

TO OTHER WORKING AMERICANS



An Open Letter from Redneck Revolt



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The history of the white working class is also one filled with collaboration with those same rich elite power holders. White working people have played the role of foot soldiers for the political and economic elite, participating in genocide and the enslavement of other peoples, and overall protectors of the ruling class. White working class participation in state and paramilitary organizations and formations like the Ku Klux Klan, the Minutemen, the U.S. Armed Forces, and the Council of Conservative Citizens has undermined the struggle for freedom among all people.

It is with these conflicting histories in mind that we hope to indite a movement amongst white working people that works toward the total liberation of all working people, regardless of skin color, religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, or any other division that bosses and politicians have used to fragment movements for social, political, and economic freedom.

We are currently working in several cities to establish a network of chapters of Redneck Revolt and our affiliate project, the John Brown Gun Club, as well as establishing solidarity and working relationships with other liberatory community defense organizations.

If you find affinity with our organizing principles and want to collaborate, hit us up at redneckrevolt@riseup.net, and we'll talk about next steps for starting a chapter in your locale, or coming out for firearms trainings and organizing workshops.

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AS THE ELECTION SEASON OF 2016 has finally come to an end, the ramifications of this election are on everyone's minds. The coming year is going to bring tremendous change. Although we probably all agree on that statement, we probably have very different ideas about what those changes will be, and whether or not they will be positive. Hopefully, we can try to find some common ground. We assume that most working class people are tired of living in poverty, living paycheck to paycheck, watching the products of their hard work evaporate before their eyes. Times are tough for many of us, and many of us have been wondering in private how we're going to survive. Politician after politician makes empty promises, but no matter which party is in power, there is no real relief for working Americans. Instinctively, we start to look around for who to blame, and the messages we're bombarded with make it seem easy enough... we blame Muslims, Black people, Brown people, "illegals". It all seems very simple. We're competing with these people for jobs and resources, so it seems like a logical enough conclusion.



Historically, white working class folks have nearly always been at odds with immigrants and folks of color. It's a lot easier to recognize ourselves and our loved ones in others who share the same traditions, culture, religious beliefs, etc. The majority of the faces we see on TV, in our community, and the folks we identify as leaders usually look a lot like us. We can often relate easiest to other white people, no matter how poor or rich. They look like people we'd see across the dinner table, and that makes it easier to hear each other out, even when we disagree. Most of us would scoff at anyone claiming that we intentionally seek out an allegiance to whiteness, or to being white, but without noticing that we're doing it, our natural enemies become non-white people.



The problem with this idea is that we've had it wrong for centuries. We've been kept blind to the true nature of what is really going on. Look around. Who lives in the houses or trailers in the same neighborhoods as us? Who works next to us in the factories, or cooks alongside us at the restaurants? Who is working in the fields with us, picking produce that we'll see at inflated prices later in the supermarket? It sure as hell isn't rich white people. It's Brown people, Black people, and other working class white people. They are the ones that are in similar situations to us, living paycheck to paycheck, stretching to feed their families like we do. So why then would we view them as so different from us that we literally view them as our enemies?

Allegiances, traditionally, are made among people who have common interests. Throughout American history, white working people have generally believed that our interests are based on looking out for each other, and we've seen our community as folks who have the same skin color as us. We've felt it was important to work for the betterment of other white folks, for our culture, for our shared identity. The truth, however, could never be further away. Whose interests have our actions really served? White workers? In the short term, the answer may be "yes". Working for the advancement of the white race at the cost of other folks does buy us relative privileges, occasional access to better jobs and neighborhoods, and even some luxuries. In the end, however, we're still poor, we're still breaking our backs to make other people money... and those people aren't working folks of color.



The history of the term redneck is long and complex. One of the earliest recorded uses of the term comes from the 1890's, and refers to rednecks as "poorer inhabitants of the rural districts...men who work in the field, as a matter of course, generally have their skin burned red by the sun, and especially is this true of the back of their necks".

In 1921, the term became synonymous with armed insurrection against the state, as members of the United Mine Workers of America tied red bandanas around their necks during the Battle of Blair Mountain, a two week long armed multi-racial labor uprising in the coalfields of West Virginia.

Today, the term redneck has taken on a demeaning connotation, primarily among upper class urban liberals who have gone out of their way to dehumanize white working class and poor people. Terms like "white trash" have come to signify the view among these same upper class liberals of poor rural whites.

