

# Anti-Oppression 101: Identity & Privilege

**Trainer Names:**

**Learning Objectives:**

*What skills, knowledge, and attitudes should learners take away from this session?*

- Learn about identity categories and explore our own identities
- Understand how privilege works within systems of power

**Achievement Objectives:**

*What tangible steps will learners take to advance real or simulated campaign work?*

- Describe our own identities and share these with others

**Time:** 150 minutes (2 hrs 30 mins)

**Written Content:**

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Normal = say out loud

Underlined = flipchart this!

*Italics* = trainer notes/instructions

**Bold** = key point

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**Preparing to Facilitate:**

All Sprog trainers should review the [SSC Anti-Oppressive Facilitation resource](#), and AO trainers are strongly encouraged to read it over together. As you read the curriculum and prepare to facilitate, you may want to make a plan together about how you will respond to conflict and “Ouch” moments during the training, and how you will check in with each other about on-the-spot facilitation decisions.

White trainers leading this session are also strongly encouraged to read the following resources:

- [Tips for White Trainers Leading Multiracial Groups](#), from Training for Change
  - [The Sugar-Coated Language of White Fragility](#), by Anna Kebler
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## 1. Opening the Space [10 min]: Everyone

Explain that this workshop involves digging deep and sharing personal experiences, which is brave and vulnerable work. The Brave Space Agreements are especially important for this work. Quickly read over the Brave Space Agreements that were established at the beginning of the week. If the following are not already on the list, present them now as additional agreements for the AO sessions:

- **Speak from the “I” Perspective.** Don’t speak for anyone’s experiences but your own.
- **It’s Okay to Be Raggedy.** We can’t all be articulate all the time! Often, people feel hesitant to participate in a workshop or meeting for fear of “messing up” or stumbling over their words. This agreement can help everyone feel comfortable participating, even if they feel that they don’t have the perfect words to express their thoughts. This is a learning space. Remind everyone to be patient and forgiving with themselves and others.

- **Ouch/Oops.** *This is a tool for addressing hurtful comments/language in the moment. If someone says something hurtful, anyone can bring attention to it in the moment by saying “Ouch”. Trainers should then [Press Pause](#) and invite the person who said “Ouch” to explain. If it is a word choice issue, be sure to give the first speaker the chance to rephrase and try again (remember, it’s okay to be raggedy!). When someone says something that comes out wrong or hurts someone else, they should start with “Oops” – first, acknowledge the impact of their words, and then try again.*
- **Confidential Space.** *Nothing shared in this space should be shared outside this space.*
- **One Mic.** *Having one person speak at a time sets a tone of respect for each other’s sharing. It also helps people to process by allowing for space between speakers, makes space for those who are less comfortable fighting for airtime in a conversation, and makes spaces more accessible for the hearing-impaired.*
- **Self-Care.** *The AO trainings can bring up heavy emotions, particularly for those with marginalized identities. Encourage everyone to give care to themselves, whatever that looks like for them, as they process the experience of these trainings.*
- **Move Up, Move Up.** *People who tend to not speak a lot should move up into a role of speaking more. People who tend speak a lot should move up into a role of listening more. This is a twist on “step up, step back.” The “up/up” confirms that in both experiences, growth is happening – you don’t go “back” by learning to be a better listener. Saying “move” instead of “step” recognizes that not everyone can take steps, while we can all move in body or spirit.*

**Remind everyone who the designated Safe People are on the training team.**

Go over workshop Objectives ([flipchart Objectives](#)). Keep the intro to this training brief – the Objectives are purposefully vague, and they should be enough of an intro for now. Anti-Oppression 201 will provide time for digging into the definition of Anti-Oppression and why we do this work.

**Anchor:** The ANCHOR step invites learners to reflect on past experiences which relate to the learning of the session. (e.g. “Think back to a time when \_\_\_\_\_. What did that feel like?”)

## 2. Circles of Self [10 mins]: Personal Stories: Naudelis

We’re going to start this training by reflecting on our personal identities. We all hold many identities that make us who we are, and that shape our life experiences.

Ask Sprogers to open their Sprogger packets to the worksheet on Circles of Self, and to fill in as many circles as they like with words that describe **who they are**. They can add as many circles as they want.

After **5 minutes**, add another piece to this task: ask Sprogers to turn to the next page and read over the list of Identifier Definitions. As they read the list, they can continue adding to their Circles of Self.

→ During this activity, trainers should float around the room and be available to address any clarifying questions that come up about the identifier terms.

