

contribution
to the
antiracist
ripostes
within
queer spaces

made for the UEEH,
july 2019

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Presentation

Over the course of the last years of the *UEEH, rencontres InterLesBiGayTransQueerAsex*, the problem of racism has become increasingly apparent. In 2018, the situation became extremely critical and explosive. As a result, a working group was formed to tackle these issues that have been left aside for too many years, within the event and more generally within the french militant network.

This working group was set up in parallel of the general organisation of the UEEH. We met throughout 2018-2019 during four weekends between Marseille, Grenoble and Toulouse. One of the group's objectives is to contribute to the anti-racist criticism of the UEEH that has emerged in recent years. This criticism has already taken several forms, such as arduous daily pedagogical work, the existence of workshops on white privilege, meetings between racialized people, writing of proposals for the general organization team, or drawing attention to racist acts during the "criées". We have the impression that a power shift is emerging and we intend to give it a boost. Through its existence, our working group aims to continue the substantial discussions that began in the summer of 2018, to relay certain proposals, and to set up concrete tools to fill structural gaps in the future.

People from the general UEEH organization have participated in some of our weekends as we did in theirs. These two groups communicate with each other without depending on each other. Also, people who have never even participated in UEEH sometimes joined us in an attempt to create links with racialized queer individuals and groups who have either left or have never been to UEEH. The racial composition of our group has always been mixed, though we have always left the possibility of creating selected moments of non-mixedness. The aim of this mixity is that white people also take charge of the immense deconstruction work to be done so as to not leave all the burden on racialized people. In addition to weekends where we met for working sessions in various formats (workshops, discussions in large or small groups, screenings, group readings of texts...), we also use a mailinglist so people can follow by distance. And because we like each other quite a lot and because there is still a lot that has to be done, we are eager to continue next year and we remain open to anyone who wants to join us!

We represent one, undoubtedly imperfect, initiative among others and we invite the militant network to begin other anti-racist initiatives. We also invite groups that have been created locally to contact us so that we can pool our efforts, collaborate on an ad hoc basis, or share the resources and tools we create.

This zine is intended for all persons participating in UEEH. We imagine it as a kind of draft that will require feedback. Its purpose is to share the discussions we had during the past year, to initiate prevention work, and to propose concrete actions to fight racism in queer circles. Don't hesitate to adapt it for events other than the UEEH.

So that's it for the form.
Let's get straight into the substance!

Racism(s) and privileges

Whether you are a dyke, bi, trans and/or faggot, and perhaps also in a wheelchair, economically precarious, seropo, Deaf, out of the beauty norms, neuroatypical or psychiatrized... it's important that you can take advantage of the UEEH to regain strength in the face of the oppressions you suffer in society. Because they are systemic, that is, they are fuelled and reinforced by a combination of social, economic, political and historical factors, these oppressions are often difficult to denounce, even within queer spaces. Yet, although one or more systemic oppressions may affect us, it is also possible to have privileges over others.

What we would like to recall here is the particularity of the privileges we enjoy according to our position in the racist system. Which means according to the colour of our skin and/or other characteristics that refer to racist prejudices. And it is very important to point out here that racist oppression is not "superior" to other forms of oppression. There is no hierarchy of oppressions! However, racist aggressions and micro-aggressions have been stunning in recent years at UEEH, and it is more than time to address these issues.

A brief attempt at definition

This attempt of definition is partially based on the white privilege workshop in 2018. It was modified through discussions and feedback during this past year and is far from being complete nor definitive.

The racism on which so-called "Western" societies are built is a historical system bound to many tools of domination, such as slavery, colonization, nationalism, imperialism, capitalism, and christianity. At the end of the Middle Ages, Europe spread all around the world to steal resources and to enslave human beings and exploit their labour force. To justify its existence, this economic domination was based on a racist ideology where the white man (rich, cis-gendered, straight, able-bodied...) represented perfection, an ideal to reach for and to praise, the good master of all this living world. All the intellectual and scientific disciplines which have been developed since the Middle Ages have been structured by (among other things) the racialization of non-white bodies (but also by the hierarchies of genders and other systems of oppression). Nowadays, this ideology still continues and has managed to spread throughout the world. The people who benefit from this system are white people, whether they want it or not, whether they're conscious of it or not. And the people who are exploited and oppressed by this system are People of Color (PoC), known in french as racialized people (in french-speaking antiracist litterature, "personne de couleur" has been replaced by "personne racisée" since this phrasing focuses on the process of racialization and therefore is seen as less essentializing).

Historically, races have been established in comparison to whiteness; whiteness has been made the universal reference. Physical criteria are used to exclude people from whiteness, such as the tone and color of the skin, the texture of the hair, and the shape of the eyes. These criteria reflect superficial biological adaptations related to geography. The meaning given to these superficial differences has real consequences on social, material, psychological, and institutional levels. In other words, white people have social, material, psychological, and institutional advantages refused to non-white people. The racist system makes so that racialized people are

perceived as inferior in social norms, traditions, and institutions and are disadvantaged on these levels.

