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# OUT

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# Queer Bashing, Transphobia, and Discrimination

An OUTSaskatoon Resource

## What Can Be Done?

Even though an individual is not overtly homophobic, bi/poly/pan phobic, or transphobic, they may unwittingly perpetuate heteronormativity and cisnormativity. It is easy to make assumptions about gender identity and sexual orientation, but with knowledge, comes responsibility.

The key is simply to not assume that everyone around you is heterosexual and cisgender. If you make an effort, it will be appreciated.

Discriminating against the LGBTQ2S community is much like discriminating against any other minority. In Canada, we are aware that discrimination against women, non-English speaking minorities, older people, young people, different races, religions, and nationalities is wrong and socially irresponsible. Discriminating against LGBTQ2S people is the same. Be sure to:

- Learn as much as you can from your openly LGBTQ2S family members and friends.
- Contact LGBTQ2S organizations such as OUTSaskatoon or search the internet for LGBTQ2S positive sites for further information.

## Concluding Thoughts

- You have a right to be safe and to feel protected
- Be aware of your surroundings and don't take unnecessary risks
- Protect yourself if you have no other choice
- Assault and making threats are crimes
- Report the attack if and when you feel safe doing so
- Practice self-care

### About US

OUTSaskatoon builds community for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two spirit, intersex, and queer people. We provide peer support and counselling, queer-specific education and resources, outreach, social gatherings and events, community referrals, and sexual health services. We support body, mind and spirit within a growing and changing community.

### A Note on language

People use many different words to self-identify their sexual/romantic orientation and/or gender identity. Some are more familiar such as lesbian or gay, while others are newer such as Two Spirit, transgender, non-binary, or pansexual. The list also grows and changes every day, so in this pamphlet we use LGBTQ2S to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, polysexual, asexual, genderqueer, transgender, intersex, Two Spirit, queer, and questioning individuals.

## Further Resources

City Police and Ambulance: 911

Saskatoon Sexual Assault Crisis Line: 306-244-2224 (24 hours)

Saskatoon City Police (non-emergencies): 306-975-8300

Mobile Crisis: 306-933-6200

Victim Services: 306-975-8400

OUTSaskatoon: 306-665-1224 (1-800-358-1833)

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to the police.

Charges can be laid when you have been physically attacked, threatened, kidnapped, sexually assaulted or when your property has been stolen or damaged.

### The Decision to Report

Choosing to report or not is up to you. It can be often be embarrassing to “come out” to the police in this kind of situation. If you are concerned that the officer who takes your statement won't be sympathetic, take someone with you when you go in to report the incident. There is also no guarantee that the attacker(s) will be caught, which may be both anxiety-inducing and disappointing for you.

If you do report the incident, you are taking a stance against hatred and practicing self-care. If the attacker can be caught, they will be charged with the crime and you will be making the police more aware of the dangerous area in which you were attacked. Reporting the crime can also help you deal with the attack as you will be facing your fear rather than keeping it inside where it can weigh you down.

## Victim Support

There are a number of support programs for those who have been attacked, even if the attacker is not caught. These programs can include covering the cost of counselling, dental and medical expenses, and damaged property.

Contact Victim Services soon after reporting an attack to see the types of compensation you are eligible to apply for:

Victims Services

6th Floor, 1874 Scarth Street

Regina, SK S4P 3V7

Tel: (306) 787-3500

Fax: (306) 787-0081

E-mail: [victimservices@justice.gov.sk.ca](mailto:victimservices@justice.gov.sk.ca)

## Important Terms

**Heteronormativity:** the assumption that everyone you come into contact with is heterosexual and the lifestyle norms, practices, and institutions that promote heterosexual relationships and binary gender roles above all else.

**Heterosexism:** discrimination or prejudice against queer people on the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm. Examples include: asking a man if he has a girlfriend or asking a woman what her husband does for a living. These questions make assumptions about sexual orientation.

**Cisnormativity:** the assumption that everyone you come into contact with is cisgender (cis). Cisnormative assumptions prevent the creation of respectful and positive environments for transgender people. An example of cisnormativity is assuming someone's pronouns based on their appearance, or assuming that someone you perceive as a woman has a vagina.

**Cissexism:** the belief that trans people are inherently inferior to cis people. Examples of cissexist behaviors include: believing that being transgender is a phase; believing that trans people are delusional; or excluding transwomen/men from spaces because they are “not real men/women.”

**Transphobia:** hatred and fear of trans people based on the expression of their gender identity. Transphobia relies on beliefs that being trans is unnatural and abnormal and that this justifies discrimination and/or acts of violence towards trans people. Transphobia indicates ignorance of transgender identities and experiences.

**Biphobia/Panphobia/Polyphobia:** refers to any aversion felt towards bisexuality, pansexuality, and polyamory/polysexuality. Biphobia is not limited to the heterosexual community; the LGBTQ2S community also engages in bi/pan/poly phobias.

