

5. Include Jews and sexual minorities as categories to be recognized when seeking multicultural diversity and balance in your organizations and places of employment.

6. Extend spousal-equivalency benefits to employees and institute equal protections in hiring policies on the basis of sexual identity.

7. Incorporate information relevant to the sexual minority and Jewish experience at every level of the educational process; encourage the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith to include homophobia among the other areas of oppression it deals with in its "World of Difference" curriculum.

8. Continue to educate yourself on issues of importance to these groups.

9. Insure that your religious community is a "welcoming congregation" to sexual minorities; ordain sexual minorities in your denomination.

10. Expand your definition of "family" to include sexual minority relationships.

11. Sensitize yourself on the realities of sexual minority life: wear pro-gay t-shirts and buttons; bold hands with someone of the same sex in public; purchase a gay, lesbian, or bisexual periodical or book and read it in public; try to keep your heterosexuality in the closet for one day or week by not disclosing it to anyone in any way. Write down the details of your experience in a journal describing what you felt.

12. Rejoice in knowing that Jews and sexual minorities are natural allies and work to end the superficial hierarchy of oppression; remember that we are all diminished when any one of us is oppressed.

## Suggested Reading List

### Books

Balka, Christie and Andy Rose, eds., Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish, Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

Beck, Evelyn T., ed., Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology, Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

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

Blumenfeld, Warren J. and Diane Raymond, Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life, Boston: Beacon Press, 1988. Second edition, 1993.

Boswell, John, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Bulkin, Elly, Barbara Smith, and Minnie Bruce Pratt, Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism, Brooklyn: Long Haul Press, 1991.

Heger, Heinz, The Men with the Pink Triangle, Boston: Alyson Publications, 1980.

Kaye-Kantrowitz, Melanie and Irena Klepfisz, eds., The Tribe of Dina: A Jewish Women's Anthology, Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

Klepfisz, Irena, Dreams of an Insomniac: Jewish Feminist Essays, Speeches, and Diatribes, Portland, OR: The Eighth Mountain Press, 1990.

Lerner, Michael, The Socialism of Fools: Anti-Semitism on the Left, Oakland, CA: Tikkun Books, 1992.

Plant, Richard, The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War against Homosexuals, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1986.

Wistrich, Robert S., Anti-Semitism: the Longest Hatred, New York: Pantheon Books, 1991.

### Periodicals

Bridges: A Journal for Jewish Feminists and Our Friends, Seattle: New Jewish Agenda

Empathy: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Persons Working to End Oppression on the Basis of Sexual Identities, Columbia, SC: Gay and Lesbian Advocacy Research Project

Lijith: The Jewish Woman's Magazine, New York

Tikkun, Oakland, CA: Institute for Labor and Mental Health

### Pamphlets/Tapes

Coming Out, Coming Home, 1987, Pamphlet, New Jewish Agenda, 64 Fulton Street, NY, NY 10038

Feminist Jewish Women's Voices, Audio tape, the Jewish Caucus, National Women's Studies Association, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742

Jewish Lesbian Culture and Anti-Semitism in the Lesbian Community, Audio tape, Radical Rose Recordings, SIDO 1, PO Box 8122, Minneapolis, MN 55408

Lesbian and Gay Liberation: A bibliography for the Jewish Community, New Jewish Agenda

Pink Triangles: A Film Study of Prejudice Against Lesbians and Gays, Documentary film, Cambridge Documentary Films, PO Box 385, Cambridge, MA 02139

Written by Joan Schuman and Warren Blumenfeld. Thanks to all the people — known and unknown to us — who have thought about, talked about, and written about homophobia, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, and Christianity.

Produced by the Campaign to End Homophobia, a network of people working to end homophobia and heterosexism through education. We believe that education about homophobia and heterosexism is most effective when done in connection with other oppressions, and realize that other forms of oppression are always present in our work. Therefore, in the context of our work to end homophobia and heterosexism, we are committed to recognizing and exploring alternatives to oppression based on race/ethnicity, physical or mental ability, class, age, sex, and religious or spiritual beliefs.

Membership in the Campaign is open to any individual or organization which supports our goals. Members receive reduced fees on educational materials, conferences, and other programs; an opportunity to be listed with the Homophobia Educators Referral Service; a subscription to Empathy, a journal for persons working to end oppression based on sexual identities; and the satisfaction of supporting this important work. For information

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# HOMOPHOBIA AND ANTI-SEMITISM: MAKING THE LINKS

"The fate of Jews and gay people has been almost identical throughout European history, from early Christian hostility to extermination in concentration camps. The same laws which oppressed Jews oppressed gay people; the same groups bent on eliminating Jews tried to wipe out homosexuality; the same period of European history which could not make room for Jewish distinctiveness reacted violently against sexual nonconformity; the same countries which insisted on religious uniformity imposed majority standards of sexual conduct; and even the same methods of propaganda were used against Jews and gay people, picturing them as animals bent on the destruction of children of the majority." (John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality.)

Jewish people and lesbians, gay males, bisexuals, and transgender people are natural allies; they share a history of oppression. However, a dominant Christian and heterosexual culture has prevented such alliances from forming. This pamphlet offers some information about the connections between homophobia and anti-Semitism and some guidance on building alliances.



## Definitions

*Anti-Semitism* is prejudice and discrimination directed against Jewish people. *Homophobia* is prejudice and discrimination directed against lesbians, gay males, bisexuals, and transgender people (sexual minorities). *Heterosexism* is the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual. *Christianism* is the assumption that everyone is or should be Christian.

