



CAMPUS  
Technical Assistance  
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# Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors: Community Response and Approaches

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## VISION

To create a world where  
Black women & girls  
are valued, respected, safe,  
**and** free from violence.

## MISSION

Mobilize the community.  
Respond to and end violence.  
Serve as a resource to survivors of  
violence, advocates, service providers &  
the community.



## *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:*

# What does 'LGBTQIA+' stand for?

This abbreviation expanded from 'LGBT', in order for there to be inclusivity of all gender identities, sexual orientation, and expressions.

'L': Lesbian

'G': Gay

'B': Bisexual

'T': Trans, not 'Transgendered'

'Q': Queer (an umbrella term)/ Questioning

'I': Intersex

'A': Asexual

'+' : Any and all identities on the spectrum, for example: pansexual, demisexual, graysexual, non-binary...etc.

## *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:*

### What is the narrative?

Black LGBTQIA+ survivors face multiple systems of discrimination because of how the different parts of their identity intersect. They will often deal with homophobia within their own cultural/ethnic communities. Aside from those internal barriers, they face other obstacles in the mainstream culture like:

- Racism
- Xenophobia (discrimination against people from other countries)
- Ableism (discrimination against people who are disabled)
- Colonialism (the effects still felt today)

## *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:*

# What is the narrative?

### CHECK YOURSELF

Homophobia is rampant within black culture and community.

- The conversations we don't have in our homes surrounding family members that identify as queer.
- Traditional language that is heavily used but no longer appropriate
- Unhealthy masculinity- how we treat black queer males
  - Gendered language/roles from young ages
    - "baby boy"
    - "lil man"
    - Males as the head of the household, attribute masculine qualities to boys from young ages
- Sexualization of queer women
  - Lesbian and bisexual women with more feminine qualities are "sexy"

## *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:*

### **Exercise 1**

The variables in a person's identity can be a form of intersectionality (a compilation of trauma or an intersection that stems from race and gender discrimination) and this shapes their experiences and resources.

#### **Exercise 1:**

What trauma or obstacle can you deduce a 1<sup>st</sup> generation black queer survivor has gone through?

## *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:*

# What does their safety look like in different spaces?

The way in which LGBTQIA+ folks decide to 'out' themselves is extremely vital to their safety and well-being. Factors that folks have to consider when deciding on whether or not to 'out' themselves depend on:

- **The situation/environment** (Are they from a low-income black neighborhood, living in a single family household where their mom expects them to be the "man of the house" - less agency)
- **People** (Do they have someone safe to come out to....is there a professor at school they are comfortable with? How would their friends react, are their friends accepting of queer folks?)
- **Resources** (If coming out threatens their home life if there somewhere they could go, if the people in their life will not be accepting is there anyone safe they could turn to?)
- **Personal boundaries** (Where are they in figuring out their identity? This progress isn't linear)

If the person is not safe in coming out at a particular place and time, their identity then becomes fluid so that they may be able to protect themselves from potential violence (physical, sexual, verbal, or mental).

## *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:*

### **Terminology**

- There are important terms and protocols to consider in the immediate, especially when providing services for trans/ non-binary folks.
- Because these terms were facilitated in academic settings, these resources were not as accessible. These restrictions manifest in communities of color, like black communities, in a way that further alienates the language from the community. *Lack of accessibility results in exclusion.* For example, black queer folks who have not had access to these tools to understand LGBTQIA+ language in its entirety, may not readily understand what 'non-binary' means, but if explained, it resonates.

*\*At the end of the presentation, there will be a mini-glossary section of terms that are immediately useful. Please note there is wide vocabulary for the LGBTQIA+ community, and the terms mentioned at the end only cover a small part of what these terms and concepts look like. Please familiarize yourself with the border terms through the resources provided. It is your responsibility in delivering trauma-informed care to do so.\**

## *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:*

### Terminology

Remember to ask what someone's pronouns are, examples can be: they/them/theirs, she/her/hers, he/him/his, ze/hir/hir...etc.

