Post-charleston piece

I've received a lot of requests. Some of these points are not profound and have been covered by scores of activists and observers. [List a few]

My points arose out of conversations with white folks, reflections, and my own personal experiences. This is mostly for the inexperienced, but some experienced organizers may find some of these points useful.

Pay attention to the killer. Take some of the shooter's views seriously because he was talking to you.

One may wonder why I start with the terrorist's manifesto. There may an inclination to distance oneself from his views.

I'd argue that his passage about "good schools" and suburbanization extend beyond mainstream conservatism too. Dude offers an analysis of the use of coded language to justify decisions about where to live and send their children to school. Obviously, suburbanization is a very complex phenonemnon and his solution to that--be racist and kill black people--is obviously wrong. But, he's not really lying about coded language and connection between race and space.

That's why I hope white people don't try to dismiss his document because many of us have heard "good white folks" talk about sending their kids to "good" schools and living in "good" neighborhoods. We often know what that means and dude called that out from his racist standpoint. It seems the audience for the document is actually white people. Like a lot of white dude racist culture warriors, he's presenting himself as someone who's willing to say and do things that most white folks won't. We scoff at him saying that he believes in segregation, but most "good" white folks live segregated lives already. Like I said, there are some rather archaic views contained in the document, but the colorblindness, victimhood (which has been a constant), Trayvon, and discussion of coded language and suburbanization make this manifesto a product of this moment. It's a product of the collective failure of white people to eradicate structural racism.

I'd totally understand why people of color, black folks especially, wouldn't want to read the document. Very upsetting and triggering. The distribution of the document plays into our impatience with media outlets' and many white folks' desires "to understand" perpetrators of racial terrorism. Yet, there was something about this particular document that made me think that, really, I/we aren't his intended audience, white folks are. And, in that context, his evil document should really operate as a mirror to white America: It reminds them that even the best of white America has to continue to interrogate how systemic racism shapes some of their most important decisions. The shooter taking his beliefs to the next level is obviously deplorable, but we, and white folks, especially, have to remember that his beliefs are a mix of the extreme and the mainstream. We may be able to say that most white folks don't share his extremist views (and would never commit an act of terror), but most white folks can't deny that they've never perpetuated some of the shooters' mainstream views.

If you're white and you run from this document, you live in the same metaphorical neighborhood as the silent white bystander. Neither make for useful allies.

You have to commit to paying the cost of change.

[reference MLK]. Even though South Carolinians have struggled for decades to get the flag taken down, you gotta remember that advocating for such a change is relatively easy. It's an 'easy stance' right now. It won't cost you or them anything. It will be an important victory, but it won't lead to structural change. Examining oneself position and being willing to extend resources personally and through redistributive public policy is hard. This is what Dr. King talked about in 1967.

Build trust with Black Americans and black organizations.

Remain vigilant about [checking? Policing?] your own position as a white person.

Leave politics at the door.

Start where you are. "Start where you are," is often the first instruction that I give interested white folks, or people in general. Over the last two years, we have witnessed protests in numerous cities—Ferguson, St. Louis, New York City, Ann Arbor, Baltimore, and Charleston to name a few. One's inclination is often to pursue the action/go to where the action is. Not everyone has the time, nor the resources to go to the action. This is why you should try to start where you are. Try to locate and identify local events. I often look to Twitter to keep up with live events. Also, consult various #BlackLivesMatter resource sites such as fergusonresponse,tumblr.com, wetheprotesters.org and Ferguson Action. If you text 'handsup' to Ferguson Action, you will be able to receive text updates about events as well.

Then, if you live somewhere where there is less action, try to start an anti-racist group, plan solidarity vigils, form a reading group, etc.

I also tell folks to start where they are when I receive questions such as, "These problems are so big, what can I do?" White supremacy, structural racism, and the new jim crow are huge problems.

I'd check it out. It may be easier to follow them on Twitter. Information seems to flow more freely there once you know who exactly to follow. I know some people have professional concerns about getting involved or connected via social media, but creating a fake twitter name would be a good option. But I'd try to find an event and go. And depending upon how much you'd like to get involved, I'd go to as many as possible. But, if you want to go to some marches and meetings and not involve yourself too much, that's okay.

You don't have to be an organizer. (In fact, it may be preferable because one cannot have too many cooks in the kitchen.). Use twitter and local news sources to try to locate meetings and protests. Consult various #blacklivesmatter resource pages (wetheprotesters, etc.) for information

on latest events. Sign up for the texts. Faith-based and policy groups may also have information. See the

Seek relatively progressive faith-based organizations, go to any community meetings.

Social media doesn't always help when there isn't a crisis.

When you start a group, you think of the connections you have among the group. You may have to do the work of build a network. Folks will advertise their events at libraries, coffeeshops, bookstores, and other community/locally-owned establishments.

Support African Americans, organize among whites. You want to become a resource for other white people.

