

Homophobia and You

CSUN Positive Space Program's

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You do not have to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual, or know someone who is, to be negatively affected by homophobia. Though homophobia actively oppresses gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals, it also hurts heterosexuals.

- Homophobia inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close, intimate relationships with members of their own sex, for fear of being perceived as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
- Homophobia locks people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self expression.
- Homophobia is often used to stigmatize heterosexuals: those perceived or labeled by others to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual; children of gay, lesbian, or bisexual parents; parents of gay, lesbian, or bisexual children; and friends of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals.
- Homophobia compromises human integrity by pressuring people to treat others badly, actions that are contrary to their basic humanity.
- Homophobia combined with sex-phobia, results in the invisibility or erasure of gay, lesbian, or bisexual lives and sexuality in school-based sex education discussion, keeping vital information from students. Such erasures can kill people in the age of AIDS.
- Homophobia is one cause of premature sexual involvement, which increases the chance of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Young people, of all sexual identities, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are “normal.”
- Homophobia prevents some gay, lesbian, and bisexual people from developing an authentic self identity and adds to the pressure to marry, which in turn places undue stress and oftentimes trauma on themselves, as well as their heterosexual spouses and their children.
- Homophobia inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. We are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned.

By challenging homophobia, people are not only fighting oppression from specific groups of people, but are also striving for a society that accepts and celebrates the differences in all of us.

*** For more information about this topic, see Warren J. Blumenfeld, *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

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