

# MAKING THE MOST OF THE ANNE BRADEN ANTI-RACIST TRAINING PROGRAM:

*Thoughts, Tips & Advice from '08 Participants*

Highlighting  
Volunteer Pl

Welcome/Agenda  
Housing Organizing  
SF 8 Organizing  
Feedback from Evale  
Cultural Share  
Volunteer

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT  
+ PARTICIPATION

How to balance  
work + life

2

How do  
that in a way  
leadership

our whole selves

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# INTRODUCTION

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*“In every age, no matter how cruel the oppression carried on by those in power, there have been those who struggled for a different world.”*

**-Anne Braden**

*Greetings 2009 Anne Braden Participants,*

*You are entering the Anne Braden Program at a powerful time in history where there is simultaneously so much hope and oppression. In outlining the horrors of current-day imperialist casualties David Gilbert writes, “Close to one billion human beings suffer chronic hunger [and] lack access to clean drinking water. The price for future generations may be even more severe as the rapaciousness of this global frenzy for profits threatens the very ecological basis for sustaining human life of any scale.” Simultaneously, thousands of people are engaged in organizing efforts to “end wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, end wars against working class and immigrant communities at home, support a just and powerful community-led reconstruction in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, and halt the ecological destruction that faces our planet” among other struggles for justice and human rights. Clearly, there’s a long road ahead of us in struggling for a different world and it is critical that social justice movements continue to develop strategic visionary and accountable leadership. All this to say, thank you for taking time to invest in your political and leadership development through participating in the Anne Braden program... your work is so critical!*

*For many of us who went through the 2008 program it was a challenging, inspiring, life-affirming and even transformative leadership development experience. The political education sessions on Sundays take place in a community of love and resistance that provide the foundation for meaningful work outside sessions including relationship building, community organizing, mentorship, grassroots fundraising and more.*

*I got involved in the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program because I needed a space that would challenge and support my development as an anti-imperialist anti-racist organizer and ally. The readings, discussions and projects helped me explore my personal connections to histories of oppression and resistance and supported me in reaffirming a life-long commitment to anti-racist collective liberation and movement building. The organizing strategies I learned in the Braden Program strengthened my work with grassroots organizations like the Bay Area Childcare Collective. The emphasis on relationship building as a component of organizing work helped me to step up my leadership in the Collective’s efforts to recruit, orient and sustain new members who provide childcare to working class movement parents organizing for economic and racial justice in the Bay and beyond. As*

*with many things in life, I got out of it what I had the capacity to put into it; and that's where this zine comes in.*

*The hopes of this zine you're holding is that it will aid in creating continuity between program years and provide useful insights and tips from past participants on how to make the most of the political education sessions, volunteer placements, mentorship relationships, and the program in general. All of the info in this zine comes directly from participants in the 2008 Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program and was lovingly compiled by chatting over tea, hours of phone interviews and a few email exchanges.*

*In compiling this zine I've done my best to stay true to what folks communicated via phone and email, but these tips are not direct quotes. Also, not all the tips and ideas in this zine will apply to everyone, so pick and choose what ones make the most sense for you.*

*There were also several points that multiple people shared similar feedback on. When this happened I noted it by writing "x number of people said this" after the tip or advise, so that the reader will know it was important enough for many people to bring up.*

*I'd like to extend a big THANK YOU to the rad folks who gave their insights into this project: Alex Fischer, Amelia Bjorklund, Ari Lev Fornari, Berkeley Carnine, Billay Tania, Dendron Utter, Dixie Block, Jamie Gooley, Jesse Carr, Jonah Daniel, Kelly Densmore, Linda Ely, Morgan Bassichis, Nina Rizzo, Ourania Tserotas, Philipe Lonestar, Ryan Winell, Rebecca Tumposky, Sarolta Cump, Shannon Stewart, Tev Monnin, Thomas Arndt, Will Dominie. And lastly, a HUGE thank you to Paulina Nowicka for dedicating hours of layout expertise to make this project possible.*

*Love & Solidarity,  
Ari Clemenzi*

#### **NOTES:**

1. Text taken from the Introduction to Catalyst Project's 2008 Annual Report.
2. Fundraising will come up in the second half of the program and additional readings and tools will be provided on that, so it's not covered in this zine.
3. A "zine" is a mini-magazine or booklet that is usually self-published and distributed for free or low-cost.
4. David Gilbert (2008) *A System Within the System: The Prison Industrial Complex and Imperialism*. Printed in Abolition Now! Ten years of strategy and struggle against the prison industrial complex by the CR10 Publications Collective

# BEFORE THE PROGRAM

## **What tips do you have on assessing the time commitment to the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program?**

Intentionally cut back other activities. Be prepared to dedicate 12-16 hours a week to this program. (6 people said this.)

Figure out what your time commitment is and understand how you are going to fit the Braden Program into your schedule: sessions, readings, volunteer placement, mentor meetings, having time to process with people

It might have helped me to think of it like taking an intensive college course. I think the workload is comparable.

Be prepared to have a lot going on in that time.

## **What about planning ahead to make enough time for the program?**

Really try to prioritize not missing any of the Sunday sessions. I didn't anticipate how much I'd want to be part of all of them.

Make extra space in your life... not just during the political education sessions but time to be really on top of the readings. The readings really led my learning in the program. If I didn't have the reading time it wouldn't have been as relevant. (2 people said this.)

It was helpful to figure out early on that the political education sessions on Sunday was all I was doing on Sunday!

## **Take time to reflect and clarify**

Take time to be aware of why you are doing this program. What brings you into this program and into this place? Will you be willing to make changes in yourself and your work from this experience? Will you be able to do something with all this information? That is the whole point.

Think about your own story, where you come from and how you got politicized around race and racism.

Reflect on what your goals are for participating in the program and what you hope to gain from this experience. Some of this reflection is captured in the application process so it may be helpful to review your application.

