

Ideas and information presented to DMD regarding efforts to define diversity in Indy

As Indy's DMD situates itself to consider the city's white working class as a distinct category or demographic among our local diverse groups, the DMD must know the history of white people.

The history of white people

Tim Wise on history of white people

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3Xe1kX7Wsc>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfJAp7NwgVA>

Historically, the mainly Southern white working class of Indianapolis who arrived here before, during and after the 1st and 2nd Great Migrations represent stereotypes of a racist, or "redneck." These folks were also stereotyped as poor or "no good" whites, aka "crackers."

See: *Is "cracker" racist? What about "redneck" and the effect of Bacon's Rebellion?*

- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1248047565237425>
- <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/redneck-stereotype>
- <https://haenfler.sites.grinnell.edu/subcultures-and-scenes/rednecks/>

In each case, this particular Indy demographic represents those who will perhaps be both the more important group to engage and the hardest Indy residents to reach/engage; yet, does DMD have any special staff or plans here?

Bacon's Rebellion: Connecting the dots: The origins of race in America

In 2015, I attended 2 of the IPS racial justice workshops for their employees presented by the Racial Equity Institute out of North Carolina: <http://www.racialequityinstitute.org/>.

Here's 2 quotes from the REI workbook:

"Early in the colony of Virginia, poor people from different backgrounds (English, Irish, Dutch, African, Native Americans) saw their common self-interest and banded together in rebellion against the English elite (John Punch; Bacon's Rebellion), but the English imposed more severe punishment on people of African descent and later on those who associated with blacks. Thus they began to drive a wedge between so-called races and to divide and conquer among those who were poor. This ensured the allegiance of poor white people to those who had power." p. 38

"Bacon's Rebellion [1676], [was] a populist rebellion that organized poor people--white frontiersmen, slaves, indentured servants, and a tribe of Indians--against the colony of Virginia. Bacon and the rebels win the first battle and the sitting government retreats to boats in the river. They win two more skirmishes before English reinforcements arrive and put down the rebellion." p. 48

Here's more information:

- The Colonial Roots of Racism (Part 2): Bacon's Rebellion and the Invention of "Whiteness" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5aOzfwrsPYg>

- How America Invented Race
<https://www.wgbh.org/programs/2020/07/06/the-history-of-white-people-in-america-episode-one-how-america-invented-race>
- The Origin of Race in the USA
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVxAlmAPHec&embeds_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.wgbh.org%2F&source_ve_path=MTM5MTE3LDEzOTExNw&feature=emb_rel_end

Why self-affirmation is important: Understanding Dr. Rollo May's the spectrum of human power and Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs

It is important that we review and appreciate the levels of human power as presented by Dr. Rollo May in *Power & Innocence: A search for the sources of human violence*

(<https://www.amazon.com/Power-Innocence-Search-Sources-Violence/dp/039331703X>)

and relate them to Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (<https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571>). See PowerPoint for illustrations.

The **1st level of power** is the **power to be**. This is life itself manifesting. It's the baby crying for food and attention. It's the seed busting out its sprout in the rain.

The **2nd level** is **self-affirmation**. Yes! I am here. I am glad I'm here. I am worthy of recognition and validation. I have basic needs like others and I want them met.

If our efforts to affirm our existence is a struggle or is ignored, **self-assertion** is the **3rd level** of power. Here we take a stand. No! We assert: "Recognize me?" We even draw a line about what we will and will not accept.

The **4th level** of power is **aggression**. It's crossing a line. There is negative (the German's invading Poland to begin WW II) and positive aggression where doctors and patients act aggressively against cancer. It happened as Blacks had sit-ins at southern US lunch counters.

If these positive aggressive actions still do not provide the needed affirmation or recognition to validate/recognize the person/group, **violence, the 5th level**, may be the last resort. Bad violence is a shooter carrying out a violent gun attack on acquaintances or strangers at a mall. Algerian Dr. Franz Fanon, a European-trained psychiatrist, in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, sees the 1961 violent revolt by "powerless" feeling native Algerians against the colonial presence of the French (who were there since 1830) as a "mentally healthy" response to years of oppression. Violence is usually a "last resort" in the human quest for significance and power. It's the rage often buried deep within those who feel wholly disenfranchised and thus powerless. Yes, power corrupts, but so does powerlessness.

Bringing in **Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs**, we see that both the spectrum of power and Maslow's pyramid situate recognition as instrumental not only in acts of self-affirmation but are a necessary step in reaching self-actualization via the power of authenticity. **The human need for recognition** is what both May and Maslow have in common.

