

Revolution of the Communal Heart:

Resources to Combat Patriarchy in Our Communities



Excerpts from the
Recipes for the
Beloved Community Book Project
plus a few other nifty resources

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Introduction:

Taking on Patriarchy

During the 2016 Presidential campaign, rape culture, sexism and gender roles were at the forefront of the national conversation. Often over simplified and dismissed in mainstream media, patriarchy – the ideology of male supremacy – is a dominant and often accepted force in our society. Like other oppressions, it operates at the interpersonal, institutional and cultural level and uses the threat of violence, marginalization, exploitation and powerlessness to privilege some groups and target others. Let's look at some fundamental ideas to get started.

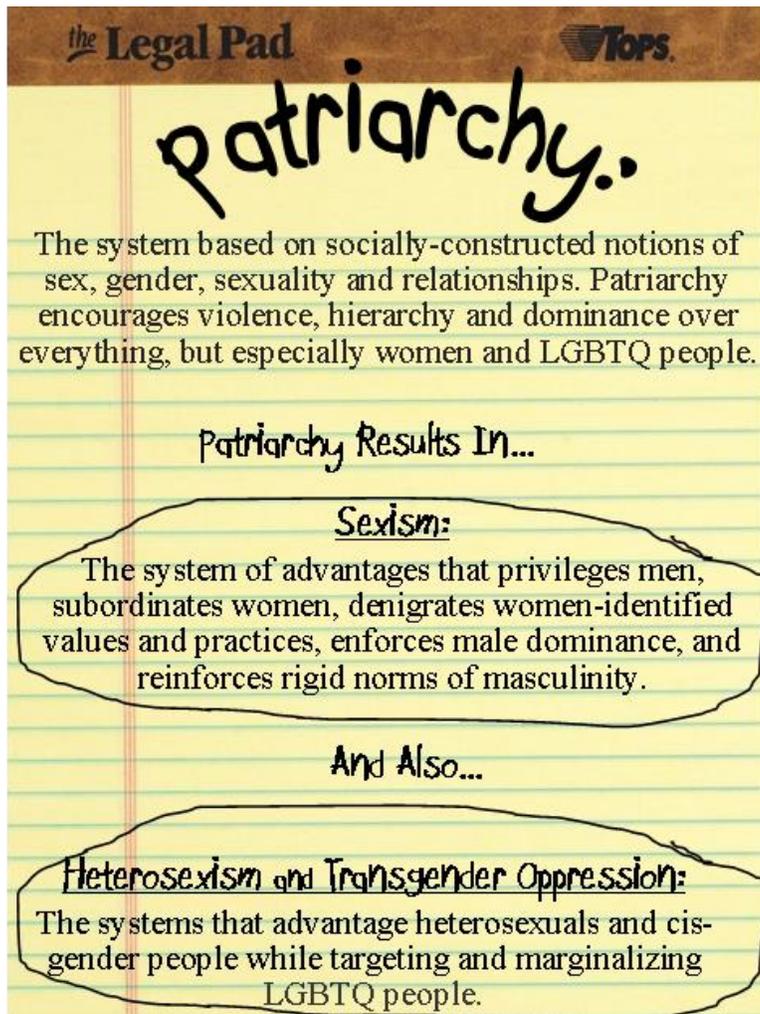
Patriarchy is the ideology of male supremacy that justifies male dominance, described well in in [Readings for Diversity and Social Justice](#):

To see the world through patriarchal eyes is to believe that women and men are profoundly different in their basic natures, that hierarchy is the only alternative to chaos, and that men were made in the image of a masculine God, with whom they enjoy a special relationship. ...It is to believe that men cannot feel a compelling bodily connection to their children, that on some level, every woman wants a 'real man,' and that mothers should stay at home and that fathers should work out of the home, regardless of their actual abilities or needs.

Like a smog that it nearly impossible to avoid, patriarchy permeates our communities no matter how radical we believe ourselves to be. It influences our community meetings, our interactions with guests and volunteers, and our family and community relationships. The ideology of patriarchy is manifested in the systems of sexism, and also within the systems of heterosexism, and transgender oppression [described by Jasmine Ingham](#):

Because we operate under a system of patriarchy, typical gender roles are expected to be kept firmly in place to continue male dominance. Homosexuals, bisexuals, and people who do not fit the gender norm, i.e. transgender and bigender people, upset the dominance of patriarchy. Therefore, from birth we are taught that we are either male or female and must look and act in masculine or feminine ways. We are also taught... that the natural, normal and expected sexual orientation is heterosexual. Upholding these expectations perpetuates heterosexual privilege, and, ultimately, male dominance.

Patriarchy, as a system of dominance, creates hierarchy. Men are more powerful/rational/intelligent than women. Straight men are more "real men"/upstanding/trustworthy than gay men. Gender roles are hallowed, and people who follow them are rewarded. Those who violate them (for example, transgender people who behave, act or dress in a way that does not correspond with their assigned sex at birth) face violence, marginalization and societal ostracism.



Sexism is the system of advantages that serves to privilege men, subordinate women, denigrate women-identified values and practices, reinforce male dominance, and impose norms of masculinity that are dehumanizing to men. **Heterosexism** is the system that advantages heterosexual relationships and marginalizes queer ones. **Transgender oppression** is the system that advantages cis-gender identities over non-binary, gender non-conforming, or transgender identities. Let's delve into these concepts.

Sexism enforces the status quo of power and privilege for men. It relies both on crude forms of oppression like violence, and subtle ones like laws, rigid gender roles, and man-splaining (a term coined by Rebecca Solnit in a 2008 essay and explained [here](#)) to perpetuate inequality and domination. Patriarchy hurts girls and women by targeting and excluding them at all levels, socializing them to believe they should play the supportive second role, and be everything to everyone. It teaches boys and men to avoid appearing weak at any cost and to be dominant, [damaging their emotional literacy](#). When people don't or can't fit into this binary,

they are shamed in every way possible. The shame messages around gender are explored in [Dr. Brené Brown's work](#) and the messages around men and gender roles are described by her [here](#).

