

SOLIDARITY WITH LGBT WORKERS

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

20 MINS: INTRO, GROUND RULES FOR RESPECT & ICE-BREAKER

15 MINS: LGBT 101

Understanding basic terminology is Step #1 in being effective and supportive allies with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the labor movement.

What does "LGBT" mean?

LGBT: Stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. GLBT is also used. At times, a Q will be added for Queer and/or Questioning, an A for Ally, an I for Intersex and/or a TS for Two-Spirit.

Lesbian – a woman whose primary romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions are to other women.

Gay – a man whose primary romantic, emotional, physical and sexual attractions are to other men. In some occasions the term may be used to refer to lesbians.

Bisexual – a person who has significant romantic, emotional, physical and/or sexual attractions to members of both sexes. The frequency, intensity, or quality of attraction is not necessarily directed toward everyone equally.

Transgender – used both as an umbrella term and as an identity. Broadly, it refers to anyone who does not identify with their assigned gender. As an identity, the term refers to anyone who transgresses the traditional sex and gender characteristics and/or expectations.

What is an Ally?

An Ally is any heterosexual ("straight") person who opposes heterosexism and homophobia and shows support/solidarity with LGBT people.

What is Gender Identity/Gender Expression?

Gender identity is how one thinks of one's own gender. A person may identify as male, female, transgender, or any number of other terms. "Gender expression" is the outward means of expressing one's gender identity. Gender identity and gender expression are different than sexual orientation.

Heterosexism, Homophobia, Transphobia:

Heterosexism is the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual, and the belief that heterosexuality is superior to other forms of sexual orientation and expression. Homophobia refers to negative feelings, attitudes, actions or behaviours towards anyone who is lesbian, gay or, bisexual, or perceived to be any of the above. Internalized homophobia is a fear of same-sex tendencies within oneself and can lead to repression. Institutionalized homophobia refers to homophobic laws, policies, and positions taken by social and governmental institutions. Transphobia is an irrational fear of, and/or hostility towards, people who are transgender or who otherwise transgress traditional gender norms.

20 MINS: LGBT & LABOR SOLIDARITY: WHY & HOW IT MATTERS

- Table discussions: Why and how does this matter for our union?
- Case study of work being done in Canada
- Overview (with power point of the following):

Employment Discrimination

In a majority of states, workers can be legally fired because of our sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. Because both state and federal laws are inadequate, union contracts are often the only line of defence for LGBT workers.

LGBT-Inclusive Contract Language

Because of the inadequacies of state and federal law, it is vital that union contracts contain specific language to ensure LGBT workers receive at least similar benefits under a contract. Major areas of contract language that are needed include non-discrimination language, LGBT-inclusive definitions, health coverage and inclusive leave of absence language.

Immigration & Family Reunification

Because LGBT families are not recognized through federal law, thousands of families are separated because of the inability of LGBT people to sponsor their partners and children for residency in the United States. As union contracts are often the only employment protections that exist for any LGBT workers, comprehensive immigration reform must ensure immigrant workers full workplace rights, including the right to organize and protections for whistle-blowers.

Marriage Equality

The word "marriage" in civil statutes confers 1,138 rights and responsibilities from which same-sex couples are excluded (in states where same sex marriage is not yet legal). These include social security survivor benefits, pension benefits and other crucial benefits. Union contracts can include language that provides many of these benefits. Unions have also been at the forefront of joining in the political fight for marriage equality.

The Union Triangle & LGBT Solidarity

Ways that LGBT solidarity relates to our organizing, political and representational work (audience participation with union triangle up on the screen)

15 MINS: NEXT STEPS & RESOURCES

- Sample contract language
- Example of educational materials provided by UFCW Canada/ CLC
- Ideas for events
- OUT Reach