

Men's Circle: Reimagining White Men's Role in Movements for Justice

Solidarity Circle in Solidaire

Description

What is the role of white men in movements for social justice and wealth redistribution?

A growing number of white men are awakening to the reality that we can move more money and show up better. However, most of the white men we know who are trying to engage, ourselves included, are finding it difficult to make meaningful contributions. Many of us fear, or have been told outright, that if we get involved, we'll cause more harm and make things worse.

We're offering this circle because we're reaching toward an aspiration we share – that it is possible for white men to feel a sense of belonging and a grounded sense of pride in contributing positively to movements for justice. We know that's possible because some of our white male ancestors – like Stanley Levison (a friend/funder of MLK) – have played important roles in freedom struggles around the world. We also know it's possible because, at times, we've felt these good feelings ourselves. We're on a journey to cultivate ongoing conditions where we can feel joyful in movement work, while also deepening our skill sets and capabilities in ways that enable us to partner effectively across differences.

During our time together, we will explore questions for which there are no absolute answers. Like many of Solidaire's solidarity circles, we will center storytelling as a means of drawing out and distilling support, inspiration, and collective wisdom. These questions include:

- In what ways do we have a shared experience as white men? In what ways are our experiences different, or even unique?
- How can we unlearn and uproot patriarchy and white supremacy in the ways that we show up in movement spaces and our lives?
- How do we engage when we hear ideas or receive feedback across differences that we agree with? What about ideas or feedback we don't agree with?
- How can we relate to oppression and injustice in an embodied way, moving from intellectualizing to feeling and empathizing, from the head to the heart?
- How can we support each other to take bold action and leverage our privilege to dismantle systems of oppression with both accountability and care?

This circle is intended to be an affinity space for members (individual or institutional) who identify as white cis-men who want to commit to exploring these questions in a heart-forward and supportive community (we acknowledge that other affinity spaces are also needed). As the ones who have materially benefitted the most from intersecting systems of privilege (while also being morally and spiritually harmed by them), we as white men are unusually disconnected from experiences of oppression. Our intention with this circle is to create a space where we can deepen our attunement across differences, and to transform the difficult emotions that often arise in doing that work into a commitment to growth and a sense of belonging in movements for collective liberation.

Goals

- Explore patriarchy, white supremacy, classism, and their intersections, and how they show up in our lives
- Create a community of authentic connection that offers loving support and challenges us to grow
- Understand our values, identify gaps between our values and actions, and support each other in taking bold action to close those gaps
- Encourage full participation in Solidaire by creating a sense of belonging in this community and clarity on how white cis-men can best participate and contribute

Timeline

This circle meets six times on the following dates:

1. Wednesday, January 24th, 9-11am PT - 12-2pm ET
2. Wednesday, February 7th, 9-11am PT - 12-2pm ET
3. Wednesday, February 21st, 9-11am PT - 12-2pm ET
4. Wednesday, March 27th, 9-11am PT - 12-2pm ET
5. Wednesday, April 24th, 9-11am PT - 12-2pm ET
6. Wednesday, May 22nd, 9-11am PT - 12-2pm ET

Possible Sessions:

- Personal stories of race, class and gender - How does our conditioning as white, cis-men impact how we show up in our workplaces, movement spaces, and personal lives?
- The role of (cis, white) men in movements for redistribution - what is our lane? What does accountability look like?
- Family as a fractal - What do we aspire for our family cultures to look like? How, if at all, are we challenging white supremacy culture and patriarchal norms in our families? If we have a partner and/or children, if/how do we practice a power sharing approach through those relationships?
- Navigating relationships across differences - storytelling, offering support
- Budget buddies - in-depth review of our redistribution plans & budgets
- How to draw other (cis, white) men into movements for redistribution?

Bios



Garrett Neiman (he/him) is a husband, dad, son, brother, activist, donor organizer, nonprofit entrepreneur, writer, and more. He grew up in a managerial class family in Orange County, California, and became proximate to the owning class by attending elite private universities and running nonprofits. Professionally, Garrett has spent most of the past 15 years as the founding CEO of CollegeSpring (college access) and a co-creator of Liberation Ventures (power building toward reparations). In June of this year, Hachette published his debut book, which NPR Books praised for its direct yet compassionate take on how guys like him can share power and why that benefits all of us. Currently, Garrett is a co-convenor of the Perennial Sunflower Project, a field catalyst that is building the movement of white men who are committed to sharing and building power alongside marginalized people and communities throughout their lives.

Chris Newton (he/him) is an energy efficiency consultant, outdoor educator, and donor organizer. He grew up in a wonderful, loving owning-class family masquerading as being upper middle class, and had his world rocked when he learned at age 18 that he had inherited several million dollars. Chris is currently engaged in redistributing much of his inherited wealth to fund grassroots social justice organizations working for Black liberation and Indigenous sovereignty, with a particular focus on building the solidarity economy. As a result, his feelings of guilt and shame related to money have lessened, and he now often experiences feelings of lightness and joy, and the beginnings of a lived experience of his stake in collective liberation. Finding community in movements for wealth redistribution has been one of the greatest sources of meaning in Chris' life, and he's excited to explore ways to invite others - and particularly other wealthy, white men - into finding the same.