If I had a nickel for every time I've heard the phrase, "Homophobia isn't an issue in our community because all of our members are straight," I would be very, very rich. Just like racism and sexism, **heterosexism and homophobia** are part of the fabric of society, and all heterosexual people benefit from the anti-oppression work by learning about straight privilege, and society's penalizing of non-straight people. Patriarchy takes many systemic forms, including heterosexism. This is explored in [Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism](#), and also described by [The National Organization of Men Against Sexism](#) here:

Our society uses the male heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy as a central symbol for all the rankings of masculinity, for the division on any grounds between males who are "real men" and have power, and males who are not. Any kind of powerlessness or refusal to compete becomes imbued with imagery of homosexuality.

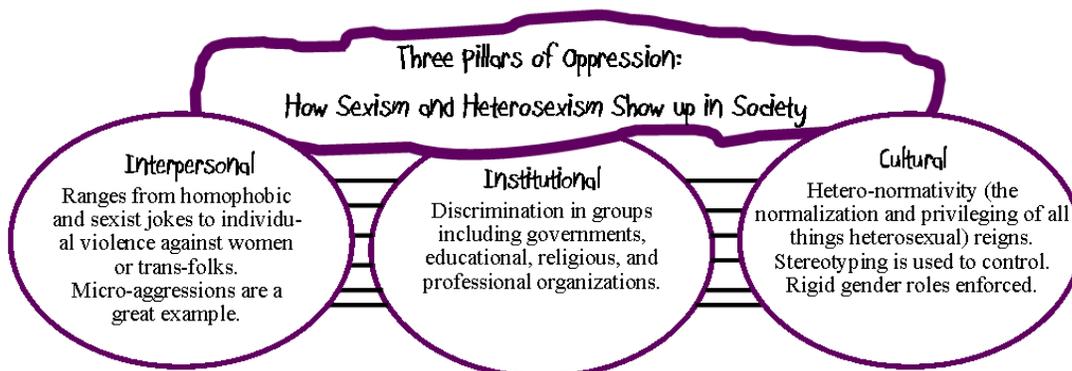
Heteronormativity is a specific expression of heterosexism – it's the normalization and privileging of all things heterosexual: parents who automatically expect their kids to marry a person of the other sex, people in positions of authority (like those of us who run soup lines and do hospitality) assuming that all our guests or clients are heterosexual, communities expecting two rigidly defined expressions of gender that have corresponding gifts, skills, and romantic attractions. Heteronormativity brainwashes all of us into believing that straight relationships are normal and good, and that relationships between lesbians, gays, and transgender

people are at best unique or unusual, and at worst deviant and destructive. Heteronormativity can be pervasive even in the most queer positive spaces, and especially salient in some faith-based intentional communities because many organized religions continue to vilify and discriminate against LGBTQ people. Heteronormativity is an outgrowth of **internalized superiority** of cis-gender and heterosexual people who (often unconsciously) rank their expressions of sex, gender and orientation as good, normal and standard.

Transgender oppression is the system that privileges cis-gender people and targets transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people. Check out the Vocabulary Worksheet for some great definitions related to sex, gender, and sexual orientation, and Everyday Feminism for a wonderful [Transgender 101 primer](#) for more foundational information. Although [medical science](#) is quickly evolving to conceptualize gender as on [a spectrum](#) rather than as a binary, patriarchy uses both sex and gender to confine people into rigid, binary categories of male and female with very specific roles of behavior for each.

In our communities, women and LGBTQ people often internalize the negative messages of patriarchy; this is called **internalized oppression**. Folks (unconsciously) buy into, replay and reinforce the messages that they've been inundated with all their lives. Women may be self-conscious about their appearance or believe messages like “I should meet other’s needs before my own...I’m unworthy because I’m not attractive...He can take charge better than I can.” LGBTQ people may experience depression, have self-hatred or doubt the significance of their relationships. Internalized oppression (often called “minority stress” in the medical field) is reinforced when people live in non-supportive spaces.

Patriarchy is terrible for our personal growth, and toxic to our communities. It inhibits the ability of heterosexuals to form close intimate relationships with members of their own sex. It locks people and communities into rigid gender based roles and stereotypes that hamper creativity and expression. Internalized oppression deters women and LGBTQ people from developing an authentic and healthy self-identity, which can lead to self-destructive behaviors. Our communities can be part of the great wave of people dismantling patriarchy. Let’s get started!



Chapter Contents

Unless otherwise noted (this chapter contains several first-person accounts written by members of the St. Louis Catholic Worker over several years) the material was edited and written by Jenny Truax. I take full responsibility for any blind spots or errors in thinking. One area for further exploration not addressed here could be first person accounts of transgender people as guests or community members, and accounts of cis-gender allies.

Chapter Sources and Further Reading

- [Being an Ally versus Being a Nice Person](#) - Nadirah Adeye
- [Dear Male Allies: Your Sexism Looks A Bit Like my Racism](#) – geekfeminism.org
- [Nola Feminist Allies](#)
- [Readings for Diversity and Social Justice - Sexism](#)

- [Voices from the Catholic Worker](#) - by Rosalie G. Riegle
- [The Catholic Worker After Dorothy: Practicing the Works of Mercy in a New Generation](#) – Dan McKanan
- [Cultural Bridges to Justice](#)
- [Understanding Prejudice](#)
- [American Psychological Association](#)
- [itspronouncedmetrosexual.com](#) for some great “[Edugraphics and Printables](#)” on gender



Worksheet:

Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation: Vocabulary

Fighting patriarchy means understanding the vocabulary of different social identities. Rather than thinking about new terms as a hassle, or writing them off as “PC,” we can celebrate the fact that people are finding new, more specific and authentic ways to self-identify themselves. Thanks to the Trans Student Educational Resources for this graphic!

