

Principles and Practice of Anti-Oppression

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Principles of Anti-Oppression

- Power and privilege play out in our group dynamics and we must continually struggle with how we challenge power and privilege in our practice.
- We can only identify how power and privilege play out when we are conscious and committed to understanding how racism, sexism, homophobia, and all other forms of oppression affect each one of us.
- Until we are clearly committed to anti-oppression practice all forms of oppression will continue to divide our movements and weaken our power.
- Developing an anti-oppression practice is life long work and requires a life long commitment. No single workshop is sufficient for learning to change one's behaviors. We are all vulnerable to being oppressive and we need to continuously struggle with these issues.
- Dialogue and discussion are necessary and we need to learn how to listen non defensively and communicate respectfully if we are going to have effective anti-oppression practice. Challenge yourself to be honest and open and take risks to address oppression head on.

Anti-Oppression Practice

These practices are based on a series on conversations on the issue of racism. We recognize that there are many other forms of oppression that must be addressed. We have taken these practices and attempted to generalize them to other forms of oppression. This list is a beginning and it needs to be expanded upon. In the future we will continue discussions on all forms of oppression.

- When witnessing or experiencing racism, sexism, etc interrupt the behavior and address it on the spot or later; either one on one, or with a few allies.
- Give people the benefit of the doubt. Think about ways to address behavior that will encourage change and try to encourage dialogue, not debate.
- Keep space open for anti-oppression discussions; try focusing on one form of oppression at a time - sexism, racism, classism, etc.
- Respect different styles of leadership and communication.
- White people need to take responsibility for holding other white people accountable.
- Try not to call people out because they are not speaking.
- Be conscious of how much space you take up or how much you speak.
- Be conscious of how your language may perpetuate oppression.
- Don't push people to do things just because of their race and gender, base it on their word and experience and skills.
- Promote anti-oppression in everything you do, in and outside of activist space.
- Avoid generalizing feelings, thoughts, behaviors etc. to a whole group
- Set anti-oppression goals and continually evaluate whether or not you are meeting them.
- Don't feel guilty, feel motivated. Realizing that you are part of the problem doesn't mean you can't be an active part of the solution!