

**understanding and
resisting**

**white
supremacy
culture**

**unpacking Tema Okun's
"White Supremacy
Culture: Still Here"**

**"I will not have my
life narrowed down.
I will not bow down
to somebody else's
whim or to someone
else's ignorance."
bell hooks**

QR code inside

**from your
friends at**



OUTRIGHT
VERMONT

White supremacy is a key part of what we are resisting and working to change at Outright. It's the deep ways all of us have been taught to stay separated from each other and taught that white history, white social norms, and whiteness is better than anything else. White supremacy: the ways we learn to mistrust any kinds of difference, including gender and sexuality, and the ways those in power control the definition of who is human. It's hard to see, because we don't walk around hearing people say these things. But it's there, and it's happening.

All. The. Time.

Why we resist.

We are all impacted by white supremacy norms, and we all have to resist them. When we are showing up in solidarity with queer and trans youth, these norms, unchecked, will perpetuate white supremacy in our queer and trans spaces. These subtle messages communicating who is included and who is not will erode and destroy our movements and communities. We have to resist.

Following are some key aspects of these norms, and how to resist them. This is not all of it, but it's a place to start. And we can resist. Together.



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Here are a few (not all) parts of white supremacy culture and how to resist.

Ever notice yourself thinking– this is just.so.completely.terrible. Or: this is the absolute best all the time? Ever get impatient when things are too complicated, and you want to just point to the bad guy or the good guy in a situation?

That's binary thinking.

We can resist this by looking for the both/and of a situation, rather than giving a single story to a situation, feeling, or issue. We love resisting the binary, in all the ways!

Ever make a mistake and feel absolutely terrible about yourself? Ever get down on someone else for how they fall short, and not tell them directly? Ever accomplish something amazing and feel like you have to refuse or diffuse compliments about it

That's perfectionism.

Perfectionism is different from excellence, because perfectionism tells us there's only one right way to be perfect. So not true. Resist perfectionism by appreciating each step we take, knowing yours and others' roles and responsibilities in any situation (student, organizer, intern, family member, etc.), focusing on learning instead of outcome, and getting comfortable with the discomfort of making mistakes and learning from them!

Ever feel like things should just hurry up and happen, or feel like those in authority should just make something happen? Ever notice, after the fact, that the person or people who should have been included in the thing weren't? Ever underestimate how long something is going to take and then beat up on yourself for not getting it done?

That's urgency.

Urgency keeps decisions incomplete, folks who need to be in on decisions away from the table, and everyone always running. Resist urgency by changing expectations and revising timelines. Pause often, and reflect with comrades- what is possible at the pace we need to move at?

Ever experience isolation and loneliness, like no matter what you do you won't find your people? Ever feel like you either have to do it all on your own, or if you do it on your own, you will be targeted by the group for not being a team player? Ever feel rewarded for being independent, until your independence threatens those in power?

That's individualism.

Individualism teaches white folks they are only individuals and not part of groups, and BIPOC that they are not allowed to act independently. Resist this by learning about group identities we hold, checking in with comrades before making moves, and being willing to be changed in your relationships and work.

Do not weaponize these words.