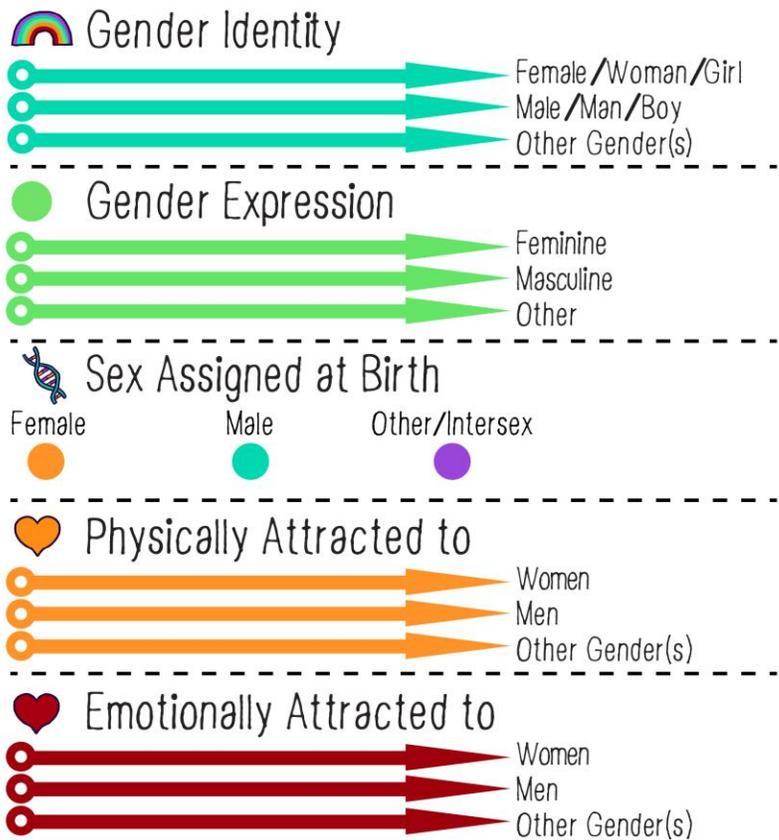
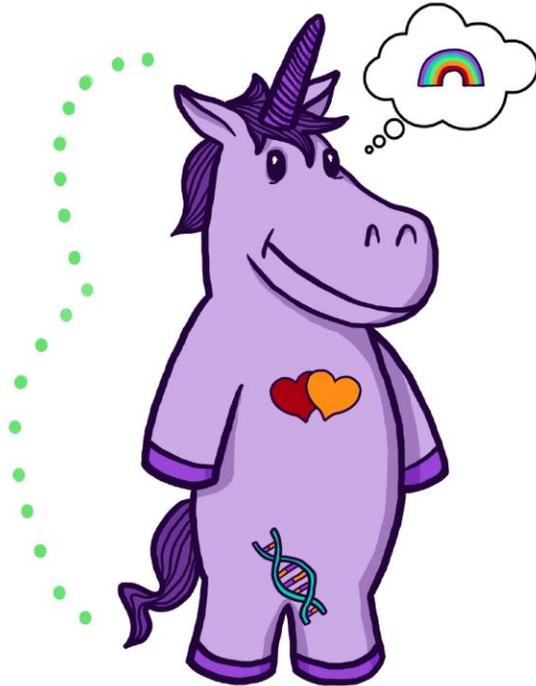
Sex

Biological Sex – (noun) a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as simply “sex,” “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned [or designated] at birth.”

Intersex – (noun) someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. In the medical care of infants the initialism DSD (“Differing/Disorders of Sex Development.”) Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic,) but these terms are now considered outdated and derogatory.

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

Gender

Cisgender – (adj; pronounced “siss-jendur”) a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and male-assigned.) A simple way to think about it is if a person is not trans*, they are cisgender.

Gender Expression – (noun) the external display of one’s gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally measured on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as “gender presentation.”

Genderqueer – (adj) a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman; or as an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid.) Genderqueer people may think of themselves as one or more of the following, and they may define these terms differently:

- may combine aspects man and woman and other identities (bigender, pangender);
- not having a gender or identifying with a gender (genderless, agender);
- moving between genders (genderfluid);
- third gender or other-gendered; includes those who do not place a name to their gender having an overlap of, or blurred lines between, gender identity and sexual and romantic orientation.

Trans*/Transgender – (adj) (1) An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an * is often used to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term. (2) A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on sex assigned at birth.

Transsexual – (noun & adj) a person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

Transvestite – (noun) a person who dresses as the binary opposite gender expression (“cross-dresses”) for any one of many reasons, including relaxation, fun, and sexual gratification (often called a “cross-dresser,” and should not be confused with transsexual)

Sexual Orientation

Homosexual – (adj) a [medical] term used to describe a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This term is considered stigmatizing due to its history as a category of mental illness, and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead.)

Bisexual – (adj) a person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to male/men and females/women. Other individuals may use this to indicate an attraction to individuals who identify outside of the gender binary as well and may use bisexual as a way to indicate an interest in more than one gender or sex (i.e. men and genderqueer people.) This attraction does not have to be equally split or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders or sexes an individual may be attracted to.

Gay – (adj) (1) a term used to describe individuals who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex and/or gender. More commonly used when referring to males/men-identified ppl who are attracted to males/men-identified ppl, but can be applied to females/women-identified ppl as well. (2) An umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

Lesbian – (noun) a term used to describe women attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other women.

Worksheet:

This is What Internalized Oppression Looks Like

Check out these descriptions and answer the reflection questions below. They can lead to a valuable community discussion about community culture and support for people with these targeted identities.

People in targeted groups often experience **Internalized Oppression**, which occurs when we (unconsciously) buy into, replay and reinforce the messages that we've been inundated with all our lives around a particular targeted identity. This looks like **Internalized Sexism** for women, **Internalized Heterosexism** for lesbian, gay and bisexual people, and **Internalized Transphobia** for transgender and gender non-conforming people. We'll describe all three.

