

TOOLKIT FOR INTERRUPTING OPPRESSION

2018



CREDIT

Written in Collaboration by

Advocates in the sexual & domestic violence survivor support and prevention movement around Oregon:

Choya Adkison-Stevens

OCADSV (Portland)

Ma'at Crook

(rural western Oregon)

Ariella Frishberg

YWCA of Clark County (Vancouver, WA)

Sami Gloria

Battered Persons' Advocacy (Roseburg)

Cat Goughnour

Radix Consulting (Portland/DC)

Meghann Hegna

Call to Safety (Portland)

Jackie Leung

Micronesian Islander Community Organization
(Salem/Portland)

Fawn Livingston-Gray

Call to Safety (Portland)

Kimber Lundy

Tillamook County Women's Resource Center (Tillamook)

LeeAnn O'Neill

Saving Grace (Bend)

Brigitte Rodriguez

El Programa Hispano Catolico Proyecto UNICA (Portland)

Jen Taylor

Lifeworks NW (Portland)

Chelsea Van

(Eugene)

Edited by

Choya Adkison-Stevens, Ma'at Crook

Design, Layout, & Illustrations by

Ma'at Crook

Proofreading & Contributions by

Vanessa Timmons, Meagan Schorr, Trisha Elizarde-Miller, Elizabeth Schallert, Zan Gibbs, Jonathan Gates

Individual Identities of Our Team

illustrating some of the variety of our experiences

• disabled • otherly abled • visible & invisible disabilities-PTSD, anxiety, bipolarism, depression, mental health, physical, & mobility impairments • able-bodied • physically & mentally capable with only a few limitations & obstacles • healthcare under-privileged • lack of health privilege • currently with health insurance • rural, small-town • urban • Black • mixed race • Latinx • Asian • Pacific Islander • adoptee from South Korea • immigrant woman of color • White • formerly undocumented • US citizen, of US birth • college-educated • working-class • middle-class • self-employed homeowner with inconsistent income but overall able to pay bills • cisgender woman • genderqueer • queer (some in relationships that look heteronormative) • straight • pansexual • bisexual • artist & writer • raised Christian • middle-aged • 45 years old • 36 years old • survivor (sexual assault, incest, rape, domestic violence)

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INTRODUCTION

Group Agreements
What are Interruptions
Receiving & Responding to Interruptions



The Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence has a rich history of anti-oppression work, supporting and aligning with those who dismantle oppression and build safer communities. Amidst this ongoing work, questions arise as to how we can do more strategic interruptions, how we intervene with an awareness of power (ours and others), and how we can avoid harming or re-victimizing ourselves and others in the process of doing anti-oppression work. This project seeks to explore these questions while adding nuance to and expanding on the anti-oppression work and interruption tools many of us already use.

In our research and collaborations we found power dynamics (discussed on page 5) were the most salient concerns for many project team members and were the least likely to be addressed by other resources. We do not always have answers but, in this document, we explore considerations and strategies we hope will be helpful to all readers, those more marginalized and those with more power and privilege.

There are no simple answers, no fail-safe remedies. This project is a work in progress. It documents considerations and guiding principles, encourages readers toward cross-cultural communication and humility practices, provides activities for building skills and guidelines on receiving input, and promotes practicing interruptions as often as possible. We want to normalize the process of interrupting oppression and violence (some fields call this "bystander intervention"). This material was created in the hopes of increasing your confidence and capability to intervene when you witness harm, providing some options, and sparking problem-solving creativity. You decide what actions are best for you and for each situation.

GROUP AGREEMENTS

"There's no such thing as a safe space. We exist in the real world, and we all carry scars and have caused wounds. THIS SPACE seeks to turn down the volume of the world outside and amplify the voices that have to fight to be heard elsewhere. This space will not be perfect. It will not always be what we want it to be, but it will be ours together, and we will work on it side by side."

– Carpe Locus Collective, The Sp(a)ce*
www.carpelocus.org/space

Power and privilege surface even in the most well-meaning trainings or group projects. We recognize that no space will be entirely safe from oppression or violence. However, to wade through sometimes-challenging topics with one another, group agreements can outline transparent terms of interaction and can help create experiences of safety and support.

When generating group agreements, an open brainstorming session can be helpful, followed by group discussion of each suggestion. Allow the organic development of group agreements based on the people present in a training or discussion, guided by the purpose of the project and the setting's limitations and benefits.

Discuss each agreement to insure every group member has a full understanding of what they are agreeing to. If confidentiality will be a part of your group agreements, make sure to define what is and isn't confidential for your group. "Make space, take space," (seen in the pocket-size version below) is a condensed way of saying "make room for others if you tend to share a lot and challenge yourself to participate if your sharing might be empowering for you and helpful to others." There is no one-size-fits-all group agreement for every project, group, or setting, as you can see from the two examples provided.

Further Research

- Seeds for Change, "[Group Agreements for Workshops and Meetings.](https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/groupagree)" Retrieved from <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/groupagree>
- Sensoy, Özlem and DiAngelo, Robin, Democracy & Education, vol 22 #2 (2014), "[Respect Differences?](http://democracyeducationjournal.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1138&context=home)" Retrieved from <http://democracyeducationjournal.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1138&context=home>

GROUP AGREEMENT EXAMPLES

Pocket-sized Version:

- Group Agreements**
1. Listen without speaking over others
 2. Confidentiality
 3. Think well of one another, we are all here to learn
 4. It's ok to pass
 5. Make space, take space
 6. Don't make assumptions about others' identities
 7. No oppressive language
 8. Be open to learning if we say something hurtful
 9. There will be unfinished business

This Project Version:

More elaborate and specific than the pocket-size version to address particular dynamics in more detail

