

# Anti-Oppression

## *From Principles to Practice*

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## Why Anti-Oppression Training?

- Rape is not about sex! It is an act of violence that is all about.....
  - P
  - C
- What is your professional and/or organizational commitment?
- Direct connection w/ sexual assault
  - Sexual violence is a result of oppression and in itself has been historically a tool used by oppressors to oppress and maintain a white supremacist patriarchal society
- Move from reflection and self-analysis to advocacy and action
  - To dismantle oppression, we must learn how each manifestation of oppression affects us and how we play a role in supporting it....“Until we are clearly committed to anti-oppression practice, all forms of oppression will continue to divide our movements and weaken our power” (SOA Watch)

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## Goals of Training

- To understand root causes of sexual violence
- To understand cultural perspectives as they relate to your own individual perspectives and specifically as they relate to how survivors access/receive services and what potential barriers they may encounter
- To gain a basic understanding and begin acquiring skills for working with/for communities “other than” your own, specifically to understand how personal, historic, social and systemic oppression affects and informs how you advocate
- To gain common language and basics of anti-oppression theory
- To begin, rejoin or continue on your own path as an advocate understanding that cultural competency and unlearning oppressive behaviors/attitudes/beliefs and internalized oppression can be a life long process

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## Building a language base:

### Commonly used terms and definitions

- ❑ **Power:** access to resources, the ability to influence others, and access to decision-makers and/or decision making process/systems to get what you want done. Being able to control individuals or systems.
- ❑ **Privilege:** choices, entitlements, advantages and benefits granted based on membership in a culturally dominant group (is usually determined at birth: boy child, white child, born into wealth, born w/out a disability, born GLBT, etc.)
- ❑ **Prejudice:** a pre-judgment, an attitude, opinion or feeling-usually, but not always, negative (either way denies the individuality of a person) and usually formed without personal experiences, no one is free of prejudice
- ❑ **Stereotype:** A generalization imposed on an entire group based on real or perceived characteristics or some individual belonging to that group; bias based on a distorted cultural norm; could be based on a myth or misunderstanding of a group/culture
- ❑ **Oppression = Prejudice + Power**

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## What do we mean by Oppression?

- ❑ **Prejudice and Power** (you must have power to actually be oppressive)
- ❑ Assumed superiority of one group over another based on skin color, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical or other type of ability, economic circumstances, language, spiritual belief, etc. The result of oppression is exploitation of one group by another for its own benefit, real or imagined
- ❑ Oppression involves ideological domination (control of ideas and norms), institutional control (control of systems and institutions), and the spread of the oppressor's group ideology, logic system and culture (oppressive group sets the norm for society).
- ❑ Power can be quantified, i.e., members of privileged groups also appropriate power from members of oppressed groups (i.e. heterosexual politicians winning support of queer people by toning down their homophobic rhetoric); rich people dominate media consumed and define what is "desirable" to encourage have-not's to buy into system that enriches the wealthy

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## What do we mean by Oppression?

- ❑ Oppression is historically entrenched
  - Legacy of violence against POC (manifest destiny, genocide, etc.)
  - Women as property
  - Children as property
  - Oppressive systems define themselves as natural or preferable
  - At personal level, oppression preserves itself by controlling and forming our identities...the oppressed and oppressor are inter-related (Freire)
  - Violent culture-socially acceptable continuum of sexual assault
  - Privileged people cooperate with this system....i.e. can disavow things like rape or murder, but would assume other privileges such as access to healthy food, housing, education are "human rights"
  - Few will question a system that affords them their so-called "basic human rights", if so, risk exclusion or even other forms of violence themselves

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### What are some manifestations of oppression?

- Sexism/gender oppression
- Heterosexism
- Homophobia
- Ageism/Adultism
- Ableism
- Racism
- Classism
- What others can you think of?

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### Understanding Gender Roles and Gender Oppression

- Activity: Gender Boxes “Be A Man/Act Like a Lady”

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### Sexism

- sexism is about objectifying women and girls. When a woman or girl is objectified (viewed as an object — not as a human being) it becomes acceptable to treat her in any way. Gender roles enforce patriarchy and maintain the “social order” created to benefit white middle-upper middle class men.

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## Vulnerable Populations: Looking at Ageism and Adultism

- Ageism: pervasive oppression of people based on their age...unfairly prescribed roles solely based on age. Discrimination comes from the societal myth that older and younger people cannot perform at certain standards b/c of they are older or younger.
- Adultism: Oppression of Young People (from the day they are born), based on their age, by caregivers (who are used as the primary oppression agents) and by the society and its institutions. This is expressed by treating young people as weak, helpless, and less intelligent. Oppression of young people conditions them to accept all other oppressions that exist in society. Adultism lays the foundation for all future manifestations of oppression.
  - Tabularasa, know less than us b/c of size and maturity, need to be "trained"

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## Ageism, Adultism and Sexual Violence

- Young People
  - Vulnerability b/c dependent on others for care
  - Begin the systematic indoctrination of gender roles
    - Rewarded and punished by adults and peers for stepping out of those roles
    - Any display of proof of heterosexuality is encouraged and condoned with little boys, even if it is technically sexual harassment
  - Taught to be trusting and have trusting natures
  - Condoned continuum of violence (verbal abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse)
  - Adults usually ignore children's rights to their own bodies
    - We force hugs, pats, etc, but we would never do that to adults
  - Children in general are often times ignored (be seen but not heard)
    - How does this relate to when a child actually is able to disclose sexual violence?