The history of the white working class is one full of resistance, collectively and individually, against the rich elite that hold power over all of our lives. From massive armed uprisings like the Battle of Blair Mountain in 1921, to the resistance to coal mining in predominately white rural Appalachia today, white working people have been in conflict with those that uphold predatory economic, political, and social systems.



THIS IS AN OPEN CALL TO ALL PISSED OFF WHITE WORKING PEOPLE.

This is an open call to ignore the rhetoric of the alt-right, to ignore the false allegiances that the rich whites try to get us to buy into, to ignore the illogical and ridiculous race-baiting from the ignorant among us! This is a call to reject the IDEA of whiteness; that is, to reject the idea that our allegiance is somehow determined by what skin we have, even when our real living situations are so different. This is an open call to no longer ignore the fact that our real allies are not determined by skin color, but by our social conditions. Our real enemies are mostly white English speaking Christians. Our allies are folks of all colors who are forced to work for a living, to provide for their families and keep a roof over their heads.

Until we start to recognize ourselves in our neighbors, we are doomed to repeat everything that's happened for the last centuries. We'll still be here trying to climb out of the hole we find ourselves in, and our children will inherit the same destiny, and our grandchildren after them, and so on... until finally, a generation of white working people will realize that we've been tricked and used, primarily by people of our own race. We will be stuck in someone else's fantasy until we recognize that the glorious white nation promised by the alt-right is only about power for them, and the same hard lives for us!

To meet other working people who are working together to seek liberty and a life worth living, you can reach us at: communication@redneckrevolt.org

Hurry. There's no time to lose. We've already been losing for too long.

Signed, respectfully and hopefully,

Redneck Revolt

The true, long-term interests of white workers lie with the fate of all other workers, no matter what their race. All workers, of all races, are exploited. We are exploited because we put in the lion's share of the work, skill, and experience, and we bear the scars and lifelong pain from working class life, but we never actually get ahead enough to breathe free. We work multiple jobs to barely meet our needs, while bosses and the people in charge profit from that labor. We are born where we're at, and we die where we're at while rich politicians and white collar business owners live in the lap of luxury. Who are these rich people? Who are these politicians? The truth is that 95% of them are white. They are also mostly male. Almost all of them are English speaking. They are also mostly Christian (or at least pretend to be so). And yet, in spite of having so many superficial things in common with one another, our lives are completely separate. When we stay up late at the kitchen table with a stack of bills, trying to figure out how the budge is going to work, they're eating at restaurants where they'll never even look at the amount on their bill. Tonight, when we finally go to bed in our noisy apartments, our modest houses, or our crowded trailers, they will go to bed in luxury and comfort, with no worries at all. Tomorrow morning, they'll wake up hours after we do, and they won't have to rush through getting their kids to school, or pray that their car starts so that they won't be late for work again. They might look like us, but they don't actually know us at all. The blunt reality is that for the last five hundred years on this continent, white working class people have been treated as disposable, and used as tools to colonize and kill people of color, feed and support the wealthy, and do the back-breaking work that creates the wealth and high living standards of the same white rich people who have always been in charge. We have been promised that if we just work hard enough, we will be like them. The trust is that we have worked and pushed ourselves for our entire lives, all the while sacrificing our own needs, wants, aspirations, while hoping that better future really is just around the corner. As hard as it is to admit, in those sleepless nights we all know it really is as simple as that. No one denies the history of what has happened at working people's expenses. Wars, poverty, poor health, homelessness, wage slavery... these are all preventable ills created by someone, but perpetuated by us... the same workers who suffer these ills.

For some five centuries we've been used by the rich (among our own race) to promote their agenda, and we have suffered because of it. Yet, somehow, we've still been convinced that our allegiance is to other white folks, including to these same rich white bosses and politicians that would sooner see us die than actually help us as allies. Let's get real, how often do these white rich bosses or so-called "race-realists" actually just give help to poor white folk, in any way that doesn't benefit them through a photo opp and a tax break? When does this actually happen? Do you really think they care at all about our well-being? Where's the allegiance from them, the people that put us in the hardest living situations we face, and simultaneously spew out the pro-white speeches at political rallies and gun shows?

When you walk into your workplace tomorrow, where are the majority of the Black folks? Or Brown people? Or women? Are they in positions of power? Sure, some might be, but where are the majority of the folks of color that are at our workplace? That's right: they're side by side with us, experiencing the same bad management, unpredictable paychecks, long shifts, and wage slavery as us. Logic tells us that we should also be side by side in our fight for liberty, and an end to oppression. Wouldn't that make more sense than continuing to only work with the same people that rob our paychecks and swindle us out of the products of our labor?

