

# Session one: Why diversity is important

- Goals:**
- ★ to welcome and introduce the group
  - ★ to clarify the schedule and ground rules
  - ★ to help the group reflect on the challenges and advantages of their organization's commitment to change (Exercise 1, Advantages and Challenges)
  - and/or
  - ★ to introduce the idea that everyone has ethnic or "racial" identities and that identity issues are complex (Exercise 2: Assessing Your Identity Profile)
  - and/or
  - ★ to explore the ways women are different and what we have in common across ethnic, "racial" and class divisions (Exercise 3: Affirming Ourselves and Our Differences)

**Materials:** see individual exercises

**Time:** Introductions: 35 minutes

Each exercise: approximately 45 minutes

Wrap-up: 10 minutes (total: 90 minutes if you select only one exercise)

## Introductions:

### ① Introduce the group to itself

It's a good idea to begin with some sort of welcoming exercise, to help everyone feel part of the group, especially if it is new, and to help focus attention on the issues. You might begin by simply asking everyone to say their name and something about themselves, and, depending on the group, what kind of work they do, what they hope to learn about issues related to women, organizing and diversity, or the accomplishment they feel most proud of.

Another way to do a welcoming exercise is to split to group into pairs, and have each partner share information about themselves with each other. Then, bring the group together and have each member of the pair introduce the other to the full group. (See Session 6: Celebrating Ourselves and Our Work, for other ideas.)

② **Introduce the Women Organizers' Video Project (WOVP)** and how you have organized this series of discussions, exercises and screenings.

Briefly discuss why WOVP created this video and workshop project (highlighted below). You can also draw from the information about the Advance, the video, this workbook and the Women Organizer's Video Project in the Introduction to this

workbook.

To emphasize the project's relevance to your group, you might choose a few facts from the Fact Sheet, pages \_\_, review changes in your organization or describe a relevant incident that happened in your group or community.

Outline your plan or schedule: how many sessions, what days and times, and any ground rules you have decided to use.

### **Summary of WOVP Assumptions:**

- ★ No one is unaffected by oppression, though we are often affected differently; there is no position of safety.
- ★ Our lives in the U.S. are increasingly inter-related with the peoples, economies, politics and cultures of the rest of the world.
- ★ The persistence of racism, anti-semitism, homophobia, able-ism, ageism, and other "-isms" damage not only its victims but also its perpetrators.
- ★ We all gain from embracing diversity and lose from racism, sexism and other oppressions.

### **Activities**

Choose one of the following three exercises. These activities can help your group gain more from the video by reflecting on their own situation first, organizationally and/or personally.

## **Activity 1: Advantages and challenges**

This exercise focuses on motivations: why is diversity important? What does diversity mean specifically to your organization?

**Goals:** ★ to help your group clarify their motivations, needs and goals for multicultural organizational development

**Materials:** large newsprint pad and markers, or blackboard and chalk

**Time:** approximately 45 minutes

This exercise is based on the article, "Building Multi-Racial Organizations," by Stephanie Roth and Robin Ferguson, reprinted on pages 53-\_\_ . Please read the article before the session so you are familiar with its main points.

Follow their instructions for the brainstorming\* exercise. They ask you to help your group list challenges and advantages of multi-racial and anti-sexist organizational development. First ask your group to take a few minutes to write down some ideas. Then share these thoughts by writing their ideas on a newsprint pad or blackboard. (20 minutes)

Then write the "premises and precepts" (from page \_\_ of the article) on the board or pad, and again open the discussion to your group. Spark the discussion by using relevant information Roth and Ferguson provide in their article. (25 minutes)

\* **Note:** "Brainstorming" means having the group list all possible answers to a question. The purpose of brainstorming is to quickly generate many ideas, without discussing, analyzing or rating them.

## **Activity 2: Assessing your personal identity profile**

**Goals:** ★ To expand our thinking about identity:

- ★ we all have several kinds of identity;
- ★ since identities often represent shared experiences, we each may have several different ways we can relate to each other;
- ★ ethnic or "racial" identity is not a simple concept, and families are often "mixed" in one way or another.

**Materials:** A copy of the Identities handout (next page) for each person in the group

**Time:** Approximately 30 minutes

Hand out the Identities handout. First, ask each member of the group to, "circle all the words on the list that describes you." Reassure them that they only need to circle things they feel comfortable sharing with this group. Then ask them to check the words that are most relevant to them on this particular day, in this particular group.