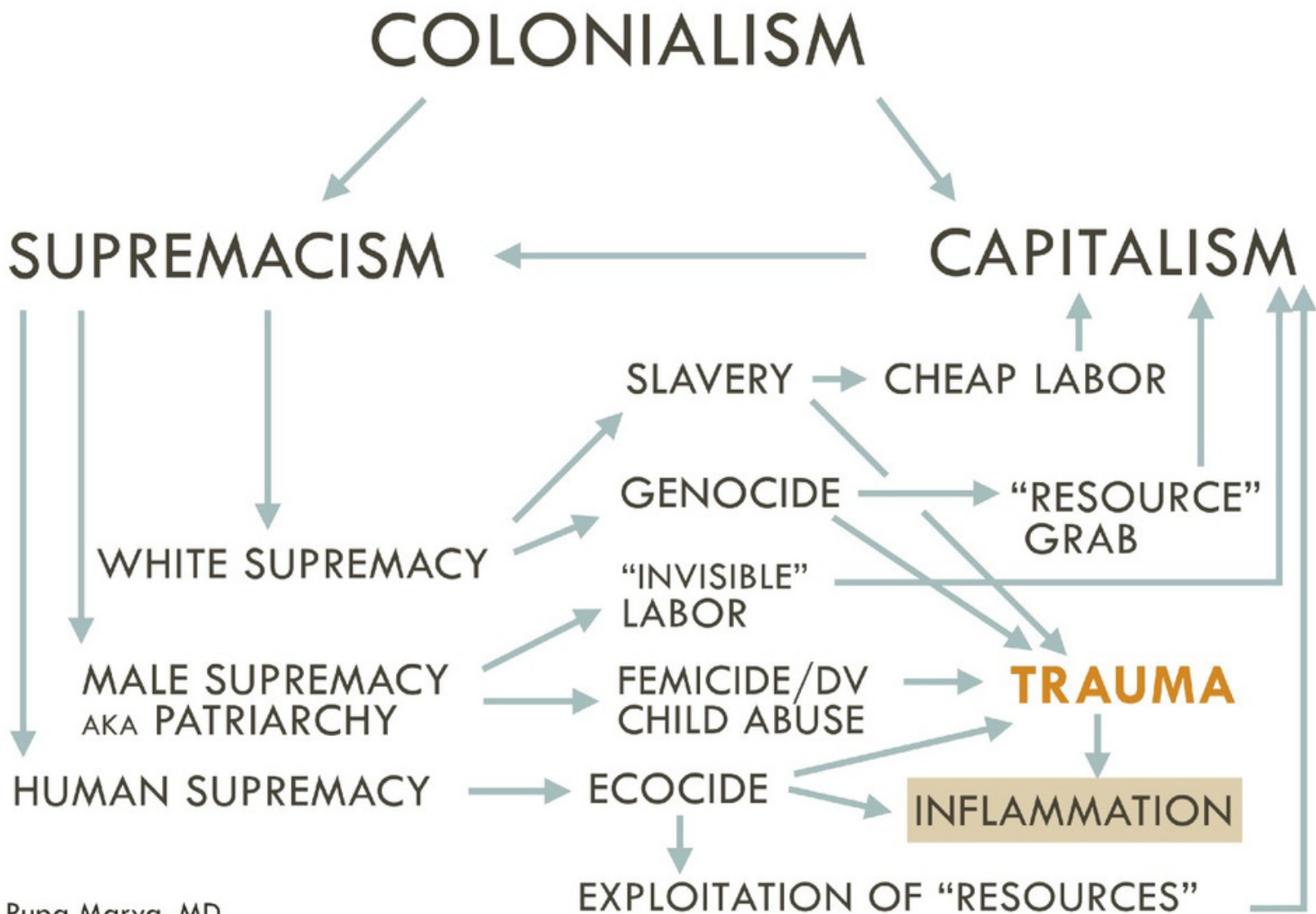
Tema Okun names how her work has been used by folks in different ways to dominate others. Sit with what it means that these very normal aspects of dominant culture are rooted in white supremacy. How can we be gentle with ourselves around these things, and invite shifts that welcome more of all of us?

Read on for a map of what we resist, and how we resist— racial equity principles to live by.

What we resist

Or: a map of how all the harm is connected, so we know all the liberation is connected, too

This chart is made by Rupa Marya, MD, author of Inflamed: Deep Medicine and the Anatomy of Injustice





How we resist

Racial Equity Principles to live by



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1. KNOW YOURSELF 
2. work on ALL THREE LEVELS
3. THINK & ACT collectively
4. BE accountable TO principles & people
5. HONOR and build POWER on the MARGINS
6. Transparency
7. → set EXPLICIT goals
8. use ORGANIZING mind → REMEMBER 
9. TAKE Risks AND LEARN FROM mistakes
10. seek connection & choose LOVE over FEAR