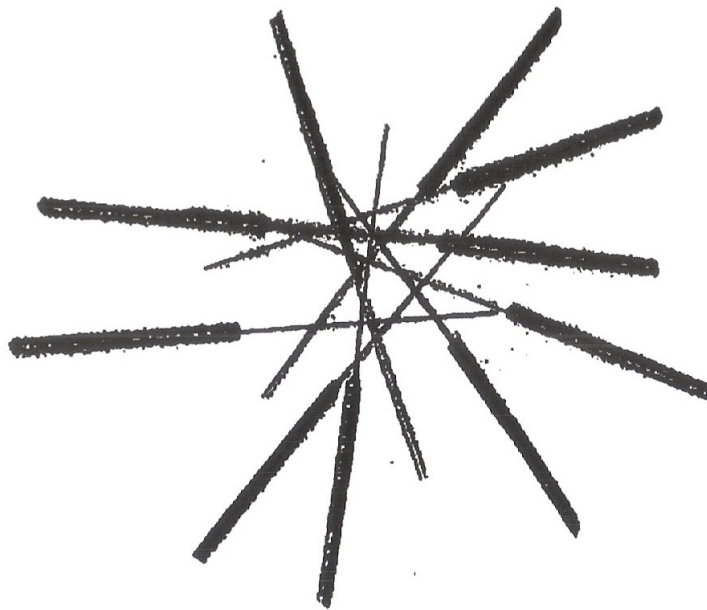


**A**  
**Radical History**  
**Of**  
**Acupuncture in America**



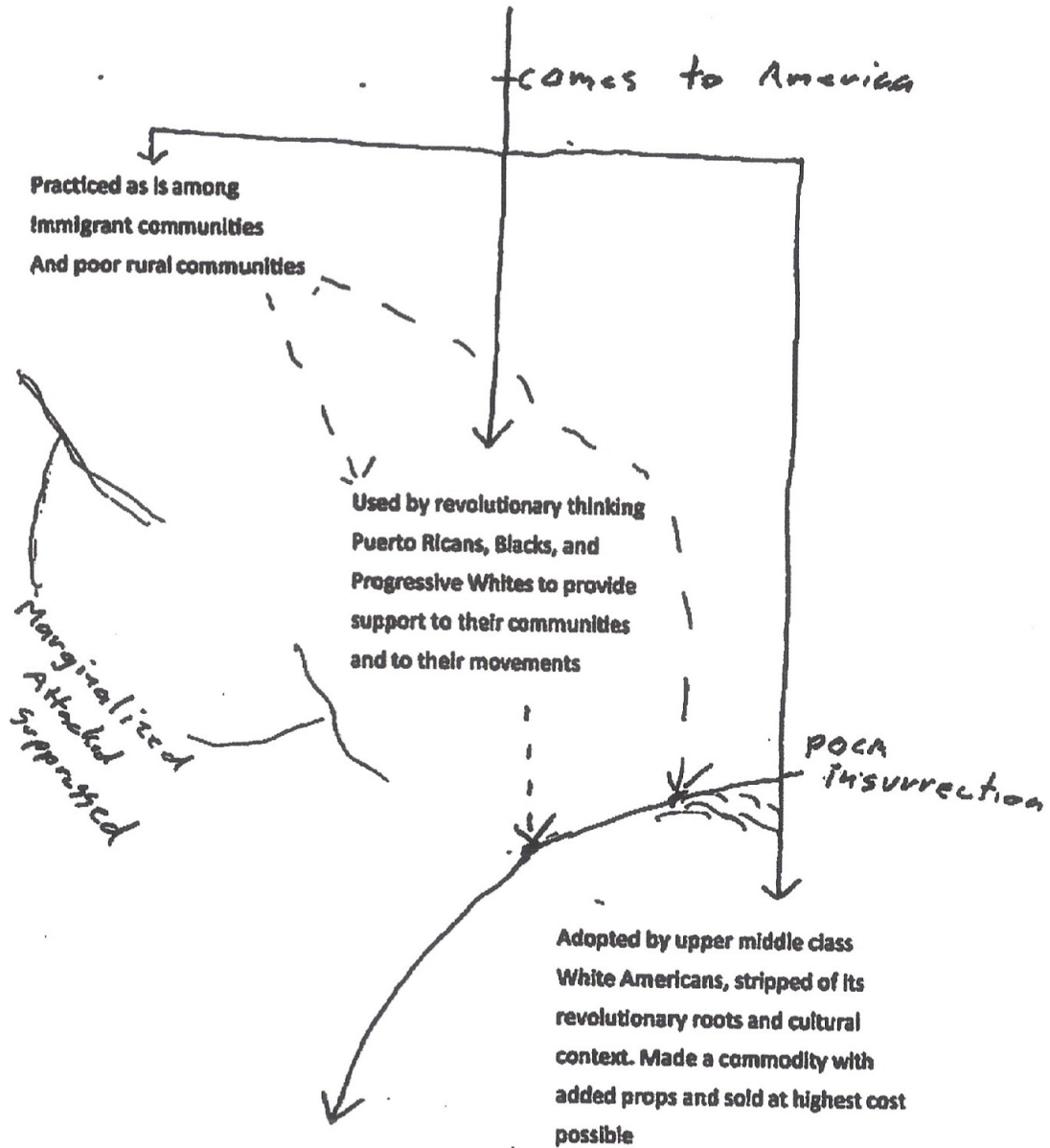
**...better lives have been lived in the margins, locked in the prisons and  
lost on the gallows than have ever been enshrined in palaces.**