- Group Agreements**
1. Keep personal stories confidential or get permission before sharing
 2. Listen without speaking over others
 3. Check assumptions about others' identities
 4. Think well of one another
 5. Attend to impacts of our words & actions
 6. Be aware of how much or how little space we & others are using
 7. Think about power dynamics in interactions
 8. Even with good intentions we make mistakes or act on unconscious biases; listen when we have done harm, sit with it, do some research, & make changes
 9. Acknowledge reactive & defensive feelings that can lead to shut-down & set intentions to identify & work through those feelings (use breathing, listening, etc)
 10. Engage with the challenge to participate, even when it feels hard or uncomfortable
 11. Acknowledge that what works for us (in the group & when doing interruptions) may not work for others, particularly in relation to experiences of power & safety
 12. Acknowledge how lucky we are when we get interrupted, especially by someone with less power than us in the situation; it is such an opportunity for growth
 13. When we run into obstacles, speak with the group about how we feel & possible solutions, or speak privately with the facilitator
 14. People within same power level groups (white people, able-bodied people, etc) hold each other accountable
 15. People who are marginalized are not solely responsible for educating or holding others accountable about oppressive behavior; self-care is an option
 16. It will be messy & there are no quick fixes; expect unfinished business

ACTIVITY

Now you try! Use the blank sheet below to make your own group agreements, fitting your group's needs.

Group Agreements

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____



Maat-Crook

WHAT ARE "INTERRUPTIONS?"

Interruptions are often an attempt to stop a present or future harmful behavior, model respectful words and actions, create a safer space, advocate for those oppressed by the behavior (self and/or others), and support those being harmed. There can also be times when we are targeted by oppression and feel the need to respond in order to promote our own well-being – rather than internalizing ill effects.

Interrupting oppressive statements and behaviors at an individual level is just one tool, alone. Interrupting does not move us to collective liberation. Much more robust, holistic, and systemic strategies are needed to dramatically shift and ultimately dismantle entire systems of oppression and violence, and to build our vision of a just and respectful world.

RECEIVING & RESPONDING TO INTERRUPTIONS

In light of creating positive change and challenging ourselves to interrupt those who contribute to oppression (knowingly or unknowingly) we want to be thoughtful about how we respond when we are interrupted, for ways we engage in oppression.

I can:

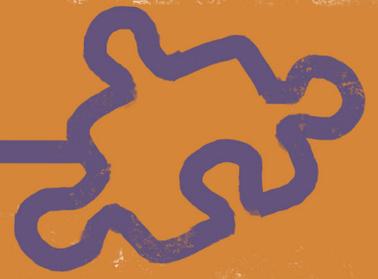
- **Acknowledge the impacts** of my actions even if my intentions aren't to harm
- Acknowledge that perfection and the good/evil **binary do not exist** within me or others
- Accept **I will mess up**, creating opportunities for people to interrupt the harm I've done
- **Get used to the discomfort** of being held accountable
- **Refrain from defensiveness**
- **Listen**, especially to those being oppressed
- Use **mindfulness** practices to stay present, calm, and better able to listen
- Use **self-compassion** and understanding of the big picture to motivate myself to action, rather than getting stuck in guilt
- [Apologize and make amends](#)
- Take actions to **change** my behavior
- Recognize it can be **difficult to interrupt** when people have less power; we might worry about safety and being heard
- Do my own **research**
- Have a **self-care** plan
- **Support** myself and others
- Remember most think of themselves as kind and all of us have the **capacity to change**

Further Research

- Dross, Corina, Crimethinc, "[Self as Other: Reflections on Self Care](#)" zine. Purchase on <https://microcosmpublishing.com/catalog/zines/5497>
- OCADSV, "[Working Definition of Allyship: the Handout](#)," Retrieved from https://www.ocadsv.org/sites/default/files/resource_pub/allyshipdefinition_handout.pdf
- Romero, Fabian, "[Apologizing is a Part of Liberation Work](#)," Fabian's Writings Tumblr Blog. Retrieved from <https://fabianswriting.tumblr.com/post/69812439798/apologizing-is-a-part-of-liberation-work>

CREATING AN INTERRUPTION

1. Common Considerations
2. Listing Possible Interruptions
3. Weighing Pros and Cons
4. Putting it all Together
5. Examples and Practice



Power



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1. COMMON CONSIDERATIONS

When making a decision about whether or how to interrupt, many considerations may be taken and used to guide a response.

Considering Power

One of the most significant aspects of anti-oppression work and interruptions revolves around power dynamics and differentials.

Power refers to the aspects of our lives where we have acquired or inherited authority, ability, and acceptance as gatekeepers of social, financial, physical, mental, and/or spiritual benefits. Society gives more power to certain groups based on age, gender identity, body size and weight, ethnicity, wealth, sexual orientation, physical ability, skin color, height, appearance, etc. A boss has power over an employee's paychecks and employment. An advocate has power as a gatekeeper of resources and services. Adults have power as caretakers, providers, authority figures, and role models for the

children in their lives.

Our positions of power can change over time and from situation to situation. Regardless of how we read someone, we can be unaware of all their identities and experiences, of all the places they hold more power and where they hold less. It's also worth noting that we likely have more power than we are aware of since it's easier to notice when we are being oppressed than it is to notice our own privileges. And there can be some situations when we have more power than one person in a group while also having less power than another.

Those of us who have experienced on-going oppressive interactions are often compelled to consider possible triggers before deciding to interrupt

an oppressive interaction. Over time we develop an awareness around those triggers and may create plans for possible responses and self-care. When experiencing or witnessing oppression, personal safety and self-care are valid concerns. There could also be times when interruptions aren't as kind or direct as we might like but they feel important to make in order to help prevent us from internalizing the harm of oppression. Sometimes we may opt not to interrupt. Interruptions are not required of us; the individual decides what actions to take and when.

Those of us with power in a specific area may try to share the benefits of that privilege with others: being supportive, collaborative, sharing resources and opportunities, sharing spaces equally, being mindful of the impacts of our own words and actions, holding ourselves and others accountable when we do or say something oppressive, practicing change, and not seeking "cookies" for doing the "right" thing.

Cookie

"Cookie" is internet and social justice jargon for accolades/recognition expected or offered when allies do the right thing. For example, someone describes a situation where they interrupted oppression or took an action of solidarity, then says "no cookies, please." Or doesn't, and someone else says sarcastically, "what do you want, a cookie?" Don't be in it for the cookies.

