Workshop notes
Racism and Lesbian Community Seminar
Cork 21 Nov '99

How does this connect with racism?

Group 1:

Difficulty defending your own patch.

Nicknames

Ireland's history

Prejudice against people from different cultures

Group 2:

Similar issues around childcare but not connected or dealt with in same way

Ways in which 'differences' are named/addressed – eg filling out official forms

Census

Education system

Group 3:

Concept of penny for the black babies

Stereotypes perpetuated by institutions

Assumption that you are white or fit into white culture

Assumptions that you are settled

Is there racism in the lesbian community?

Group 1:

Yes

Group 2:

Yes

Assumption that if you experience discrimination, you don't practice it.

In Ireland a white woman can never know what it is like to experience racism. Can understand marginalisation / discrimination but not in the same way. Don't have a choice to let people know about ethnic difference whereas lesbians can pass as straight sometimes.

Sharon Murphy and Vicki Donnelly

How do lesbians experience institutional homophobia?

Group 1:

Relationships with children

Dealing with a real estate agent as an example.

Assumptions about being heterosexual.

Conditioning.

Use of language

Life-style choices which have been influenced by our own reactions

Group 2:

Children – fostering, parenting, equality, access to services etc.

Marriage rights – property, wills

Leave of absence

Emigration / immigrations – reuniting families, partners

Tax relief, social welfare

Education system – assumption of heterosexual family structures etc.

Institutionalised homophobia throughout structures

Funding etc. of lesbian research, groups etc.

Group 3:

Assumptions of being straight by institutions and laws

Being penalised for not conforming eg partnership rights

Straight culture at work

Lack of protection by state institutions

Invisibility of lesbians in educational curriculum

Group 3:

Yes

Lack of challenge of racism

Racist jokes

Denial and ignorance of racism - we're all grand

Shalinin Shina

Oppressor and Oppressed status – we each have both – acknowledging them important to understanding ways in which we oppress one another

Issues important to people to address:

Changing things within the lesbian community and broader community

Taking responsibility to challenge racism

Confronting racism in the open

Identifying racism – conscious and explicit awareness

Power being non-reversable

How to stay enthusiastic

Inter-racial relationships

Bringing black friends to Ireland to visit

How to challenge without being confrontational