If you misgender someone or use the wrong pronouns, please instead instantly correct yourself as soon as you catch it--- do not divulge the mistake and over explain why it happened."

**For example**, the responsible way to correct yourself would be (in this example we will use someone whose pronouns are they/theirs):

- "She-, I mean they, - would like to see what other services are available."

#### **An example of a harmful response:**

- "She- Oh, wait I mean they! I'm sorry, it's just hard for me to get used to it but I'm trying. You have to understand that, right? You don't look like a 'they'."

## *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:* Trauma Informed Practices

Even now with trauma-informed practices becoming the standard, there are still noticeable gaps. Specifically, with LGBTQIA+ folks, strategies around how their trauma-informed care looks, have been less developed than others.

An institution's programming and practices must be inclusive in order to avoid re-traumatization, and to empower survivors to engage with their healing process. For an institution/organization to be survivor centered and trauma-formed, they must consistently:

- Train staff,
- Update policies and procedures to be trauma reductive,
- Hire staff with an exceptional knowledge of trauma and its historical context,
- Provide inclusive treatments/screenings.

The survivor should feel as if their providers are akin to community partners.

*Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:*

## Trauma Informed Practices, Exercise 2

The institution/organization must be dedicated to meeting the survivor's needs. In order for needs to be met, the organization's culture must also adhere to inclusive standards so that staff feel supported to best care for their community.

### **Exercise 2:**

What are different steps your institution can take to improve the culture around inclusivity for LGBTQIA+ survivors?

## *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:* **Affirmative Support**

Community and familial support are central to LGBTQIA+ identities being validated, this in turn can mean improvement in mental health and less exposure to violent events.

People often find the resilience to pull through traumatic events through the *pride* they feel in their identity.

In mainstream society LGBTQIA+ people, especially LGBTQIA+ people of color, experience discrimination in non-inclusive spaces quite often. This constant negation of their humanity makes the pride in their identity that much more crucial to their *resilience*.

They are both **black** and **queer**. Not one or the other.

## *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:*

# How services for survivors can be harmful

Sanctuary harm occurs when services are offered without taking on a critical lens to the intersecting barriers that LGBTQIA+ survivors face. These services are created to help but can often result in harm.

An example of sanctuary harm can be seen in our health system, when these spaces saw LGBTQIA+ identities as 'disorders'. The effects of this are still felt by LGBTQIA+ folks today. Sanctuary harm implicates that the service does not take into consideration:

- Heterosexism
- Racism
- Ableism
- Colonialism
- Transphobia
- Homophobia
- Classism

# *Black LGBTQIA+ Survivors:* How services for survivors can be harmful

An example of how sanctuary harm may occur:

*You want to include members of the LGBTQIA+ community on campus in conversations around campus safety/violence:*

*You may have a campus townhall where campus advocates show up, including queer students on campus. You begin the conversation talking about violence on campus, violence committed by male students against female students. This is supposed to be a safe space so you open the conversation for students to share experiences and suggestions. The queer students who attend do not feel safe to speak up because they have not been validated, their experiences/identity have not been brought to the table and they are in a room with majority cis-hetero young men and young women.*

*Black LGBTQIA Survivors:*

## Sanctuary Harm and Transformative Justice

With the help of transformative justice, trauma-informed practices can now be implemented with a broader perspective than what mental health services were previously able to provide.

Transformative justice addresses and deconstructs oppressive social structures that further enables violence and injustice.

It calls for survivors to have space for safe healing and empowerment in their narrative through community action and accountability. Think of the trauma informed care through a transformative lens as community centered.

# *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:* Sanctuary Harm and Transformative Justice

How can transformative justice practice be included on campus?:

- Introducing the use of pronouns on campus starting with student applications, welcome week, & orientation.
- Undergoing a process of doing away with gendered dorms.
- Providing gender inclusive and gender neutral bathrooms for students.
- Requiring sororities and fraternities on campus to undergo trainings on inclusiveness.

