'Resistance' is not a purely historical concept. While we commemorate the struggle against racism and fascism of the past we must not forget to continue the struggle today. Sadly, many decades since the end of World War II the spectres of racism and prejudice have not disappeared from the European landscape. In fact in many countries racist and xenophobic groups are on the rise again. It is up to our generation to resist it by all means available. There is a multitude of ways of opposing and counteracting racism. Everyone can contribute to resistance against intolerance in various fields. The bottom line, however, is your own decision to act and to encourage others to follow.

This leaflet hopes to give a general introduction to those who want to join today's resistance against racism and intolerance as individuals, community groups, or non-governmental organisations alike.

"Asking yourself a question, that is how resistance starts, then asking that question to someone else"  
(Remco Campert, Dutch poet)
HISTORY

Historically, resistance has taken different forms and shapes, depending on historical circumstances, ranging from armed struggles against fascist forces to educational projects on issues of discrimination.

It has been argued that a combination of both physical as well as ideological opposition to fascism has been the most effective means of combating the extreme right.

Different groups and individuals took part in different kinds of resistance. Today we do not have to emulate them literally but we should know about the diversity of traditions of resistance. Its diversity is also reflected in arts, music, and writing.

Racism

The first cases of resistance against racism can be traced back to the opposition of native peoples of Africa, the Americas and Asia to the European colonial yoke and to slavery. Revolts and uprisings against racist colonial rule occurred throughout centuries of European colonialism. The 1791 Haitian revolution stands out as a fine example: an army composed of former slaves repeatedly defeated the forces of big colonial powers and laid foundations for an independent black republic. Another example is the struggle of the Chechen people who resisted Russian imperialism for almost a century. Another form of resistance was maintaining the native cultures and identities of the oppressed peoples despite attempts at uprooting whole ethnic groups. The tradition of cultural resistance to racism and slavery is reflected in, among others, many of Bob Marley's songs.

Fascism

The first well-known international effort to combat fascism came in 1936 with the Spanish Civil War. Volunteers from all over Europe and beyond came together to defend democracy against the fascist military putsch led by General Franco. People from different walks of life and with different political beliefs joined the International Brigades. There were socialists, liberals, communists, anarchists, and others, among them. Groups all over Europe organised solidarity events to support the Spanish Republic. After three years of fighting the Republicans were defeated by the fascist forces supported by Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy, but the tradition lives on, not least in numerous literary works by authors such as George Orwell and Ernest

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1 Racism is the belief that some people are superior because they belong to a particular race. Racists define a race as a group of people with common ancestry. They distinguish different races from one another by physical characteristics, such as skin colour and hair texture. In fact, there are no clear differences, and especially no significant differences that matter. Recent research shows that race is an imagined entity. "Race" has no biological basis. The word "racism" is also used to describe abusive or aggressive behaviour towards members of a so called "inferior race". Racism takes different forms in different countries, according to history, culture and other social factors. A relatively new form of racism sometimes called "ethnic or cultural differentiation" says that all races or cultures are equal but they should not mix together to keep their originality. There is no scientific proof of the existence of different races. Biology has only determined one race: the human race.

2 Fascism is a violent reactionary right-wing political movement, and manifests itself ultimately in an openly terrorist dictatorship. Fascism gains support among all social groups especially in times of political and economical crises, it destroys democratic liberties and discriminates members of specific (ethnic) minorities and people with different views. Fascists believe in the just leadership of a strong man, instead of parliamentary democracy. Fascism builds on a strong nationalism, that often turns racist. The first fascist dictatorship was established in 1919 in Hungary, then 1922 in Italy, 1923 in Bulgaria and Spain, 1926 in Lithuania, 1936 in Japan. The most brutal form of fascism was the national-socialist dictatorship in Germany 1933-1945. Nowadays there are groups, organisations and parties that follow that ideology again. They are called neo-fascists.
Hemingway who gave their eye-witness accounts of the struggle. The Republican battle-cry "No Pasaran" - "They Shall Not Pass" and the clenched fist salute have remained symbols of anti-fascist resistance until now.<br>

A famous early instance of resistance to fascism was the so-called "Battle of Cable Street" in London in 1936 when thousands of people blocked a march of the British Union of Fascists through a Jewish quarter.<br>