**Gay-bashing:** when a gay man, lesbian, or anyone who is perceived as gay or lesbian is assaulted by one or more people. The assault does not have to be physical as making someone fear for their well-being by making threats or chasing them is also considered gay bashing.

**Trans-bashing:** the practice of victimizing a person because they are transsexual and/or transgender. This often includes physical violence, but the practice of making someone fear for their safety through threats in person or online is also trans-bashing. Unlike gay-bashing, trans-bashing is based on someone's gender expression and/or gender identity.

**Dyke:** a derogatory term used in reference to a lesbian, however, some lesbians have reclaimed this term as a positive reference.

**Fag:** a derogatory term used in reference to a gay man, however, some gay men have reclaimed this term as a positive reference.

**Homophobia:** hatred and fear that is directed towards anyone who is or perceived as being gay or lesbian. Homophobia indicates ignorance surrounding gay and lesbian identities and experiences.

**Homonegativity:** negative behaviors and/or attitudes towards gender and sexually diverse people. This also includes biphobia and transphobia. The term homonegativity is increasingly being used in place of homophobia as it makes visible the fact that although homophobia has become a public ill, more covert negativity and exclusions toward LGBTQ2S people still persist.

### Homonegativity can take different forms:

**Personal or Internalized Homonegativity:** When an individual in the LGBTQ2S community faces internal feelings of self-hate regarding their identity due to socialization and conditioning.

It is not uncommon for a person suffering from internalized homonegativity to turn their inner feelings, outward. They may believe that by attacking other LGBTQ2S people or those perceived to be LGBTQ2S, they can prove that they, themselves, are not LGBTQ2S.

**Institutional Homonegativity:** When groups, organizations, businesses, and government agencies have active policies or laws that exclude or limit the rights or access of LGBTQ2S individuals. Often these policies are unwritten and are based on the attitudes and actions towards LGBTQ2S by senior staff and/or management.

you may need to run or fight.

- Trust your intuition. If you feel unsafe, leave and be prepared to run.
- Think of where you can go to be safe: stores, busy streets, hotels, restaurants—anywhere that other people are
- If you can't run, do whatever you need to do to defend yourself and get away. You have the right to protect yourself.

## Assault

### If You See an Assault

- Call 911
- If you see someone being harassed or bashed, do something. Shout or make noise and get other people to shout and to follow you. The trick is to scare off or distract the attackers while not getting into a fight, yourself.
- Think about what you see so you can report it to the police. For example, what the attackers looked like, what they were wearing, license plate numbers, or anything else you can remember. Every piece of information helps.
- Stay with the victim(s) until help arrives

### If You are Assaulted

- Call 911. Go to the Emergency Room if necessary
- Call the police as soon as possible and report what happened. Be sure to get the name and badge number of the officer who takes your report as well as the badge number
- Write down what happened on paper and describe what the basher(s) looked like.
- Consider asking that charges be laid if the attacker(s) is caught

### Following an Attack

It is not uncommon for anyone who has been attacked to feel fear or shame after an incident and to want to forget it ever happened. Throughout these feelings, take care of yourself. If you are hurt, go to the hospital, seek counselling, and tell someone what happened even if you do not choose to go

- A cis person can use public restrooms without fear of verbal abuse, physical intimidation, or arrest
- A cis person's validity as a man/woman/human is not based on what kinds of surgery they've had or if they "pass" as their gender
- Strangers don't assume that they can ask a cis individual what their genitals look like or how they engage in sexual activity
- Strangers often call cis individuals by the name they provide and do not ask what their "real name" or "birth name" is and then assume they have a right to use this incorrect name
- A cis person can reasonably assume that their ability to acquire a job, rent an apartment, or secure a loan will not be denied on the basis of their gender identity/expression
- A cis person's identity is not considered a mental pathology or a "gender identity disorder" by psychological and medical professionals
- A cis person does not have to defend their right to be part of the "queer" community and may not be excluded from an equality movement such as feminist discussions
- A cis person will often be able to purchase clothes that match their gender identity without being refused service or mocked by staff
- A cis person has their gender as an option when filling out forms
- A cis person doesn't have to convince their family of their true gender

The best and simplest way to fight transphobia is to refuse to be a part of it. Cisgender privilege should be acknowledged just like male privilege, white privilege, and class privilege. Do not resign yourself to stereotypes and learn more about what it means to be transgender as there are many resources out there to help you. All transgender individuals whether transitioning or not, deserve love, respect, and dignity. Challenge transphobia wherever you see it and encourage others to do the same.

## Queer and Trans Bashing

### When Trouble Occurs

- Verbal harassment can lead to an attack. If you choose to answer back,

**Cultural Homonegativity:** is when social standards and customs perpetuate or give preferred treatment to heterosexual or cisgender individuals.

