

Engaging in Anti-Oppression Work

By The United People of Color Caucus (TUPOCC) of the NLG and the NLG Anti-Racism Committee

Ending oppression is part and parcel of the Guild’s mission: “Our aim is to bring together all those who recognize the importance of safeguarding and extending the rights of workers, women, LGBTQ people, farmers, people with disabilities and people of color, upon whom the welfare of the entire nation depends; who seek actively to eliminate racism; who work to maintain and protect our civil rights and liberties in the face of persistent attacks upon them; and who look upon the law as an instrument for the protection of the people, rather than for their repression.”¹

Yet having an anti-oppression stance is only a beginning, and the Guild recognizes the importance of *actively* combating racism, sexism, homophobia, and all other forms of oppression. The purpose of this chapter is to (1) give a basic description of the anti-oppression work of the Guild, (2) to address related law school specific issues, and (3) to provide resources to engage in anti-oppression work in your own chapter. The resources include the Alabama Manifesto and the TUPOCC Pledge, two documents the Guild encourages student chapters to sign onto, as well as information on how to be an ally, reaching out to students of color, and other anti-oppression training resources.

The United People of Color Caucus (TUPOCC), the Anti-Racism Committee, the Alabama Manifesto, & the TUPOCC Pledge

The United People of Color Caucus (TUPOCC) is an alliance of law students, legal workers, attorneys, and other people of color within the NLG. The necessity of such an organization is borne from the history of the United States where economic power is dependent on the continued subjugation of people of color, poor people women, queers, and other oppressed people.²

TUPOCC is a caucus of the Guild, meaning that its membership is open to those who self-identify as people of color. TUPOCC wishes to provide all people of color with opportunities and, when such opportunities are not available, to work with allies to create them. The caucus seeks to unite people of color in the NLG, to represent communities of color, to help people of color achieve their potential, and to function as a powerful force within the NLG, the United States, and the world. Membership is open to all members of the NLG community who self-identify as people of color. For more information, email tupocc@nlg.org.

Those who do not identify as people of color are encouraged to join the Anti-Racism Committee (ARC) of the Guild, an organization of “allies” that also does anti-racism work. The Anti-Racism Committee strives to make the Guild into an effective anti-racist organization, holding it to the principles on which it was founded. The cost of joining the Anti-Racism Committee is \$12, which can be paid with your membership dues. For more information, email antiracism@nlg.org.

The Alabama Manifesto

The Alabama Manifesto is the document that officially brought TUPOCC into being. Local chapters and student chapters of the Guild are encouraged to formally adopt The Alabama Manifesto as well as to ensure that their activity is fully aligned with both the spirit and the letter of the Manifesto.

The United People of Color Caucus (TUPOCC) of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) is an alliance of law students, legal workers, attorneys and other people of color within the NLG community. The necessity of such an organization is borne from the historical context of the capitalist United States where economic prowess is dependent on the furthered and continued subjugation of people of color, women, the poor, queers and other oppressed people. We are dedicated to fostering and supporting the growth and empowerment of all people of color, particularly within the organization of the NLG. We believe that meaningful social change and actual justice can only be attained when people of color and all other beleaguered communities are more than mere afterthoughts. Equality must be woven throughout the fabric of the organization. We seek to further educate ourselves and inform the larger NLG community about the issues that affect us and investigate the relationship of these issues to social justice. We strongly believe that this work cannot be done unaided, and we encourage support from our allies throughout the NLG in furtherance of our goals. We wish to provide all people of color opportunities in support of these goals, and when such opportunities are not available, to work with our associates and allies to create them. We seek to unite ourselves, represent our communities, achieve our potential, and function as a powerful force within the NLG, our chapters, schools, communities, the United States of America and the global population.

The United People of Color Caucus (TUPOCC) of the NLG has a multi-point strategy that we shall use to advance our mission:

1. Elect students of color and people of color into leadership positions within the NLG
2. Demand that white and privileged Guild members take accountability for their racism and other oppressive behaviors by joining us in examining and effectively changing the culture of the NLG. Together we believe that we can accomplish this goal by:
 - a. Meeting as people of color regularly to deal with oppression and other issues we uniquely experience as people of color
 - b. Encouraging all members who are not of this caucus to regularly attend meetings of the Anti- Racism Committee, or preferably, to join such committees.
 - c. Institutionalize an anti-racist agenda by creating policies in favor of and beneficial to eliminating racism and other oppressions. (e.g. making anti-racism an active and prioritized component of the National Convention)
3. Alter the focus of the NLG by learning how to be accountable to the communities that it seeks to support and protect.