During World War II forms of resistance in various occupied countries ranged from partisan warfare to underground universities, clandestine newspapers and so-called "small sabotage", i.e. painting anti-Nazi graffiti, secretly removing swastikas from public sites, etc. Thousands of people risked their lives on a daily basis helping those in hiding, primarily Jews. In some countries this "crime of solidarity" was punished by death. One of the most tenacious myths about World War II is that Jews went to the gas chambers like sheep. They did not. Many resisted and most paid for it with their lives. The Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 1943 is but one example.<br>

The wartime resistance movements still inspire anti-fascists in many countries. Fortunately, most of us do not have to fear for our lives because of our involvement in anti-racist activities. After the war former members of wartime resistance as well as ex-servicemen who had seen the horrors caused by Nazism played a vital role in post-war opposition to neo-fascism. One such example was the 43 Group formed by Jewish ex-combatants in England.<br>

Civil disobedience<br>

A different form of resistance which has had an enormous historical impact was civil disobedience as practiced by the Indian independence movement led by Mahatma Ghandi and the Black American civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King. The method of non-violent non-cooperation ("satyagraha" in Hindu) was a peaceful and very successful way of mobilising thousands of people deprived of their rights and of resisting injustice. It has been a source of inspiration for worldwide struggles for equal rights.<br>

The co-called "Black Power" movement, which appeared in the USA and spread to other countries, too, put emphasis on empowering minority groups to regain their self-respect and self-confidence. It is strongly reflected today in, for example, hip-hop culture, which is popular around the world.<br>

It is important to understand that groups and individuals taking part in resistance have always been very different and their methods differed accordingly. The best results were obtained, however, when a degree of mutual understanding, co-operation and solidarity between different groups was achieved.<br>

Anti-racist and anti-fascist resistance has never been a monopoly of any single political current. Today's anti-fascist and anti-racist campaigners should be aware of this particular aspect of the past and should be able to draw creatively from the past experiences.
ICONS OF RESISTANCE

Jan Karski (1914-2000)

As a member of the Polish underground resistance movement (AK) during World War II, Karski repeatedly crossed enemy lines to act as a courier between his occupied nation and the West. Prior to his last departure from Poland, he snuck into Warsaw's Jewish Ghetto so he could gain first-hand knowledge of its plight. After touring the Ghetto, he donned a disguise to enter a Nazi concentration camp in Eastern Poland. There he witnessed mass murder. In November 1942 he delivered an impassioned plea on behalf of Poland's Jews to top Allied officials in London. In July 1943 in a lengthy White House meeting he told President Roosevelt about the extermination of the Jews of Europe. Jan Karski - a young, Roman Catholic Pole - tried to stop the Holocaust. His mission failed. After the war he became an academic. In the 1990s he was a vocal supporter of Poland's anti-fascist youth movement.

(source: http://www.us-israel.org/source/biography/karski.html)

Martin Luther King (1929-1968)

Martin Luther King was a civil rights leader, preacher, writer and teacher. He was the most internationally famous and revered leader of the campaign against racial segregation and inequality in the United States in the 1960s. He inspired a generation with his powerful speeches: "I have a dream" was his most famous. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He was assassinated by a white supremacist in 1968.

(source: CD-ROM "Homebeats. Struggles for Racial Justice", Institute of Race Relations, Multimedia Department, 2-6 Leeke Street, GB-London WC1X 9HS, phone +44-20-78370041, fax +44-20-72780623, e.mail info@irr.org.uk, www.irr.org.uk/publication/cdrom/)

Malcolm X (1925-1965)

As a leader of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm became internationally famous for his political writings and religious beliefs. He led the black liberation movement and argued that black people must free themselves "by any means necessary." Growing up in face of racism in the US South, Malcolm moved to Boston as a young man where he drifted into crime. Whilst in prison in the early 1950s he joined the Nation of Islam and adopted the title "X" to symbolise his unknown African roots. In 1964 he left the Nation of Islam to form the Organisation of Afro-American Unity making trips to Africa and meeting many heads of states. After his assassination in 1965, the Black Power movement emerged based on his writings and ideals.

(source: CD-ROM "Homebeats. Struggles for Racial Justice", see above)

Nelson Mandela (born 1918)

Nelson Mandela was a trained lawyer and a leading activist in the African National Congress, which was banned in 1960 by the apartheid regime. He spent 27 years in prison for his political activities. During this time he became an international figure symbolising the black struggle in South Africa. On his release from prison in 1990 he conducted negotiations to dismantle the unjust apartheid system and in 1994 he became the first black president of the new democratic South Africa.