Think about people who have influenced you in terms of understanding oppression.



Think about organizations you are already involved in and reflect on what kind of goals you have for being involved in the groups you are already in? Keeping this in mind allowed me to go into the Braden Program with these things in mind so I kept them in relation to each other.

### **How did you involve and inform your political communities about your participation in the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program?**

I told lots of folks [in the Organization I work with] so that members of the community would help prepare the way for conversations we may have or actions we may do as a result of what I brought back from the Braden Program.

I checked in with members of my collectives one to one about what they thought of the Catalyst Project to see if they thought it would be relevant to our work. I got community investment in my involvement in this program.

Catalyst has a particular way that they address racism and I felt that if I was going to invest all of this time then I wanted to make sure that folks were down with this organizing model. This meant dealing with initial caution and then general excitement that I was taking time to do the Braden Program.

### **How did you involve and inform your personal communities about your participation in the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program?**

The acceptance email Catalyst sent out acknowledged that it could be hard to be in dialogue with folks who applied but didn't get in to the program and may be feeling excluded.

Before the program consider having discussions with these folks in your life who applied and didn't get in. Are there ways to integrate the learning you are doing and have conversations with folks outside the program?

Going through a large transformative experience with a group of folks while you are

still around folks outside of the program can be hard to navigate. Open sessions were helpful in navigating this, as I invited people in my organization and community to come.

Do some thinking and planning on ways you can take conversations from the Braden Program and make them accessible to larger groups of folks.

Start talking it up with folks in your life and gain perspective on who can play support roles, who is down to talk stuff out with you, who is not. This way you can share with folks who want info and not burden folks who aren't into it. (4 people said this.)

Be prepared to talk about the program with a lot of people. I kept getting asked how it's going and what I was learning. Folks in my life were curious and solicited me to share.

Be clear with your community about having limited capacity over the next 5 months.

For me, there needed to be a shift in recognizing how people in my family could participate in multiple ways. Some folks hadn't talked with their families about anti-racism work or how to link this to all of the readings and processes we're doing. How does letting folks know about this work help to build the movement.

### **How did you plan for the Sunday political education sessions?**

I prioritized making every Sunday session. I got more out of it when "that is what I did on Sunday" instead of rushing there from somewhere else. Walk in really ready for it instead of needing an hour to settle into the space.

Take some time before the training to breathe, walk, write, or sit and think; some time for centering and focusing. Don't pack the Sunday session into an already full day or rush there from some other place.

If the program ends at 8pm don't make plans for 8:15 because you may want to hang out, help clean up or talk with folks.

If you do make plans for after the program on Sunday make them with a supportive grounding person.

Don't make plans to do stuff after the sessions that are vastly energetically different than the program. I liked to make plans to hang out with folks in the program or just one friend.

### **What did you do to prepare yourself for the content of the program?**

The most helpful thing for me in preparing was to have structured time during the week to do readings. I felt more connected to the training when I had done the readings.

I made time to do the pre reading given out by Catalyst. It really enhanced my experience to understand Catalyst and where they were coming from.

In the months or weeks leading up to the program refresh yourself on basic issues of racism in the US. This can also help with getting back into more academic reading.

### **How did you prepare emotionally to participate in the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program?**

It was emotionally intense and took a lot of emotional energy that was good for me but challenging.

Think about what you need to feel emotionally prepared to do this work.

It was helpful for me to identify a few folks not in the program to process and share with. I shared what we were doing in the program, and got extra feedback from outside of the group that allowed me to expand and continue on with those discussions. This was important because the sessions felt so fresh and sometimes there was more I wanted to say and talk about. It was helpful to have that support outside of the program.

Create a self-care plan so you don't get burnt out.

Create mental space after the workshop on Sunday. I didn't have much mental space to do other things because my brain was occupied by everything going on in the session. It was helpful to have down time to go to the gym or do something physical that allowed the mental space to work through things.

Get a sense ahead of time what you'll be doing in the sessions; if there will be a lot of movement, or a lot of sitting, get a general idea of how the topic will be approached.

Acknowledge and expect it to be a big deal ahead of time... really welcome it into your life and how it may impact you. Do whatever you do to welcome something new and big into your life: imagine it, have a ritual, or just think about it a lot.

Alert your support network and community that you'll be going through this program and may be out of touch but still need support. It would have been helpful to alert folks to opportunities to plug in for example, I wanted folks to come through to the open sessions.

Don't be afraid to get messy. In this program everything was great but there was a tendency to stay in a safe range that was non-confrontational. That was different for me doing anti-racist work, different and helpful, and it wouldn't have been bad to have more vulnerability in that space.

Push yourself to be vulnerable. When some folks pushed themselves to be vulnerable there was a lot of care in the room. (2 people said this.)

### **What other tips can you share for preparing to make the most of the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program?**

Talk to past participants. If you don't know any and would like to talk to someone, ask Catalyst staff.

Do the readings little by little. I started reading by Wednesday and would do them little by little all week.

Take the class with a friend if possible.

I was especially grateful to participants who were able to use their connections to local organizations to plug the rest of the group into campaigns that were happening. It seems like the daily relationship building and organizing that we're already doing is great preparation for the program.

We have increased the number of hours we're telling people to expect in the application and program overview.

# DURING THE PROGRAM

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## **What worked well for you overall?**

Participating fully by reading the materials, showing up for sessions, being open to learning and following through with my volunteer placement.

Showing up feeling prepared.

It was helpful to go into the program knowing there was stuff I wasn't necessarily going to like or get that much out of; but still being open to going through the process, being open to it and being surprised at where I got stuff out of it. I was surprised by where I got more inspiration or where topics hit home.

Trust the people in the program; that is where unexpected healing came from for me. I found I was less angry at other white folks and was able to go into white spaces in a more effective way because I wasn't coming from a space of 'you all suck' but about building people power.