Internalized Sexism: the involuntary belief by girls and women that the lies, stereotypes and myths about girls and women that are promoted within a sexist society are true, and the replaying of these messages at oneself and other women, which reinforces sexism and may manifest in the following ways:

1. Belief that you are incapable or less capable than a man
2. Belief that you are unattractive or valuable because of your appearance
3. Hatred or feeling of being uncomfortable with your own body
4. Judge women more harshly than men
5. Greater willingness to support male leadership
6. Greater comfort with male theology and language for the sacred
7. Feeling uncomfortable with women of different racial/class backgrounds
8. Feelings of superiority on the part of white women/ young women
9. Feelings of inferiority on the part of women of color/ older women
10. Belittling one's accomplishments
11. Feeling like you have nothing to contribute or can't be articulate
12. Giving males more time and attention
13. Seeking validation/attention from men
14. Believing that the needs of others are more important than your own

Sources and Further Reading

- [“What is Internalized Sexism?”](#) - Finallyfeminism101.org
- [Internalized Sexism Inventory](#) – Cultural Bridges to Justice

Reflection Questions

1. Which of these examples have you personally experienced or witnessed in others?

2. How does internalized sexism affect women in your community?

Internalized Heterosexism: the involuntary internalization of the negative stereotypes, beliefs, prejudice and hatred targeted at lesbians, gay men and bisexuals (LGB) and the replaying of these messages at oneself and others who are perceived as LGB. Also called internalized homophobia, it may manifest in the following ways:

1. Doubting your goodness
2. Feeling unwanted and that you don't belong
3. Doubting that your relationships are as significant as heterosexual relationships
4. Believing stereotypes about people with your sexual orientation
5. Horizontal hostility: judging and criticizing others of your targeted group
6. Self-hatred (Often connected with clinical depression and linked to a [higher incidence of suicide](#) upon LGB youth, up to 30%.)
7. Feelings of isolation/ not being understood
8. Defensiveness—feelings of being under attack
9. Denial of one's sexual orientation
10. Distancing oneself from other people in the LGBTQ community
11. Devaluing your life choices and accomplishments
12. Perfectionism in response to being scrutinized

Sources and Further Reading

- [The Relationships between Internalized Heterosexism, Spirituality, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young Adults](#) - Jon Raymond Bourn, University of Tennessee
- [Internalized Homophobia](#) – Cultural Bridges to Justice

Reflection Questions

1. How have you either personally experienced or witnessed this internalized oppression?

2. How can heterosexual people support LGB people experiencing this internalized oppression?



Internalized transphobia: occurs when negative societal views of transgender people are internalized and enacted. It is also referred to as internalized heterosexism and internalized genderism.

1. Associated with anxiety and, even more strongly, with depression
2. Having another targeted identity, for example being African American AND transgender, is associated with even higher levels of internalized oppression, low self-esteem, and depression
3. Internalized transphobia is affected by the climate in which one lives
4. Strongly associated with high rates of suicidal ideation and attempts (A [recent study](#) by the National Center for Transgender Equality found the attempted suicide rate to be 41% in the transgender community compared to 1.6% of the general population)
5. Lower global self-esteem
6. High levels of self-hatred and shame
7. Associated with lower quality of relationships (indicated by relationship satisfaction, social support, reported stress levels and, occurrences of partner abuse and victimization)
8. Can result in self-isolation
9. Horizontal hostility: Criticizing other transgender people, especially related to appearance and ability to “pass”

Sources and Further Reading

- [Internalized Stigma Within Sexual and Gender Minorities: Change Strategies and Clinical Implications](#)
- [Internalized Transphobia, Minority Stress, and Collective Self-Esteem](#)
- [Hung Up on Our Bullies: Internalized Transphobia](#)

Reflection Questions

1. How have you either personally experienced or witnessed this internalized oppression?

2. How can cis-gender people support transgender people experiencing this internalized oppression in our communities, groups and houses?



Community Recipe:

Sexism in Intentional Communities

Jenny Truax, 2013

Progressive intentional communities do a great job of taking personal responsibility to address the structural injustices of war, over-consumption and poverty. We often do the Works of Mercy, host actions for justice, seek to live simply, resist war taxes, and learn to grow food. What would it look like for us to focus more on the oppression of sexism? This is a messier proposition; members of the targeted group (women) are in our communities, rather than just the (safe) recipients of our hospitality or solidarity actions. Examining sexism in ourselves and our communities is uncomfortable; we avoid doing it just as much as white folks avoid talking about our racism. When male domination or sexism is breached, we often minimize it, or use the classic distancing behavior of “comparing oppressions,” which sounds this: “Sexism is simply not as important as drone strikes and homelessness. Women in the U.S. don’t have it as bad as (prisoners at Guantanamo, people in Afghanistan, our guests, etc.) so let’s focus on who’s really suffering.” This mindset ignores the reality that oppressions are interconnected - they are all about systems of domination that privilege (and value) one group at the expense of another. Unless we take the effort to examine and eradicate them, sexism, racism, ageism, and heterosexism will continue to be expressed in our organizations, communities, and personal relationships. We will look at how sexism has plays out specifically in the Catholic Worker (CW) movement.

[Teaching for Diversity and Justice](#) describes sexism as “a system of advantages that serves to privilege men, subordinate women, denigrate women-identified values and practices, enforce male dominance, and reinforce norms of masculinity that are dehumanizing to men.” Over the years, a few (but not many) articles and texts have explicitly talked about sexism in the Catholic Worker. In 1993, interviewees in [Voices from the Catholic Worker’s](#) chapter on Feminism mused that perhaps the heart of the CW, the Works of Mercy, has a levelling effect on the sexes (aka, the Works of Mercy are typically considered “women’s work..”) Others in this oral history talked about the problems of male domination and patriarchy in their houses in terms of decision-making. In CW papers throughout the years, some authors have pointed out the hypocrisy that the CW focuses primarily on the sins of war and poverty without much acknowledgment or analysis of our communities’ own internal sins of racism, sexism, heteronormativity and ableism.