(source: CD-ROM "Homebeats. Struggles for Racial Justice", see above)
Resist what?

Neo-nazi and openly racist organisations are nowadays present in almost every country in Europe. They are conspicuous through their use of old-style fascist symbols and through their violent activities. These fringe groups are not the only threat, however. All too often they manage to infiltrate, directly or indirectly (through the adoption of similar slogans) mainstream political parties which in turn start promoting xenophobic policies, e.g. in the field of the treatment of refugees.

Racism can raise its ugly head even in the unlikely environment of the supposedly cosmopolitan youth culture. The skinhead subculture and the 'black metal' music scene seem particularly often used for the dissemination of racial hatred. Refugees and migrants, as well as Roma and Travelers are currently the most common scapegoats suffering from xenophobic sentiments. Other forms of prejudice such as anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism, homophobia, and so on, are alive and kicking too. You can encounter organised or non-organised racism and xenophobia almost everywhere in society: in schools, football grounds, parliaments, newspapers, on the Internet...

Effective resistance needs to be: - broad-based - creative - principled

In order to build a successful locally-based resistance you need to:
- evaluate the situation
- establish the objective
- find the right partners
- find the right methods

Evaluating the situation

You need to determine how serious the situation is:
- Have there been physical attacks against minorities?
- Who were the victims? Have they received adequate support?
- Has fascist and/or racist propaganda been spread?
- Who was responsible? (what groups, individuals)
- Has there been an adequate reaction from the police, the media, and the local community?

It is likely that you do not know particular hate-groups, who are their leaders, what are their publications or symbols. It is good to consult people who might have the necessary knowledge, e.g. an academic, a local anti-fascist research group or an anti-fascist magazine:
Examples of anti-fascist magazines which can be asked for help:

**Searchlight**
PO Box 1576
GB-Ilford IG5 ONG
phone +44-20-76818660, fax +44-20-76818650
editors@searchlightmagazine.com
www.searchlightmagazine.com

**Nigdy Wiecej (Never Again Association)**
PO Box 6, PL-03700 Warszawa 4
phone +48-601-360835
redakcja@nigdywiecej.org www.nigdywiecej.org

**Memorial - Human Rights Centre, St. Petersburg**
ul.Rasiesjaia 9, RUS-191002 St.Petersburg
phone +7-812-7106519, fax +7-812-7106519
tumbalalaika@mail.ru, tumbalalaika.memo.ru

**Antifaschistisches Info Blatt**
Gneisenaustrasse 2a, D-10961 Berlin
phone/fax +49-30-6946795
aib@mail.nadir.org
www.nadir.org/nadir/periodika/aib/

In many cases they will be able to help you identify the perpetrators and analyse the situation.
Do not forget about the plight of the victims. They need to be provided with legal, psychological and sometimes financial support. Try to contact them directly whenever possible to check if they do not feel isolated and intimidated.
In some countries specialised groups exist providing help to the victims such as:

**Victims Perspective – 'Opferperspektive'**
Schlossstrasse 1, D-14467 Potsdam,
phone +49-331-8170000
info@opferperspektive.de, www.opferperspektive.de

Try to collect all press cuttings about relevant events. They may seem unnecessary now but will prove to be indispensable in the future.

**Establishing the objective**

This is a crucial element in resisting hate groups and hate speech. Do you only want to get rid of an extremist organisation from your neighbourhood or do you want to work for good inter ethnic relations in the long run? On the other hand is it possible to promote benefits of multiculturalism while turning a blind eye to extremist activity aiming at destroying it?
You should be both ambitious and realistic in establishing your objective. It is probably impossible to hope for an end to racism once and for good. Yet it is possible to fight it effectively, to limit its scope and to marginalise it to some extent.
A lot depends on the environment: the local and national context. Sometimes anti-racist groups are forced to act against the mainstream of society and be prepared for a long-term strategy rather than for a quick and easy success.

**Finding the right partners**

Many beginners in the field of anti-racism feel alone and isolated. In fact, it does not have to be the case, provided there is enough good will to overcome sectarianism.
The victims of racism and fascism belonged to countless categories: Jews, Roma, political and religious opponents, homosexuals, people with disabilities and many others. In fact, virtually everybody can be treated as a minority in one sense or another. By dividing people into those categories fascism separated them from each other. But it is important to bear in mind that all potentially vulnerable groups combined together constitute the majority in society!
It is up to you to contact individuals, groups, and organisations which might be helpful in your activities or even interested in involving themselves on a larger scale.