### The Effects of Homonegativity

- It includes changes to behavior so as not to be perceived as being LGBTQ2S
- It prevents people from actively participating in the lives of their LGBTQ2S family members or friends
- It prevents people from having full, well-rounded, and deep friendships
- It assigns limited roles or expectations of gender, often preventing people from exploring hobbies or interests that are associated with a different gender
- It can make someone feel afraid to stand up and defend other LGBTQ2S people in the face of discrimination or bullying.
- It can adversely affect an individual's home life when they or a family member who is LGBTQ2S or perceived as LGBTQ2S is physically attacked, emotionally abused, or driven out of the home by another family member

## Biphobia/Polyphobia/Panphobia

Homophobia and homonegativity target anyone who is perceived as "non-heterosexual," but biphobia, panphobia, and polyphobia are specific to bisexual, pansexual, and polysexual individuals because the intolerance and hatred is focused towards one subgroup of the LGBTQ2S community and can come from both heterosexual people and other queer people. Therefore, a person may be biphobic/panphobic/polyphobic without being homophobic.

Stigma and myths around bi/pan/poly people include false beliefs such as: "bisexual, pansexual, and polysexual people can't make up their minds as to whether or not they are gay or straight," or "they are confused, unfaithful, more likely to have casual sex and get STIs."

Stigma surrounding bi/poly/pan identities can lead to feelings of isolation and depression. It can also lead to many people to avoid disclosing their orientation in order to avoid judgement and alienation from both peers and

strangers.

## Dispelling Myths

Many bisexual, polysexual, and pansexual people find themselves more attracted to an individual's personality rather than to a specific biological body part or gender. Therefore, sometimes bi/poly/pan individuals enter into relationships throughout their lives that may "pass as straight" and at other times be in relationships that may be perceived as queer. Believing that bi/poly/pan people should "choose" to be in a heterosexual relationship in order to "blend into" the heterosexual community is a damaging attitude to perpetuate as it negates the complexity of bi/poly/pan individuals' true feelings and sexual identities.

There are also myths that bi/pan/poly folks lack loyalty in their relationships. Remember that monogamy is one of many relationship choices and although many bisexual/polysexual/pansexual individuals choose to enter into committed and monogamous relationships, poly folks often choose to enter into non-monogamous relationships.

In many ways, coming to terms with being bi/poly/pan can be more difficult than discovering yourself as straight or gay because society tends to privilege black and white ideas or binary thinking. Bi/pan/poly people can teach us to better understand the fluidity and complexity sexuality and sexual experience.

## Combat Biphobia/Polyphobia/Panphobia!

If you see or hear someone making biphobic/polyphobic/panphobic remarks or behaving in a discriminatory manner, refuse to participate in the conversation or behavior and correct them. If you see someone being assaulted, call the police. Biphobia/Polyphobia/Panphobia is combated primarily in everyday situations through communication and education. Challenge the myths about bisexual/polysexual/pansexual identities and be an ally to your bi/poly/pan friends and family.

# Transphobia

## Transphobia from the Outside

There are still many individuals, organizations, institutions, and religious

groups that view transgender individuals as different, confused, or even as a threat. Individuals who discriminate against transgender people tend to have very rigid concepts of gender based upon biological sex, with no room for genders in between. Many trans people fit in-between the two categories of "male" and "female" while others undergo a long transition experience of adjusting their physical bodies to better fit their gender.

## Transphobia from Within

Some members of the LGBTQ+ or queer community can also discriminate against transgender people. An example of this is when transwomen are denied access to women-only spaces. Some people within the community feel that transgender individuals belong in their own category apart from people of various sexual identities. Such exclusion does not account for the fact that many transgender people also identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual...etc. and that they deserve the same respect and acknowledgement from their cisgender allies and queer friends. Indeed, other community members feel it is more important for everyone to stick together rather than dividing them based on gender identity. There are many people out there who are very accepting of trans identities.

## Performing Gender

On occasion, drag queens and kings find themselves the targets of transphobia. This stems from others' discomfort with the ways in which drag performers step outside of and play with rigid gender roles. For instance, traditional forms of gender are challenged when we see a male-identified individual perform as a woman. Whether or not the drag performer considers themselves trans, they are engaged in gender bending and, as a result, are sometimes the targets of transphobic slurs and violence. As well, people within the LGBTQ+ community who fail to distinguish between a person in transition and a drag performer perpetuate transphobia.

## Cisgender Privilege

Identifying as a cisgender individual carries a lot of privilege which is easy to take for granted. Many people who are cisgender don't think about the challenges a trans person faces on a daily basis as a result of their gender identity and/or expression. Some examples of cisgender (cis) privilege are: