



SHARED OPPRESSIONS

After an organization has established key issues and priorities— the next step is to examine and connect LGBTQ issues to the priorities they are already focused on.

Organizations should ask critical questions: how do these issues impact LGBTQ folks of color? Do LGBTQ members experience different barriers or challenges than heterosexual members? What common experiences link communities? By answering these questions, organizers can ground the conversation about LGBTQ rights in the experiences of communities of color, and create opportunities to logically extend the work to engage potential LGBTQ constituents.



v2 Rev. 10/2011



Shared Oppression ⁷



2 hours

SUMMARY

This session highlights the disproportionate impact of institutional oppression in arenas such as employment, education, and housing that LGBTQ people of color experience. It also highlights the unique intersections between homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and racism that LGBTQ people of color face.

GOAL

- Help participants understand how LGBTQ people of color are impacted by multiple systems which results in disproportionate impacts.

MATERIALS

- Flip chart
- Markers
- Copies of "Shared Oppressions, Similar Impact" handouts - blank and data, p. 6-7

AGENDA OUTLINE

EXERCISE	FORMAT	TIME
Introduction & Review	Presentation	15 minutes
Intersecting Oppressions	Large group discussion	45 minutes
Shared Oppression, Similar Impact	Small group discussion	45 minutes
Wrap-up	Presentation	15 minutes

Trainer Note:

This workshop aims to help participants understand the unique experiences of LGBTQ people of color. One of the dangers of this conversation is falling into a hierarchy of oppressions conversation, which is not the intent. We recommend focusing on how the experience of LGBTQ people of color is unique, impacted by multiple institutions, and reinforced by cultural stereotypes.

► **Introduction & Review (15 minutes)**

Presentation

Introduce exercise by saying that there are many ways marginalized communities are controlled and oppressed.

Trainer Asks:

- "What are the ways that dominant groups exert power and control over communities of color? Over LGBTQ people of color?"

Flip chart the response to this question on two separate pieces of paper, one for communities of color and the other for LGBTQ people of color.

Possible responses for how communities of color have been controlled and oppressed are:

- Slavery
- Internment camps

⁷ "Shared Oppression" is an adaptation of an exercise originally published in "The Welcoming Congregation Handbook: Resources for Affirming Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian or Transgendered People," by the Unitarian Universalist Association, 1999. See also Suzanne Pharr's "Common Elements of Oppression"

Shared Oppressions (continued)

- Immigration policies excluding certain nationalities
- Anti-miscegenation laws
- Welfare reform
- Racial profiling
- Indian boarding schools
- Red-lining practices in housing & real estate

Possible examples of how LGBTQ communities of color have historically been controlled or oppressed are:

- Anti-sodomy laws
- Raids on bars and other spaces that welcome or are for LGBTQ people
- Medicalizing and treating being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender as an illness
- Anti-marriage laws
- Anti-adoption laws
- Housing and employment discrimination
- Police profiling and brutality
- Church sanctions against LGBTQ folks
- Immigration bans
- Disproportionate lack of access to health care

Trainer Asks:

- “What does our culture teach us about communities of color? LGBT people of color?”
- “What institutions have policies or practices in place that support racism / xenophobia / or homophobia?”

Trainer Points:

- Remind participants that many of these examples are institutional forms of racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia. It may be helpful to have these terms defined in advance on a flip chart. [Use definitions from Glossary]
- Strategies of oppression are both similar and specific across communities of color, and LGBTQ communities. Generally, they are rooted in the dominant group’s belief of their superiority and supremacy as white, American citizens, wealthy, and heterosexual.
- Systems of oppression work through a range of strategies – political, economic, socio-cultural, and physical or psychological harm and violence. For example, the goals of redlining practices and racial profiling are the same: to exert dominance over people of color, exclude them from resources and maintain power and control over their communities. These are the same impacts of scapegoating immigrants and building a border wall, as well as gay marriage bans and gay-bashing.
- LGBTQ people of color experience the forms of oppression suffered by LGBTQ community and communities of color. In addition, they experience a whole other category of oppression that is unique to the LGBTQ people of color experience.

Shared Oppressions *(continued)*

- These forms of oppression—cultural, individual, and institutional—result in a range of disparities across our communities.
- These identities also overlap and intersect, and the same ways that all three forms of oppression are happening and intersecting, the same is true for identity aspects for LGBTQ people of color and immigrants and refugees.

► **“Shared Oppressions, Similar Impacts” Handout (45 minutes)** ***Small Group Discussion***

Divide participants into two groups. Distribute the blank worksheet titled “Shared Oppression, Similar Impact.” Do not hand out the completed worksheet yet.

Assign each small groups to take two categories and complete the worksheet with information, data, and policies that lead to disproportionate impact for both communities.