**-propogandi**

# American Acupuncture History X

(a brief flow chart)

Acupuncture a simple, low tech, cost effective medicine for the people by the people



# The Black Panthers, The Young Lords, & Lincoln Detox Center (The People's Drug Program)

## Background

Late 60's: "On the one hand we had the drug epidemic, but there was also revolution in the air—change was something that you could breathe, that you could taste, that you could feel, because the movement was very vibrant".—Vicente "Panama" Alba

COINTELPRO, an F.B.I. program of the 50's, 60's & 70's, was a low level war waged against Black, Latino, Asian, and Indigenous struggles and their allies as well as other progressive movements. The US government employed a very effective strategy of "chemical warfare" against these communities, flooding them with heroin and other illicit drugs. The strategy was effective on several levels:

1. Profitability—Increased extraction of wealth and resources from affected communities
2. Destruction of the hearts, minds, and revolutionary will of the people "they realize that as long as they can keep our Black youths standing on the street corners "nodding" from a "shot" of heroin, they won't have to worry about us waging an effective struggle for liberation". — Michael "Cetewayo" Tabor *Capitalism Plus Dope Equals Genocide*
3. Serves as a pretext for a stronger police presence (occupation force) in targeted communities without intensifying revolutionary fervor
4. Serves as a legal means for the harassment of colonized people and their allies with programs such as "no knock" warrants and "stop and frisk" under the pretext of looking for narcotics and "other evidence".

"Now, anyone who thinks that this law will be confined to just suspected drug dealers is laboring under a tragic and possibly suicidal delusion" ... "It should come as no surprise when the homes of revolutionaries and other progressive and true freedom-loving people are invaded by the police on the pretext of searching for drugs and "other evidence". - Tabor

5. Serves to effectively criminalize a large portion of targeted communities.
6. State-sanctioned methadone clinics were eventually recognized as a continuation of "chemical warfare" which allowed the state to exert further control over the flow of drugs into the communities and lower morale by effectively taking away the people's ability to help themselves and each other.

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The Black Panther Party and the Young Lords were revolutionary, anti-imperialist organizations who approached their struggle from many fronts. Both groups emphasized the need for material support of the people and implemented many programs and actions to improve public health, healthcare, nutrition, and quality of life for their respective communities (I can't convey the enormity of the scope of these programs. Look it up!). They realized that heroin addiction was a threat to their communities as well as their movement.

By 1970, Lincoln Hospital, known as the "butcher shop of the South Bronx", was the only medical facility in the area. The Young Lords and The Black Panther Party took over the facility briefly in early 1970 to demand better health care for the community and confronted the administration about the lack of services for people addicted to heroin. This failed to produce any real change.

On November 10, 1970 members of The Young Lords, the Black Panther Party, and other allies and supporters took over Lincoln Hospital and established a drug treatment program called The People's Drug Program which became known as the Lincoln Detox Center.



Lincoln detox was an extremely successful program that focused on exposing and treating the root cause of addiction. It consisted of three important components: Acupuncture treatment, Political education, and Community service.

"From the first day, November 10, 1970, we had a constant influx of people everyday seeking help. Hundreds and hundreds came—I'm not talking about one or two-dozen people—as the word spread about Lincoln Detox, the opportunity for people to walk in and get effective help from everyday people (not white professionals but their own people) who had a loving heart, developing an understanding of things they needed to articulate. People came from all over New York and Connecticut, Long Island, New Jersey, too. The Lincoln Detox program became so successful and effective that a United Nations delegation visited and gave us recognition for it."