## **What advice do you have about how to bring back parts of the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program to your community?**

Think ahead about how this training stems out into our larger communities.

Figure out what other folks want to learn from the training and find ways to share that with them. I did readings with people in my community and we went to open events together. (2 people said this.)

It could have been useful to create opportunities to write more about our experiences in the training; a 'zine project, internet update or blog to share with our networks all over the country and all over the world. Think about these types of projects as ways to bring folks in and help yourself translate what you're learning into your life more.

Tell folks outside the program about what you're learning and listen to what their responses are. In particular, talk with folks of color in your life about the program.

Having folks within the program to talk to outside the program was really helpful. (3 people said this.)

Find ways to be doing anti-racist work throughout the program. I made a reader and organized a retreat for my collective. This gave a constant feedback cycle and provided support around the training.

Every week I organized a 15-minute exercise for staff at my work based off of learning from the ABP. This was a great way to immediately incorporate what I was learning.

Find ways to include your family.

I gave some of the reading material to my mom and it was cool to share resources with her and talk about it. It was special and we had some good conversations about it. It was cool for her to come to the closing ceremony after so many shared conversations.

### **What can you share about getting support when you needed it?**

Utilize systems set up by the leadership team to get support. Also use this opportunity to create and expand your support networks.

The culture of being white is individualistic... but I noticed there was a way in other political education spaces where folks would ask for support if they needed help with the readings or time management. I noticed that some folks felt overwhelmed by the work or needed some level of support and didn't feel entitled to ask for it. So my advice is to please put out what you need. The worst they can say is that they don't have the capacity to help out. Put forward your needs to be getting intense leadership development, even if it's an article you read and you want to chat about it. Catalyst staff gave out their numbers so call the facilitators and just talk through it. It's an unusual opportunity to be able to do that with folks. Take literally the support that facilitators put forward and ask for what you need.

There wasn't always space on Sundays to process all that we were working through so be sure to find folks to talk with outside of the program. (3 people said this.)

### **What advice do you have for participating in the political education sessions?**

Be aware of your class background... people didn't bring up class a lot because it was often invisible to them. Take on what privileges you own and explore them.

Certain discussions need to have race as the focal lens and look at the implications of race. We're all facing multiple oppressions so it can be easy to focus on being a woman, disabled, etc. but really take on race... because it can be hard to do.

Relate everything back to white supremacy. Ask how everything you're learning about fits in with white supremacy.

Realize the privilege of being in the Anne Braden Program. This is a space that not everyone has access to or time to do. It's a privilege to be in this group.

I tried to be really open and came into every session not knowing where it was going to go, but trusting and allowing myself to be in the space. (2 people said this.)

I tried to stay in the room mentally and physically to try to hold everything that was going on for folks and for myself.

I managed my ADD so I wasn't checked out.

### **What insights do you have about the readings?**

*It was helpful to reflect on how the readings connect to my own life and practices.*

Do the readings! You get a lot more out of it. That is something you can share with people, something you can copy and give to people.

I would carry each week's reading around with me all week to have it on me and ready to read.

Come to the sessions with questions or thoughts on the readings or the subjects they cover.

I gave myself a lot of time to read. I'm a slow reader and a slow learner so being conscious of time was helpful to me. I didn't feel stressed and that was awesome.

Readings are hard for me and I learn better when I talk through stuff. So I got together with someone in-between the sessions and I felt more prepared when we went through readings.

### **What can folks do to plan for a lifetime of organizing for collective liberation even as they are going through the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program?**

Do some thinking about why you want to be an organizer. Why do you care about developing yourself as an anti-racist organizer? How does this program fit in this moment in your life? Spending some time thinking or writing about these questions can help you develop specific goals and figure out places where you can ask for help.

Stay grounded and connected to your everyday. When you are going through something as short and intense as this it's easy to forget where it fits into your larger perspective and goals. So find ways to keep yourself grounded in where this fits in to your larger life/goals.

Use the program to make bigger goals for yourself for later on and outside the program. I kept looking at all this info and thinking that eventually I'll use this info to do anti-racist organizing with white folks. Take this info and put it in a place of purpose, not just "oh this is cool to talk about."

Come into the program with an understanding that it can be a long-term thing... sub groups have formed and there are things that will continue on after the program. I hadn't planned on having things go on. Remember that it can be bigger than the four months.

### **What can you say about bringing your whole self to the work?**

Really be honest. There were so many things that I held back from saying during the first session and I feel like it would have been helpful to bring it up. Bring it all. (3 people said this.)

Bring your full self to each training.

Trust and let go. It's a lot to ask because trust is built and learned, but that's when folks get the most out of it. I've been really traumatized in groups; have a hard time in groups. I could have gotten more out of the program but I held myself back because of ego or old wounds.

### **What about relationship building?**

The relationship building was definitely not inconsequential to the workshop itself. There were a lot of important bonds and relationships that came out of that.

Get together with folks over the course of the program and make plans to see each other outside of the program at actions. Go out for drinks afterwards.

It was great meeting with my "root group" outside of the regular sessions. Maybe cook together beforehand if it's your turn to bring food. (2 people said this.)

Take time and initiative to connect with folks afterwards and outside the program. Invite someone to sit down for coffee. I didn't have any conversation without interesting stuff popping up. It built on the learning in the program. (3 people said this.)

I think it's a good idea to make arrangements to travel to and from the sessions with a buddy (carpooling or BARTing). It's nice to have someone to help stay accountable for showing up on time and showing up at all... I'm sure most of us had at least one week when we didn't really feel like going. It's also nice to have someone to chat or debrief with on the way home.

Really connect with and take time to follow up with the facilitators. Stuff would come up and I'd talk with Catalyst staff and those would be special and important conversations. They were excited to go deeper and talk so delve into those folks as well.

Don't assume community is automatic; you have to be intentional about building it.