Interviewees in the [Voices](#) book [note that liturgy](#) seems to be a place of conflict on the issue of sexism in the CW. At both Midwest and National gatherings throughout the years, Catholic Workers have struggled to create meaningful liturgy that is not sexist. (This is tricky to accomplish in a big Catholic Worker gathering - some folks strongly desire a Catholic Mass, which is, by its nature, male dominated, while others have been deeply hurt by the Catholic Church and desire a different liturgical expression.) When feminist liturgies have been attempted, some Catholic Workers have reacted that they were not inclusive enough to men.

You can’t talk about sexism in the Catholic Worker without [talking about the Catholic Church](#). Our spiritual roots lie in a Church that is an anchor of male domination, and that codifies sexism and heterosexism. As communities that are often supported by local Catholics, we are often hesitant to challenge the Church on issues like women’s ordination and civil rights for LGBTQ folks. Some of us decide we have “bigger fish to fry” (again, overlooking the interwoven strands of oppression) and some of us even go along with the sexist party line claiming excuses like “tradition,” “men’s special vocation” and the like. Noticing and addressing the Church’s manifestations of sexism is an essential part of our path to liberation.

our sex, we need to step out of our comfort zones, learn new skills, take risks, challenge oppression, learn from our mistakes, and support others to do the same. We can host listening sessions, and discussion groups on different aspects of sexism, and its connection to other oppressions. These actions are just as important as anything else we do to resist oppression, whether it's growing our own food, sheltering people who are homeless, or holding anti-drone vigils. To send us off on our anti-sexist journeys, I've rephrased sections of [“A Letter to Male Activists” from Sisters of Resistance](#):

In closing, we ask you to listen. Listen to us when we speak, listen to our criticisms, listen to our experiences as members of a group targeted by sexism and patriarchy - just as you would to a guest, or neighbor. Stop minimizing and ignoring sexism; acknowledge the privilege you have from being born male. Do not interrupt women when they speak and stop immediately disagreeing with us. When it comes to sexism, you are not under attack, women are. We need community spaces to be safe and respectful places in which we are treated as *equals*.

You can create these spaces of equality by actively challenging sexist gender roles, by taking over the chores and actions typically still carried out by women: cooking, tidying up, looking after children, doing the food shopping and the laundry, providing emotional support, listening to people, etc. Take the minutes at meetings and do the menial administrative tasks still disproportionately done by women.

Be committed allies to women - not testosterone-heavy saviors. Ask what the women around you are doing, feeling and experiencing and assist them however you can. Interrupt and name sexist comments and challenge male domination. Notice the male-female dynamics in meetings, demonstrations and conversations and actively address this imbalance. At your resistance actions and in your community meetings, ensure that the male to female ratio of speakers, facilitators, participants or chairs is 50/50. Do not attribute the hard work and ideas of the women in your community to men, who are often in the spotlight. Take sexism - and your responsibility to eradicate it - as seriously as you do imperialism, militarism and earth care. Incorporate an awareness of gender and feminism into your everyday life; for if you want to bring about revolutionary change, you must begin with yourself.

Extra Resource:

**Tools for White Guys who are Working for Social Change
and other people socialized in a society based on domination**

by Chris Crass

1. Practice noticing who's in the room at meetings – how many gender privileged men (biological men), how many women, how many transgendered people, how many white people, how many people of color, is it majority heterosexual, are there out queers, what are people's class backgrounds. Don't assume to know people, but also work at being more aware – listening to what people say and talking with people one on one who you work with.
 - 2a. Count how many times you speak and keep track of how long you speak.
 - 2b. Count how many times other people speak and keep track of how long they speak.
3. Be conscious of how often you are actively listening to what other people are saying as opposed to just waiting your turn thinking about what you'll say next. Keep a notebook so that you can write down your thoughts and then focus on what other people are saying. As a white guy who talks a lot, I've found it helpful to writing down my thoughts and wait to hear what others have to say (frequently others will be thinking something similar and then you can support their initiative).
4. Practice going to meetings or hanging out with people focused on listening and learning – not to get caught in the paralysis of whether or not you have anything useful to say, but acting from a place of valuing other people's knowledge and experiences.
 - 5a. Pay attention to how many times you put ideas out to the group you work with.
 - 5b. Notice how often you support other people's ideas for the group.
6. Practice supporting people by asking them to expand on ideas and get more in-depth.
 - 7a. Think about whose work and what contributions to the group get recognized.
 - 7b. Practice recognizing more people for the work they do and try to do it more often. This also includes men offering support to other men who aren't recognized and actively challenging competitive dynamics that men are socialized to act out with each other.
8. Practice asking more people what they think about events, ideas, actions, strategy and vision. White guys tend to talk amongst themselves and develop strong bonds that manifest in organizing. These informal support structures often help reinforce informal leadership structures as well. Asking people what they think and really listening is a core ingredient to healthy group dynamics, think about who you ask and who you really listen to. Developing respect and solidarity across race, class, gender and sexuality is complex and difficult, but absolutely critical – and liberating. Those most negatively impacted by systems of oppression have and will play leading roles in the struggle for collective liberation.
9. Be aware of how often you ask people to do something as opposed to asking other people “what needs to be done”: logistics, child care, making phone calls, cooking, providing emotional support and following up with people are often undervalued responsibilities performed by people who are gender oppressed (biological women and trans folks).
10. Struggle with the saying, “you will be needed in the movement when you realize that you are not needed in the movement”.
11. Struggle with and work with the model of group leadership that says that the responsibility of leaders is to help develop more leaders, and think about what this means to you: how do you support others and what support do you need from others.

This includes men providing emotional and political support to other men. How can men work to be allies to each other in the struggle to develop radical models of anti-racist, class conscious, pro-queer, feminist manhood that challenges strict binary gender roles and categories. This is also about struggling to recognize leadership roles while also redefining leadership as actively working to build power with others rather than power over others.