- Vicente "Panama" Alba

"...our ability to get involved with acupuncture and to learn it, and to learn it from a very fundamental basis was an important contribution to that struggle." "...acupuncture, in the hands of revolutionary thinking, Puerto Rican, Blacks, Progressive White people, was an intervention that the government was not willing to accept at the time because it attacked and exposed the intention of the government to impose a chemical warfare on a certain segment of the community. And it exposed the fact that the government wanted to control the flow of drugs into the community". -Mutulu Shakur

"We became a threat to the city of New York and consequently with the development of the barefoot doctor acupuncture cadre, we began to move around the country and educate various other communities instead of schools and orientations around acupuncture drug withdrawal and the strategy of methadone and the teaching the brothers and sisters the fundamentals of acupuncture to serious acupuncture, how it was used in the revolutionary context in China and in Vietnam and how we were able to use it in the South Bronx and our success. Primarily because we had a love for our people and we had a commitment to our people." - Mutulu Shakur

"The existence of the program was a thorn in the government's side. We were revolutionaries and radicals doing work, recruiting people to do work the government didn't want to happen."

- Vicente "Panama" Alba

"The concept of self-determination within the minimum context of community control and control of one's own health, was too much of a significant barometer for our community to see the potential of freedom, the potential of self-determination, so we became the target."

- Mutulu Shakur

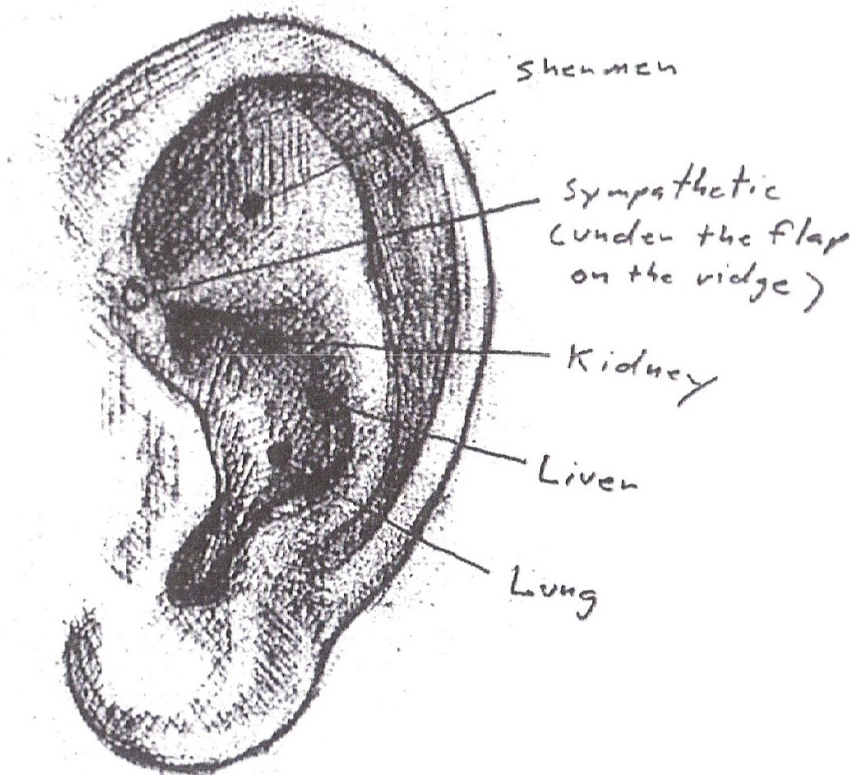
After the forced shut down of the Lincoln Detox Center by a force of 200 police officers in 1979, Mutulu Shakur an acupuncturist and asst director at Lincoln Detox, went on to co-found the Black Acupuncture Advisory Association of North America (BAAANA) and opened an acupuncture clinic in Harlem where he continued working with drug addiction. BAAANA also provided treatment for thousands of elderly and poor patients who otherwise would have received no treatment of this kind. Patients were able to receive quality health care at reasonable prices. Over 100 students were trained as acupuncturists through the BAAANA affiliate, the Harlem Institute of Acupuncture. BAAANA was shut down in 1982. Mutulu Shakur is currently in prison.

## National Acupuncture Detoxification Association

Michael Smith, who was director of Lincoln Detox after his predecessor Richard Taft was murdered in 1974, founded the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association (NADA) in 1985. Today, every acupuncturist knows the five points in the ear known as the NADA protocol, but few have heard about its roots and development at Lincoln Detox.

The protocol developed after the staff read a paper by Dr. H.L. Wen of Kwong Wah hospital in Hong Kong. Dr. Wen used electrical stimulation of the Lung point in the ear to treat opium withdrawal symptoms. The patients and staff had been looking for a more natural method of detox than methadone, so began experimenting with acupuncture. They soon learned that needles alone were more effective, flexible, and cost-efficient.

The five points in each ear ease cravings and the emotional roller coasters of addiction and withdrawal, and also provide potent treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. The five-needle protocol treats sleep disturbances, depression, and anxiety, often achieving instant results. (Baird, 2013)



"you can now receive acupuncture treatment for drug withdrawal as an alternative method of treatment. And that exists today because many men and women were put in jail, shot, and killed" - Mutulu Shakur



## Miriam Lee

Meanwhile in California in the late 60's early 70's an acupuncturist named Miriam Lee was quietly practicing acupuncture out of her home. Miriam Lee was a nurse-midwife who eventually became an acupuncturist. She was born in China in 1926 where she lived through WWII and the brutal Japanese occupation until she left for Singapore in 1949. She lived and worked in Singapore for 17 years before coming to America in the late 60's.

