

How Homophobia Hurts Everyone: A Theoretical Foundation

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Within the numerous forms of oppression, members of the target group (sometimes called "minority") are oppressed, while on some level members of the dominant group are hurt. Although the effects of the oppression differ qualitatively for specific target and dominant groups, in the end everyone loses.

1. Homophobia locks all people into rigid gender-based roles that inhibit creativity and self-expression.
2. Homophobic conditioning compromises the integrity of heterosexual people by pressuring them to treat others badly, actions contrary to their basic humanity.
3. Homophobia inhibits one's ability to form close, intimate relationships with members of one's own sex.
4. Homophobia generally restricts communication with a significant portion of the population and, more specifically, limits family relationships.
5. Societal homophobia prevents some lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people from developing an authentic self-identity and adds to the pressure to marry, which in turn places undue stress and oftentimes trauma on themselves as well as their heterosexual spouses and their children.
6. Homophobia is one cause of premature sexual involvement, which increases the chances of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Young people, of all sexual identities, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are "normal."
7. Homophobia combined with sexphobia (fear and repulsion of sex) results in the elimination of any discussion of the lifestyles and sexuality of sexual minorities as part of school-based sex education, keeping vital information from all students. Such a lack of information can kill people in the age of AIDS.
8. Homophobia can be used to stigmatize, silence and, on occasion, target people who are perceived or defined by others as gay, lesbian or bisexual but who are in actuality heterosexual.
9. Homophobia prevents heterosexuals from accepting the benefits and gifts offered by sexual minorities: theoretical insights, social and spiritual visions and options, contributions to the arts and culture, to religion, to family life, indeed to all facets of society.

10. Homophobia (along with racism, sexism, classism, sexphobia, etc.) inhibits a unified and effective governmental and societal response to AIDS.
11. Homophobia diverts energy from more constructive endeavors.
12. Homophobia inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity, making it unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. Therefore, we are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned.

-- From Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price, ed. Warren J. Blumenfeld (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).