**Add:** The ADD step introduces new information and tools for learners to consider.

The list of Identity Categories included in the handout:

- **Ability:** A categorization based on different ways of navigating and negotiating society. Can include physical, mental, emotional, or psychological condition. (Examples: disabled, Deaf, able-bodied, Autistic)
- **Class/Socioeconomic Status:** A representation of social class that is often indicated by a combination of a person's education, occupation, social capital, and income. (Examples: working class, wealthy, cash-poor)
- **Ethnicity:** A shared sense of identity based on traditions, culture, language, norms and values, and/or geography of origin that is passed down over generations within a group. (Examples: Irish-American, African-American, Jewish, Navajo)
- **Gender:** A person's internal concept of self as "man," "woman," or other/neither. Gender is self-identified – something each person determines personally. You cannot tell a person's gender from their physical body, the gender they were assigned at birth, or the way they dress, talk, or behave. (Examples: man, woman, trans\*, femme, genderqueer, agender)
- **Race:** A system of categorizing humans largely based on observable physical features such as skin color and ancestry. There is no scientific basis for or discernible distinction between racial categories. (Source: Race Forward, Core Concepts.) (Examples: Black, white)
- **Religion/Spirituality:** A person's beliefs about the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, which may include a divine figure. (Examples: Quaker, atheist, Muslim, Buddhist, Rastafari)
- **Sexuality:** How a person identifies themselves based on their sexual or romantic attractions, desires, and/or preferences. (Examples: bisexual, straight, lesbian, polyamorous, asexual, queer)
- **Sex:** A label that describes a person's physical body. Can be self-determined based on how a person identifies their own body; however, a person is typically "assigned" a category at birth based on physical characteristics. (Examples: female, male, intersex)
- **Gender Expression:** How a person presents and expresses their gender to the world, typically through appearance, dress, or behavior. (Examples: masculine, androgynous, feminine, butch)
- **Personal Identities:** Not all identities are connected to systems of oppression. People may also hold identities connected to specific lived experience. (Examples: worker, sister, migrant, student, caretaker, foster child, activist, Appalachian, trauma victim/survivor, parent, etc.)

Identities can be **visible** or **invisible**, they can be **innate** or **changeable**, and they can have to do with **how others perceive us** or **how we perceive ourselves**.

**Apply:** The APPLY step invites learners to utilize the new information in a task, challenge, or focused conversation. (e.g. practice, application, case studies, compare, etc.)

### 3. Circles of Self Reflection [30 mins]: Personal Stories: Laura

#### Pair Shares [20 mins]

When you wrap up the time for individual work, have Sprogers find a partner **who they feel comfortable sharing with**. When they've have found pairs, reveal the three discussion questions:

- 1) What identities came to mind first? Why do you think that was?
- 2) Was there anything you didn't write down until you read the list? Why do you think that was?
- 3) When others look at you, what do they see? What don't they see? What do you wish they'd see?

*Encourage pairs to practice deep listening – this means listeners shouldn't ask questions, turn attention to themselves, or try to solve anything. To break the ice and set a tone of vulnerability, **trainers should take ~2 minutes to model this**. One trainer should ask the other the questions one at a time, and model deep listening as their partner shares.*

*Give **15 minutes** for pairs to talk, and then bring attention back to the full group.*

## **Full Group Debrief [10 mins]: Brian & Naudelis**

*How did it feel to share about this with someone you trusted? Would anyone like to share any reflections, or any questions you're still sitting with? **Take responses**. As you close discussion, thank everyone for their vulnerability, and remind them to thank their partners for sharing and listening.*

*Announce the break and ask everyone to **sit in groups of 4-5 when they return**. (Note: 4-5 per group is ideal, but for the sake of time, adjust group size as needed so that there are no more than 8 groups.)*

*Time check: You should now be **50 minutes** into the training.*

**-- Break [10 min] --**

**Anchor:** The ANCHOR step invites learners to reflect on past experiences which relate to the learning of the session. (e.g. "Think back to a time when \_\_\_\_\_. What did that feel like?")

## **4. Mainstream & Margin: Small Group Work [30 min]: Laura Opens**

*(This tool has been adapted from [Training for Change](#)).*

### **Introduction [5 mins]: Laura**

*Contextualize the activity:* Now that we've reflected on our personal identities, it's time to zoom out. We know that identity doesn't exist in a vacuum – it is connected with and influenced by systems of power. We're going to dig into that in the second half of this training. Before we start, can each group please choose a scribe?

*Lead the closed-eye visualization:* Close your eyes and remember back to a time in your life when you felt **marginalized** – a moment when you knew that you weren't part of the mainstream, when someone made you feel like an outsider. If you can, think back early in life, maybe to a childhood example – this doesn't have to be an example connected to oppression. Remember that moment... What happened? How did it feel to know you weren't part of the mainstream? **How did you know you were on the margin?**

*Give ~2 minutes for reflection. Ask Sproggers to open their eyes and write down any answers that come to mind for that last question. Flipchart the question: How did you know you were on the margin?*

*At this point, trainers should take a minute to briefly share personal examples with the group. Again, this is an opportunity to invite vulnerability from participants and to set the tone for the activity. **At least one***

**trainer should share an example that is not connected to an identity, to demonstrate that these kinds of examples are also acceptable.**

### **Small Group Work [15 min]: Brian**

After trainers model, have Sprogers turn to their groups and share what came up for them in response to the question. Sprogers may share their stories with the group too if they feel comfortable doing so, but **sharing is optional – no one is required to share their story.**

When groups have discussed for a 5 minutes, pause discussion and present the next question: Now, think back to that example – but this time, think about the mainstream. What did the mainstream look like to you when you were on the margin? What were some characteristics of the mainstream?  
**Scribes, take notes on your team's responses!**

Additional questions you can ask to prompt answers and help participants understand:

- How would you describe the mainstream?
- How did the mainstream behave?
- How did you relate to the mainstream?

