacy is the central task facing all Americans, of whatever race.

For his part, Wayne claims that I argue that white workers are better off because of racism and that I imply that fascism would be good for the white working class. I have never argued either position. That Wayne chooses to grossly, almost hilariously — “Racists say that your [white workers'] interests are against Black people, and... [the “Draft Resolution” signers] do too” — distort the theory of white skin privilege is a result of ideological blinders that he puts on himself.

There are two ways to refer to white privileges as “petty.” On the one hand, when compared to a truly free world, having first crack at the best jobs (all of which stink), being last hired

and first fired (for a shitty job), living in the better neighborhoods (most of which are still no good), giving one's kids the best public education (so they can be well-paid worker drones when they grow up, too), etc. are "petty" indeed. No privilege held can compare to a world in which privilege does not exist. I think Wayne and I agree on this point. On the other hand, however, to call white privileges "petty" is also a way to dismiss the role of white supremacy in the construction of our unfreedom as relatively unimportant. From what Wayne has written, I believe he considers the wages of whiteness to be "petty" in this sense too, and here I could not disagree more. White supremacy has been absolutely crucial in the construction and development of every major political, economic, and social institution in this country, from the creation of the two-party system to the weakness of labor unions to the impoverishment of the South to popular attitudes toward birth control to women's liberation to the length of the working day to the songs we listen to on the radio.

White unanimity is both the secret to American capitalism's success and its weak link. Smashing white supremacy will not mean that all other forms of oppression will magically disappear afterward, not at all. However, history shows that the struggle against white supremacy also creates political space to challenge other forms of oppression from a position of strength. It creates situations and possibilities to build new social relationships and institutions that we can only dream of now. There is nothing "petty" or "stagist" or "reductionist" about this analysis of history. It is the cornerstone of revolutionary work.

One other point: when the "Draft Resolution" reads that the struggle against white supremacy "will mean a quantitative reduction in the standard of living for many workers in imperialist countries in general and for white workers in the US in particular," it doesn't mean that we have to tell poor workers to embrace their poverty or to try to "win over" better-off workers by threatening to take what they have. It simply means

is the cotter pin that holds American capitalist society together, and that in the process of removing that pin we clear the table for a struggle against all forms of oppression, and clearing the table can begin the process of building a totally new society.

I've discussed dual power numerous times in the *Fed Bull* so I'll simply restate my definition here: an action or campaign that directly challenges the existing institutions of power in this world and — even if in just some small way — prefigures the new society we want to build. Chris's excellent article, "Dual Power in the Selva Lacondon" on dual power and the Zapatistas fleshes out this definition in a much better way than I ever have, so I'll refer the reader to that article for more explanation.

As Chris argues, a situation of dual power is like the Zapatistas setting up parallel administrations in forty "liberated zones" throughout Chiapas, but it also has relevance to the mundane and much less exciting activism we are all engaged in. Doing activism is vital but it isn't enough. What we as revolutionaries must constantly ask ourselves is, what is the content of our activism? What implications does it or could it have on the society at large? Does it challenge the powers that be or does it in some way, consciously or unconsciously, end up strengthening the hand of one of our enemies, whether it's the state, the right, or the "progressive" but essentially bourgeois left? I am not saying that fighting for reforms is inherently reactionary or bourgeois — not at all. What I am saying is that the reforms we do win should weaken the power of official society rather than strengthen it.

For example, pro-choice groups recently celebrated the lawsuit they won against radical anti-choice groups based on RICO, a set of laws that were originally established to use against the Mafia. But by using these laws, the pro-choice groups have strengthened the hand of the state at the same time that they've weakened the right. What they've essentially done is given the state another weapon they can use

do more damage in a crucially strategic campaign than 1200 in campaign with politics that limit it to social democratic outcomes. It might mean we have to abandon some struggles or radically alter their aims and tactics. But that shouldn't be too big a problem because we're committed to freedom, not issues.

Wayne contends that the question of white privilege is only being raised to distract people from "the Stalinist issue." I can't speak for anyone else, but I have been raising this question well before WWB, and I ain't hiding no Stalin statue in my coat anyway. In my opinion, the politics of the "Draft Resolution on White Supremacy," whatever its wording problems (hey, it's a draft resolution) isn't "negotiable." It is a dividing line issue. I have no desire to be in a group that doesn't take these politics to heart, because I know it will be an organization destined to failure. It may be an efficient, disciplined organization that wins reforms and manages to build a modest membership, but it will pose no revolutionary threat to the powers that be.

### **III. A Commitment to Dual Power Strategies**

I keep pushing the white privilege analysis for two reasons. First, a free society has no room for racial discrimination or the system of "race" as we know it, so it must be smashed. It is evil and keeps all of us, regardless of skin color, from being free. But second, I am convinced that the struggle against white supremacy has the best chance of creating a situation of dual power in the US. While I do not believe racism is the "primary" form of oppression that, once conquered, will magically eliminate all other forms of oppression in its wake (which is what many socialists believe of class), I do believe that the peculiar history of the United States and its systems of racial slavery, Jim Crow, and white democracy means that white supremacy

that the world cannot support six billion people with two cars and 300 channels. Revolutionaries who try to win people over with such promises a) are liars and b) treat freedom like a commodity more than the bourgeoisie does. People have to be won over to a vision of a completely new world in which one's "standard of living" is judged by the creative control they have over their own lives, not by how much stuff they have. The struggle against white supremacy is a struggle against this impoverished conception of freedom. If the language of the resolution does not reflect that then the language should be changed, but the political point still stands.

Unfortunately, however, it's not just Wayne and Bill who don't take the criticism of this second notion of "petty privileges" to heart. Many members who probably oppose most of WWB also consider "doing anti-racist" work as one choice among a variety of types of activism we could be doing. But this viewpoint of "relatively autonomous forms of oppression, relatively autonomous struggles against them, so pick and choose which oppression you want to fight ignores how, in the United States, white supremacy structures the way all forms of oppressions — even though they are all relatively autonomous-operate and the way in which various factions struggle around them. What we need to do is figure out how racial privilege is at work in these "other" struggles — even if they usually go under the name of union organizing, reproductive freedom, rent control, tuition hikes, school financing, welfare organizing, or community policing and figure out ways to attack it, recognizing that smashing white privilege is a necessary prerequisite of not just winning that particular struggle but clearing the way for a more radical struggle.

As an example, let's take the work the Vermont local is doing around the Living Wage Campaign, union issues, and other "class issues." To begin, with I want to say that, from the reports they submit to the *Fed Bull* and the articles they write for the newspaper, I think the work they did for the livable wage

campaign was incredible. The door-to-door work, the coalition building, the strategizing — all of it seems to me to epitomize effective, influential political work with a radical bent that is done in a directly democratic manner. They have certainly gone far beyond any successes I can claim with my own activism. Nevertheless, several things about their work troubles me. At the Lansing conference, Jason reported that because Vermont was 98% white, race wasn't really a good issue to organize around there, so instead they decided to focus on "class issues." Now, without accusing the #10 folks of racism or anything like that, it seems that what focusing on "class issues" really comes to mean in this context is focusing on the white working class. This wouldn't necessarily be a problem if the aim of the work was to get white workers to recognize that the struggle to uplift workers of color is a struggle to uplift whites as well, even if it undercuts some of their "petty privileges" (here the term is appropriate). But the struggle for a livable wage, as good as it is, doesn't do that. Sure, it raises the minimum wage of all workers regardless of race, in that sense it is a progressive measure that we should all cheer. But when Black unemployment levels are historically always double that of whites in the US, how does raising the minimum wage unify the working class when Black workers won't be able to enjoy it because they can't get jobs? If white workers actively or passively defend this disparity in unemployment rates, we still have a breach in the class. Thus, the prospects for radical political movement in such a campaign hit a white wall. To repeat, a livable wage is a progressive measure that we should all support, but because it leaves white privilege intact it cannot, I believe, ultimately provide the basis to create a unified working class, which is the prerequisite for more radical struggles, such as the abolition of wage labor itself. Thus, the most such a campaign can do is win social democratic reforms, educate radicals for later struggles, and (hopefully) radicalize folks who previously weren't active. I do not want to dismiss these ben-

efits at all; they are important. But by themselves they cannot threaten official society. That requires a campaign that gets to the heart of what keeps capitalism functioning, and that heart, in the United States at least, is the wages of whiteness.

I use the Vermonters as an example because their work has generally been so successful, not because they are any more chauvinist or shortsighted than the rest of us. (I also apologize to the #10 folks for not raising this issue with them right after Lansing as I intended.) The Vermont local is by no means the only crew to make this mistake. By and large, I think the entire anti-austerity working group has worked according to the same incorrect logic. The editors of *Race Traitor* made a similar critique of this logic in their critique of the CUNY work by the New York local (See the Aug./Sept. 1997 *Love and Rage*). Unfortunately, New Yorkers responded defensively and dismissively rather than seriously considering the critique. Such defensiveness is understandable when you've poured your soul into a struggle only to have it challenged at its core, but it's unfortunate when that defensiveness refuses to give way to self-criticism, especially when the defensiveness is expressed publicly in the newspaper.

Placing white supremacy at the core of our activism won't necessarily make activism any easier. The Vermont folks are right: it is tough to get an angle on how to fight white supremacy in a state that is 98% white. However, this doesn't mean we abandon our analysis of American history. (After all, there are reasons why Vermont, one of the few states that allowed Black suffrage in the pre-Civil War era, is 98% white-white folks did all they could to prevent free Black persons and fugitive slaves from settling there.) It means we have to be innovative in figuring out how to apply it. It might mean that struggles that are currently "popular" or attract more people (to the extent that any left wing struggle is popular in the 1990s) might not be the best ones for us to engage in. But if our analysis is right, twelve people can