

SAMPLE WORKSHOP

SAMPLE WORKSHOP ON LAW ENFORCEMENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OF COLOR & TRANS PEOPLE OF COLOR

INCITE! has used this workshop format (and variations on it) to raise awareness of police brutality against women and trans people of color among domestic violence workers, anti-police brutality organizers, and people working on criminal justice issues. We offer it not as a definitive model, but as a set of ideas that you can adapt to local needs and circumstances. For background information to help you lead the discussion, see the other materials in this toolkit and on the resource CD, as well as *The Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*.

WHAT YOU NEED: A single piece of paper for each participant, pens, butcher paper, tape, markers. If you want, you can show the Sista II Sista video, *You Have the Right to Break the Silence* at the end - then you'll need a DVD player and TV. For a copy of the video, contact us at incite-national@yahoo.com.

SET UP: Just chairs in a circle! **TIME REQUIRED:** One and a half to two hours (it doesn't look like it would take a lot of time, but it generates a lot of discussion - we always run out of time!)

At the beginning of the workshop, introduce yourself. Tell participants that the workshop will begin with a mini "quiz" in which you will ask a series of questions and ask people to quietly write down their answers (and not shout them out just yet!). Then you will discuss everyone's answers to each question in turn. Emphasize that there are no "right" answers, and that the questions are just designed to help us think about how we approach issues of police brutality and violence against women. Encourage people not to think before writing down their answers, but just to "free associate" and jot down the first thing that pops into their heads. After everyone has had a chance to write down their answers to each question, go around the room and ask everyone, one at a time, to tell the group their answer to the first question. Discuss everyone's answers, and then repeat this process for Questions 2-5.

QUESTION 1. What is the first *name* that comes to mind when I say "police brutality"?

Usually, people instinctively say "Rodney King," "Amadou Diallo" or "Abner Louima," or maybe the name of a man of color in their local area who has been beaten or killed by police. Explore why the names that immediately come to mind when we think of police brutality are generally those of straight non-trans men of color. Is it because that's what the media covers? What police brutality organizers focus on? Why is that? Is it because it doesn't happen to women or trans people of color, or because state violence against women and trans people of color is invisible and/or normalized? Is it because racial justice movements tend to frame racism almost exclusively through the lens of straight men of color's experiences due to sexism, homophobia and transphobia? Or is it because if we confronted police violence against women, we'd have to confront all forms of violence against women in our communities? What role do we as women and trans people of color in anti-police brutality movements play in perpetuating or challenging these dynamics?



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If anyone in the workshop mentions a woman's name in response to the question, ask them to describe what happened to her. Share the names and experiences of Tyisha Miller (shot 24 times by officers responding to a distress call), LaTonya Haggerty (shot to death when officers mistook her cell phone for a gun), Sandra Antor (beaten by a South Carolina State Trooper by the side of the road), Eleanor Bumpurs (shot point blank in the chest by housing police coming to evict her for being late on the rent) or of other women and trans people of color. You can find out more about these women's experiences and others in *The Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology* or by searching their names on the Internet.

One thing that you will want to be prepared for is the possibility that someone in the room will identify as a survivor of police brutality. For many women and trans people of color, this may be the first time they have the space to disclose what they experienced as police brutality or as gendered violence, or both. Be prepared to create a respectful and caring space for them to talk about their experience, and if possible, designate someone to able to check in with them if they feel overwhelmed or triggered by talking about it.

Another point you may want to explore is why we don't usually know the names of the police officers who commit police brutality, and only those of people who have been subjected to it. What does this mean in terms of accountability? Or does it matter which individual representative of the state commits the violence?

Question 2 - What is the first *image* that comes to mind when I say "police brutality?"

Generally, people describe a white officer racially profiling or beating a Black or Latino man. Explore why we don't think of an officer profiling or beating a woman or trans person of color. Question why images of rape, sexual assault, abusive searches or sexual harassment don't come up as police brutality - you can use examples from the fact sheets in this toolkit to spark discussion. Ask why we don't picture women and trans people of color who are profiled as sex workers, drug users and/or couriers or as bad mothers as subjects of racial profiling. Why don't immigration raids come up? Why don't we see Native or Asian people as targets of police brutality? How can we expand our vision of police brutality to include the full range of our communities' experiences of law enforcement violence?

Question 3 - What is the first *image* that comes to mind when I say "violence against women" or "hate crime?"

Usually, people's responses to this question describe some form of domestic violence or stranger sexual violence. Explore why the examples of law enforcement violence against women and trans people you have been discussing so far don't come to mind when we think of violence against women or homophobic or transphobic violence. Why don't we think of police or immigration officers as people who commit violence against women or homophobic or transphobic violence when they clearly do? What role does our reliance on law enforcement to stop or protect us from violence play in keeping us from thinking of violence that they commit against us?

Question 4 - What is the first idea that comes to mind when I say "stopping violence against women" or "stopping homophobic or transphobic violence?"

Responses generally focus on calling the cops or intervening personally. Ask the group to think about examples of when calling the cops works and when it doesn't and why. Discuss examples of police brutality that happened when police were responding to a call for help (there are some in the "Domestic Violence" fact sheet in this toolkit and in *The Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology*). Discuss statistics in this toolkit about the impacts of mandatory arrest policies on women and trans people of color. Ask participants to expand on their ideas for intervening personally, collective interventions, and further explore how we as a community could address violence without relying on the cops, who also commit violence against us.



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Question 5 - What is the first idea that comes to mind when I say “stopping police brutality?”

Answers to this question tend to range from “my mind is blank,” to organizing and fighting back, to civilian review, copwatching and other forms of police accountability organizing. Explore how our existing ways of addressing police brutality do and don’t work for women and trans people of color. There has been some community organizing around cases involving shootings of women of color by police - why is this not more common? What can we do to make it more common, and expand it to include other forms of police brutality we experience like profiling, harassment, rape, and abusive searches? Whose experiences are our copwatches and hotlines usually built around? How can we do outreach and copwatches differently to capture the experiences of women and trans people of color? How would we need to change complaint mechanisms (ours and theirs) to better address the needs of women and trans people of color? Is getting the cops out of our neighborhoods and lives by finding community-based responses to violence that don't involve the police a way to stop or limit police brutality? What does this require us to do?

Additional questions can include:

“Who do you think is most affected by the ‘war on drugs’?”

“Who do you think is affected by the ‘war on terror’?”

“Who do you think is affected by immigration enforcement violence?”

Use the resources in this tool kit to inform the discussion of people's answers.

Questions? Want to talk to someone about doing a workshop like this in your area?

Contact us at incite_national@yahoo.com!



Please visit www.incite-national.org for more info!



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