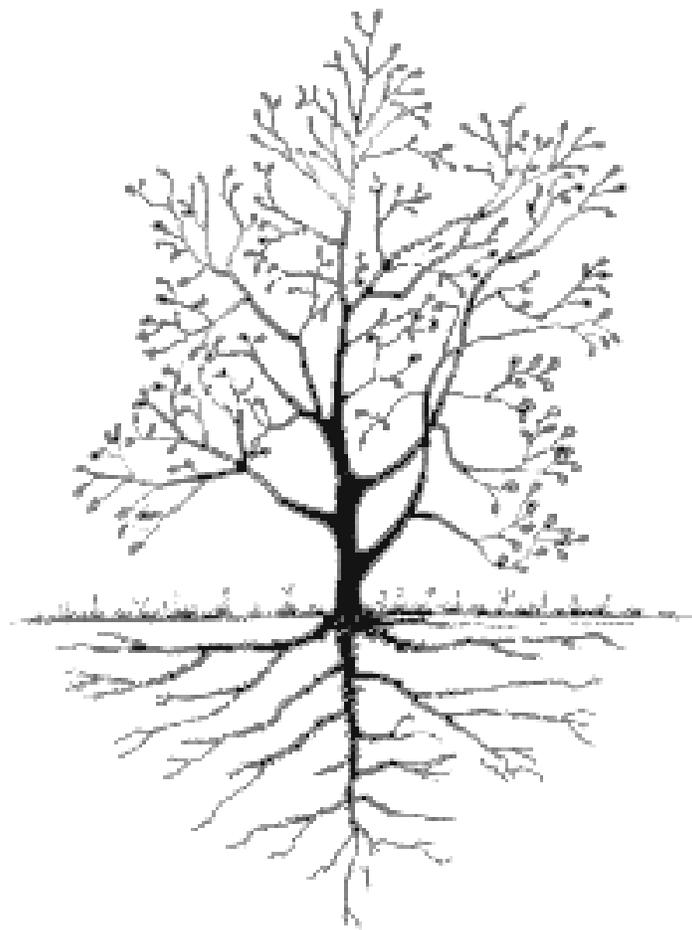
12. Remember that social change is a process, and that our individual transformation and individual liberation is intimately interconnected with social transformation and social liberation. Life is profoundly complex and there are many contradictions. Remember that the path we travel is guided by love, dignity and respect – even when it brings us to tears and is difficult to navigate. As we struggle let us also love ourselves.

13. This list is not limited to white guys, nor is it intended to reduce all white guys into one category. This list is intended to disrupt patterns of domination which hurt our movement and hurt each other. White guys have a lot of work to do, but if we white guys support and challenge each other, while also building trust and compassion we can heal ourselves in the process.

14. Day-to-day patterns of domination are the glue that maintain systems of domination. The struggle against capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism and the state, is also the struggle towards collective liberation.

15. No one is free until we are all free.

Thanks and love to my comrades in the Bay Area gender privileged men's group of the Ruckus Society and the men's group (biological and transgendered men) of the Challenging White Supremacy Collective.



Worksheet:

Straight Privilege Checklist

1. I can be pretty sure that my community members, guests, neighbors, co-workers, and fellow activists will be comfortable with my sexual orientation.
2. I do not have to fear that if my family or friends find out about my sexual orientation there will be economic, emotional, physical or psychological consequences.
3. I am not accused of being abused, warped or disordered because of my sexual orientation.
4. I do not have to fear revealing my sexual orientation to community, friends or family. It's assumed. I can go home from most community meetings, classes, and conversations without feeling excluded, fearful, attacked, isolated, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, stereotyped or feared because of my sexual orientation.
5. I can easily find a religious community that will not exclude me for being heterosexual.
6. I can count on finding a therapist or doctor willing and able to talk about my sexuality.
7. I can choose to not think politically about my sexual orientation.
8. I can express affection in any social setting, including in my community house, without fear of repercussions.
9. My sexual orientation can have access to any level of leadership in any organization.
10. My sexual orientation is never mistaken as the only aspect of my lifestyle.
11. My family does not love me "in spite" of my sexual orientation.
12. There is a socially accepted language for my relationships (wife, husband, etc.)
13. I can't be fired because of my sexual orientation.
14. My spouse and I can celebrate an anniversary and expect approval.
15. My sexual orientation has never been considered or scrutinized as a choice.
16. Every day is (white) Heterosexual Pride Day.

Sources and Further Reading

- [Heterosexual Privilege Checklist](#) - based on Peggy McIntosh's article on [White Privilege](#)
- [30+ Examples of Heterosexual Privilege](#)

Reflection Questions

1. Are any of these privileges new ideas for you? Which ones?
2. What personal experiences do you have related to straight privilege?
3. How does straight privilege play out in your community?

Worksheet:

Individual Action to Fight Transgender Oppression

Sourced from [The National Center for Transgender Equality](#), these suggestions for individual action can be useful when educating community members, volunteers or guests about transgender issues.

1. Remember, you can't always tell if someone is transgender simply by looking at them. There is no one transgender experience and no one way for transgender people to look, which makes it important to be an outspoken ally even in spaces that you think don't have any transgender people in them.
2. Think about how you use gendered language. Do you regularly greet groups by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen?" Do you have a coworker who refers to everyone as "guys?" Consider changing your habits to avoid making assumptions about people's gender or pronouns.
3. Learn about policies affecting transgender people. Are there any laws that protect transgender people where you live? Any policies at work or school that are inclusive of transgender people?
4. Use the language a transgender person uses for themselves and if you don't know what pronouns to use, ask. A simple way to see what pronouns someone uses is to wait and see if it comes up naturally in conversation. If you're still unsure, ask politely and respectfully, without making a big deal about it. Sharing your own pronouns is a great way to bring up the topic—for example, "Hi, I'm Rebecca and I use she/her/hers as my pronouns. How about you?" If you accidentally use the wrong pronouns, apologize and move on. Making a big deal out of a pronoun mistake can often draw unwanted attention.
5. Be careful and considerate about what other questions you ask. There are many topics that you may be curious about. That doesn't mean it's appropriate to ask about them. Many transgender people are uncomfortable discussing surgeries, hormones they've had, their sexual relationships, or their birth name except with those closest to them. Ask yourself these questions to help determine if a topic is appropriate:
 - a. "Do I need to know this information to treat them respectfully?" Asking someone's name and pronoun is almost always appropriate but a transgender coworker's surgical history is rarely information that you need to know.
 - b. "Would I be comfortable if this question was turned around and asked of me?" For example, it would probably not feel appropriate for a coworker to ask you about your private areas of your body.
6. Avoid compliments or advice based on stereotypes about transgender people, or about how men and women "should" look or act. People sometimes intend to be supportive but unintentionally hurt transgender people by focusing on their looks or whether they conform to gender stereotypes. Here are some examples that can often feel like backhanded compliments:
 - a. "You look like a real woman! I never would have known that you're trans."
 - b. "You would look less trans if you just got a wig/shaved better/wore more makeup/etc."
 - c. "No real man would wear clothing like that. You should change if you don't want people to know."
 - d. "I'd date him, even though he's transgender."