This kind of discrimination may also apply to cultural or religious groups that experience racialization through the combination of physical characteristics and practices, customs or traditions. This is the case for Jews or Muslims for example. Antisemitism and islamophobia, as well as colourism and negrophobia are specific forms of racism. It should not be forgotten that racialized people aren't homogeneous, and they experience different forms of racism, whether they are mixed, Rrom, from Asia, Maghreb, Subsaharian Africa, South America, or from unceded ancestral lands for example. In any case, racism is a complex system of oppression that has material foundations and consequences, and changing the mentality of individuals is not enough to face it.

Which white privileges?

White privileges are everywhere: whether in housing, work, repression, health care, education, or papers... In the queer circles (and at the UEEH), they might show up in different ways, but they're there. If you're a white person who was born in france, for example, the culture you grew up with is represented everywhere, in musical choices, the dominant language, the way of organizing, and different social codes. People don't ask you all the time where you come from, why you are in france or what your family history is. You're not the subject of intrusive curiosity nor patronizing pity. When you get closer to someone or flirt with them, you won't have to worry that the other may be attracted to you out of exotism, might be projecting colonial clichés onto your body. Or that they might be using you to look "open-minded" to their friends. You can speak french without feeling judged about your level of knowledge of this colonial language. White people won't come speaking arabic or maori to you randomly, without knowing if you actually know those languages. Nor will people disrupt you in a discussion to tell uninteresting generalities about your accent, your clothes, your smooth skin, or the country you/your family came from.

At the UEEH, these privileges make you feel more legitimate and comfortable to perform most tasks and invest in most spaces, and not just the subordinated tasks and spaces. In the queer/activist worlds, you can participate in events, workshops, and meetings without finding yourself constantly in the position of being a racial minority. Nor will you be invited out of sheer concern for inclusiveness. When you speak, you will not be given the impression of representing a whole group of people. Your individuality will usually be respected. If you get angry, people won't call you a savage because of your skin colour. You are never seen as an uncivilized person who needs to be taught how to defend themselves properly. It probably never happened to you that unknown people touch your hair without asking. Or that people appropriate rituals, musics, hairstyles, traditional clothes, or words which are politically or spiritually relevant to you, just because that's the last trend or to look cool/weird. What you own, people won't think at first that you might have stolen it. You are not assigned a social class based on your physical characteristics. And the clothes you wear are usually not at the center of national debates...

This list could be much longer, but the purpose is not to make it complete. What matters here is that even if you imagine that you have never committed racist behaviour in your life, you still benefit from many privileges. Just like sexism, where not all cis guys are big machos but they all benefit from the patriarchal system, not all white people are racists but all of them benefit from the racist system.

Recognizing your privileges is destabilizing and stirring. It implies to question a whole bunch of evidences that allow you to ignore issues of racisms. It requires you to step out of your comfort zone. However, it is a work that must be done, and not out of guilt. Guilt turns the focus on oneself and provokes much paralysis. Privileges are granted wheter you like it or not. What to do with that fact? How can this condition be overcome? How do you use them to be better accomplices?

Coming to the UEEH is therefore being ready to do a lot of work on yourself. A work that shakes you up.

Fragmented history of racism within the UEEH

Telling the general history of UEEH is a complicated matter. And, not to fool ourselves, the history of the different histories within a community event like this one depends on who tells it... There is not a single continuous lineage within the UEEH since the creation of the association and the first event in 1979. So we have tried to get more information, but there is a serious problem with the archives of the UEEH; they have never been digitized and are locked away in a room in Marseille. As a result, we do not have a complete list of all the aggressions, ripostes, and resistances that may have taken place. Nor do we know how the organization and the white participants reacted (or not)... It is therefore difficult to say how things have evolved over time. In any case, for a long time aggressions and discomforts have been silenced but the actual resistance of queers of color make it more visible now.

The UEEH project began as the result of a certain french white LGBT activism that has for too long failed to recognize the reality of its colonial background. Ordinary racism is experienced by many racialized participants, whether they are french, living in france, or coming from abroad for the event. To date, this fact has not been taken into account by the orga team or at the event itself. What we desperately lack are the memories of the voices that have been raised against this reality throughout the history of the organization. If you have more information and the desire to expand this history please contact us.

The facts we know so far

2009: The theme of the conference was "To question feminisms and overcome the communities' conflicts around feminism". Upon arrival at the UEEH, peeps of color discovered that all the speakers were white. Criticism of this, carried collectively, led to a redesign of the conference to include non-white and non-academic speakers. It also led to the creation of a workshop for racialized people only. After that workshop, participants relayed information to the rest of the conference.