Possible allies include:
- trade unions
- churches
- ethnic minorities
- migrants' and refugee groups
- youth groups
- gay and lesbian groups
- disabled people's groups
- human rights organisations
- local authorities
- artists and cultural institutions
- schools
- political groups
- media outlets
- and many others...

It depends on your objective and on the kind of activity you have in mind to choose the right partners. It is generally advised to involve a number of different groups, in order to broaden your appeal, to strengthen your effectiveness and to avoid possible criticisms of political (or other) bias. Sometimes your future partners need some encouragement and ought to be persuaded about benefits of co-operation with others. Do not lose your spirit when they are reluctant to join; it is quite possible they will change their mind in the future.

All partners participating in joint work on resistance against racism and/or against the extreme right need not agree on every single issue. It is quite natural they retain their identities and particular views while agreeing on the basic issues which brought them together. All partners need to be sensitive to each other's concerns. In order to work together it is necessary to understand and respect each other's traditions and viewpoints: in a joint struggle there is a place for everyone. There are examples of successful anti-discrimination projects involving such seemingly unlikely allies as e.g. gay and Muslim organisations. Solidarity is the key to success.

International solidarity

Occasionally you may feel as if there are no good partners or like-minded organisations in your area or even in your country. Don't worry! There might be groups in other countries who share your concerns and might be prepared to help you. International solidarity is a cornerstone of the European anti-racist and anti-fascist movement. UNITED for Intercultural Action was created out of the need felt by anti-racists to maintain international contacts. The UNITED annual address book is an indispensable resource for all looking for partner organisations abroad.

(Actual database available on: http://www.unitedagainstracism.org)

Methods

As it was said before, methods used in the area of resistance against intolerance have always varied according to different personal and organisational capabilities and

Intolerance is a lack of respect for practices or beliefs of others. This is shown when someone is not willing to let other people act in a different way or hold different opinions. Intolerance can mean that people are not treated fairly because of their religious beliefs, their sexuality, or even their clothes and hairstyle. Intolerance does not accept difference. It lies at the basis of racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and discrimination in general. It can often lead to violence.

Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is being yourself without imposing your views on others. Tolerance is not giving in or giving up. Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. The practice of tolerance doesn't mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's conviction.
preferences. There are special concerts and conferences as well as long-lasting awareness-raising campaigns, directed, for example, at football fans or media workers. Sometimes resistance is sparked off by particular incidents of racist violence or fascists standing in local elections and the urgent need to oppose them. For campaign ideas used in different countries, see e.g. UNITED campaign reports of 9 November - International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism and 21 March - European-Wide Action Week Against Racism.

In general, the more creative and innovative the method of protest, the better. On the other hand, we should not be ashamed of evoking the historical images in the struggle against intolerance: lessons drawn from history can be our biggest ally. This happened in the case of mobilisation against the British National Front. The slogan "National Front is a Nazi Front" helped British people understand the sinister nature of neo-fascism, a direct descendant of the criminal totalitarian dictatorships. It is vital not to allow hate-groups to hide behind a veneer of respectability.

The policy of 'No Platform' should be taken into account in all anti-racist activities. It states that fascists, who fundamentally disagree with democracy and the idea of freedom of speech, should not be given the right to a public platform. When they are allowed to speak publically, they stir up racial hatred. Debating with them on an equal footing gives them a feeling that their ideas should be taken seriously. If an academic agrees to debate with fascists, it appears that the fascist's arguments are worthy to be listened to and are important. Such debates have often proved counterproductive.

The question of security ought to be given consideration, too. There have been numerous examples of anti-fascist activists being threatened by violence. Do not put other people at risk through your carelessness.

(see UNITED information leaflet no.5 on "Security and the anti-antifa. Protection for anti-racist organisations", www.unitedagainstracism.org/pages/info05.htm)

One final word of general advice

Whatever we do, we ought to remember that resistance is not about a one-off event or a political declaration, but it is about a lasting process of consciousness-building, of influencing people's attitudes and creating a culture in which intolerance is not tolerated. Even if you experience problems, do not lose hope!

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