Reflection Questions

What specific ideas listed could you personally implement in your work?

For every girl who is tired of acting weak when she is strong, there is a boy tired of appearing strong when he feels vulnerable.

For every boy who is burdened with the constant expectation of knowing everything, there is a girl tired of people not trusting her intelligence.

For every girl who is tired of being called over-sensitive, there is a boy who fears to be gentle, to weep.

For every boy for whom competition is the only way to prove his masculinity, there is a girl who is called unfeminine when she competes.

For every girl who throws out her e-z-bake oven, there is a boy who wishes to find one.

For every boy struggling not to let advertising dictate his desires, there is a girl facing the ad industry's attacks on her self-esteem.

For every girl who takes a step toward her liberation, there is a boy who finds the way to freedom a little easier.



Adapted from a poem by Nancy R. Smith. Copies of this poster are available, as well as a smaller version with a genderific coloring book on the back side which can be had in bulk quantities, from CrimethInc. Genders Anonymous / PO Box 13998 / Salem OR 97309 or go to www.crimethinc.com.



"Cakes, baking is her soul, but we can make a finer dough out of flour, eggs and honey!"



"Glasses, when we have bottles, can we have umbrellas?"



"Bike is getting ready to drive the world's most fun car!"



"What are you protesting?"



"We don't want to be any more!"

Worksheet:

Communal Action to Fight Transgender Oppression

The National Center for Transgender Equality provides an amazing resource called Transitioning Our Shelters: A Guide to Making Homeless Shelters Safe for Transgender People, the source of the following suggestions. The ideas can be modified for an intentional community, soup kitchen, hospitality house or another ministry. Review the list and then answer the Reflection Questions as a group.

1. People should be treated according to their self-identified gender. In other words, people are who they say they are. If someone says she is a woman, she is, and she should be treated as a woman, whether or not the person has had surgeries or appears a certain way to you.
2. Develop written policies (signs on the wall, announcements in your intake forms, information on your website etc.) that make your welcome to transgender folks explicit.
 - a. The National Coalition for the Homeless Policy has a sample, or you could have a more broad nondiscrimination policy that says that all people—regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, HIV status, gender identity, or gender expression—will be respected.
3. Educate your group about the other local agencies that are welcoming to LGBT folks.
4. Welcome Process: If you have a welcome process, make sure to cover these topics:
 - a. Preferred name and pronouns: “We value people and want to treat everyone with respect; do you prefer people to use ‘he,’ ‘she,’ or ‘they’ to refer to you?”
 - b. Housing and room options available: Transgender people should have the option to sleep in a space according to their self-identified gender and in the place they deem safest.
 - c. Placement of bathrooms and showers, including whether or not there are any private bathrooms and showers, and whether or not they lock.
 - i. Having private showering spaces is the only policy that is ultimately consistent with respect for every person’s innate human right to privacy and dignity. Consider offering additional safety if necessary by providing locks on the stalls or doors, locking the shower room, or providing a monitor outside while the transgender person is showering.
 - ii. Try to have at least one single-stall restroom with a door that locks. Mark the restroom as a “family restroom,” or simply “restroom.” In multi-stall restrooms, make sure that the individual stalls have doors that can be locked.
 - d. Safety concerns: Ask each incoming guest if they have any fears about safety and then follow-up appropriately to address their concerns.
 - e. Confidentiality: This is important to prevent or minimize discrimination, harassment or violence. In fact, a transgender person should not even be required to disclose if they are transgender or not. Some groups apply the same policy of confidentiality about a guest or resident’s transgender status that they do for information about medical conditions. Other places ask transgender people how they would like the information addressed if it comes up.

5. Whenever possible (on intake forms, survey questions, etc.) encourage people to name their own gender (for example, replace “male” and “female” with “Gender: _____” so that people can self-identify. Near the “Gender: _____” question, there can be a sentence that explains that transgender people are welcome and respected here.
6. Interactions with volunteers and other guests: If non-trans guests or volunteers have concerns, have a discussion with them individually. Help with any misconceptions, and ensure them that you have strict rules about inappropriate behavior for all people in the house. It is important to be clear that harassment of transgender folks is not tolerated. Verbal harassment comes with the very real threat of escalation into physical harassment. Take harassment seriously by answering these questions and following up: Is there education that can be done to prevent future incidents? Is a response necessary? How will this type of incident be avoided in the future? What can we learn from the incident?
7. Reach out to your local transgender community for training, information and referrals. Consider hosting an information session for guests, volunteers and community members.

Reflection Questions

1. Which suggestions stuck out for you?

2. What obstacles does your group have to implementing these suggestions, and how could you address these obstacles?

3. Which one would be easiest to implement, and which one seems the most urgent?

Worksheet:

Survey: Where is Patriarchy in Your Group?

Answer these questions alone in a group to get a sense of how your group engages with patriarchy. These questions could be the basis of an initial discussion or conversation in your group.