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## Tips for Advocates: Reducing Your "Adultism"

- Make contact with children (get to their level) and give them your complete attention (the same way you would effectively communicate with an adult)
- Recognition and inclusion
- Be aware of your tone and words. Are you negotiating solutions or giving orders? Are you changing the tone of your voice in an attempt to "talk down" to them?
- Don't embarrass youth by disciplining or chastising them in front of their peers. This is usually not an attempt to effectively teach the child a lesson, but is usually to show they are in control of their children in front of others. Embarrassing youth teaches them that humiliation is ok.
- Teach children their body belongs to them and respect their physical, emotional and body boundaries.
- Talk to your own children about sexual violence and let them know that if it has happened to them it is never their fault....listen when a child tells you they have been sexually abused.

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## Intersection of Classism and Sexual Violence

- Blaming and punishing poor people for their own poverty and for society's social and economic problems reinforces the attitude that it is all right to treat people living in poverty as less than human. It suggests that the rights of poor people are less important than the rights of those who have money. Poor women's rights have always been vulnerable. They are now at risk even more with the dismantling of the welfare state. Women living in poverty do not have enough to afford adequate housing, food and clothing. They are at greater risk for homelessness, and women continue to stay in abusive relationships because they do not receive sufficient social assistance to make it a viable option to leave the relationship;
- Ottawa Rape Crisis Center

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## Intersection of Ableism and Sexual Violence

- Ableism:** abuse and discrimination against people with different physical, mental, and emotional abilities. Lead to viewpoint that people who are differently abled are "sick", are not/should not/ cannot be sexual, are not as "beautiful", or otherwise are inadequate and a burden.

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## Tips for Advocates: Being an effective ally to differently-abled populations

### Understand that some co-factors may be involved:

- Fear.** Perpetrator has an economic hold or social power over the victim
- Isolation.** Little or no contact with anyone other than caregivers, who may be the perpetrator
- Lack of Access.** Decreased access to violence-related support services because of lack of knowledge or transportation
- Credibility.** Perceived to be less competent and less reliable when reporting or disclosing abuse
  - CDC Sexual Violence and Differently Abled Pops

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## Incarcerated Populations & Sexual Violence

- Incarcerated Populations
  - Intersection with racism
    - Disproportionality: POC, esp. w/ men
  - Intersection with sexism and gender oppression
    - Women w/ male guards and staff
    - Lack of harsh discipline for guards who offend
    - Retaliation
  - Power differentials and non-consensual sex
  - Lack of data (incidence), barriers to accessing/giving services, prejudicial attitudes, and victim safety

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## Incarcerated Populations & Sexual Violence

- Male detainees and sexual assault
  - Expectations, humorous, homophobic response, largely ignored
  - Inside sex/drug market
- Female detainees and sexual assault
  - Prior survivors of sexual violence
  - Violence in detention facilities
    - Inside sex/drug market

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## Cultural Considerations & Sexual Violence

- Racism: Racial and cultural prejudice and discrimination, supported intentionally or unintentionally by institutional power and authority. Based on arbitrary, generalized and often artificial characteristics in physical appearance, people are categorized into races, with the white race implicitly or explicitly being viewed as superior.
  - Is a modern idea
  - Used to justify social inequalities as natural: justified slavery, taking of Mexican lands, etc. and then practices were institutionalized w/in American government, laws and society (first time in the history of the world)

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## Racism and Historical Legacies of Violence

- Racism (cont.)
  - Native American Community
    - Historical Legacy
    - Current Issues and barriers to access services
  - Latino Community
    - Historical Legacy
    - Current Issues and barriers to access services

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## Towards Self-Reflection and Advocacy

- Violence as a Human Rights Issue
- Forms of Resistance to Examining Oppression and Privilege
  - Difference between sensitivity and competency
- Being an ally
  - Getting to know your community
  - How to be an ally

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## Worksheet-adapted from Sujata Warriar's Outreach to Underserved Communities curriculum

### Getting to Know Your Selected Community

1. Select one group that will be the focus of your outreach efforts in the next year.
- 2. List three beliefs you have about the group. Where did you get that information?
- 3. List three ideas you have about the group that you think might be misconceptions. How did you get those "ideas" about the group? How will you find out if they are misconceptions?
- 4. Describe your attitude towards the group. Do you think it is the "correct" attitude?
- 5. List the five key issues in the community.
- 6. Where do the women in the community go for help?
- 7. List the key demographics for the community – e.g., population size, % males vs. % females, income levels, total number of adults etc.
- If you don't know, how will you get this information?

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8. What do the community members see as their service needs?
9. What do you think are the community's attitudes and beliefs regarding sexual/domestic violence?
10. Describe how the community is currently dealing with sexual/domestic violence. If you don't know, how will you get this information?
11. List the leaders of the community, including at least two leaders who are women.
12. Describe how the community views your program and the advocacy/services it provides.
13. List at least two things your program will gain from working with this community.
14. List at least two things you will gain from working with this community.

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Worksheet-adapted from Sujata Warrier's Outreach to Underserved Communities Curriculum

Factor	Effects of Factor on SV	Barriers Created for Survivors	Impact on Program	Resources to help you
Racism/Ethnic Bias				
Religious Bias				
Classism/Poverty/Homelessness				
Immigration				
Other				
Other				

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Words to advocate by.....

- "...sooner or later you're going to realize just as I did that there's a difference between knowing the path and walking the path."  
- the matrix, [morpheus](#)
- "no person is your friend who demands your silence."  
- alice walker
- "oppression is all about the big guy trying to hold the little guys down. Come on, even I know that"-telpochtli moreno-cordova, age 5
- "are you trying to explain to me what sexual assault is? Yeah, I already saw the billboard"-telpochtli moreno-cordova, age 7

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## Questions????

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