



B6: Graffiti board

Type of Exercise: classroom/workshop activity

Level: basic

Length of time: 1 hour

Resources needed: chalk or white board or butcher paper, markers or chalk

Instructions: Ask participants to identify all the slang terms, phrases, and words they have heard that are associated with people who are LGBTQ and write them, or draw them on the board. This tends to be a high-energy activity and requires letting go a bit of control and trusting yourself and the group. You may need to give permission for participants to record the slang terms, and, they may at first be cautious and not believe that you want them to list the very negative and derogatory terms they might have heard. Give encouragement, suggest that they write it really big, or make a suggestion or two to get it going if needed. Remind participants that you do not assume that they agree with the terms, but that you want them to focus on what they have heard or others have said.

Follow the board work with a discussion. Some of the discussion questions might include:

- What are your reactions to the words on the board: What emotions or thoughts do these words trigger?
- How old were you when you first heard any of these words? What was the context?
- What purpose do these words serve in our society?
- Why are they so infrequently challenged?
- Why are they so powerful?
- What impact do you think that these words have on people--on lesbians? Gay men? Bisexuals? Transgender persons? On straight women/men?

Modifications:

- 1) For a more advanced level of discussion, and depending on the words that come up in the exercise, you might connect the -isms of sexism and racism with this exercise and explore how these words are used in keeping women,



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people of color, or other marginalized people in their place. Raise questions such as:

- a. In what ways do these words continue to reinforce the "role" of woman in our society?
 - b. How do these words help to maintain racism and classism?
 - c. In what ways are derogatory terms and slang used to oppress other groups based on race/ethnicity?
 - d. Are there similar ways that stereotypes operate to maintain the status quo? E.g.: "sissy," "pansy," and "effeminate" are gendered terms that imply that to be "woman-like" is negative, reinforcing sexism. Terms like "down-low" are examples of racialized sexism, and scapegoat African American men who have sex with men and women as the causes of HIV/AIDS among African American women. In reality, a small number of people of all genders, sexualities, and races may cheat on their partners, not just African American men
- 2) You could also modify this exercise to address the terms used for each group individually (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) and include discussion about how the terms are related. For example, many of the terms are related to gender stereotypes or disruptions of gender expectations: many of the slang terms about gay men imply that they are more like women in their appearance and interests, and slang terms about lesbians imply that they are more like men. Stereotypes about bisexual people, however, are rarely gendered, and more often reflect ideas of confusion or indecision. In addition, participants often come up with fewer terms for bisexual and transgender—you can ask participants to speculate why this is.



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