## *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:* IPV/DV in LGBTQIA+ Relationships

There are very little resources and statistics for people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and/or beyond the binary; ***all survivors deserve accessibility and visibility.***

Violence in LGBTQIA+ relationships share similar modes to what we see in heterosexual relationships. This violence exists while having to deal with systems like:

- homo/bi-phobia
- transphobia,
- trans-misogyny,
- and, specifically for black queer folks- misogynoir.

The factors listed above can serve as an outline for the kind of abuse that occurs. (This causes LGBTQIA+ survivors to endure very specific experiences due to their identity).

## *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:*

### **IPV/DV in LGBTQIA+ Relationships**

Specifically, these individuals may endure **identity abuse** (*shaming folks that aren't "out", discrimination of different members of the queer community*), which can look like:

- Limiting access to support systems within their community (LGBTQIA+ communities are very close, meaning the abuser is more probable to be part of the survivor's connections or networks)
- Isolation is a tactic often used
- 'Outing' them (sexual orientation or gender identity)
- HIV/AIDS status
- Making their partner feel as if they are not valid or authentic in their identity ('queer enough')
- Trans survivors experience more police violence when they report (which can deter them from reporting)

## *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:*

# IPV/DV in LGBTQIA+ Relationships

Identity abuse can manifest itself in many ways that can be seen on campus, for example:

- It can be shown in campus community/systems when the use of pronouns aren't recognized or institutionalized.
- Not respecting a person's gender expression versus their gender identity.
- Stigma that is still held as a community around HIV/AIDS status.

## *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:* IPV/DV in LGBTQIA+ Relationships

LGBTQIA+ people have a greater chance of experiencing something called '*poly victimization*', which is basically various kinds of abuse and violence that they experience from various different people, like:

- Family
- Partners
- Community folks
- Strangers

Most services, if they offer LGBTQIA+ inclusive services, center those resources and information around the dominant white middle-class survivors. This again prevents more vulnerable groups like black, immigrant, trans, and differently-abled folks from receiving the proper support.

*Black LGBTQIA Survivors:*  
IPV/DV for LGBTQIA+ folks, Exercise 3

**Exercise 3:**

What can the resources/response you offer be inclusive to your specific environment? In this case, being at an HBCU?

## *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:* **Religion/Spirituality**

It is important to note that religion/spirituality can play a big part in a survivor's community, whether it be one they adhere to or grew up with, the affirmation of their experience and identity can often times be closely associated with their community's faith.

For LGBTQIA+ people who are also religious or grew up in a religious community, their identity could suffer the loss of their spiritual community, along with family and friends due to these oppressive beliefs. In turn, this causes folks to develop internalized shame (internalized homo/bi/trans-phobia) around their identity.

## *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:* Religion/Spirituality, Exercise 4

For communities of color, their spiritual community can be especially crucial to their well-being because of the already limited sources of support.

For example, particularly in the black community, Christianity has impacted much of our history and belief systems. The church has served as a place of sanctuary for folks in the community to escape racial injustice and violence.

### **Exercise 4**

How can we make sure that an institution's communal belief doesn't affect a queer survivor's experience? What steps can be taken?

# *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:* Important \*Immediate\* Terms

- (Definitions have come from the National LGBT Health Education Center's '*LGBTQIA+ Glossary of Terms for Health Care Teams*', which is available online):
- **Agender** (adjective) – Describes a person who identifies as having no gender, or who does not experience gender as a primary identity component.
- **Assigned female at birth/Assigned male at birth** (noun) – Refers to the sex that is assigned to an infant, most often based on the infant's anatomical and other biological characteristics. Commonly abbreviated as AFAB (assigned female at birth) or AMAB (assigned male at birth).
- **Sex assigned at birth** (noun) – The sex (male or female) assigned to an infant, most often based on the infant's anatomical and other biological characteristics. Sometimes referred to as birth sex, natal sex, biological sex, or sex; however, sex assigned at birth is the recommended term.
- **Cisgender** (adjective) – A person whose gender identity is consistent in a traditional sense with their sex assigned at birth; for example, a person assigned female sex at birth whose gender identity is woman/female. The term *cisgender* comes from the Latin prefix *cis*, meaning "on the same side of."
- **Gender-affirming hormone therapy** (noun) – Feminizing and masculinizing hormone treatment to align secondary sex characteristics with gender identity.
- **Coming out** (verb) – The process of identifying and accepting one's own sexual orientation or gender identity (coming out to oneself), and the process of sharing one's sexual orientation or gender identity with others (coming out to friends, family, etc.).