Law-School Specific Issues of Anti-Oppression

It's no secret that US law schools are a hotbed of oppressive dynamics. For a stunning example, check out [this short video](#) created by students of color from UCLA Law School. Inevitably, the key question is not whether disparities exist, or whether oppression exists in US law schools – the question is *what to do about it!* Other chapters of this manual encourage curriculum change, faculty and student diversification, and those are two tactics that are certainly important and useful in working to push for more inclusive and welcoming dynamics. In addition, the Guild encourages its students to engage their schools directly on issues of oppression and inclusivity. Here is a (non-exhaustive) list of actions students can take to engage their school administrations, faculty, and student body on this vital issue. Part III of this chapter provides a list of resources to help effectuate this effort.

- Adopt the Alabama Manifesto and TUPOCC Pledge
- Encourage schools to offer classes on Critical Legal Studies
- Encourage schools to take on diverse faculty and prospective students

- Hold regular and frequent anti-oppression trainings for students, faculty and staff
- Encourage leadership of students of diverse backgrounds
- Be an ally! This means many things. Check out our list of resources on this topic to learn more about being an ally.

Anti-Oppression Resources

The following is a list of suggested readings and resources on issues of oppression. For further guidance, consult TUPOCC and ARC!

General Resources about Anti-Oppression Work

- Dismantling Racism Works: http://www.dismantlingracism.org/Dismantling_Racism/aBout_uS.html
- Catalyst project: <http://collectiveliberation.org/>
- The Harvard Implicit Bias Test: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>
- People's Institute for Survival: <http://www.pisab.org/>

Resources for Anti-Oppression Trainings

- Training Tools: Scenarios Common for US Law Students: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tLVz-iGtlRXKMae-T8BQrVFqgPakWn3sZO4pANTzpJQ/edit?usp=sharing>
- Training Tools: Glossary of Terms: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ogz7hPZgus5V8m2vicoTW8ag3xjEFQfvFAsVH-zwac8/edit?usp=sharing>
- Handout: "To Equalize Power Among US," by Tools for Change: <http://www.toolsforchange.org/resources/org-handouts/to%20equalize%20power.pdf>
- Exercise: Power and Diversity Sequence: https://docs.google.com/a/colorado.edu/document/d/1hL_jGBASv_38gsRvXTpY3YzPFsHnQbkizAW-WEENjrg/edit
- Exercise: The Benefits of Being Male: <http://organizingforpower.org/the-benefits-of-being-male-exercise/>
- Exercise: Theater of the Oppressed: <http://organizingforpower.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/games-theater-of-oppressed.pdf>
- Exercise: Power Shuffle: <https://docs.google.com/a/colorado.edu/document/d/1V3GHGTTTa2VCWZNhH-b9Qpp9M8l6MvnCCuek6K6JPEU/edit>

Resources on Being an Ally/Information on Privilege

- "How To Be An Ally" An Excerpt from "Becoming an Ally Breaking the Cycle of Oppression," by Anne Bishop: <http://www.daa.org.uk/uploads/pdf/How%20to%20be%20an%20Ally.pdf>
- "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh: <http://www.deanza.edu/faculty/lewisjulie/White%20Priviledge%20Unpacking%20the%20Invisible%20Knapsack.pdf>

- Tools for Creating Healthy, Productive Interracial/Multiracial Communities:
<http://organizingforpower.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/community-builders-tool-kit.pdf>
- “Are you a Jerk to People with Disabilities Without Even Knowing It?”
<http://www.vox.com/2014/5/8/5694742/are-you-a-jerk-to-people-with-disabilities-without-even-knowing-it>
- “Tools for White Guys who are Working for Social Change ... and Other People Socialized in a Society Based on Domination”
<https://docs.google.com/a/colorado.edu/document/d/1aKmUrGcHmjBzQz07FzMn4TdcjnqsGP1eOVm2JgyUYh4/edit>
- “Creating An Atmosphere Where Everyone Participates” by Tools for Change:
<http://www.toolsforchange.org/resources/org-handouts/social%20power.pdf>

¹ <http://www.nlg.org/about>

² www.nlg.org/committees/TUPOCC