



Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

2.3 Considering the Oppressor

Objectives

Recognize ways in which even oppressed people can participate in oppression.

Develop an awareness of how oppression can harm the oppressor as well as members of the oppressed group.

Materials needed

“Identity: Skin Blood Heart” by Minnie Bruce Pratt. Available in *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge*. Ed. Helen Crowley and Susan Himmelweit. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992.

Copies of the handout

Time needed

Twenty to thirty minutes

Instructor directions

Provide your students with copies of Minnie Bruce Pratt’s article and ask them to read it and be ready to discuss it in class.

Ask your students to consider the question “Does oppression harm the oppressor?”

Have them identify ways in which they might be considered to belong to an oppressor group and how they benefit from their membership.

Then, ask them to consider ways in which they are harmed by their participation or membership in an oppressor group. Encourage group discussion.



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2.3 Considering the Oppressor Handout

Directions

Consider the question “Does oppression harm the oppressor?”

First, identify ways in which you could be considered to belong to an oppressor group (according to your gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, age, etc.).

Then, answer the following questions:

How do you benefit from your membership in this group?

What are you missing out on as a consequence of your membership in an oppressor group?

How are you harmed, morally, ethically, or psychologically, by your membership in this group?

What action(s) might you take as a result of your new understanding of this issue?

What does Pratt mean by “. . . asking what new thing will I hear, will I see, will I let myself feel, beyond the fear”?

(This exercise is adapted from an exercise by Lani Roberts, Ph.D., assistant professor of philosophy, Oregon State University.)