2011: The conference was entitled "At the intersection of oppressions, which solidarities, which struggles? Reflections on race and gender oppression." Among the speakers were Horia Kebabza, Nacira Guenif-Souleimas, and Sabreen Al'Rassace (from LOC'S) as well as June and Anakin from the french-speaking radio show *Dégenrés*. That same year, a participant denounced a racist and classist aggression on her at the UEEH. She read a text at the opening of the conference to discuss this situation. At her request, a public apology was made at the closing general assembly by the person who had committed the aggression. The organization issued a statement a few months later about that.

2014: A workers strike in the parisian bar La Mutinerie (on the basis of racism and sexism) gave rise to intense conflicts during the UEEH, particularly over racism.

2017: Many racist behaviours were denounced through the "criée." A box to collect testimonies of racism experienced during the event was created but then disappeared. There was a distinct lack of collective or individual reaction from white people. Only on the last day of the conference, a workshop on white privilege was improvised by white people. Most PoCs boycotted the closing general assembly. A new commission of racialized people was created, which proposed a non-mixed room for the next year. A working group was created within the orga team to address issues of racism and white supremacy. The work of this group was rather internal self-training and eventually felt apart. See appendix for testimonies collected following the 2017 UEEH.

2018: A racialized non-mixed room and outdoor space were created. In the program, a workshop on white privilege was offered on several occasions. Many times, racism seen and experienced during the event was made visible by a number of participants at the "criée." White people were strongly criticised for their inaction while racist acts and microaggressions multiplied. Two lists of proposals to address the issue of racism at UEEH were written (one of which by People of Color). A year-round working group was created. This zine is the result of the work of that group.

To everyone who benefits (whether they want it or not) from the racist system

Even if you don't intend it, it can happen that an interaction with a person of colour ends up uncomfortable for them. Just because you think you are a kind and open-minded person doesn't mean that it's not going to happen. Racism is not just found in far right discourses, because racism isn't just open hostility towards PoC. It can take several less visible forms, forms that you have the privilege to ignore when you don't live that oppression. This ensures that the daily lives of racialized people are filled with racist (micro)-aggressions in addition to other systemic oppressions. Most of the times, these aggressions go totally unnoticed by people committing them. Perhaps the other person in the conversation simply sighs, or finds an excuse to quit the conversation. But sometimes people try to point out these oppressive behaviors.

Being accountable for your actions

If you're with a person who lives a form of racism that you don't experience, and that person points out an oppressive behavior of yours, trust them. Even if you don't understand straight away. Even if their reaction looks disproportionate to you. Since they're living that oppression, they know way more than you in this field, as it is for you for example if you're a dyke talking about homophobia with straights. What matters in this moment isn't to save face by claiming your "innocence" but to be accountable for what you did. It starts by accepting the fact that you may have hurt someone's feelings. Just because you did or said something racist doesn't mean that you're a monster. But it's important that you take responsibility for what you did instead of justifying it over and over and only thinking about yourself and reputation. Sometimes, sincere apologies are enough. Sometimes distance is needed and you might have to organize your life in order to ensure that. Sometimes a mediation process is asked for. Every situation is specific and needs specific reactions. There are no guidelines, and the person you harmed is not obliged to explain you what you should do in order to fix the situation. It's your own responsibility to question yourself, to take a step back from your ego, and to find solutions. You might get it wrong and need help at some point. During this process, victimizing yourself is just a way to focus the attention on your ego and to avoid an accountability process.

Against scapegoating

If you witness or hear about a racist situation, please avoid scapegoating the person who committed it, pointing them out as if they were THE racist person. We all can and do convey racist behaviors, even when we don't notice it. When we scapegoat someone, we clear ourselves from being potentially racist. Moreover, we reinforce the general fear of being exposed and condemned on the "public stage" and eventually being rejected by our community. When we try to hide our own racism behind these opportunist indignations, every person will try to find all possible means not to recognize that they did shit, including putting pressure on the person

who called them out and ignoring, minimizing, or ridiculizing them. This discourages people who experience racism to denounce the aggressions they live. It's the same mechanism which is maintaining other kinds of oppressions and which contributes to their invisibilization.

Against tokenization

Similarly, we must stop using racialized people as tokens, that is, as instrumentalized stooges that serve the interests of the dominant group. This is the case when the opinion of a person of colour is used to make a point, as if it would represent all people of color's opinion. Tokenism also happens when we put up front racialized people to appear inclusive, whether within an organization, an event, in a conversation or in relationships. As a result, it dehumanizes the person and imposes on them a reductive identity.