"I worked with a survivor who used the word 'retarded' a lot. She didn't realize that it was oppressive to disabled people. The first few times I heard her use it, I didn't say anything; I was focusing on building safety and trust in the relationship, and I knew I'd probably have time later. Once we had developed rapport, I gently interjected when she used the word, with something like 'hey, I know you don't mean anything bad toward disabled people but that word often hurts folks' feelings and puts people down. Would you consider using a different word to express when something is frustrating or irritating?' She explained that had been a common word in her childhood and she'd never thought about it. Although she was a little embarrassed, she responded quite well, and when I reminded her gently and humorously in the future ('there's that pesky word again!' 'It's hard breaking habits, isn't it? I struggle with that too') she welcomed the interruptions and sheepishly and good-naturedly adjusted her speech."

-Anonymous

Considering Resilience and Safety

Another common consideration is assessing resilience in ourselves, the people we're interrupting, and others affected by the situation. Past trauma, experiences with microaggressions, shame, and embarrassment can all play a role in how we approach interruptions. Perhaps the person who said something oppressive is in crisis and has very little capacity to take in new, corrective information. Meanwhile maybe we are in a relatively stable position and can tolerate waiting for a different moment to interject. Conversely, perhaps the person whose behavior caused harm is in an okay place, and if we take in the comment without responding it will add to internalized pain, so we choose to say something. This practice of assessing for resilience, even in a quick moment, can support compassionate decisions regarding whether, when, and how to interrupt oppression. We can become aware of, consider, and plan around our own physiological reactions, and notice reactions in others we are interrupting or striving to support.

A consideration for marginalized folks is our lifetime of repeatedly experiencing and interrupting oppression; it's profoundly exhausting. Stress creates real biological reactions in our bodies; we may get triggered when we are targeted by oppression or become reactive when we are confronted about something oppressive we've said.

We don't have to interrupt. It is ok to take care of ourselves the best way we know how. Sometimes we may choose to interrupt, depending on how resilient we are at the moment; our expression may be calm, cool, and collected, it may be emotional or disjointed, or it could be somewhere in between. All responses are valid. When we are considering interrupting a survivor of violence, we may consider their resilience, choosing not to over-burden those in acute crisis and, for those in a safer space, acknowledging their capacity to care and grow.



Miaat Crooke 2018

Considerations:

- Do I feel **safe** enough?
- Do I have the **resilience** to interrupt?
- Do I believe the **other person** is in the emotional space to listen?
- Is it more important to **speak out** for myself and/or others?
- Would it be better to speak **now**, **wait** until later, **change** my approach, or choose not to interrupt?
- Could interrupting **risk harm** to the oppressed person or group?

"A bicultural worker confided that a white coworker had made fun of her ability to communicate in English. She did not feel comfortable engaging the white coworker so instead spoke with management about what had happened. Rather than acknowledging the power issues present because of racism, management fell back on the policy that each person is responsible for going directly to the other staff with whom they have a problem, before asking for help managing the situation. I wanted to talk to management and explain that their response wasn't in line with our anti-oppression policy, but struggled on how to do this as one of the few people of color on staff (and generally having the experience that management haven't responded well to perceived criticism). In the end, I never raised the issue because I did not feel my input would be well received and it just felt too hard and exhausting to make the interruption."

- Anonymous

Considering Relationships and Longevity

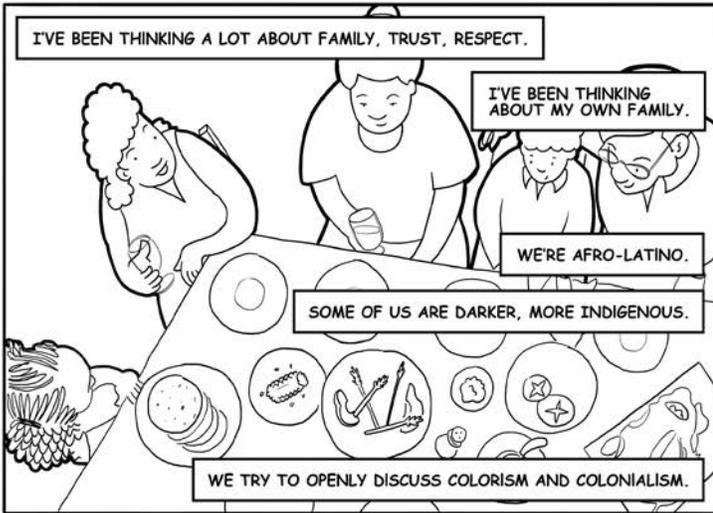
The longevity and closeness of the relationship can affect our decision of how or if we will interrupt. Ongoing relationships may make it easier to interrupt, at the same time, there may be more at stake. Loved-ones may be more open to listening (if there is a level of trust and safety) or may be less equipped to process interruptions. Interrupting strangers may give a level of freedom, likely they will never see us again, or we may feel less safe interrupting. Respectfully interrupting survivors of violence who are acting oppressively may increase the level of trust in the relationship or may risk a perception of control as a gatekeeper.

Considerations:

- How well **do I know the person** and how will that affect my decision and approach?
- Will I **see them** repeatedly or just this once?
- How could an interruption **change our relationship** and am I open to that change?
- How might **NOT interrupting affect** me, them, others, and our relationship?

"I was really excited about my new fanny pack, faux tan leather suede with fringe, and a friend said it was cute but also cultural appropriation. She said it jokingly, but it caused me to really think. On second look I realized it was obviously supposed to be a Native American bag. It actually looked similar to a medicine bag; I had not been aware of exactly what a medicine bag looked like so I did a little research online. For my friend, using humor and keeping it light was effective because I was already engaged and on board with the general concept – but I did feel embarrassed I didn't pick up on something that later seemed obvious."