Give them 10 minutes to discuss, then ask each group to report back.

Trainer Points:

- The disproportionate and persistent rates these various measures of well-being across these communities did not happen by accident;
- They are (1) shaped by cultural prejudices, (2) result in historical, deliberate and discriminatory practices and policies, and (3) internalized and externalized by individuals, both those from the dominant and marginalized groups.
- As social justice activists and organizers, our job is to surface these patterns of discrimination, document them and call it out.
- LGBTQ people of color suffer greater disparities in all the categories because of homo/transphobia and racism. In addition, there is also the unique oppression experienced because of their identities as LGBTQ people of color. By addressing the disparities that LGBTQ people of color experience, we can see the ways that homophobia, racism, xenophobia, classism, gender oppression and more interact together.

Distribute the completed handout to wrap up the conversation.

► **Wrap-Up (15 minutes)** ***Large Group Discussion***

Divide participants back into the same groups from the last exercise (one group each on people of color, immigrants & refugees, and LGBTQ people).

Trainer Says:

- “There are more things that bind our communities than divide us, and we have individuals that exist across multiple identities in our communities.”
- “Our resistance has occurred in many ways, both big and small; by challenging head-on the oppression inflicted on us but also by bringing out and celebrating the strengths of our communities – our resilience, our creative energy, our steadfast faith and our hard work.”

Shared Oppressions (continued)

Ask participants to write up as many ways they can think of that these communities resist and celebrate their strengths. You can use historical or current examples of resistance, culture and celebration that inspire you (think back to the timeline).

Possible responses:

- Radical literature, research
- Pride rallies
- Civil rights and other progressive legislation passed
- May Day rallies
- Establishing progressive radio and other media programs
- History Awareness months
- Celebrating diversity activities
- Anti-Racism/ Anti-oppression training and organizing
- Civil disobedience
- Addressing communities needs
- Black Panther Breakfast program
- Stonewall

Shared Oppressions, Similar Impact

	COMMUNITIES OF COLOR	LGBTQ PEOPLE OF COLOR
POVERTY RATES	24% of African-Americans and 23% of Native Americans live in poverty. (people of color make up 33% of population, but 50% of the impoverished). 21.5% of Latinos and 11% of Asians and Pacific Islanders live in poverty.	Black female same-sex couples report a median income of \$10,000 less than Black married straight couples. Latino male same-sex households earn \$27,000 less annually than white gay households.
SCHOOL PUSH-OUT RATES	21% of African-Americans are pushed out of school (compared to 12.2% of white people). 27.5% of Latinos are pushed out of school.	Nearly 1/3 of LGBTQ students drop out of high school to escape the violence, harassment, and isolation they face there - a dropout rate nearly three times the national average. This is even higher for LGBTQ students of color 4.7% of LGBTQ students of color reported being verbally harassed because of both their sexual orientation and their race or ethnicity.
HOMELESSNESS	African-Americans make up 40% of the homeless population (but only 11% of the general population); Native Americans make up 8% of the homeless population (but only 1% of the general population). Latinos make up 11% of the homeless population (but only 9% of the general population).	40% of youth who are homeless are LGBT. Homeless gay and transgender youth are disproportionately youth of color. In New York, 44% of homeless gay youth are black and 26% were Hispanic. 62% of homeless transgender youth were black, and 20% were Hispanic.
INCARCERATION	70 percent of those who are incarcerated are people of color. 80 percent of those incarcerated under the War on Drugs are people of color. Black women are the fastest growing population in prisons. Nearly 3% of Latino adults are incarcerated.	Drug charges account for 80% of people incarcerated. Studies have repeatedly shown a higher rate of drug use in LGBTQ communities (used as self medication). Alcohol and drug abuse affects an estimated 20-30% of the gay and lesbian population – a rate that is 2-3 times higher than the overall population. A study in Massachusetts found that 80% of transgender people had problems with drugs or alcohol.

Information from Western States Center's We are Here Handout, The Sentencing Project, Center for American Progress' 2010 Report on Homelessness, Queers for Economic Justice's Rockefeller Drug Laws Factsheet, Families USA, American Progress, National Urban League: Left Behind in America, Lambda Legal: Facts about Gay and Lesbian Youth in Schools, End Homelessness, and the Department of Justice.

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Shared Oppressions, Similar Impact

Complete the following worksheet to help identify how LGBT people of color are impacted by poverty, school push-out rates, homelessness, and incarceration. Fill in statistics you know, as well as policies you are aware of that lead to disproportionate impact for both communities.

	COMMUNITIES OF COLOR	LGBT PEOPLE OF COLOR
POVERTY RATES		
SCHOOL PUSH-OUT RATES		
HOMELESSNESS		
INCARCERATION		