Respecting the non-mixity

There are times and spaces reserved for specific non-mixities. These are willingly initiated by the people it concerns when they consider them necessary. It is important to pay particular attention to it when you propose a workshop in the program. This is particularly true if what you propose takes place only once and/or if you aim to stimulate substantive discussions that will have a decisive influence on the UEEH. Is a non-mixed workshop already happening during this time slot? Does the workshop or discussion you are proposing overshadow it? Does the chosen time exclude a group that has a non-mixed meeting at that moment? Generally, can we keep updates about queer of colors agenda, so we avoid organizing stuff that will compete with theirs and prevent them from participating? If we want to respect the non-mixity, it does not only mean physically, but also to be aware of it when proposing stuff.

Racial segregation: out of our lives!

If non-mixed spaces do exist, the rest are mixed. Yet we can see that people tend to stick to their affinity group. On several occasions, racialized folks have raised that issue, that is, the too little efforts made by few white people to leave their comfort zones and mingle with People of Color. In comparison, PoCs mingle way more. This creates a highly problematic racial segregation that seemed to have reached its peak last summer. The fact that racism has so often been made visible throughout the edition seems to have created a dynamic in which, too afraid of potentially enacting racist behaviours, white folks stayed between themselves. That backlash isolates PoC while it strengthens white solidarity.

We should also ask ourselves the question of hospitality in the light of colonial reality. "Just imagine if the UEEH were organized in Morrocco!" claimed a participant during the criée in 2018. When whites visit former colonies (and other non-western countries), they are most likely to be welcomed with open arms and limitless generosity. On the other hand, the reality for non-western people who arrive in fortress europe is extremely different. Can we pay attention on how colonialism affects our interactions here at the UEEH and how it plays a role in the lack of hospitality? How do we welcome those who made the trip to france especially for the UEEH?

The dancefloor

The dancefloor is a place where everyone is free to play all sort of music, including non-imperialist music from outside of Europe and North America. Some people systematically leave the dancefloor when it plays. In 2017, people even ripped off sound cables in protest against traditional music choices. Is it possible to reflect on cultural hegemony, to open up our mind and to put oneself in the shoes of those who may not recognize themselves in the imperialist culture?

Exotisation and seduction

Racism sometimes takes the shape of exotisation, a process by which racialised bodies are given an exotic value for what would be considered strange, unknown, and unusual in them. Therefore they are seen as either desirable (fuckable), interesting (bizarre), or entertaining (funny). This imaginary strangeness is constantly projected on PoC through many small insidious gestures. It thus installs a distance that sends these "Others" back to a distant exotic fantasy inherited from colonial imagery. By completely ignoring their individuality, exoticism locks up racialized bodies into stereotypes that are most often hypersexualized. They are referred to by clichés, sometimes turned into freakshows, sex dolls, or considered as wild beasts. Some racialized people are considered more "sexual," and so they are compared to "indomitable" animals (a gazelle, a lioness...). Others may be seen as more submissive, perverse, or asexual.

Inappropriate comments about physical characteristics or about our alleged origins, prejudices about cultural or sexual preferences, or the attraction to or repulsion from specific ethnic types (Asian, African, Arab, etc.), all take part of an exotizing gaze and fully contribute to racism. Not to mention the standards of beauty by which whiteness prevails and from which racialized folks are disqualified. In the same way that we question heterocissexist norms, it's time to reclaim our desires and to reflect on the racism that underlies the way we look at each other.

To visibilize racism doesn't mean to talk about that non-stop to the people it may concern

We think it's very important to point out racist behaviors at the UEEH and to take more time and space to work on the current situation. But at the same time white people shouldn't take up all the space (physical or symbolic) with their reflections on white privilege. Especially, it's better not to put up posters on racism

everywhere, and white people should avoid talking about only that with racialized people who didn't choose to, who don't actually wish for the topic of racism to take up all the space, and who would like just to spend a good time without having to position or justify themselves as regards each conflict.

Division of tasks and legitimacy

UEEH is a self-organized meeting, so everybody's taking part in everyday tasks (cleaning up, cooking, garbage, dish-washing...). We've noticed that for the past few years it has often been racialized people who end up taking on more of those tasks than white people. This asks the question of who feels legitimate to occupy which places/roles during the event. Of course, this means thinking about the division of tasks that are on the common tasks board, but also we need to think more broadly about the practical, logistical, organizational, affective, political, and care tasks and we need to ask to ourselves which tasks are rewarded with acknowledgement and which ones are not. Which tasks are valued and which ones are not. And at the end, who's doing what?

The space, the atmosphere

This paragraph is partly inspired from the text "Racism in our interactions" that you can access online (in french) on iaata.info

It's possible to not notice it, but western socializing codes are structuring a lot our interactions in spaces. We should notice the predominant atmosphere when we get into a space. What are we doing there? Is my presence or my way of interacting disturbing for other people? Am I taking all the space, me and my white friends? Many white people have specific social norms about how they interact with people and share space. To think about one's privileges means questioning these social norms and getting out of one's comfort zone. At the UEEH, there are people coming from far away and who're often out of their habits / comfort zones with french codes and norms. What kind of relationships do we want to build between us? Not questioning western sociability norms means actually forcing people to follow them and creating then an unequal,

vertical relationship between those who know the codes and those who don't. This creates of course feelings of unease, illegitimacy, and rejection, especially concerning flirting codes, welcoming codes, and all the unspoken rules that shape our ways of interacting.