- Anonymous



MaatCrooke



Considering Language and Culture

We learn words to describe experiences and situations we witness in our culture, the social groups that include people with whom we share – for example – nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or religion. Culture also includes groups like our family, circle of friends, and our workplace. You may understand the word "cissexism," and someone you know may understand the word differently or it may be a new word to them. Someone may know something is harmful but not know how to communicate why or how to label it. You may be with someone who has a better understanding of oppression and choose not to speak over them. When translating between two languages it may be difficult or impossible to find equivalent words for gender or gender-neutral pronouns, for example.

Taking into consideration an understanding of ourselves and those involved with the specific oppression may sway the decision we make on how, when, or whether we interrupt. Encountering these differences, we have an opportunity to work for cross-cultural understanding and to develop respectful ways to talk about and treat one another.

Considering Other Barriers

Many people strive to interrupt oppression when we witness it but encounter obstacles along the way. It can be helpful simply to acknowledge some of the things that prevent us from intervening; naming them can help us grapple with and plan around them.

We might:

- Fear making **mistakes** or doing something wrong
- Worry we'll come across as **patronizing**
- Be reluctant to recognize our **own complicity** in oppression
- Be uncertain how to **bridge** differing backgrounds and perspectives
- Feel **constrained** by power differentials (discussed on page 5)
- Fear being **lumped in with the target group**
- Feel **ill-prepared**
- **Not fully recognize** oppression because it is normalized

It's normal to struggle but you can use tools and practical activities in this booklet to overcome these and other challenges.

2. LISTING POSSIBLE INTERRUPTIONS

Considering risks, benefits, and obstacles may inform our options for interrupting. The collection of interruption options below is incomplete, imperfect, and intended simply to spark your problem-solving creativity.

Immediate Action:

- I can give **brief and direct** information - *"That sounds like victim-blaming."*
- I can use **"I" statements**, focusing on the problem not on "you did..." identify my feelings, and bring up a possible solution, asking if it will work for them - *"When it's assumed I'm not from the U.S. because of how I look, I feel indignant. If that's not what you're doing, please ask about my life in a different way. Ok?"*
- I can use **humor** or sarcasm, being thoughtful of when it could be useful, safe, misunderstood, or make things worse - *"You know ALL Black people and every one of them acts that way, hm?"*
- I can give **my perspective** - *"When you say, 'that's so gay' you are associating something negative with me."*
- I can ask for **clarity** - *"By 'crazy' do you mean awesome? Unexpected? Wrong?"*
- I can promote more **respectful behaviors** - *"If someone reclaimed the word 'fat' and identifies as Fat, by all means, use their word for them but otherwise please stop using it to shame people."*
- I can voice my **values** - *"Please refrain from using ableist language like 'dumb' and 'lame'."*
- I can assume the best or stay on the person's **team** - *"I know you think it's a harmless joke but others overhearing could be hurt."*
- I can fall back on rules or **policies** - *"This is a place where it's not ok to use violent language."*
- I can appeal to a sense of shared **humanity** - *"How would that person, or someone from that group, feel if they heard you?"*
- Even if the person being oppressive won't hear me I can still speak up to **support those targeted**
- I can use my **anger** (a valid emotion) as motivation and to stress the importance of the situation, sometimes focusing on the root of my anger for a clearer, controlled message

Actions Over Time:

- I can share information a **bit at a time** and invite thoughtful discussion - *"I've noticed you use the word 'ladies' when we meet as a group which doesn't describe us all." Another time: "Can we discuss why your continued use of 'ladies' is alienating and inaccurate for some of us?" And still later: "Can we use a gender-neutral term, like 'folks' or 'friends'?"*
- I can interrupt at a **safer time**
- I can interrupt **privately**
- I can interrupt when they are **calmer**, not showing off, less likely to get defensive, when we are with people they respect and who support me
- I can share **my experience**
- I can interrupt through other **creative means** like drawing, writing, performing, or wearing messages

Getting or Providing Support:

- I can **speak with another** witness, process and/or work together on an interruption
- I could **ask for help**
- I can **support the targeted person** while they interrupt, never speaking over them
- I can **listen to and learn** from the targeted group
- I can **financially support** marginalized people asking for help, marginalized creators of media or products, and support civil rights agencies
- I can **volunteer** at a support agency, work in politics, community organize, etc
- I can come together with others of shared identity (sometimes called **caucusing**) to express concerns, generate support for one another, and develop a plan

Indirect Action:

- I can **email** (anonymous or not), text, call, or interrupt over social media, recognizing character limitations and difficulties of clarity when not face-to-face
- I can **walk away**, refusing to support the oppressor, engage in, or affirm the behavior
- I can **validate** the emotions behind the oppressive language or behaviors and redirect the conversation to the root problem - *In response to a survivor lashing out, using ableist words: "You feel manipulated and abused by them playing mind-games and gaslighting. What do you want to do for yourself today and how can I help?"*
- I can engage in protests or other **community-based actions**
- I can make phone calls and send emails to **representatives**
- I can share **social media** posts about the change I want or write posts that bring awareness to specific oppressions

No Action:

- I can choose not to interrupt

Other Actions:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3. WEIGHING PROS AND CONS

Deciding which action to take can depend on the consideration of many factors, coming up with possible options, and weighing the pros and cons of each option.

For example:

- *"If I choose to interrupt my family member in front of other family members they may act defensively and everyone might gang up on me. At the same time the whole family could be in on the discussion, they would all know how I feel, and that I won't remain silent. Maybe someone else would even contribute!"*
- *"If I choose to interrupt my family member when the two of us are alone, they may be more willing to listen and I won't be taking away from our time at the family reunion. At the same time my family member said the abusive words in front of everyone; if I say nothing now my family members may believe I support the use of these words and anyone who is hurt by the words may believe it's not safe for them to speak up."*

The above thoughts are being weighed before this person makes a choice to interrupt in front of family or to interrupt privately. When we weigh pros and cons we may be able to take time to deliberate or our thoughts may come quick, with options and their pros and cons flashing through our minds in a matter of milliseconds. Many decisions are made in this split-second manner and sometimes we may, later, come up with a "better" decision or statement, and may feel shame and embarrassment. If we are understanding and patient with ourselves, we are more likely to learn from the experience and improve our interruption skills for future use.

4. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Below and throughout this toolkit are some real-life examples of experiences from people wishing to remain anonymous. On some level they took many things into consideration, thought of options, weighed pros and cons, and finally made a choice to interrupt or not. The results of these interruptions may not have produced the outcomes the people had wished. These decisions can only be made by the individual. Likewise, the decision to change or not can only be

made by the person who was interrupted. The results of our interruptions are not within our control.

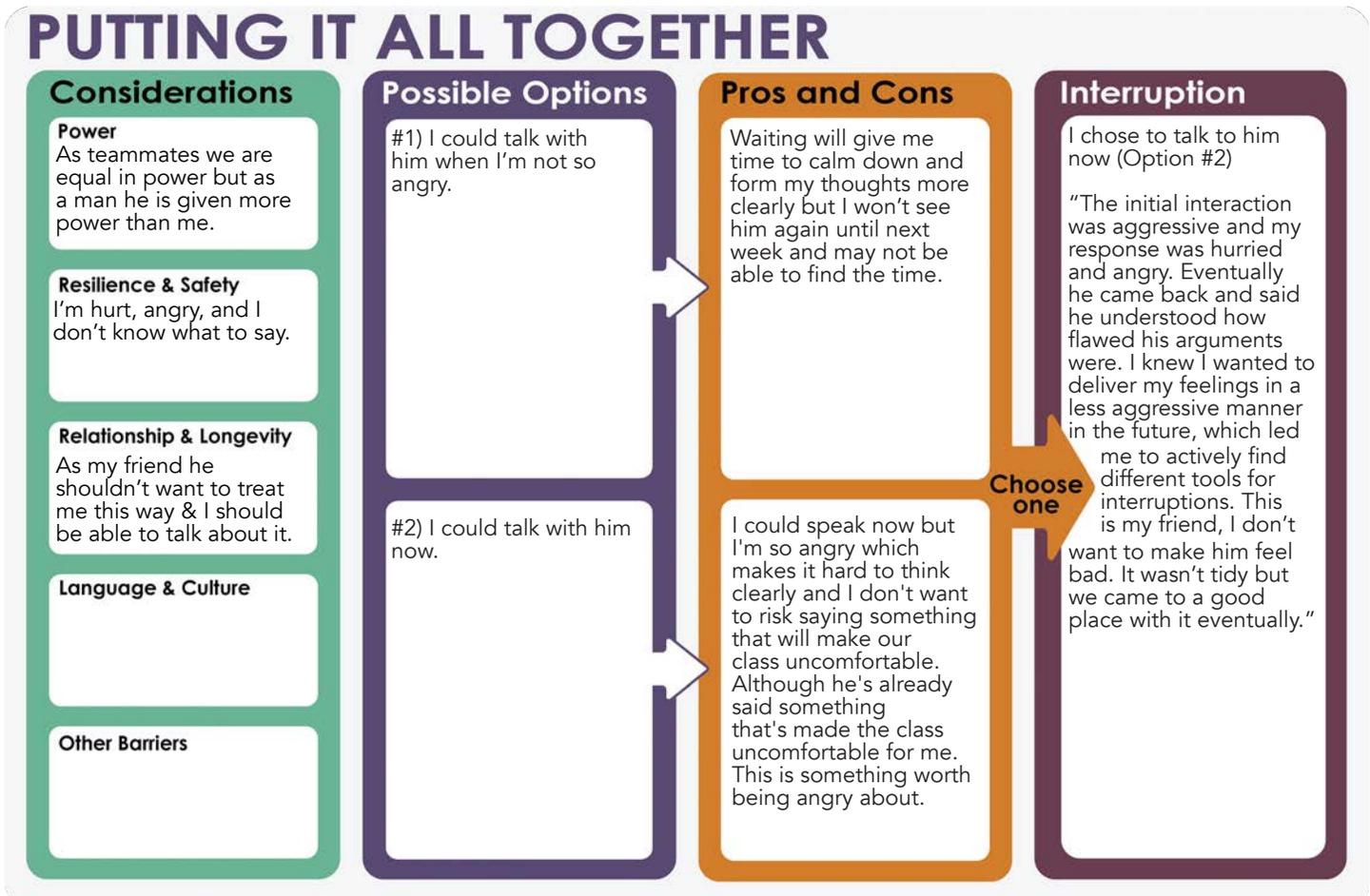
The following are two example scenarios and the considerations, possible options, and pros and cons that went into making a decision about interrupting or not. Take a look at them and then try to imagine what thoughts might go into your decision if you were to experience the scenario on page 14.

EXAMPLE ONE

The below diagram shows the thought process this person went through when deciding whether and how to interrupt in the following situation.

Scenario:

"At a boxing rink with a male teammate practicing Muay Thai, he said things that invalidated my feelings."

