

"Common Elements of Oppression"

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- **Defined Norm** – comparing everyone to one or a few ideal examples based on my own culture
- **Institutional Power** – resources, laws, policies, political clout, political representation
- **Economic Power** – financial/material resources
- **Myth of Scarcity** – belief in the socially constructed fear that there are not enough resources to go around
- **Violence & Threats of Violence** – implicit or explicit messages intended to make people afraid, to fear harm, pain, suffering, etc. if they advocate for themselves
- **Lack of Prior Claim** – insisting on a biased origin story of society as if 1) it is the only story, 2) it is the correct and complete story, and 3) some things cannot be because it is more important to preserve traditions rooted in that story
- **the Other/Othering** - treating some people/groups as abnormal in relation to the norm
- **Invisibility** – omitting contributions, presence, existence, etc. as if some groups have made no substantial contributions – underrepresentation in histories
- **Distortion** – revising history to reflect incomplete, inaccurate details – false histories
- **Stereotyping** – dehumanizing by denying individual characteristics, interpreting individuals first according to stereotypes; applying the “fallacy of confirming instances” = seeking evidence for what you already believe and omitting/ignoring evidence that contradicts what you already believe
- **Blaming the Victim** – portraying oppression as deserved, seeking explanations for the problems people face in terms of individual behaviors and failures of character, effort, culture, etc.
- **Internalized Oppression** – coming to believe the falsehoods and myths that further oppressive institutional arrangements and cultural beliefs
- **Horizontal Hostility** – hatred of and/or competing with others who are also oppressed (rather than fostering solidarity among people who are underrepresented)
- **Identification with Power** – assuming/believing, falsely, that those in positions of authority act in your best interests, and seeking to attain the favor of those in power (likely because of background desires to attain similar status)
- **Exploiting Isolation** – interfering with, preventing solidarity among groups and individuals, and/or taking advantage of the lack of solidarity among underrepresented groups and individuals
- **Assimilation and Tokenism** – creating fake “model” representatives in attempt to discredit claims of oppression
- **Individualized Solutions** – responding to systemic problems by proposing that individuals need to work harder in order to persevere, and/or believing all people can equitably pull themselves up by their bootstraps without addressing systemic inequities

Checklist for Choosing an Issue

A good issue is one that matches most of these criteria. Use this checklist to compare issues, or develop your own criteria and chart for choosing an issue.

Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3	Will the Issue
			1. Result in a real improvement in people's lives?
			2. Give people a sense of their own power?
			3. Alter the relations of power?
			4. Be worthwhile?
			5. Be winnable?
			6. Be widely felt?
			7. Be deeply felt?
			8. Be easy to understand?
			9. Have a clear target?
			10. Have a clear time frame that works for you?
			11. Be non-divisive?
			12. Build leadership?
			13. Set your organization up for the next campaign?
			14. Have a pocketbook angle?
			15. Raise money?
			16. Be consistent with your values and vision?

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