On cultural appropriation

Several times people have pointed out cases of cultural appropriation during the UEEH. Cultural appropriation is the act of appropriating histories, discourses, or codes while neglecting/ignoring the culture they come from and getting a social and/or economic benefit from it. This can be applied to art, hairstyles, clothes, decoration, music, language, representation, intellectual production... Cultural appropriation is usually based on insulting colonialist stereotypes, especially (but not only) concerning spiritual and sacred domains. Often, the dominant culture makes fun of and represses what it appropriates.

For example, frizzy hair or braids are often considered dirty or vulgar when it's a non-white person wearing them. It's not rare that people make fun of these hairstyles or discriminate against people on the basis of it, that people touch it "for curiosity," or that people have to straighten their hair in order to get a job, go to school, or just feel secure. When a white person's wearing them, these hairstyles become suddenly esthetical and classy. They can provide an alternative/fashionable look and people make wigs in order to dress up...

The issue of cultural appropriation is quite complex and the border between cultural appropriation, cultural exchange, and cultural assimilation is not always clear. Is someone points out some form of cultural appropriation coming from you, the least you can do is to search for ressources coming from concerned people that can feed your reflection on the topic. Great discourses on the beauty of universalism and cultural exchanges are often hiding a denial of colonial privileges. The concept of cultural appropriation aims at pointing out this denial and the feeling of legitimacy coming from it.

Proposals for the UEEH 2019

#1

Accessibility of racialized people to registration

Queer feminist networks are mostly made up of white people. These people have probably already heard about or participated in UEEH so they tend to feel more legitimate and comfortable to attend. They also have better access to information about registration coming from their networks. Since places are limited, these people have an advantage when it comes to registration. White privilege makes it easier to access the UEEH, that's a fact.

Moreover, a number of places are reserved for different groups (general organizing group, kitchen crew, listening team...) which of course are mostly made up of white people. There are also several places booked for people coming from abroad through the COMIN. But this has no consequences on PoC living in Europe and fighting all the time against widespread racism in order to get a place in the queer existing milieus.

Since the remaining places are booked so fast, one of the proposals for acting against white privilege has been to open registrations in advance for racialized people (on a basis of self-definition, no justification needed). This idea came out during the 2018 edition in a european / living in europe PoC-only meeting. The idea was later relayed (alongside other proposals) during the final plenary.

At the point we've reached, we believe that it's politically essential that more privileged white people leave more space to people experiencing racism in our milieus. We believe that this would facilitate a shift in the current power dynamics.

The proposal has not been accepted yet because of a lack of consensus between the different components of the UEEH and the need to allow more concerned people to express themselves on the issue. So we hope that we'll have more time this summer to discuss it.

More details in the appendix about the arguments for this proposal and its evolution throughout last year.

Edit autumn 2019:

We discussed publicly this proposal during the UEEH 2019 and no opposition arose. Therefore, we will finally apply this proposal for the UEEH 2020.

#2

Non-mixed spaces

The UEEH is an event that takes place in a "non-mixed" environment based on gender identities and sexualities that deviate from the cisheteropatriarchal norm. That is to say, it means without cis-heter* folks. Since the tool of non-mixity speaks to us -- as a means of collective elaboration, political struggle, liberation from speech, and creation of comfort -- it is completely possible to

organize non-mixed times/spaces at the UEEHs on the basis of other oppressions we experience or are subjected to, whatever they may be. These spaces can be central or more isolated, indoor or outdoor. They can be temporary or permanent, they can be multiple... To facilitate access to these spaces to the people they concern, it may be good to be precise about who's included or not in the proposed non-mixity. Often, people wonder about their legitimacy to be present in these spaces. In addition, sleeping spaces can also be reserved for non-mixed people.

#3

Workshop on the visibility of micro-aggressions

This year, we propose a workshop on the visibility of micro-aggressions. It's a half-day workshop that will be offered several times during the event. By focusing on micro-aggression, we want to reflect on structural oppression and how it is present beyond more spectacular acts. Micro-aggression refers to all behaviours, attitudes, and gestures that may seem trivial but which, since they occur repeatedly in everyday life, contribute to the oppression in question. For example, asking someone where they come from may seem completely harmless. But when you are asked for the thousandth time, with the implication that you are a foreign person simply because of your skin colour and/or accent, it can make you lose your mind at some point. We believe that micro-aggressions constitute the insidious and permanent breeding ground of domination. In addition, we assume that we can all find ourselves both perpetrators and targets of microaggression.