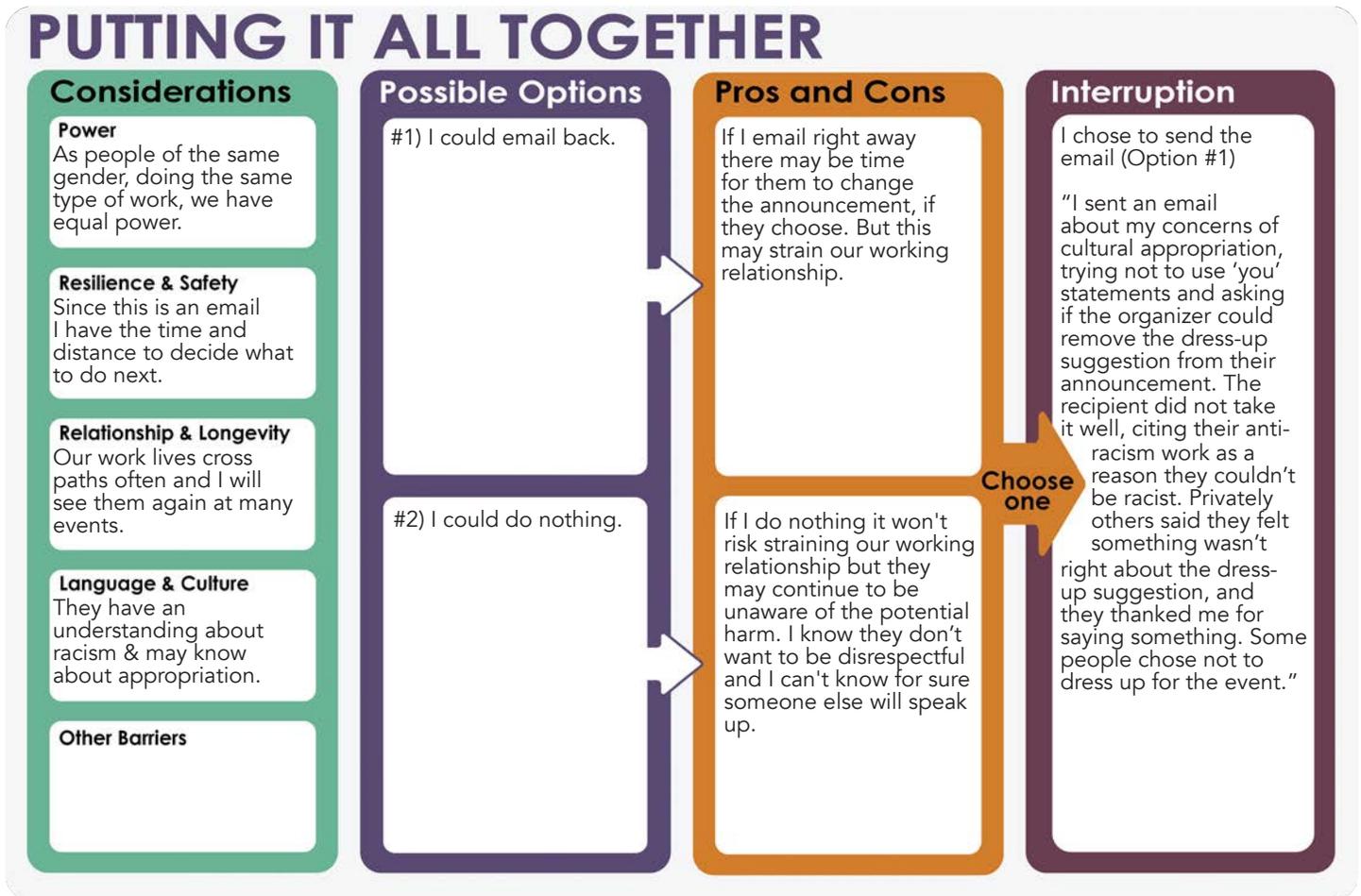


EXAMPLE TWO

The below diagram shows the thought process this person went through when deciding whether and how to interrupt in the following situation.

Scenario:

"I saw an email announcement about a party with the theme of another country. The person organizing the event suggested everyone dress up like someone from that country."