Supporting people of color and organizing and talking among whites are not new ideas, either. In the midst of the self-identified black power movement, leaders like Stokely Carmichael and the Black Panther Party urged sympathetic whites to organize themselves. Organizing among whites is a very important job since race conversations often occur in racially segregated spaces. Many whites will censor themselves when they are talking to people of color. They are less likely to censor themselves around you. Practicing talking to other white folks also helps relieve pressure for people of color to always have to intervene. There is always a demand for white folks who are willing to talk to other whites.

A more organized way to talk to white folks is to start a reading, or just a general, affinity group devoted to analyzing systemic racism and whites' roles in perpetuating it. Such a group can read texts, organize solidarity vigils, and even engage in direct action in white-dominated spaces.

The ultimate goal for the white ally would be to become a resource for other whites who are interested in involving themselves in the racial justice movement. This person would not just operate as a resource, but also a connector to other groups and actions.

Commit your time and resources. Donate to bail funds, institutions in distress, etc., etc. Attend public meetings, especially with public officials, and voice your displeasure with the system. Contribute your skills, whether it is research and writing, fundraising, your social and professional network, etc.

continuing to use your teaching skills to get your students to think about how structural racism changes over time. One of the biggest obstacles, as you already know, is not just the virulent racist who opposes these protests, but those who rely upon notions of colorblindness try to rationalize what's happened. I'd continue to talk about your experiences participating with those who are close to you in person and on social media.

Study. Much racial justice labor includes unlearning narratives of race that tend to reinforce structural racism and inequality. Examining histories of structural racism, white supremacy, intersectionality, protest and organizing, and mass incarceration is essential for anyone wanting to participate. One needs to understand how race and racism and race-based social movements

change over time. One also needs to understand particular assumptions that support bankrupt concepts like colorblindness and diversity. How do individuals and institutions perpetuate racism and inequality?

Political education is very important. It is tough, if not totally contradictory, to think one could support a black-led movement without engaging in any personal reflection or anti-racist education. One's unwillingness or inability to commit to anti-racist political education can lead to tension between them and activist-organizers of color. Some white folks try, and many are often unsuccessful. This is part of building trust.

One should study on one's own time or among a group of peers.

Be ready and willing to take criticism from people of color.

Public policy:

Support particular reforms, but remember that the broader goal is to end the new jim crow and eradicate racism.

Fight to strengthen voting rights.

Fight austerity.

Advocate for a more just urban policy.

We don't need you for the cause to be just and moral. But we need all hands on deck if we are to fulfill this challenge.

We're making history over here, you don't want to sit this one out.

[My own bibliography/list of resources?]

Ferguson Syllabus

Baltimore Syllabus

Charleston Syllabus

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As much as I love everyone running from the Confederate flag, just erasing that aspect of history does little to eradicate structural racism. It also reinforces the idea that explicit racism and white

supremacy only lives in the south. Again, it's another way for white folks to distance themselves from a system that they too benefit.

The "cost of change" and "The price of liberation" (the meaning of freedom?)

Or [On the?] Black Liberation in the 21st century

Black Liberation: A Greater Act of Love

750-1,000 words

I. Roof
II. Context that produces Roofs and the degredation of black life/what Sundiata Cha-Jua calls the second nadir.
    a. Hurricane Katrina
    b. The financial crisis
    c. Assault on voting rights/disfranchisement
    d. Assault on labor
    e. Privatization and the theft of natural resources (water)
    f. Police and vigilante killings.
III. What is freedom (the cost of change?)
    a. Reckoning with history—but that's not enough. I'm a historian, but I'm not naïve enough to assume that just reckoning with history will magically lead white folks to reconsider. It's going to require a serious political debate and fight.
    b. Policies
IV. White folks
V. Conclusion

Reckoning with one's history has been a constant theme in my writings over the last several months. I know taking the history of racism seriously will not eradicate white supremacy in itself, but I do hope that moving to restructure American society becomes a product of the reckoning.

Restoring black humanity does not just mean respecting black folks, not saying anything explicitly or implicitly racist, it means eradicating the institutions, discourses, and beliefs that render black life disposable.

And not just rendering black life disposable, but subjecting black individuals and black people as a group to bodily and psychological trauma of racist killings, the political violence of using colorblindness to eradicate voting rights. We live in a country where Republicans are willing to rely on voting restrictions in order to protect themselves. Essentially, they are willing to destroy representative democracy. And in destroying representative democracy, they render black folks even more vulnerable to their policy whims. Striking down [section] of voting rights, subjecting black folks to more state-sanction regulation are forms of violence. It needs to stop.

…This is the immediate historical context of Dylan Roof. Republicans and everyone want to run away from it because he represents the utter [w.c.] of America—the unabashed white supremacist who was willing to commit an act of terror in order to start a race war.

Many whites don't want to engage that discomfort. [I don't know if I will actually say this.]

Evasion is the default for the northern white liberal—happened after the civil war and the civil rights movement.

Get beyond talking about fighting for the "soul" of the nation. Such a metaphor sounds moving, but such references only reflect an empty gesture. We're fighting for better realities for black americans and people of color. Freedom, democracy, liberty, humanity are made real through practice. They are felt—when black folks can cast a ballot freely, when public policies can eradicate the ghetto, when black folks in Detroit can access water freely, when black folks aren't stopped and frisked by the police because they fit the description, when police departments train their officers to diffuse situations instead of shooting them. That's freedom, liberty, democracy, and humanity. It's not just about feeling. This isn't a fight for this country's mythical soul that no one can touch. It's a fight to save and improve black lives.

It means black trans folks aren't risking life for just being themselves. Justice in that regard would mean that the criminal justice system would not ignore their deaths like […]. They would seek justice for them like they would a wealthy white man or woman. Liberty embodied would mean having access to all of the tools needed for gender transition. We would pay for it because we care and cherish all humanity. If you happen to be the type of person who writes #alllivesmatter and you're not willing to pay the cost for change, then you are misleading us. [word choice]

Justice for all black folks is a precondition for black love and forgiveness. There is nothing revolutionary or extraordinary when white folks or the state expects love and forgiveness from black folks. For those who believe in whiggish history, no one can talk about an advancing America without the institutionalization and embodiment of justice.

Equality is the reflection of just policies embedded in our spaces, landscapes, institutions, and bodies. Inner cities are restored, black churches are respected, law enforcement lifts curfews in public spaces. And we do it with moral and political courage and conviction. Acting with such means rethinking zoning laws, seeking mixed housing development, rethinking the tax code, taxing the shit out of corporations, eventually reforming the tax code to privilege community-based development [for real? Or just reword?]. This may scare a lot of people, but seeking justice may mean upending a lot of laws [reword]. We have to be willing to not just reckon with our history, but we have to be able to pay the cost of change—redistribute resources, change tax laws, tax corporations, set up accounts (consult the BLM economic platform that's been ignored).

And there's still a chance that racism isn't eradicated after all of this. But you know what, I'm willing to try. [I don't know if I'll keep this, either.]

And in the context of representative democracy/republic/government, they are made real by policies designed to enable these practices. (help black people, poor people, etc.) It's about doing, not feeling. It's about impact, not just intent.

Creative maladjustment.

One may wonder, how can all of this work? This is just a pipe dream. Sure. But I am trying to take folks' desires for "unity" and "forgiveness" seriously. If white folks seek forgiveness, then they have to be willing to give up something. If folks are serious about being tied together, then we need a new social contract grounded in Dr. King's belief that we [are tied in a garmet of destiny" [place real quote]. You can only take that seriously by relaxing our death grip around individualism, negative understandings of liberty [keep? A little contradictory], and selfishiness. Let Ayn Rand roll in her grave. .

Closing the wealth, education, [etc.] gaps may only be preconditions for black liberation and freedom for everyone. Only, though. We have to ensure equality. [keep? Or cut?]

We live in a time where leading democratic candidates talk about institutional racism, even if their predecessors played huge roles in erecting the new jim crow. They must know, though, if you name the system then you have a responsibility to eradicate it. If we talk about eradicating the system then we're talking about liberation. If we're talking about liberating ourselves from the system of structural racism and white supremacy, then we're talking about rethinking zoning laws, the inequality in education funding between public and private/charter schools, we're talking about abolishing prisons and restoring voting rights to felons. Mixed housing development becomes status quo. Food desserts are eliminated. The word entitlement vanishes because resources are shared.

It considers all black people—gay, lesbian, queer, trans, straight, poor, working-class, the disabled,

Protects reproductive freedom.

Black liberation is immune from [right wording?] respectability politics.

Bring in my Aura Rosser speech—provocation. Talk about racial capitalism. I need to just synthesize everything into this piece.

Name is Pinckney

Brief mass expressions of unity doesn't signal the presence of justice.

Way too difficult to present a full vision. Also, folks would need to decide on what that vision looks like. It's impossible for one person to devise and articulate that. Could offer a few elements that are necessary for justice and freedom to flourish.

Narratives of civility—used to shame protesters in other cities despite the fact this groundswell probably isn't possible without those uprisings.

There's little love without liberation.

I remember being at a conference and I told folks that we'll need to start trying to outline what a post-police world would look like. We need to try to provide a sketch.

Several white folks with signs: "Love will win this time…," "Love wins every single time…"

Bree Newsome's act symbolized this love and desire for freedom and liberation.

End with "the promise?"

There are times when you feel like you've said everything that you could say about racism and white supremacy in the US.

Decriminalization, demilitarization, de-stigmatization, dismantle, then rebuild. Can happen within the movement, in public discourse and culture, but also through policy and structural change.