In this workshop, we address the logic of punitive justice and its mechanisms in queer-feminist spaces (mechanisms such as moral judgments, scapegoating, fear and taboos), versus transformative justice. Afterward, we would like to share our experiences of the difficulties of visibilizing (micro-)aggressions. This workshop isn't about a specific oppression but applies to all systemic ones. We

propose moments of discussion in both larger and smaller groups as well as a practical exercise. In the latter, we propose to train ourselves how to react when someone makes visible a micro-aggression we've done.

#4

Tool for community accountability in situations of racism

In last year, one of our objectives has been to find concrete tools that help to get out of immobilization and to give oneself the means to react to situations that involve racism. In this process, we began to look for a fluid and adaptable framework that could facilitate collective reactions if necessary. In our research, we found a text that most closely resembled what we would like to propose as a tool: "Community Accountability Within the People of Color Progressive Movement". It's written by INCITE, a non-mixed group of women, lesbians, trans, and inter of color in the United States.

As the text is mainly oriented to address the issue of gender oppression, work has been done to adapt it so that it can be used to address racism in the specific context of UEEH. These changes were made with a certain flexibility keeping in mind the necessity to adapt to each of the situations possible during the event. This tool is mainly aimed at those who are handling a situation of crisis due to racist aggressions, when such handling is wanted. The content can potentially serve as tool for personal support for those who experience all forms of racism. This is mostly a draft that we present to the participants this year, and not a final version. Copies are available in the room dedicated to anti-racism.

#5

A space dedicated to antiracism

During the UEEH we decided to dedicate one room about antiracism. Why a specific room? Several people experiencing racism told us they don't want those issues to be always present in all the spaces of the UEEH. And also, we would like to gather resources and tools specifically about white privilege and racism. It's a mixed room and we hope that every person taking benefit from the racist system comes to see it.

It's going to be a meeting point for the workshops we propose, but it will also contain:

→ A **wall** to make visible / testify to the racism experienced within the UEEH. This wall is only for people who experience racism, in order to be able to make it visible, without any censorship.

→ A **distro** with texts on antiracism, histories of struggles, white privilege, and testimonies and specific texts about the UEEH. Any initiative to organize readings/discussions is more than welcome. Why not a daily reading time, using the zines? Or we could listen together to radioshow about antiracism?

→ The **reports** from each meeting our group had during the year, and also the documents we used (like some ideas/demands that came out of the UEEH 2018 and the objectives we decided for the group at the beginning of the year).

→ The **feedback box**: at anytime come to share your opinion, your feedbacks on what you didn't like, liked, what could be better, added, or removed, (in connection with the actions taken to make visible and fight racism). The notes will be read each day.

** We don't want this room to limit other initiatives that could need other forms of visibility. This space is open and it's possible to modify it. The idea is not to make it central.*

What's next?

So, that's what we've been working on this year. Obviously we see that there're still a lot of theoretical discussions to have and so many things to do. Some of the topics we didn't talk (enough or at all) about this year, and that we want to work on next year: antisemitism, cultural appropriation, specific forms of racism (negrophobia, arabophobia...), xenophobia, the intersectionality of oppression... We also had the goal to create more connections with queer PoC collectives (to organize things together, meet each other, talk about what we do...) but that's still left to do.

We would have liked to use other ways of communicating for the UEEH (to not only use written words, and be more accessible. Another thing we wanted was to take the time to find all kind of resources (videos, movies, texts, radio shows...) that highlight the histories and celebrate forgotten, unknown, or "occultées" racialized people/struggles. If someone is interested :)

If you want to participate next year in of work on antiracism within the UEEH, there're so many different ways to do that:

- Create a new initiative (we don't want to be a central group, we represent one initiative amongst others!) and help us connecting with other initiatives.
- Come to one or several working meeting of our group.
- Participate on a specific project, but not come to the working meetings.
- Offer feedback on the work that is done during the year
-Help out on specific things (translation, helping with the logistic organization of the working meetings...).

And there're probably a lot of other ways we didn't think of! Anyway, don't hesitate to come meet us, to participate to the workshops/discussions organized by the group during the UEEH, to come to the room dedicated to antiracism, or to write to us:

groupe-travail-ueeh@riseup.net

Appendix

About the proposal on the accessibility of racialized people to registration

This text was written in June 2019 by a group that worked all over the year on the issue of racism at the UEEH. It's a summary of the initiatives that have been taken this year to relay a proposal aiming at making the access to UEEH easier for people who endure racism. The proposal consists in prioritizing, for the first time, the registration of racialized people (on the base of self-definition, no justification asked).

The goals of this text are :

- Getting more transparency on this issue, because we have the feeling that our proposal, but not the arguments for it, has spread. This might have biased some people.
- Being a support for further discussions on the topic.