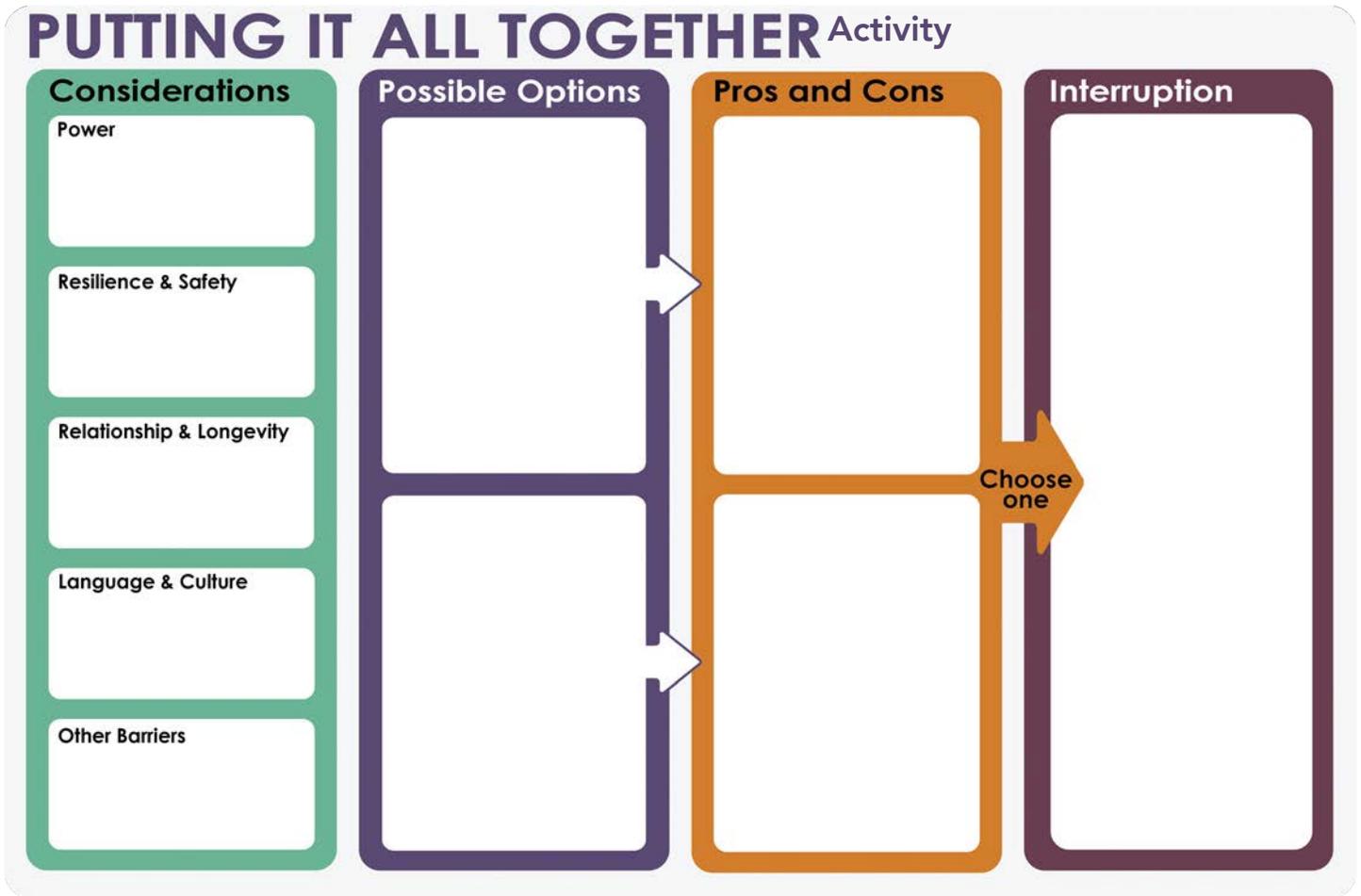
Notes: _____

ACTIVITY

Now you try! If you witnessed the following scenario what considerations would you make? What possible options can you think of? How would you weigh pros and cons? Which interruption decision would you make?

Scenario:

“While doing case management with a client who is Black, the client informed me another advocate suggested she call the police as part of her safety plan. The survivor was not from the area and asked me if local law enforcement was racist, as she'd had racist encounters with law enforcement in other areas in the past. The client ultimately decided she did not want to interact with law enforcement, or at the very least wanted an advocate present if she did. After the client left, the other advocate and our director expressed how strange they thought it was that the client was hesitant to use law enforcement in safety planning; they didn't understand why a survivor wouldn't feel safe calling the police.”



Notes: _____

5. EXAMPLES AND PRACTICE

There is no perfect interruption, no surefire way to get it right but after practicing interruptions for some time the process can begin to feel more manageable. Each time we do this, we can become bolder in our vision, clearer, and more nuanced in our approach. It makes sense to feel awkward, anxious, or afraid but, whether we speak or are silent, we're going to make mistakes. We all started somewhere and still have further to go. Because of this it can be beneficial to have compassion for ourselves, other allies, and to find supportive people to create a shared culture of practice and continued learning.



I'M WORKING REALLY HARD TO REDUCE MY USAGE OF WORDS LIKE "DUMB" AND "STUPID." I WAS TALKING WITH A FAMILY MEMBER AND INTERRUPTED THEIR USE OF THOSE WORDS, AND THEY GOT PRETTY **ANGRY**. THEY SAID I WAS BEING RIDICULOUS, BUT I CAN SPEAK FREELY WITH THEM. DUMB AND STUPID REFERENCE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY; I SAID "YOU DON'T GET TO DECIDE WHETHER THAT WORD FEELS GOOD TO YOU, BECAUSE IT ISN'T YOUR EXPERIENCE, YOU DON'T HAVE ID/DD," AND THEY DIDN'T LIKE IT. THEY SAID "I'M STILL GOING TO USE THOSE WORDS." IT WASN'T AN IMMEDIATE SUCCESS, BUT I HAVE A FEELING THEY WILL STOP USING THEM GRADUALLY OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.



WHEN I WAS IN COLLEGE, A BLACK STUDENT WAS TALKING TO ME ABOUT THE OPPRESSION HE'D EXPERIENCED. I TOLD HIM "I UNDERSTAND OPPRESSION BECAUSE I'M A SURVIVOR OF LONG-TERM MOLESTATION." UNCHARACTERISTICALLY FOR HIM, THE CONVERSATION IMMEDIATELY STOPPED. LATER, AS I THOUGHT ABOUT HIS UNUSUAL SILENCE I KNEW WHAT I'D SAID WAS PROBLEMATIC. THE OPPRESSION I EXPERIENCED IS NOT A DUPLICATE OF THE OPPRESSION HE EXPERIENCED AND STILL LIVES THROUGH. I WAS TRYING TO CONNECT WITH HIM; INSTEAD I SILENCED HIM AND INVALIDATED HIS EXPERIENCE. I WAS TOO EMBARRASSED TO BRING IT UP, I NEVER APOLOGIZED, AND OUR FRIENDSHIP SUFFERED FOR IT. STILL IT HAS STUCK WITH ME FOR A DECADE AS A LESSON I EVENTUALLY LEARNED FROM."



WHEN I WAS A CHILD I USED TO PURPOSELY AVOID BEING AROUND OTHER PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO THINK I WAS "RET**ED."

MY FRIEND LOOKED AT ME AND SAID "YOU ARE THE BIGGEST HYPOCRITE! WHY WOULD SOMEONE THINK THAT? I DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT WHEN I'M HANGING OUT WITH YOU!"

AND I THOUGHT, "THAT'S A GOOD POINT." I WAS SO CALLOUS, I HAD SUCH A NEED TO FEEL NORMAL IN THE WORLD I WAS LIVING IN; MY FRIEND REALLY WOKE ME UP TO THAT. THIS WAS ME AS A TEENAGER, NO TRAINING, JUST ME BEING ME.



MY SUPERVISOR AND I HAVE DEEP CATHARTIC CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE, CULTURE, AND GENDER. ONCE I USED THE TERM "COLORED PERSON" TO REFER TO MYSELF. SHE ASKED,

"IS THERE A REASON YOU USE OR IDENTIFY WITH THAT TERM?"

THIS IS A PLACE WHERE I AM BEHIND; THIS IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF HOW I DON'T KNOW ALL THE INFO ON GROUPS I PERCEIVE MYSELF TO BE A PART OF. THE INTERRUPTION HELPED ME UNDERSTAND HISTORICAL OPPRESSION OF THE TERM AND SUGGESTED A DIFFERENT WAY OF SAYING IT. POC AS AN ABBREVIATION SOUNDS COOLER ANYWAY. IT WAS A PLEASANT AND POSITIVE EXPERIENCE OF BEING INTERRUPTED, SHE HAD MORE POWER, BUT IT FELT LIKE A PEER CONVERSATION, NOT A REPRIMAND.



I WAS WORKING, DOING CLINICAL THERAPY WITH A YOUNG WHITE CIS MALE, AND HE USED A HORRIBLE MISOGYNISTIC WORD WHEN HE MEANT SOMETHING ELSE. I INTERRUPTED, ASKED HIM TO USE A DIFFERENT WORD. HE DID, AND CONTINUED TRYING TO CATCH HIMSELF IN FUTURE WHEN HE SAID THAT THING, "OH I'M SORRY, I MEANT '_____'." SO I FEEL LIKE THAT WAS PRETTY SUCCESSFUL.



Further Reading

- Nieto, Leticia and Boyer, Margot F. (2006), COLORSNW, "[Understanding Oppression: Strategies in Addressing Power and Privilege.](https://beyondinclusion.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/ask_leticia_part_1.pdf)" Retrieved from https://beyondinclusion.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/ask_leticia_part_1.pdf
- OCADSV, [Anti-Oppression and Equity resources.](https://www.ocadsv.org/our-work/anti-oppression-and-equity) <https://www.ocadsv.org/our-work/anti-oppression-and-equity>
- Southern Poverty Law Center (2015), "[Speak up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry.](https://www.splcenter.org/20150126/speak-responding-everyday-bigotry#everyday-bigotry)" Retrieved from <https://www.splcenter.org/20150126/speak-responding-everyday-bigotry#everyday-bigotry>
- What's Up Pittsburgh, "[Scenarios for Role Plays.](https://www.whatsup.wordpress.com/scenarios-for-role-plays/)" Retrieved from <https://www.whatsup.wordpress.com/scenarios-for-role-plays/>

ACTIVITY

Now you try! Use this space to reflect on a time when you had an opportunity to interrupt in the past. Without shaming yourself, what can you learn from the situation? Consider if it were to happen again, what would you do differently?

An interruption I did... _____

Dynamics at play and things to consider were... _____

What can I say or do differently in the future... _____

A situation I wish I'd interrupted... _____

Dynamics at play and things to consider were... _____

What can I say or do differently in the future... _____



The practice of interrupting oppression is complex; it entails a lifetime of learning, trying things out, revising our approach, and trying again. Intervening during harm or violence can be frightening and certainly flustering. When we have compassion for ourselves and others, practice patience, and take our time, we're more likely to be effective. And success can look a lot of different ways; someone's initial response may have been defensiveness but perhaps they will think differently about their words next time or make a different choice – we can never fully know. Caring for ourselves and one another in this process is vital, for everyone, and especially survivors of oppression.

We encourage you to contact OCADSV with feedback on this toolkit, as well as your own stories and experiences; let us know if you are open to those being anonymously shared! You might also consider joining our equity workgroups or other efforts in ongoing partnership to dismantle oppression and build liberated relationships.

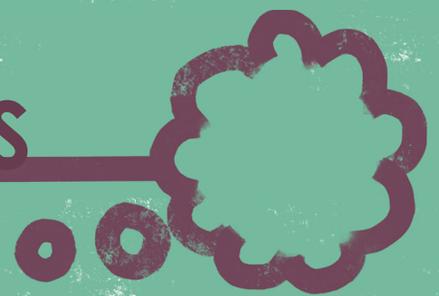
Oregon Coalition Against Domestic
and Sexual Violence
www.ocadsv.org
info@ocadsv.org
503-230-1951

Interruptions will always be a work in progress. We wish you courage.

READINGS

- Dross, Corina, Crimethinc, "[Self as Other: Reflections on Self Care](#)" zine. Purchase on <https://microcosmpublishing.com/catalog/zines/5497>
- Nieto, Leticia and Boyer, Margot F. (2006), COLORSNW, "[Understanding Oppression: Strategies in Addressing Power and Privilege.](#)" Retrieved from https://beyondinclusion.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/ask_leticia_part_1.pdf
- OCADSV, "[Anti-Oppression and Equity resources.](#)" <https://www.ocadsv.org/our-work/anti-oppression-and-equity>
- OCADSV, "[Working Definition of Allyship: the Handout.](#)" Retrieved from https://www.ocadsv.org/sites/default/files/resource_pub/allyshipdefinition_handout.pdf
- Romero, Fabian, "[Apologizing is a Part of Liberation Work.](#)" Fabian's Writings Tumblr Blog. Retrieved from <https://fabianswriting.tumblr.com/post/69812439798/apologizing-is-a-part-of-liberation-work>
- Seeds for Change, "[Group Agreements for Workshops and Meetings.](#)" Retrieved from <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/groupagree>
- Sensoy, Özlem and DiAngelo, Robin, Democracy & Education, vol 22 #2 (2014), "[Respect Differences?](#)" Retrieved from <http://democracyeducationjournal.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1138&context=home>
- Southern Poverty Law Center (2015), "[Speak up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry.](#)" Retrieved from <https://www.splcenter.org/20150126/speak-responding-everyday-bigotry#everyday-bigotry>
- What's Up Pittsburgh, "[Scenarios for Role Plays.](#)" Retrieved from <https://www.whatsup.wordpress.com/scenarios-for-role-plays/>

RESOURCE REFLECTIONS



REFLECTIONS ON "SPEAKING UP: RESPONDING TO EVERYDAY BIGOTRY"

BY SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

&

"SCENARIOS FOR ROLE PLAYS"

BY WHAT'S UP PITTSBURGH

Some in our group felt these published materials were quite complete and pondered whether it made sense to do the work we'd set for ourselves. Were we replicating? Others quickly pointed out these resources, as with so many on the topic of allyship, do not address power differentials and seem to speak primarily to white people and other privileged people. Through discussion we found the body of work was incomplete and agreed we would focus our project in such a way as to complement these existing resources by emphasizing experiences of and support survivors of oppression.

That being said, we appreciated these published tools' emphasis on respect, humility, accessing empathy, expanding horizons and what is possible, and appeals to shared humanity. They clearly state that relationship context is significant and each tool works through examples similar to the dynamics we discussed in this project. Some group members have used Southern Poverty Law Center's tool in particular in training with majority white groups; having a readily available resource for folks who are at a loss for how to do interruptions has been helpful.



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