

Why Anti Oppression? By Seth Donovan, *Something Grown Together*

There are so many models and examples within movement work...we have campaigns based on every issue; it seems that there is a different color ribbon magnet for every cause on every car; we can all fill in a hundred words to the end of the phrase "Save the _____" (whales, grasslands, children); and when we want to be involved in change in our community it often feels overwhelming to figure out which cause we will get involved in or which non-profit we will volunteer with.

I often look around and take all of this as an amazing sign that so many people care and so many people are interested in change. I also many times look around and wonder, "If there are so many issues, and so many people involved, then why are we continually having to add more issues to the list and create more non-profits, and all the while increasing competition between each of these issues for money and people and resources?" We end up working on fixing the results of oppression instead of addressing the root causes of oppression. It's kinda like clipping the leaves off of weeds in your garden and then wondering why new weeds keep growing in the same place. Weeds have to be addressed at the root level.

So working at the root level on issues of oppression is often talked about as anti-Oppression philosophy. **It is the foundation of movement work in our communities that asks the question, "What are the roots of oppression and what do we need to do as people, as families, as communities, and as a country to address the roots of oppression?"** Why do we have domestic violence, sexual assault, and hate crimes? Because of the roots of misogyny, patriarchy, and homophobia. Why do we have unlivable wages, homelessness, gentrification, and unemployment? Because of the roots of racism, classism, and gender discrimination.

When we are interested in anti-Oppression work, we are also interested in always asking the question, **"What is the root of this problem?"** and then, **"What do I need to do to address it?"** **This means we have to do our own work – we have to work on ways that we think or feel or are socialized to be racist, homophobic, classist, sexist, etc. and then we need to carry that work into our relationships, school, and workplace.** We also need to carry that work to our city government and voting decisions. At every step, we never trick ourselves into thinking that we have arrived. We are always in a process of striving for a more just and compassionate world.