Where this proposal comes from

The idea of prioritizing people who endure racism at the UEEH registration came out during the 2018 edition in a PoC-only meeting (attended mostly by people living in Europe). It was later relayed during the final plenary. Our group, which is mixed, decided support this proposal as well as on others that were done last year.

The proposal comes from the fact that activist and queer spaces in Europe are predominantly white and hostile to PoC. As power dynamics around white privilege and racism seem to be changing, it has been pointed out as important to focus on access to the event. There's an important international presence, but last summer it was noticed that there were not a lot PoC living in France

or Europe in attendance and that white privilege certainly played an important role in that. It plays a role in how people plugged into existing networks know about the event, feel more legitimate, and quickly relay information about registration to one another, and it plays a role in that places are reserved for participants in different working groups (general organizing group, kitchen crew, listening team...) which are mostly made up of white people. There's an important number of places reserved to the International Commission, which is great, but this is of no benefit to PoC living in Europe who have a hard time finding a space in the existing queer milieus.

At a moment when racism issues have become explosive, we think it's essential to step out of the status quo and to directly face the problem. Among different solutions that we wanted to bring to this edition, we believe that letting more places go to PoC, who come less and less to the event, could participate to overthrowing the current power dynamics. The issues related to different forms of racism are always discussed under crisis, this is the experience of UEEH when you're not white. We would like the UEEH to be a place for discussions and meeting people, where dealing with crisis is not the only way to discuss the intersections between racism and queer issues.

That's in short what pushed us to relay this proposal during last year.

Issues debated

We've had several discussions during our weekends, first focusing on the content of the proposal. We mostly debated the following objection to the proposal: "Queer milieus reproduce numbers of other oppressions, and prioritizing racialized people looks like creating a **hierarchy of oppressions**. Why are we prioritizing this one more than another one?"

After discussions, we considered that proper solutions should be found for each oppression, considering their specificities and respecting the will of the people who endure them. It would be politically dangerous to transpose this proposal of prioritization to people who live other oppressions which are invisibilized in our milieus (like ableism or psychophobia for example) if this idea isn't coming from concerned people themselves, and if there are no tools, no reflections and no support planned during the edition (as it's being done for anti-racism). The goal of this proposal is to support an ongoing shift in the power balance. Which doesn't prevent our capacity to address other dynamics, quite the opposite !

Some parallels have been drawn between this proposal and the **hypocritical strategy of quotas**. These parallels didn't convince us, because :

- In our case, the proposal is based on the strategy of overthrowing the power balance between social classes, and not on the illusion of equality.
- A quota implies a fixed number to be filled, even if this implies looking for people just to fill the numbers. Our proposal is on the contrary an invitation, that can be accepted or not, and doesn't have in any case any quantity goals.
- Our goal is not to build an anti-racist facade to the UEEH, instrumentalizing PoC in order to alleviate the conscience of white folks, but instead to question white privileges around the access to queer events.

Once we clarified our position as related to those criticisms, we agreed on the fact that we wanted to carry this proposal as a group. We started then thinking about the best way to put this into practice.

Technical presentation

In order to better understand our proposal, it's necessary to quickly explain how registrations generally take place in the UEEH. Taking the example of 2019, the organizing team decided that there would be ~200 places in total, among which :

- ~50-60 were pre-booked for the International Commission (including also the local coordinators and some people taking refuge in Europe).
- ~40 were pre-booked for the people who worked during the year to prepare the UEEH : the organizing team, the kitchen crew, the listening team... and our group too.
- Among the remaining places, 30% (~30 places) were set aside for on-site direct registration. This rule has been in place for several years and aims to leave a place for people with precarious lives who're not able to anticipate their participation several months in advance. You need to be well informed to be aware of the existence of these places though...
- This leaves ~70 places left then for online registration.

Considering this base of functioning, **our proposal** was :

- That online registrations open several days in advance for people who endure racism. And later, if there are still some places left, that they open for anyone.
- That one third of the places reserved for on-site direct registration are set aside for people enduring racism.

What we wanted was to respect everyone's self-definition, to avoid putting people in a situation where they need to justify themselves. And to have the choice to be prioritized or not.

There could be a few more technical details to share, but we figure that it's not so interesting to do so here. If needed, we're open to discuss more about it.

Exchanges with the general organizing team

Once the proposal had been clarified, we got in touch with the general organizing team, which, after a few exchanges aimed at further clarifying the proposal, gave us informal positive feedback. At the second-to-last organizing weekend in Rennes, which took place at the beginning of May, a person from our group joined the general organizing team in order to carry this proposal. At this moment, very negative feedbacks were expressed by people who were not part of the general organizing team. Several hours of discussion were spent on the topic, without getting to any satisfying conclusion. Considering the importance of the disagreement, it has been decided that for the moment it was wiser to not validate the proposal.

During our last weekend in Toulouse (at beginning of June) we discussed this, regretting the way we went about it. We made the proposal too late and with insufficient communication. We saw that the proposal itself was spreading around, but not the arguments that justify it. Moreover, we hadn't created a way for anyone to discuss it outside of our group, leaving out the voices of some people affected by racist oppression.

The following weekend, three people of our group took part in the last general organizing weekend. The proposal was discussed together again and everyone agreed that white privileges influence the access to UEEH and that it's important to find a way to change this. But considering the lack of collective discussions and the disagreements on the topic, it would be premature to validate this proposal for 2019. And it will be important to take the proper time for discussing it again with all the participants of the edition.

Conclusion

As an intermediate solution, it has been decided to write to some PoC queer groups in order to share in advance the opening date of registrations and to ask them to spread this information within their networks. But despite this intermediate solution we're still quite disappointed about how things turned out and we're worried about the continuation of the status quo as regards white privilege and registration to the ueeh.

We hope that this summer's edition will be the place where to discuss this proposal together (and not at distance/through other people !) and more largely to find a way to limit the influence of white privilege on the access to registration for 2020.

Edit autumn 2019:

We discussed publicly this proposal during the UEEH 2019 and no opposition arose. Therefore, we will finally apply this proposal for the UEEH 2020.

Testimonies

collected in 2017

« At the beginning of the 2017 edition of UEEH, a white person has hairstyle traditionally worn by afro-descendants: braids stuck to the skull. A word in the "criée" comes as a reminder: "white people, our hairstyles belong to us". »

« Many french speaking people came to the "criée" without radio (to have interpretation in different languages). This clearly showed a lack of respect for minority languages. Most of the time, people did not announce the language before reading in french. It often took time to translate when input was written in arabic. »

« Interpersonal exchanges with seduction dynamics: for Black and Arab people, interactions often imply exotisation. For example I was dancing when two girls were wondering aloud, two steps away from me, whether I was available - fuckable - because I was "good looking". Also during the evening someone voluntarily rubbed their body on me. During the same evening, my braids were touched because "they are pretty" and my arm was stroked because "my skin looked soft". And when I asked someone to get the fuck off me, they replied that I was being a "savage". »

« I felt pressured in the kitchen when we cooked a meal with meat. We had less help (spontaneous or from kfc). People went into 'surveillance mode' and pressured us every half an hour to remind us the schedules and spaces with/without meat. It was like being vegetarian or vegan was a white value, which suddenly created a link between "eating meat and being a Person of Colour". Other POC friends that are vegan invisibilized. »

« I am a trans feminine person and in my country I cannot always be "out". I do not have access to hormonal treatment for example. I had a lot of misgendering experiences during the 2017 UEEH edition. As if transidentity did not exist in my country. »

« A Black person publicly reported a racist situation she experienced during the edition. I am Arab and, later, a white person who is part of the orga team comes to see me, relieved, to tell me: "you know the situation of racism pointed out by the Black person, well it's actually an Arab person, a Person of Color, who is responsible for it." »

« A white person with whom I discuss thinks they are complimenting me by saying "your french is so good". I hear directly the implied meaning: you speak well "for a non-white person who does not live in france". Yes I speak french well indeed. It's one of my mother tongues. »

« I find that during 2017 UEEH edition many white people have tended to not mix in the canteen and other spaces such as parties, to not say hello and not take the initiative to come and talk to POCs. I feel this as a lack of warmth. The space segregation it creates makes me feel uncomfortable. »

«« I noted that no collective meeting was organized, nor proposed by white people to solve the situations of racism that were pointed out, until the end (last day) of the UEEH. Yet during the edition there were a lot of notes in the "criée" explaining racist situations. There has never been a public and collective response. »»

«« I noticed during parties that lots of white people left the dancefloor when traditional non-imperialist music (not from Europe nor North America) was being played, such as raï. During the 2017 edition at a party a sound cable was ripped off by white people in order to pressure the djs into changing the music style. »»

«« I'm talking to a white person that I do not know who asks me "where do you come from?" I answer by the city where I do *live*. They insists: "No, but what is your origin?" »»

«« A discussion was held on being queer and Muslim in a central space of the UEEH. We ended with a moment of collective prayer. There I could feel a lot of tension from the white people and it made me notice how much the space was structured by habits and customs of whites. »»

«« I noticed that whites tend to speak by specifying the origin of the person when it is not French and/or white. They often use terms that smooth out differences like "Africans". Or they identify the person they are talking about as a member of a group of racialized people instead of just talking about the person itself. »»

«« Following racist situations that were called out, white people came to see People of Color who had spoken to offer them "nice" things like massages or cold drinks, asking "what can we do to help you to relax?". I do not need a massage when I'm angry. »»

