

How to Reduce Classism in Activist Groups

1. In talks, panels, press conferences, or anywhere that the group is viewed publicly, have a balance (not just tokenism) of people of different classes, just as there should be a balance of gender, ages, races, etc.
2. Make membership fees and events available on a sliding scale with a low or no minimum threshold to join or participate.
3. Practice affirmative action in hiring of staff with working class/low income backgrounds and in choosing decision-makers for the group.
4. Seek out people who are from or who have connections in working class/low income communities before making decisions or changes in organizational policies or programs.
5. Identify certain parts of the organization where working class/low income involvement is especially important (example: where they can speak from their own experience and middle class people can't) and insure that involvement.
6. Sponsor a workshop or discussion on classism and identify class backgrounds and current status of all staff and decision-makers.
7. Don't sponsor/co-sponsor events that are too expensive or not priced on a sliding scale basis.
8. Challenge classism in your own publications and in media stories about your group or its issues or other topics.
9. Pay all staff equal wages (or based on need) rather than some getting more and others less for an equal amount of work. Make sure those wages are a "living wage."
10. Look for places where a group uses a "middle class" process and change that process where it limits who can participate and how.
11. Actively recruit (with a Plan) working class/low income people into the organization and have them involved from the beginning in the group or in new projects.
12. Be inclusive by making locations wheelchair accessible, providing childcare for meetings and events, and scheduling meetings and events to make groups and events welcoming to people who are working class/low income.
13. Use simple language and smaller words in all written and verbal business of the group.
14. Don't publicize how much people donate to your group w/categories representing different amounts. Some people giving \$5-10 may be making a greater contribution for their means than others giving \$100 or more.
15. Do special outreach to groups or communities with a large number of working class/low income people.
16. Sponsor a variety of cultural events that appeal to a broad cross-section of the population, not just to the middle or wealthy classes (not just classical music and folk singers).
17. Don't stereotype working class/low income people by steering them into certain jobs in an organization. Encourage them as writers and spokespeople and in leadership positions, not just helpers, leafletters, drivers, or food prep.
18. Offer special welcoming and attention to working class/low income people who want to join the group. Make sure you know what wc/li groups there are in your community and have a plan to be able to work with them on mutual concerns.
19. Make sure your organization looks at issues at least in part from the point of view of someone who is not financially comfortable, so their positions reflect that viewpoint. (For example: looking at an environmental issue to maintain jobs as well as preserving the environment.) If possible, find issues that appeal to a broad spectrum of economic classes.
20. Create a "safe space" so people of various classes can talk in confidence with others about situations where class discrimination has happened.