Take advantage of break times to get to know folks.

Learn people's names.

### **A lot of folks talked about the importance of reflecting on and documenting their experience in the program. What did you do outside of sessions to continue learning from the material and record your experience?**

I did a lot of creative writing, poetry and journaling. This helped bring parts of my personal life into the things we were talking about. I reflected on things we talked about in the program and it strengthened me in a lot of ways.

Some friends and I write confessions books and trade them. I would journal about what came up with the topics we're learning. This is part of the idealized self and integrating that process more throughout.

I wish I had written more reflections on the experience and on what was being brought up... not everything that was brought up was able to talk about. Make time to reflect and process as needed: with a friend, writing etc.

I worked at integrating writing and music into my process. Deal with what comes up for you in the program creatively.

I gave myself time to sit with things. I recommend journaling and taking time to process readings after reading them.

### **How can folks practice holistic self-care while in the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program?**

Go to the beach or do something physical before coming into meetings.

Think about whatever makes being emotionally connected possible for you.

Spend time with friends you can talk with. Leave time and space around what comes up in the program for conversation with extended family. (2 people said this.)

I tried really hard to take care of myself in ways that I know revitalize me because it felt so important for me to be present in the actual sessions. For several days before the sessions I would be really gentle with myself so I wouldn't get sick or feel "not there".

I started breaking a lot of bottles on the train tracks during the program, which is

what I do when I feel angry and overwhelmed by the world and that was helpful.

Personally I liked to not do anything else on Sundays. I would just finish up readings and eat a good breakfast. I'd leave that time on Sundays before the program open and allow space for whatever I needed to get prepared.

I found that I needed to be well rested so I actually made sure I could go to bed on Saturday night or sleep in. Days I didn't have that rest I had a hard time handling it.

Take care of your body. Wear comfy clothes, don't feel bad about having to get up, stand, stretch etc.

Bring a snack or two. This work makes people hungry!

Do a scan of your body... listen to what your body is telling you. We need a holistic analysis and that is about listening to our bodies. For me somatic practice has been helpful.

### **What would you have done differently overall?**

I would have gotten acquainted with the structure and what topics would be addressed when. (2 people said this.)

Try to come with an open mind. Think about assumptions you bring and try to leave some of them at the door so you can be fully present.

I would not have missed a class. I missed one and it really caused an uncomfortable break in the program. It was next to another break and so it felt too long.

It would have been nice to be in the Catalyst office more. I would have come by to visit the office and be around more outside of meetings. It was helpful to be in the space in a different way.

### **What would you have done differently in regards to the readings?**

I would have done some of the readings ahead of time.

Even if I couldn't do all of the readings I would have at least scheduled a time do some and not judge myself for not being able to do all of the readings all of the time. (3 people said this.)

### **What would you have done differently as far as relationship building?**

I wished I had involved folks early on in the program about what they were doing and set up a way to report back or talk about it. By the end I had done that but I wanted to be doing it all the way through. As a result, I felt disconnected and had to do a lot of catching up with folks

Catalyst did a great job of bringing in folks from different experiences and I wanted to expand who I was in contact with and learning from. I would have tried to have more one-to-one time with folks during the program. (4 people said this.)

I would have opened up more in class to other people. I felt very unsure and judged in the group. There were some people that still after the 4 months I didn't get to talk with very much.

I would have checked in with folks who missed meetings and found ways to support folks who couldn't make it. I could have called or emailed them to let them know I

missed seeing them. I could have conversations like, “we talked about this and it reminded me of when you said that...” Hold pieces of conversations so you can reinforce and appreciate folks in the group in different ways.

**What would you have done differently with your community?**

I found it difficult with one friend who wanted to get into the program and hadn't. We couldn't have in depth conversation about the material and I struggled with how to extend this info and the sense of the experience to my larger communities.

I could have shared session notes, but didn't do that much.

I would have figured out how to bring back what I was learning to my community and put more energy into that before, during and after the program. (2 people said this.)

I would have told more folks outside of the Bay / program about going into it so they could help me or be more a part of the process.

**What would you have done differently to take care of yourself during the program?**

I would have scaled down work commitments.

A couple times I came in hung over and that made it hard to function as well as I could have. I don't want to criminalize that behavior, but think about how it will impact your ability to participate.

I wonder if my own pretty intense desire for friendship and acceptance may have distorted my idea of how to best contribute to creating a space in which we could build movement. In hindsight, I think I mostly just tried really hard to feel comfortable and to make others comfortable. I wonder whether I could have been more real with folks; less smiley and more honest about my own struggles and dissatisfactions, even if that wasn't going to make me friends.

**What would you have done differently to reflect on and record your experience in the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program?**

I would have done guided writing, journaling or conversation with someone. (3 people said this.)

Something I could have done was having a mid-way evaluation of myself. Am I living out my intention in this space? Am I doing what I need to do to get the most out of this training? Even if it was 10 minutes somewhere around the midpoint or at the 1/3 way point. Is this working for me? Why or why not? What do I need to do to make the most of this? It goes so fast it seems easy for weeks to roll by without asking that question. It could even happen during a break in the program.

The small disappointments coming out of the program was the lack of retention of facts, moments of history etc. Either a 'zine or writing or timeline could have helped with this. (2 people said this.)

**What would you have done differently to bring your whole self to the work?**

I would have brought more of myself in the beginning.

I would have forced myself to speak out more in the group settings. I already knew this was a challenge for me but I wanted to do more.

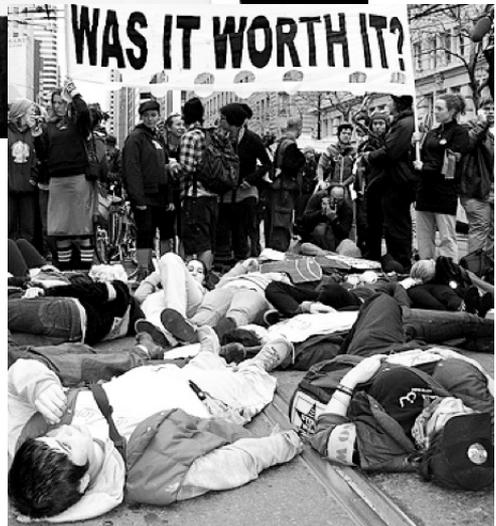
I wanted to share myself more with participants in the program. Don't be scared to share what is going on for you. Let your guard down and trust.

**What would you have done differently as far as time management?**

I would leave more of time for the program.

With that in mind make good use of Saturday (the one rest day I had each week) so I was prepared and not exhausted or hung over. (2 people said this.)

When I applied for the program I didn't know I would be going to grad school and leaving in June. The fact I left made my volunteer placement less useful because it wasn't going to be local to me anymore. I had to stop just as we were getting to know each other.





## **From your experience, what advice would you share about scheduling to meet up with your mentor?**

Practice proactive scheduling; don't let it fall by the wayside.

Make sure your meetings are at least 1.5 to 2 hours long. I needed time for us to get to know each other as people and then also talk about the issues at hand. An hour was not long enough.

Try to meet every Tuesday or set up a regular schedule.

Don't be afraid to contact them and don't wait! They are really busy and may have a hard time finding time to get together. (3 people said this.)

## **What general advice do you have for planning for the mentorship part of the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program?**

Be flexible and go with what works. Trying to force things; to have a dinner date when pressed for time can be hard. Try to respect each other's time.

Definitely read Paul Kivel's article specifically about what a mentor is and why people do it. That is a new concept for a lot of (white) folks. What the hell is a mentor anyway and why would I need one? Why would someone want to be one? Give yourself a chance to think about why someone would want to mentor and why they may have signed up.

The day before we met I thought about what I wanted out of the experience. I asked myself how a mentor could be helpful? And I thought about what questions I wanted to ask my mentor. (2 people said this.)

## **How did you and your mentor spend time together?**

There are lots of ways to build relationships: coffee is one; being out in the world together is another. My mentor and I went to a protest, a fundraiser and watched a movie together.

I went to my mentor's home and walked around her neighborhood.

We would just talk informally.

Honor your mentor as a person and learn more about them and their experiences.

We swapped stories about the organization we both worked with. We discussed dealing with misogyny and talked about accountability with those issues.

I talked about myself and got a balance of listening; dialoguing. It was helpful to un-

derstand that my mentor had stuff to learn from and share with me as well. Give your mentor the opportunity to be invested in you in a similar way as you are in them.

I asked my mentor what made them interested in being a mentor. What made them sign up to do it? Why are they there? That helped ease some of the strain of the connection. It was a bit weird at first.

My mentor was around at my volunteer placement when I was there and the casualness worked great.

We mainly talked about personal stuff impacted by the program. We discussed anti-racism in other areas of our lives including in our job choices. A lot of times there was no easy answer to these questions but we did a lot of talking about it.

My mentor and I talked about the program but also opened the conversation to broader topics: housemates, new things I was noticing in my life specific to the program but in a broader sense.

I think my mentor and I had a good balance between me talking about what I'm up to and getting feedback, and her sharing about her activism so I could learn from her.

We talked a lot about what I was learning in the program and how that was similar or dissimilar to organizing and political education she had been a part of in the 1970's and '80's.

My mentor and I went on a road trip to visit a political prisoner we have both been in contact with.

Although it felt weird at first I really appreciated how we spent time catching each other up on our lives in general before delving into political discussions. And often-times we would find anti-oppression themes in the common everyday experiences we shared with each other.

### **What tips do you have for mentees?**

Have fun!

Do more than just meet for coffee together. Check out events.

Don't be shy to send your mentor an email or call to follow up.

Don't worry about saying things the wrong way. Just learn from the experience.

Don't get intimidated by someone who may be older or more experienced.

Articulate your goals for the mentorship relationship. It was helpful to articulate those and keep them in mind during the course of the relationship.

Meet with each other as soon as possible.

Approach the relationship with intentionality and structure.

Bring questions from the program to talk through with your mentor.

As a logistical thing, consider the space you meet in. How will you be most focused and be able to receive most guidance. The times that I met with my mentor in a public place were a lot better than other times because both of us live with lots of people.

### **What advice do you have on getting to know your mentor as a person and as an organizer?**

It could have helped to read more about the organizing projects my mentor was

involved in. Getting a better sense of what he was up to would have allowed me to get a sense of what I could have gotten from meetings with him. Read about their organization, any articles they wrote; get on the same page.

Understand at the beginning why they chose to be a mentor and what they want to get out of it and what you want to get out of it so you don't feel like a burden.

Don't be afraid to ask them personal questions about their life, who they are, how they got into their work, mistakes they made, how they set up their lifestyle to be conducive to organizing.

I attended events my mentor organized and this gave insight into who she is as a person; the organizing she does; ways she's invested in the community. I meet with her family and this allowed me to get to know a more layers and ask a lot of questions

My mentor was vulnerable at different points and this helped; she would remember her husband and talk about how she was motivated by her relationships with folks. It was helpful to think about why mentors are involved in what they are involved in.

### **What about having more than one mentor?**

I didn't get that much from my assigned mentor so I looked to other folks in the volunteer placement and some folks in the program as well.

Some relationships are strategic, some are healing, and some are about experiential learning that happens in the Braden program. If you don't get all that you're looking for from your mentor you can look for the other part in someone else. (4 people said this.)

### **What advice do you have about clarifying what you want from the experience?**

I didn't have a lot of emotional process with the person and I didn't expect that right away, but I think this should be factored in. Ask yourself what you need from your mentor emotionally. How will you deal with insecurities that come up?

Set some clear goals and communicate those clearly. Talk about your goals in the first meeting. (2 people said this.)

### **What would you have done differently?**

Meetings with my mentor were hard to schedule. If I did it again I would get on scheduling right away and that was hard. (5 people said this.)

I would have come into it with a better understanding of what I wanted out of it. By the second meeting I had a list of questions and topics to talk about. (2 people said this.)

We only met once and the other times I got stood up by my mentor. I'm not sure what the deal was but it was not the best experience.

I was not sure what to do with mentorship because I didn't have mentors in my life. I would have been more intentional about what I wanted.

I would have gotten more out of it if the person were from a different generation than me. That is something I crave so much. So I was disappointed... but I could have had that disappointment and then gotten to a place where I could learn from them. Work with it. Don't expect mentorship to be from older generations.

In retrospect I would have liked to have a planned outing or project to work on with them rather than just tea and talking.

I would have worked harder to create a relationship with my mentor.

Structure would have helped. (3 people said this.)

I encourage folks to see their mentor as a source of support and not be super concerned with only talking about thing “worthy of mentorship”.

I had to get over ideas of “how to act” or what to do. It took me a while to adjust to it.

### **What did you get out of the mentorship experience?**

I was able to get support and perspective as someone who was new to the bay area, as someone who was working on similar issues.

She helped me get better at saying no and reminded me that it’s ok to say no to things when I don’t have the capacity to do them.

My mentor and I were matched up well and it was fun to hang out with her and her family. We just had good conversations. It doesn’t have to be something to trip about it. It doesn’t have to be a super structured thing.

My mentor was good at strategizing and asked questions in the first session that stumped me and I didn’t have the framework to respond to: questions about forming an organization, who do I work with, who I was in close political unity with and if I think about structure for that? As I thought more about these questions I realized how important they were.

### **Planning beyond the program with your mentor:**

Set clear boundaries with your mentor towards the end of the program about if your relationship will continue.

Keep in mind that after the 3 meetings you and them have a choice to keep meeting or not. If you want it to continue ask them if they have the capacity to do that. Communicate about what you want. Be prepared that they may say no and don’t take it personally.

### **Any other reflections on your mentorship?**

It’s mentorship of an entire person and the person has signed up to be a mentor because it’s mutually beneficial. Don’t feel like you can only talk about how you are feeling about whiteness and white supremacy.

The mentoring experience was validating and rad!

# VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT

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## **Catalyst staff match participants with an organization for the volunteer placement based on participant interests and top choices. What advice do you have on thinking about what volunteer placements to list as a top choice?**

I loved my volunteer placement and intentionally chose a placement that was challenging.

Think about location: doing something East Bay was really important to me.

Chose a place you can see volunteering long-term.

I chose an organization I thought was a weakness of mine: never having lived in a city before I chose an organization that could help me understand urban issues better.

I chose an organization I already worked in coalition with. This was confusing but deepened my relationship with them. If you have an organization you already come across a lot it's good to try to choose them.

## **What advice do you have on scheduling time at your volunteer placement?**

Get a clear idea upfront of what hours they will need you there. The organization I worked with had given flexible hours but they mainly needed folks between 9 and 5 and I couldn't do that.

Ask the organization "when would it be MOST useful for you to have volunteers?"

Agree on expected number of hours and you can do more if you want to, but everyone knows what is going on.

Consistency. Try to go in the same day and time each week rather than trying to shuffle it and find 3 hours somewhere or shove it between a bunch of stuff.

## **What advice do you have on time management with the volunteer placement?**

Be realistic with your time. I went in trying to do everything I was already trying to do as well as the program and I had to cut back to make time for volunteer placement. (3 people said this.)

The volunteer placement can especially be a burden on working folks and not everyone has the time to do that.

Develop a weekly work plan so you have a meaningful work plan that fits your schedule.

A lot of organizations need a lot of help. Don't have a mentality of "I'm here through this anti-racist training so I have to sacrifice myself" be careful about white guilt and white supremacy culture of "if I don't do this nobody else will." I caught myself on these

things and talked with my site supervisor about it. Read the Tema Okun culture of white supremacy article as it relates to your internship.

### **What advice do you have about communication at your volunteer placement?**

Clear communication with volunteer supervisors is really important.

Be honest about what is hard about the placement.

Think about how to be explicit about your skills, background and what you have to offer from the beginning so they can plug you in a meaningful way. You can give them a resume to help them get acquainted with what skills you bring. (2 people said this.)

If there are things you really want to get out of your placement be clear about what they are and communicate them clearly and early on.

Pay attention to the needs of the organization as well as your needs. This is not the time for you to be learning new skills... it's not "teach me time"... it's not an internship but a volunteer placement.

Find a balance of asking questions and listening. It's ok to ask questions but also you're not there to take the time up of the organization.

Talk about your placement with your community outside of the Braden Program so you can reflect on it.

Be really proactive about communicating with people at your placement because they may be busy. If you are confused or unsure about something call or email them and be sure to follow up.

Schedule time to check back in and evaluate and get clarity. Ask "Am I doing what I'm supposed to be doing?"

I had to own up to what I had trouble with. I wrote a letter to the site supervisor and I tried to come from a place of love and excitement even though I was frustrated.

### **What advice do you have for taking on the work?**

Be ready to do anything! Do whatever they ask you to do even if it seems menial.

Ask a lot of questions. (2 people said this.)

Acknowledge that what you are doing is awesome and that folks are appreciative of what you're doing.

Spend as much time in the space of the organization as possible whether that's an office or an organizer's home.

There can be a lot of hesitation in taking on leadership roles when you're new to an organization and I think it's about negotiating that. Don't be afraid to use your skills to support the organization. (2 people said this.)

I let myself gravitate to where my strengths were: planning an arts event. Meanwhile I tried to balance this by keeping my white privilege in check.

### **Think Big Picture**

Really understand how the tasks you're given fit into the larger vision of the organization and how that fits into your goal of volunteering. Take the small things and fit

them into the big picture.

Be patient with the organization and their goals. See the full picture of the organization and understand that the work extends far beyond the 4 months of Catalyst training. That helped me have perspective about doing something that had value: building a relationship with an organization that was going to be around.

Try to do the full 6-hours whenever you can... that way you'll have more time to see folks doing what they do.

Don't try to define what you are going to do. Watch and wait. Try to understand the overall campaign.

### **Work With Integrity**

There can be tons of drama around organizing projects and you don't have to get sucked up in it. Participate in ways that are productive and remember that you don't have to get in a tizzy about it.

Don't side with anyone. BE NEUTRAL. If you're working in communities who have been fucked over and have internalized some oppression especially, be neutral where there is tension and think of the long-term vision.

### **Practice Accountability**

On the accountability tip: only say yes to things you can actually take on and say no to stuff you can't do. Do what you say and say only what you can do.

Be as independent as possible. Take a task and do it and having confidence that you're not burdening folks.

You're going to fuck up and that's fine. You'll say things that you'll freak out about or get corrected on and that's ok. Just do your best and remain open. If you do something that isn't the best thing ever fix it: acknowledge it; own it; learn from it and move on. You don't have to process it 8,000 times.

Own up to your insecurities. I had thoughts like "I'm not able to do a good enough job." Instead of being insecure just own up to what you are and aren't able to do. That let me express a lot more appreciation and love for the organization.

### **Be Mindful of the Organization's Internal Culture**

Be sure to check out the internal culture of wherever you are going to.

I was like wallpaper for a while. Respect the environment and community that is being created by the organization and community. Follow that lead. I watched how members and organizers interacted, and how member organizers interacted. I watched more before I jumped into it.

Take social cues from folks in the office. For example, if folks are dressing up to come to work then look clean. If it's not ok to swear in the office don't do it.

Constantly look for support and re-evaluate. Find allies to help you navigate the process.

The organization I was placed with was in crisis. I basically ended up hanging out with my site supervisor and did a bunch of political self-education. It was good to



realize this is a real situation and learn about what it means to do volunteer work with an organization in crisis and how you can still engage and provide support when it's like that.

**What advice do you have about building relationships at your volunteer placement?**

Introduce yourself and talk to everybody at the organization.

Trust is built slowly and takes a lot of time. Be neutral if there is any tension.

Take time to build relationships with the organizers, members, and the larger community.

Be a really good listener.

Be open to comments, criticism and feedback.

Have an in-person meeting with the coordinator to facilitate really clear communication especially if you're at an organization you've already been working with. Have meetings with your site supervisor and Catalyst folks to close the communication loop.

Go to the organization's actions. Be out in the community and see how folks respond to the organization and to the organizers.



### **What did you find helpful about your placement?**

I have a job working solo so it was great to go into a volunteer placement where there were people around I could work with.

I hadn't lived in a place where gentrification was an issue. I wanted a place that would orient me to the Bay Area where I could get something new instead of what I already know about and I was able to get that from my volunteer placement. Now I'm able to describe what gentrification is and how it happens.

What I got out of it during the program itself was exactly what I wanted: it just took longer than the scope of the program. My hope is that folks choose an organization they will continue some type of connection with.

My volunteer placement gave me an opportunity to ground my politics around abolition in the experiences of those most impacted by those situations.

In my working group we were able to have discussions about our work and how it relates to class and gender and race.

I got a jump on it by volunteering with the organization I was placed with for a year

before the Braden Program. The formal structure of the placement provided a good space to ask more questions.

I found a mentorship aspect in my volunteer placement by taking advantage of folks within the organization.

I got experience pairing research with on the ground organizing and I'm still working with my placement organization.

**What, if anything, would you do differently?**

I may have tried to get placed doing something I was already working on.

There weren't regular check-ins with my site supervisor, but that would have been helpful.

I had no capacity for the volunteer placement and felt I could just do office work. Next time I would think about specific admin skills I wanted to develop and ask to do that.

I might have switched my placement not because it wasn't a good spot but because I couldn't give as much time as they wanted.

I wished I could have been placed with another Braden participant so we could bounce ideas off of each other and expand ideas of how to benefit the organization.

I don't think I made the most of my volunteer placement. I wish I had communicated more with my site supervisor.

I think something I could have done would have been to schedule a specific weekly block of time to do the volunteer placement, instead of trying to fit it in here and there.

I would not have stayed with organization I was already working with. Instead, I would have been more organizationally polyamorous.

It would have helped to be present with understanding the question of why support work and solidarity work, as a white person is so important. It hit me that I hadn't been grappling with that until late in the program.

**What advice do you have on reflecting on your volunteer placement?**

Find ways to reflect early and often.

Ask for support if you need it from either the supervisor at the placement or someone at Catalyst.

Do a mid-way assessment of "Am I getting what I need? Do I need to do something differently?" (2 people said this.)

**General Tips**

Ask about literature the organization has created and READ IT!

Approach the volunteer placement with intentionality and structure.

Enjoy it! Have fun! Don't let it stress you out!

Gain real real clarity about what your role is.

## **Are there any other tips and advice you have for how folks can make the most of the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program?**

Come from a place of love

Come into the program with love and openness. Love yourself, the community you come from. Come with acceptance for where you are at and a willingness and desire to change and transform.

Really embody non-competitiveness. Focus on where you are at as a process. It's not about being a better activist/ally/organizer THAN anyone else... it's about learning more.

Be good to yourself and practice self-love. Practice affirming and appreciating yourself and others in the program.

## **Make the connection personal**

Relate the reading and discussions to your personal life and the people in your life.

Retrace some of your steps to uncover some of the things you couldn't see before. Find past points where your racism came out perhaps because you were younger or couldn't see it before.