Anti-Semitism, homophobia, Christianity, and Heterosexism are forms of oppression and operate on four distinct but interrelated levels: *cultural/personal, interpersonal, and institutional*. The *cultural level* (sometimes called “collective” or “societal”) refers to social norms or codes of behavior that, although not expressly written into law or policy, nonetheless work within a society to legitimize oppression. The *personal level* refers to an individual’s belief that Jewish people or sexual minorities either deserve to be pined or should be hated. The *interpersonal level* refers to behavior between people which transforms prejudice into its active component — discrimination. The *institutional level* refers to the ways in which governments, businesses, and educational, religious, and professional organizations systematically discriminate.

## Anti-Semitism and Homophobia:

### Overt Forms of Oppression

Throughout history there are clear cases where target groups have been portrayed in proverb, joke, and social commentary as less than human. Jewish people and sexual minorities have both been targeted:

- o During the middle ages, stories spread that the Jews had concealed tails beneath their garments, had a peculiar smell, and that they were in the service of the devil;

- o By the 19th century, physicians published studies claiming that males engaging in same-sex eroticism were inclined toward having underdeveloped genitalia resembling that of a

male dog, and that women engaging in same-sex eroticism were usually of a masculine type who had a greater propensity toward hysteria and insanity.

- o A Medieval anti-Jewish motif, the “Jundensau”, depicted Jews sexually entwined with pigs;

- o In the 6th century, Roman laws were issued connecting the “crime” of men having sex with other men with famines, earthquakes, and pestilences;

- o In 12th and 13th century Europe, Jews were accused of causing the Black Death by poisoning drinking wells.

In the 20th century, oppression of both Jews and sexual minorities was the cornerstone of Germany’s Nazi philosophy:

- o In his official newspaper, *Volksischer Beobachter*, Hitler blamed the Jews for “trying to propagandize sexual relations between siblings, men and animals, and men and men.”

- o Heinrich Himmler, chief of the German secret police, saw homosexuality as a symptom of racial degeneracy destructive to the “Aryan” race.

Hate motivated violence certainly did not end with the death of Nazi Germany. Today, Jewish synagogues and cemeteries are defaced, sacred religious scrolls are burned, anti-Semitic epithets are hurled at children in the schools, and hate-motivated violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people (“queer bashing”) is on the rise. Often, as visibility of Jews and sexual minorities increases, oppression against these groups also increases.

Much of this hatred is fueled by widely held myths, e.g., Jews control the economy and gays recruit people into their lifestyle. Eventhough most people believe that myths such as these are just myths,

most people learned this misinformation as children. An important step in unlearning these stereotypes is to acknowledge the ways in which we unconsciously accept them and have allowed them to influence our behavior in the present.

## Heterosexism and Christianity: Subtle Forms of Oppression

Homophobia and anti-Semitism are active forms of oppression by design and intent; heterosexism and Christianity are often quite subtle or indirect. In the United States, heterosexism (compulsory heterosexuality) and Christianity (compulsory Christianity) are normative assumptions that invalidate behaviors and beliefs, rendering Jewish people and sexual minorities invisible. Heterosexism and Christianity result in historical and popular cultural omissions and distortions of sexual minorities and Jews, a lack of civil and human rights protections and other benefits, and a lack of positive visible images of these groups.

Although their victims experience these forms of oppression differently, heterosexism and Christianity force sexual minorities and Jews to struggle constantly against their own invisibility, and make it much more difficult for them to integrate a positive self identity. Just as other target groups internalize shame due to their oppression, Jews (with varying histories of assimilation into dominant Christian culture) and sexual minorities (at different points in the process of identity formation) are not immune from internalizing the negative messages of anti-Semitism and homophobia.

Although it may be easy to recognize overt forms of oppression, it is often difficult to identify the workings of heterosexism and Christianity. Here are some examples:

**Holidays and Beliefs:** It is often assumed that everyone celebrates Christmas and Easter even if it is known that a person is Jewish.

Assumptions about “Family”: “Traditional Family” is currently defined as a household

unit composed of two married parents with their biological children. Stigmatization and a lack of recognition falls upon those that do not follow this standard: sexual minorities, proponents of reproductive freedoms, and even heterosexuals who choose either not to marry or not to bear children.

**Anti-Zionism and Anti-Israel Issues:** Some people equate all Jews (American, Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Ethiopian, Israeli, etc.) with the government of Israel, thereby confusing politics with identity. While some people — Jews and gentiles alike — criticize the policies of the Israeli government, this criticism often masks underlying anti-Semitism.

## Forming Alliances: Jewishwork and Homotwork

1. Challenge homophobic and anti-Semitic jokes and epithets.

2. Be proactive by initiating serious discussions and coordinating workshops on the topic of homophobia and anti-Semitism.

3. Attempt to plan events for your organizations at times other than Friday evenings and Saturdays. If meals are planned, invite all members of your organizations to inform you of their special dietary needs.

4. Be aware of the assumptions you make:

- o Be conscious that people celebrate many different types of holidays.

- o Be conscious that there are people of many different sexual orientations in every group to which you belong.

- o Remember that Judaism, Zionism, and the policies of the Israeli government are not necessarily the same.

- o Be conscious that many people can have or care for children regardless of their marital status or sexual orientation.

- o Remember that one’s religious practices may be different from one’s culture or identity.