It was illegal to practice acupuncture in California at the time, so she worked on an assembly line at Hewlett-Packard. She quietly treated a few people that she went to church with successfully using acupuncture. Word quickly spread and people began lining up outside her house. So many people came that the back staircase to her home broke from having too many people waiting on them. Eventually, in 1973, even though acupuncture was illegal, a doctor offered to share office space with her.

*"If you don't press the olive seed, there will be no oil" -old Chinese Saying*

More and more people came to receive acupuncture. She was treating 75-80 patients per day, 14-17 patients per hour with no help. The pressure on her at this time was great. She had to dig deep to come up with ways to treat the incredible amount of people who sought her for help. Staying true to her roots, she developed a radically simple acupuncture protocol that could treat the majority of the problems faced by people in the modern, western world. This 10 point protocol is still widely used by busy community acupuncturists all over America and the rest of the world.

*"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will" - Frederick Douglass*

The next part of her story should come as no surprise. On April 15, 1974, Governor Ronald Reagan vetoed a bill legalizing the practice of Acupuncture in California. At 6:45am on April 16 the police shut down her clinic and arrested her for practicing medicine without a license. At her trial her patients overwhelmed the courtroom, demanding the right to make their own decisions for their health, the right to receive acupuncture treatment. Within days the Governor and state legislator were forced to compromise and a loophole was created to allow Miriam Lee to continue practicing. Acupuncture was formally legalized in California in 1976 thanks in large part to the work of Miriam Lee and the actions of her supporters.

Miriam Lee's Great 10 Needle Treatment: (considered safe even in new hands)

On each arm: *He Gu (LI 4), Qu Chi (LI 11), Lie Que (LU 7)*



On each leg: *Zu San Li (St 36), San Yin Jiao (Sp 6)*



## Working Class Acupuncture,

## The People's Organization of Community Acupuncture,

## and The Rise of the Acu-punk!

By the end of the 20th Century, Acupuncture had been mostly taken in by mainstream America. It was stripped of its revolutionary roots and long history as a peasant medicine, and through a lens of white privilege was being focused into an upper middle class commodity. Through increased regulation and higher prices, acupuncture was quickly becoming inaccessible to the people who had effectively used it to better the health and well-being of their communities.

In 2002, in Portland, Oregon, an acupuncturist named Lisa Rohleder, after 7 years of working in a variety of public health settings which utilized the NADA protocol, was facing the prospect of beginning a private practice. She began to realize that none of her neighbors, friends, and family members in her working class neighborhood could afford the going rate for acupuncture. Out of a desperate attempt to make acupuncture affordable and accessible to the people in her own neighborhood and make a living herself, facing much criticism and hostility from some of her peers, she opened the first community acupuncture clinic which would become Working Class Acupuncture.

*...to be a revolutionary doctor or to be a revolutionary at all, there must first be a revolution  
- che guevera*

Working Class Acupuncture quickly grew to be an extremely successful acupuncture clinic which this year alone provided nearly 50,000 acupuncture treatments. Realizing that she couldn't effect a large enough change on her own, she began to reach out to other acupuncturists. She taught anyone who would listen what she had learned and freely disseminated any information and ideas that she had. Eventually with the help of many allies, a co-op was formed called the People's Organization of Community Acupuncture (POCA). Through POCA the community acupuncture movement has grown quickly. There are now over 200 community clinics across the country that last year provided over 750,000 acupuncture treatments offered at a sliding scale rate that is affordable and accessible to the whole community.

*"I think it's part of POCA's responsibility to spread the word about what really happened. And who we really owe our thanks (and our work) to. In my mind that's the Black Panthers, Young Lords, NADA, and Miriam Lee. Imagine how different the profession would look if their visions shaped it." -Lisa Rohleder*

*Every tool is a weapon if you hold it right - Ani DiFranco*

Community acupuncturists, or acupunks, are working to affect social change through the tools we have available to us, acupuncture. Working to recognize and expose our own privilege and how it shapes our world view is a difficult process, as privilege is invisible to those who have it, but necessary if we are to learn from history and create our own future based on reality. This is our history. It's our responsibility to learn from it and get to work building the future.

Acupuncture can change the world!

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**Lisa Rohleder. "The Remedy" and "Acupuncture Is like Noodles"**

**Also check out [pocacoop.com](http://pocacoop.com)**

**If you find any errors or have anything to add, change it, add it, or whatever and send us a copy**

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