Leadership & Decision Making

1. Patriarchy encourages male leadership, with women in supporting roles, making the decisions happen: “Man proposes, woman disposes.” Does your community reflect this saying? Who are the strong voices, are all voices heard?
2. What ideas do you have to amplify the voices of those folks in your community that are less heard?
3. Male dominance can create a mindset of “there is one right answer, and I know what it is” which stymies conversation and consensus. Does this mindset influence your community? How do you deal with it?

Resistance

1. Who are the leaders in your resistance campaigns and projects- do you take the steps to ensure equal representation for women and LGBTQ folks?
2. How do you address the intersectionality of oppression (notice the way racism, sexism, classism, etc. intersect with different justice issues)?
3. Does your community pay as much attention to process as it does outcomes of resistance campaigns?
4. Does your community build relationships and coalitions with local LGBTQ and feminist groups?

Public Interactions

1. Do you publicize that your community accepts and affirms LGBTQ people, both as community members and as guests - in your newsletters, online presence, signs in the house, etc.?
2. Do you publicly support equal rights for women, especially in the realm of religion?
3. Do you have a communal understanding and agreement about how you will respond to homophobic, sexist, or transphobic language, from guests or volunteers, as individuals and as a community?

Worksheet:

Practice Scenarios for Interrupting Patriarchy

In groups of 3, take turns responding to each scenario. Discuss different options for each scenario. Respond as if you are really responding to the situation, don't paraphrase. We're practicing different language to get more comfortable confronting oppression!

1. A soup line guest is heckling a fellow community member, who happens to be a lesbian: "Baby, where's your boyfriend? You need a man in your life! Why don't you have a husband?" What do you say?
2. During a meeting, the men have done most of the talking. A new topic is introduced; what do you say?
3. Some volunteers are discussing the Catholic Church: "The stuff about women being priests is a waste of time. We should be working to end war, which is the ultimate oppression." What do you say?
4. Your community, which does hospitality for women, gets a call from a potential guest who is transgender. Someone says, "The guests and volunteers are going to be uncomfortable. I don't think she should stay here." How do you respond?
5. A guest in your house of hospitality won't pick up her baby when he starts crying. She says that if she spoils him too much, he'll turn into "a fag." What do you say?
6. You're at your community sponsored liturgy, which has a practice of using non-sexist language. An invited Priest is presiding, and uses male pronouns (He, Him, Lord) when referring to God. What do you do?
7. A female community member is listening at length to a guest. A fellow community member (a man) notices this is happening, but does not engage, leaving the woman community member to continue doing the listening. How do you talk to him and the other men in the community about women doing emotional labor?
8. Some high school volunteers are playing with kids in the house. They are asking the boys if they have girlfriends and the girls if they have boyfriends. How might you respond to them?
9. A new community member is giving a tour to some adults. As she passes her bisexual community member, she introduces the group, and "outs" Paul: "And this is Paul, he works on lots of pro-gay issues, like marriage equality." What do you say to your new community member?
10. Your non-binary community member prefers the pronouns "they, theirs and them" rather than "he" or "she." At an event, one of your house supporters keeps referring to this community member as "he." What do you do or say?

Community Recipe:

Action Opportunities: Dismantling Patriarchy

Some suggestions for communal, concrete action aimed at dismantling patriarchy. These ideas could be the backbone of a brainstorming session with a group.

Be public in your group's support of LGBTQ individuals and their relationships:

- Hanging Rainbow Flags etc.
- Post a statement of welcome for LGBTQ people
- Include this statement in your newsletter, website, etc.
- Celebrate International Women's Day and National Coming Out Day

Resistance

- Host discussions on issues that affect the LGBTQ community
- Show up for actions around queer issues
- Build coalitions with feminist groups, LGBTQ advocacy groups
- In resistance campaigns, ensure equal representation between genders in leadership

Spirituality

- Delve into the feminist theology and gay-liberation theology
- Worship in a way that celebrates the spiritual insights and leadership of all people
- Challenge sexism and homophobia in religious institutions

Communal Relationships

- Ask LGBTQs and women for feedback on how their identity shapes their experience of life in community.
- Create support groups for women and LGBTQ individuals to talk about their experience of sexism and heterosexism and transphobia within the community
- Develop a communal understanding and agreement about how you will respond to homophobic, sexist, or transphobic language, from guests or volunteers, as individuals and as a community
- Host book groups and events to educate community about sexism and heterosexism

Consider your participation with groups that discriminate against women or LGBTQs:

- Humbly ask them to change their policies
- Consider not participating with them
- Build relationships with them and share your insights
- If you do choose to participate in such a group, commit to do so as an agent for change ("critical acquiescence")

THE CATHOLIC WORKER IS A PLACE OF LOVE, ACCEPTANCE, AND CELEBRATION!

LET'S CELEBRATE...

WOMEN

WHO ARE STILL PAID LESS THAN MEN, OFTEN TREATED AS SEXUAL OBJECTS, AND TAUGHT TO DEFER TO MEN

ELDERS AND YOUTH

WHO ARE OFTEN OVERLOOKED, IGNORED AND PATRONIZED

PEOPLE OF COLOR

WHO ARE SURVIVORS OF GENOCIDE, SLAVERY, LYNCHINGS; HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF TERRORISM BY THE WHITE POWER STRUCTURE

TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

WHO FACE DISCRIMINATION, HATE CRIMES, WHO ARE TAUNTED AND TREATED LESS THAN HUMAN

PEOPLE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

WHILE THEY CONTRIBUTE MUCH TO OUR SOCIETY, MANY BELIEVE THEY DO NOT DESERVE BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

PEOPLE WHO ARE LESBIAN, GAY & BISEXUAL

WHOSE RELATIONSHIPS ARE CONSIDERED SECOND-CLASS BY SOCIETY

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

WHO ARE AMONG THE POOREST PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY; CONSIDERED INFERIOR, A BURDEN TO SOCIETY

LOW INCOME PEOPLE

WHO ARE OFTEN BLAMED FOR THEIR POVERTY