Helping people maintain/sustain their mechanism of self-affirmation is a protection against the necessity of aggression and violence to get the attention needed to feel significant/recognized.

The presentation on self-affirmation and violence from May and Maslow was delivered by me at 8 conferences on 4 different continents, 5 countries, and 7 cities:

- Rouge Forum, Louisville, KY 2008
- World Education Forum, Sao Paulo, Brazil 2007
- ISU Terre Haute, IN Human Rights Day 2011
- London, UK London International Conference on Education 2013
- Association for Humanist Sociology Midwest Regional Meeting U Indy 2014
- Pretoria, SA South African International Conference on Education 2014
 - Paper presented published in the peer-reviewed *International Journal on Cross-Disciplinary Studies in Education* <https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/The-Praxis-of-Hip-Hop-Levels-of-Human-Power-Self-actualization-and-Democratic-Education-for-Addressing-the-Roots-of-Violence-1.pdf> 2015
- Spirit & Place, Center for Interfaith Cooperation, Indianapolis 2018
- Rotterdam, NL SPIOR Conference on the de-radicalization of Muslim youth 2019

Why and how to foster the self-affirmation of Indy's white working class

What our challenge is: how do we affect the self-affirmation of Indy's white working class so that the esteem needs of a sense of self-regard, dignity, pride, and significance becomes present?

This will take dismantling/eradicating the years of psycho-social, political, economic, cultural, and family disregard produced by the "white trash" stereotype of Indy's white caste system.

A meeting with Indy's Department of Metropolitan Development (DMD) as they go about defining diversity in Indianapolis has been set up. The DMD have accepted the proposal to discuss the possibilities of making the white working class be a separate demographic/category in Indianapolis that's distinct from the white majority. This will be a huge step in validating the place and role of the Indy's white working class in the city's development and history.

Remember, our challenge is to take account of and to act on US President Johnson's statement, "Tell the poorest white man he's better than the best black man and that poor white man won't notice you pick in his pocket. In fact give him someone to look down on and he'll take out his billfold and give you his money."

The question for us is: how can we make it so that the working class white person doesn't need anyone to look down on?

I have answers to that question and this is why I'm meeting with the DMD. We have to realize that historically the white establishment needs the so-called n***** label/category in order that poor whites aka "white trash" accept their place at the bottom of the white pecking order. Here they are told by the white mainstream: "Yes, you may be white trash, or you may be called a 'cracker' but at least you're not a n*****. Once poor whites have a sense of dignity and pride they won't need anyone to look down on in order to be somebody, to be validated, to have a sense of significance. Thus, the need/use/value/political power of reprehensible n***** status will be effectively neutralized and abandoned.

I am proposing the following 6 Actions that will raise the level of self-affirmation experienced by members of my Indy working-class community:

1a) The DMD will recognize Indy's long-time white working citizens as a distinct group/culture as opposed to being mixed in and disappearing in the larger white majority which is used as the standard when defining local diversity. Indy's white working class, due to its historical roots in the South and Appalachia, have always had distinct cultural characteristics from the city's mainstream white middle/upper classes. For example take language: hillbonics, southern twang/draw; music: folk, country, country-western, bluegrass, rockabilly; entertainment: honky tonks, Grand Ole Opry; family/relatives and neighborhood/community structures; games/toys: <https://www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/appalachian-toys-and-games-from-a-to-z.html> ; cuisine: hillbilly/redneck diets, white lightening; dance: square dance, clogging; church services: hymns.

1b) The DMD will read and share *White Trash: The 400-year untold history of class in America*, Nancy Isenberg, 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_Gq2qDwFpA&t=1340s.

Again, historically the white middle/upper class majority and the lower class white minority have been at odds. Neither group necessarily like the other. In fact they make fun of each other. I remember *Hee Haw* star Archie Campbell played "The Professor" at the Grand Ole Opry. He wore a graduation outfit with a mortar board/tassel. He had a pointer and a portable blackboard. Three "students" were seated in front of him. The professor was not there to represent distinction and scholarship, but to be made fun of. In one instance he had the term "paradox" written on the board. A student asked him what paradox meant. The professor said, "...2 doctors." The audience laughed and the students threw paper wads at the professor. Of course the other side of the coin is that the white middle classes use stereotypes of lazy dumb hillbillies lying around drinking moonshine when they disparage that group.