## **Bring it home**

Be willing to bring this back home. Connect with your family and folks you grew up with.

Ask yourself if you are willing to go back home and do anti-racism work where you come from.

Immediately set up anti-racist organizing projects outside of the program. It can be something really small; don't be intimidated by it. For example, do an hour-long presentation to your work about your involvement in the program. (2 people said this.)

## **Get and give support**

Utilize each other and the leadership team as support people. Just talk to folks! (3 people said this.)

Do at least one buddy check in outside the group.

Ask clarifying questions if/when you don't understand stuff. Other folks probably have similar questions.

I came in feeling like I didn't belong here and that was hard for me. There were a lot of

folks that felt that at some point for whatever reason and this feeling is really connected to all of the stuff we are trying to unravel in the program. If that comes up for you really know it is probably a shared experience and it doesn't have to feel so isolating.

Treat your participation in this program as a responsibility and a special and important time. If there is anything that is not quite clicking for you, it is a time to work to address those things. For example, if you're not getting the readings done talk to someone about that. If an aspect isn't working for you talk to someone. The more you can articulate your goals and be attentive to taking care of your needs and putting them into a framework of developing yourself as a white anti-racist person the more everyone and you will benefit.

### **Take care of yourself**

Bring a pillow... those chairs are not comfy!

Pace yourself. This will stir up a lot of stuff. You don't need to deal with it all in the 4 months of the program. This is an intro and you can continue to deal with stuff after the program.

For me Sundays were the highlight of my week. I felt supported and grounded, stimulated, excited and inspired there and it was hard to leave alone on Sundays when I got the feeling that other folks were going home to family/friends where they had a chance to process. I might recommend setting up an opportunity for social stuff on Sundays after the training.

Get support; don't feel like you have to hold it together by yourself. Stay in communication with your buddy, root group, and program leaders.

Plan something fun and rejuvenating for the sessions/weekends it skips. If there are any breaks plan a trip or do something relaxing and rejuvenating. Idea: go out of town to write and rest.

Go dancing.

### **Remember, We're In It for the Long Haul**

Think of yourselves as in the movement over the long haul. A lot of us can get into a headspace of "we have to end all of this oppression right now." Don't think of it that way. Instead ask, "how am I going to have this be part of something I'm going to do for my entire lifetime?" Realistically we won't end it all tomorrow so have a concept of sustainability and what you are working towards.

These 4 months are your time to learn how to be a more powerful anti-racist organizer. Focus on how to make it infused into your life and work.

### **Set Clear Goals For Yourself**

Have clear goals for yourself that you can articulate at the beginning. Have a one to one with at least one of the program coordinators or with a mentor.

Identify one or two concrete skills with volunteer placement even if you only have capacity to do admin work. What do you want as far as personal development goals?

Can you push yourself to speak more in front of groups or to build with folks one on one?



What do you want as far as organizing skills? Do you want to be learning about media work, get better at asking folks to do movement work, or come to support actions?

What are your technical goals? Do you want to learn about layout, or computer skills?

What are your political education goals? Do you want to be able to articulate an argument in an article or identify a few key political questions from readings?

Have the focus be to deepen your anti-racist praxis as a white person... if you can't do it exactly like that its ok and you can still have a deep experience in the program. But this still needs to be your focus.

### **Proactively Build Relationships**

Try to have a one on one with at least 5 of the participants in the program during the program. (2 people said this.)

Don't be intimidated by the organizers! Be able to interact with them on a normal and friendly level

Find ways to blend Anne Braden with the rest of your life. Don't let it become a separate or cliquish thing. Introduce Braden folks to your community. Find folks you are involved in current organizing with and talk about the issues coming up for you so you don't feel isolated in your organizing or projects.

Step up to organize activities outside of the program for relationship building. It could be that there are 1 or 2 folks who are excited about being social coordinators of some type... and there may be more Sundays where one of the announcements is for meeting up after.

Think about how you might talk to people who applied and didn't get in about the program because it can be a little awkward. It's important to use this opportunity to relate and reach out to folks so it's not seen as elitist or breeding awkwardness. Think ahead about how you'll talk about the program. Try out what you might say in these circumstances ahead of time.

**NO ONE IS  
ILLEGAL!**

**¡Ningún  
ser humano  
es ilegal!**

**socialist  
Worker**  **Obrero  
Socialista**

**DEPORTATIO**

Se ve

Se siente

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esta

Presente

## General Advice

Do the readings. (Yes it's a lot, do it anyway.)

Be on time if not early.

Make BANGIN' food! Coordinate food the way you might coordinate the readings; think about how important sustaining people with food is to organizing. Make things you feel will nourish people.

Keep a journal of your experience.

Don't be afraid to critique the program; take that on as part of the responsibility of being in the program. Have conversations with the organizers in addition to the forums provided to give feedback.

Notice the way that flirting affects your participation in the group and your ability to be attentive and in tuned to the group.

Learn about deaf culture before coming into the group. Even if there's not any deaf folks in the group. If there is a deaf person be sure to talk to them and use the interpreter.

Be super open! There is a lot of variety in the teaching techniques.

Be attentive to both the urgency of the work and the urgency inside ourselves of figuring stuff out and getting answers right away. But balance that with slowness and depth and the time we need to take and can take in the work.

Be as present as possible. It sounds like a long time but it goes fast! I changed more in those 4 months than any other time period.

Use all of the resources that are provided: buddies, mentors, leadership team, and all that jazz.

Have fun with it. Enjoy the depth. Take care of yourself so you CAN be present.

Be prepared for a really amazing experience! And be prepared for it to end. Start thinking about that early on. What will you do when you have more time? How will you deal with missing the program?

Don't miss sessions! Each one is really valuable.



2008 Mentor Circle



**“Political Education, Leadership Development,  
and Movement Building for Collective Liberation.”**

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