The heart of the matter is that we've been too busy fighting the people who should naturally be our allies against these injustices. The rich whites have used our skin color against us, have used our instinct to fear people who are different than us... they've used workers against workers, us against us. They've blinded us with these ideas of "white pride" and "white nationalism" into fighting other working people of other races, while they sit on the sideline and laugh.

For far too long, the ignorant stooges of the rich within our race have thrown up a red flag to these ideas... have spewed words like "pinko" and "communist" at white folks that may have finally started to awaken to the truth of what's really happening here. I'm not a communist. I hate Stalin. I hate Lenin. I hate Mao. I also hate Trump, Clinton, and Obama. These people, all of them, are the ruling elites that I despise, because they live in luxury while the rest of us work away our very existence to barely eat.

The rich and powerful have been great at dividing workers up from each other as much as they can, by distorting and magnifying our existing divisions and differences. Now, unlike traditional conservatives, Trump's rhetoric has actually appealed directly to the white working class. He claims that he opposes free trade agreements like the Transpacific Partnership (TPP) and has said that NAFTA was a mistake. But beneath this populist rhetoric lies a bleak reality – Trump, like all politicians, is just one more opportunist intentionally playing towards the worst elements in our society. He makes appeals to the concerns of white working folks, by calling Mexican immigrants "rapists" and "criminals", and threatening to make a registry of Muslims in this country. But we have seen where those policies take us and we do not want to even begin to go down that road!

We consistently get used and thrown to the side, just to expand the power of those already above us. Over and over again, we've shown that we'd rather support some billionaire TV personality while our kids go hungry at night, than actually organize together for better pay, or fight back against the people that have been using us. It's a sick reality, and yes, the stakes are high in 2016. They're high every year. And deep down, we all know that even though Trump may seem like a breath of fresh air, we're still going to be screwed, and we're still going to be ranting about the "illgals" stealing our jobs, or the Muslims being "terrorists", or these crazy hippie liberal SJWs... while ignoring the rich, white, Christians among us that rake in the profits and power. Wake up! We've fallen for this crap for far too long. No Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton or Rand Paul or Bernie Sanders is going to save us! Only we can do it... together, as people of all races and backgrounds that are sick of living like this.



These privileges did not come from the kindness of the planters' hearts nor from some form of racial solidarity. (Scottish coal miners were held in slavery in the same period of time.) Quite simply, the poor whites were needed and used as a force to suppress the main labor force: the African chattel slaves. The poor white men constituted the rank and file of the militias and later (beginning in 1727) the slave patrols. They were given added benefits, such as tax exemptions to do so. By 1705, after Blacks had been stripped of the legal right to self-defense, the white bond servant was given a musket upon completion of servitude. There was such a clear and conscious strategy that by 1698 there were even "deficiency laws" that required the plantation owners to maintain a certain ratio of white to African servants. The English Parliament, in 1717, passed a law making transportation to bond-servitude in the plantation colonies a legal punishment for crime. Another example of this conscious design is revealed in the Council of Trade and Plantation report to the King in 1721 saying that in South Carolina "Black slaves have lately attempted and were very nearly succeeding in a new revolution – and therefore, it may be necessary to propose some new law for encouraging the entertainment of more white servants in the future.



We can see the evolution of the idea of whiteness in America, as a racial identity that stood in contrast to the identity of black and brown folks. The "us vs them" mentality was created and stoked by politicians and policy. Once our allegiances stopped being to other impoverished working people, and we instead aligned with white people of all classes, we lost track of who the real enemy was. Unfortunately, we're still there. The rich people among our own race have made us so confused that we'd rather be on the border hunting for brown working people than actually fighting those people that create the social conditions that we all collectively suffer in. I mean, let's be honest here, if this was actually about securing our borders, why wouldn't we be talking about the danger of illegal immigrants coming through Canada, or even talking about any white illegal immigrants?



WHITE WORKING PEOPLE, THE TIME IS NOW TO FORM THE REAL ALLIANCES THAT WILL ACTUALLY BETTER OUR LIVES. IT'S TIME TO SEE WHO OUR REAL ALLIES MUST BE.

For starters, we have to reject the ridiculous notion that migrants and refugees from Mexico or Syria are our enemy, that they are somehow stealing our jobs or are somehow really "terrorists". Let's get real: who's really stealing our jobs? Who is really harming us? Well, let's see, a generous estimate of the number of illegal immigrants working in the US is 6 million (notice I said working, not living). This stands in stark contrast to the conservative estimate that nearly 5 million jobs have been outsourced thanks to "free trade" agreements pushed by both political parties. Well, let's ask ourselves, who's really stealing our jobs? Poor Mexicans? Or rich white CEOs? We've been fed ridiculous ideas of the "invading" brown hordes, and the rich whites that make up the upper tiers (and financiers) of right-wing militias salivate over our reactions. If we're busy fighting the Mexicans and Muslims, and trying to round up all the "illegals," then we're too busy to fight the real enemies, the ones who set us against each other to begin with. Most of us that keep falling for these lines mean well. Hell, we only want to defend our families and our communities... but in reality, we're weakening them even more, by fighting our real potential allies and diverting our attention from the real enemy, the "enemy within," the politicians and race-realists, the bosses and white collar criminals who are the only ones really profiting off of us to begin with.

And why are all these immigrants and refugees coming here in the first place? Why has there been a rush to get into this country? About 80% of the Mexican immigrants here in the US have entered since 1994, which was when NAFTA was passed, a free trade agreement that benefits nobody but the rich people on both sides of the border. Surges in Muslim immigration are much more recent. In 2016 alone, there have been over 38,000 Muslim refugees admitted into the United States. Why is that? The United States military is involved in active conflict in 4/5 of the top countries where Muslims refugees are coming from; Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq*. White nationalist and so called patriots keep telling us that we need to be worried about terrorist threats and immigrants, but in reality, those folks are fleeing problems in their own countries that were created by American politicians and their foreign policies. If the people in power do not care for their citizens, maybe it is time we start to genuinely care for each other, regardless of race, religion, or creed. Whiteness has been an interesting concept in American history. The evolution of the identity of whiteness on this continent tells us everything we need to know about the situation we find ourselves in.

I think that David Gilbert explains this complicated history the best, in his essay "Looking at the Working Class Historically":

Up until the 1680s little distinction was made in the status of Blacks and English and other Europeans held in involuntary servitude. Contrary to common belief, the status of Blacks in the first seventy years of the Virginia colony was not that of racial, lifelong, hereditary slavery, and the majority of the whites who came were not "free". Black and white servants intermarried, escaped together, and rebelled together.

There were a series of servile rebellions that threatened the plantation system in the period preceding the transition to racially designated chattel slavery and white supremacy. In 1661 Black and Irish servants joined in an insurrectionary plot in Bermuda. In 1663, in Virginia, there was an insurrection for the common freedom of Blacks, whites and Indian servants. In the next 20 yrs, there were no fewer than ten popular and servile revolts and plots in Virginia. Also many Black and white servants successfully escaped (to Indian territories) and established free societies.

The 20 year period of servile rebellions made the issue of social control urgent for the plantation owners, at the same time as they economically needed to move to a system of perpetual slavery. The purpose of creating a basic White/Black division was in order to have one section of labor police and control the other. As Allen says, "The non-slavery of white labor was the indispensable condition for the slavery of black labor".

A series of laws were passed and practices imposed that forged a qualitative distinction between white and Black labor. In 1661 a Virginia law imposed twice the penalty time for escaped English bond-servants who ran away in the company of an African life-time bond-servant. Heavy penalties were imposed on white women servants who bore children fathered by Africans. One of the very first white slave privileges was the exemption of white servant women from work in the fields and the requirements through taxes to force Black children to go to work at twelve, while white servant children were excused until they were fourteen. In 1680, Negroes were forbidden to carry arms, defensive or offensive. At the same time, it was made legal to kill a Negro fugitive bond-servant who resisted recapture.

What followed 1680 was a 25 yr period of laws that systematically drew the color line as the limit on various economic, social, and political rights. By 1705, "the distinction between white servants and Black slavery were fixed: Black slaves were to be held in life long hereditary slavery and whites for five years, with many rights and protections afforded to them by law." We can infer from these series of laws that white laborers were not "innately racist" before the material and social distinctions were drawn. This is evidenced by the rulers' need to impose very harsh penalties against white servants who escaped with Blacks or who bore them children. As historian Philip Bruce observed of this period, many white servants "had only recently arrived from England, and were therefore comparatively free from... race prejudice." The white bond-servants now could achieve freedom after 5 years service: the white women and children, at least, were freed from the most arduous labor. The white bond servant, once freed, had the prospect of the right to vote and to own land (at the Indians' expense).