### **The following questions may be useful in leading this discussion.**

- ★ Identities often indicate areas of shared experience. What identities do we as a group have in common?
- ★ How many categories of identity have each of you circled?
- ★ How many people checked more than one word from each section? How many people have checked more than one ethnic, national or "racial" identity? Does anyone have more than one ethnic, national or "racial" identity in their family (parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, in-laws, spouses or partners)?
- ★ Are there terms you find objectionable that are used in this identity list? Why? Do you prefer certain terms? (Note: if people from the same ethnic background prefer different terms, you might help the group discuss what each term means, and how these terms have political implications. Another approach is to discuss how identities and terms change, and that people may prefer different terms in different groups.)
- ★ What is your earliest memory of an ethnic or "racial" identity?

- ★ Did you feel like emphasizing or de-emphasizing any aspects of your identity here?

You might begin or end this exercise by reading selections from Barbara Joseph's thoughts on her own identity, on page \_\_ of the Appendix.

**Sources:** Inspired by Panel of Americans, and Equity Institute activities.

## **IDENTITIES**

### gender

female  
male  
\_\_\_\_\_

### relationships

single  
married  
separated or divorced  
in a relationship  
lover  
partnership  
mother, father  
wife, husband  
stepparent, godparent  
grandparent  
aunt, uncle  
niece, nephew  
cousin  
daughter, son, step-child,  
adopted child  
sister, brother, half or step-  
sister or brother  
\_\_\_\_\_

### age

child  
young adult  
adult  
elder/senior  
\_\_\_\_\_

### religion

Animist  
Atheist  
Agnostic  
Buddhist  
Yoruba  
Christian  
Hindu  
Jewish  
Muslim  
Pagan/Wicca  
\_\_\_\_\_

### ethnicity

European American  
American  
Anglo-Saxon  
\_\_\_\_\_ American  
White  
African American  
Black  
Negro  
Afro-American  
African  
Caribbean  
Latino/a  
Hispanic  
Chicana/o  
Puerto Rican  
Borinqueno/a CHK  
Asian American  
Asian  
Oriental  
Chinese American  
Native American  
American Indian  
Amerindian  
First Native  
\_\_\_\_\_ (nation)  
Jewish  
Pacific Islander  
\_\_\_\_\_

### relation to U.S.

citizen  
resident  
visitor  
immigrant  
refugee

### class

poor  
working class  
middle class  
upper class

### sexual orientation

gay

lesbian  
heterosexual  
bisexual  
\_\_\_\_\_

### political affiliation

radical  
liberal  
moderate  
conservative  
right-wing  
apolitical  
Republican  
Democrat  
independent  
\_\_\_\_\_

### geographic

urban  
suburban  
rural  
\_\_\_\_\_

### job/career \_\_\_\_\_

## **Activity 3: Affirming ourselves and our differences**

This exercise explores the different expectations and responsibilities that are placed on women and men. You may adapt the questions to reflect differences in color, class or nationality instead of gender.

- Goals:**
- ★ to clarify that women of different backgrounds have both similar and different ways of coping with the pressures and joys of family, work and community;
  - ★ to affirm that our differences are valuable and make us all culturally, politically and personally richer;
  - ★ to clarify that our families and society have different expectations for women and for men

**Materials:** For each person, a copy of "Expectations and Responsibilities" charts for BOYS and for GIRLS.

Newsprint pad and markers, or blackboard and chalk.

**Time:** Approximately 45 minutes.

Break into small groups and ask participants to fill out both sections of the handout. Explain to the groups that there are two versions, one for girls and one for boys. The first part lists expectations and responsibilities, and the second part asks about our feelings about these roles. Ask the groups to select a recorder and presenter. (This should take about 20 minutes.)

When the groups are finished, bring the whole group back together and ask the recorders from each group to present their findings.

Then present the following questions for discussion. You might give the group a few moments to write down their thoughts before you ask them to respond. Also, it may be helpful to summarize responses on a newsprint pad so the whole group can reflect on them.

- ★ Are there similar expectations and responsibilities placed on women as compared to men regardless of "race" or ethnic group? What are some things that are similar? What are differences?
- ★ What are some of the strengths of women and men in your particular ethnic group?

**Source:** Violence Against Women: A Curriculum for Empowerment. Sharon Szymanski, editor.

## **Affirming Ourselves and Our Differences Expectations and Responsibilities: For Girls/ For Boys**

As a girl/boy in your "racial" or ethnic group, what were the expectations and responsibilities placed on you?

① Towards children:

② Towards men (fathers, brothers, future partners) (if you are taking the female perspective)  
or Towards women (mothers, sisters, future partners)(if you are taking the male perspective):

③ In paid work:

④ At home:

⑤ In school:

Source: Violence Against Women: A Curriculum for Empowerment. Sharon Szymanski, editor.