# *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:* Important \*Immediate\* Terms

- **Gender affirmation** (noun) – The process of making social, legal, and/or medical changes to recognize, accept, and express one’s gender identity. Social changes can include changing one’s pronouns, name, clothing, and hairstyle. Legal changes can include changing one’s name, sex designation, and gender markers on legal documents. Medical changes can include receiving gender-affirming hormones and/or surgeries. Although this process is sometimes referred to as *transition*, the term *gender affirmation* is recommended.
- **Gender-affirming surgery (GAS)** (noun) – Surgeries to modify a person’s body to be more aligned with that person’s gender identity. Types of GAS include chest and genital surgeries, facial feminization, body sculpting, and hair removal.
- **Gender binary structure (noun)** – The idea that there are only two genders (girl/woman and boy/man), and that a person must strictly fit into one category or the other.
- **Gender-diverse (adjective)** – Describes the community of people who fall outside of the gender binary structure (e.g., non-binary, genderqueer, gender fluid people).
- **Gender dysphoria (noun)** – Distress experienced by some people whose gender identity does not correspond with their sex assigned at birth. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) includes gender dysphoria as a diagnosis for people whose distress is clinically significant and impairs social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. The degree and severity of gender dysphoria is highly variable among transgender and gender-diverse people.

## *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:* Important \*Immediate\* Terms

- **Gender expression** (noun) – The way a person communicates their gender to the world through mannerisms, clothing, speech, behavior, etc. Gender expression varies depending on culture, context, and historical period.
- **Gender fluid** (adjective) – Describes a person whose gender identity is not fixed. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of more than one gender, but may feel more aligned with a certain gender some of the time, another gender at other times, both genders sometimes, and sometimes no gender at all.
- **Gender identity** (noun) – A person’s inner sense of being a girl/woman/female, boy/man/male, something else, or having no gender.
- **Chosen Name/Name Used** (noun) – The name a person goes by and wants others to use in personal communication, even if it is different from the name on that person’s insurance or identification documents (e.g., birth certificate, driver’s license, and passport). *Chosen name* is recommended over *preferred name*. The terms *Chosen name* or *Name used* can be put on patient health care forms alongside *Name on your insurance (if different)* and *Name on your legal identification documents (if different)*. In conversation with patients, health care staff can ask, “What name do you want us to use when speaking with you?”, or “What is your chosen name?”
- **Outing** (verb) – Involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

## *Black LGBTQIA Survivors:* Important \*Immediate\* Terms

- **Non-binary** (adjective) – Describes a person whose gender identity falls outside of the traditional gender binary structure of girl/woman and boy/man. Sometimes abbreviated as *NB* or *enby*.
- **QPOC** (noun) – An acronym that stands for *queer person of color* or *queer people of color*.
- **Transgender** (adjective) – Describes a person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth do not correspond based on traditional expectations; for example, a person assigned female sex at birth who identifies as a man; or a person assigned male sex at birth who identifies as a woman. Transgender can also include people with gender identities outside the girl/woman and boy/man gender binary structure; for example, people who are gender fluid or non-binary. Sometimes abbreviated as *trans*.
- **Trans man/transgender man** (noun) – A transgender person whose gender identity is man/male may use these terms to describe themselves. Some will use the term *man*.
- **Trans woman/transgender woman** (noun) – A transgender person whose gender identity is female may use these terms to describe themselves. Some will use the term *woman*.
- **Transfeminine** (adjective) – Describes a person who was assigned male sex at birth, but identifies with femininity to a greater extent than with masculinity.
- **Transmasculine** (adjective) – Describes a person who was assigned female sex at birth, but identifies with masculinity to a greater extent than with femininity.



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