1c) DMD will analyze and apply of Bob Dylan's "Only a pawn in their game" video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XOUmfBwA_U to help them appreciate the political position local poor whites are in historically.

2) DMD will work with city officials, civic leaders, and arts organization to have acclaimed local muralist Michael "Alkemi" Jordan do his mural of a history of labor. Getting such a mural in Indianapolis will not only encourage the self-affirmation of working class whites, but of all who have or do use their backs and hands for a living. As well, the mural will influence viewers to have a sense of pride for and validation of labor, enhancing workers' status/prestige—and most importantly, affirming what they have done and do for Indianapolis and our country: <https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Sketch-of-Indy-mural-honoring-working-people-by-Michael-Alkemi-Jordan.pdf>.

3) Help make October the official month for country music in Indianapolis. We can't forget that country music has the global distinction of bringing together the violin from Europe and the banjo from Africa. See a preview of the 8-part series on the History of Country Music by Ken Burns: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVOZl671ssY>. As well, country music has always

had Black American listeners. Here are some famous Black artists: Charley Pride and Ray Charles. Currently country music has many fans of all colors from around the world. Having a country music history month will affirm the contributions of country music to American folk, bluegrass, gospel, and popular music genre'. Here are the new artists: Kane Brown and Darrius Rucker, and female star Mickey Guyton.

4) Next, it is important to have a curriculum on labor for middle schoolers based on this proposal. This will also include the history of Indy's main white working-class neighborhoods: The Valley, Stringtown, Fountain Square and other areas on the west-side and east-side of town. <https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/SEW-CTF-Keeping-urban-students-in-school-Adding-a-history-of-labor-course-to-the-curriculum.pdf>.

DMD will read and distribute the proposed "Compromise regarding the Southside debate: "College or die" vs. "Not everyone needs to go to college" with local school districts: <https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/A-proposed-compromise-regarding-the-southside-debate-College-or-die-vs.-Not-everyone-needs-to-go-to-college.pdf>,

5) The DMD will co-hire with CICF a local hillbilly to represent the recognized white working-class demographic. This co-employee will also begin work with CICF staff and its anti-racist MVMT10K maneuver through the city's historic systemic racism matrix. See: Working-Class Whites helping tackle Indy racism: <https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Working-Class-Whites-Helping-tackle-Indy-racism.pdf>.

This way Indy has white working class representation on DMD/CICF as these long-time working class neighborhoods that housed the blue collar workers who built and maintained the city's back bone are dismantled and erased as predicted in "Connecting the dots: Destroying our city's backbone by the gentrification of long-time Indianapolis urban neighborhoods": <https://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Connecting-the-dots-Destroying-our-citys-backbone-by-the-gentrification-of-long-time-Indianapolis-urban-neighborhoods.pdf>.

6) Engage with Southeast Indy politicians and City-County Councillors Kristin Jones and Jared Evans about helping DMD regard/engage Indy's white working class as the city's Fountain Square, Stringtown and Valley areas are dismantled via gentrification as mentioned in point 5).

All of these efforts will affirm the value of the white working class as builders and sustainers of the city's historic backbone and adding flavor to our city, distinguishing Indianapolis nationally over the last 12+ decades.

In conclusion

Having Indy's working-class whites included among the various groups making up our city's diversity will be profound, setting us on a path of distinction with other local hillbilly influenced towns like Cincinnati and Louisville.

Understand that many of Indy's traditional white working-class areas are and will be dismantled due to gentrification--particularly Fountain Square, the Valley, and Stringtown. This will dismantle, erase, and replace these century old parts/cultures of Indy...and I predict this gentrification will only feed the fear, self-deprecation, self-abrogation, self-hate, and the twisted racism that puts and maintain their status as "white trash" if nothing is done to regard this condition of our city.

Now the Valley has been an integral part of Indy for well over 120 years. Historically, they have helped build the backbone of the city. Also, the poor and working-class whites live in the Valley for a reason. Again note, as I have shown, some of the city's white middle/upper classes don't like Indy's hillbillies. The feeling is mutual. The hillbillies take pride in not have to become "proper" to make a living. Indy's hillbillies take pride in having their own nationally/globally validated history/culture: language, values, cuisine, music, beliefs, family structure, games, origins, etc.

All of these 6 Actions proposed here will add up to affirming the white working class who will have self-regard and personal affirmation—walking taller with a sense of pride and dignity in what they have contributed to our local and national well-being.