### **Mainstream Theater Preparation [10 mins]: Naudelis**

When groups have discussed characteristics of the mainstream for 5-7 mins, pause discussion again and announce the next task: Great news! Your groups get to plan a short performance to show the rest of the group some of the characteristics of the mainstream that you just talked about! This can be a short skit, a silent drama, a human statue, or any other kind of interpretive show. You'll have five minutes to prepare the skits, and then we'll come back to the whole group for Mainstreams Theater!

Tell the groups they have 5 minutes to prepare their skits, but in fact you can give them up to 10 minutes if needed. 10 minutes should be plenty of time to prepare.

## **5. Mainstream Theater! [20 min]: Everyone**

Bring the group back together and welcome them back to Mainstreams Theater! Ask for a volunteer group to share their performance first (or call on one if nobody volunteers). After each performance, give a round of applause and keep your enthusiasm high.

Title a flipchart Characteristics of the Mainstream, and build this list as you go. After the first performance, ask the audience to name characteristics of the mainstream that they saw demonstrated. Be careful with timing on this part: harvest the learning after the first 2-3 performances, but then you may need to run the rest in chunks or all together and collect learning at the end.

- Facilitation tip: As you lead this process, ask follow-up questions to help Sprogers **generalize** what from they observe in the skits. You want to be listing characteristics of mainstreams, and not just plot points from the skits. For example: if a Sprogger observes, "The teacher made excuses for the bullies instead of punishing them," you could follow up by asking, "Why was that important?" or "How did that impact the dynamic between the mainstream and the margin?" to help arrive at a more general characteristic of mainstreams – in this case, maybe something like "Harmful behavior is not taken seriously by people in power". If necessary, you can also help by reframing Sprogger observations as generalizations, but try your best to guide the group to get there on their own.
- Some generalized characteristics of the mainstream you might draw from this activity include: the mainstream appears normal, is rigid, is catered to by people in power, is intolerant of difference,

etc.

**Add:** The ADD step introduces new information and tools for learners to consider.

## 6. Putting the Pieces Together [10 min]: Brian

Thank everyone for their performances and give one last round of applause to all the performers! Then, ask Sprogers to turn back to their Circles of Self and think about these questions:

- Are there identities that you think have put you in the margins at any point in your life?
- Are there identities that have put you in the mainstream?

Encourage them to make notes about their mainstream identities, then add: In our culture, there are clear patterns about what identities put people in the mainstream and which are marginalized. Understanding those patterns is an important piece of understanding how oppressive power systems function.

Have Sprogers turn to the chart in their handouts titled “Types of Discrimination”:

Discrimination	Based On	Assumed Norm	Examples of Marginalized Identities
Racism	Race	White	Black, Latinx, POC, indigenous, biracial, multiracial
Colorism	Skin color	Light skinned	Dark skinned
Ableism	Ability	Able-bodied, non-disabled	Disabled
Sexism	Gender	Male/man	Female/woman, nonbinary
Cissexism, transphobia, transmisogyny	Sex	Cisgender	Transgender, nonbinary, intersex
Homophobia, heterosexism, queer-antagonism	Sexuality	Straight, heterosexual	Gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, asexual
Ageism	Age	Adult	Elderly, youth, children
Religious discrimination	Religion	Christian, Protestant	Jewish (Anti Semitism), Muslim (Islamophobia), Wiccan, Sikh
Xenophobia	Migrant/Citizenship	Citizen	Undocumented, etc

**Check for comprehension:** Are there any questions that are coming up for people about this chart?

**Apply:** The APPLY step invites learners to utilize the new information in a task, challenge,

or focused conversation. (e.g. practice, application, case studies, compare, etc.)

## 7. Mainstream & Margin Reflection [15 min]: Laura

Today, we've learned some important things for navigating a world of diversity.

- In our mainstream roles, the list of mainstream characteristics applies to us.
- As mainstreamers, we can take initiatives to help change the dynamics of mainstream and margin.

*Now, ask Sprogers to turn back to their small groups and think back once more to their experiences on the margins. Present the following question:*

What would you have liked the mainstream to do that would have helped you to renegotiate your relationship to the mainstream?

*Repeat the question several times; check for comprehension, and be patient with what a difficult question this is. Point out that you are **not** asking them to fantasize about the mainstream incorporating them – you are asking them what actions the mainstream could have initiated that would have helped them change the way they related to the mainstream. Give a minute or two for silent reflection; then, trainers should share examples again, to help show what the question is asking and model vulnerability once more.*

*Give 5-10 minutes for small groups to discuss, then come back to the full group to collect responses. Write examples on a flipchart titled "Initiatives the mainstream could take" [flipchart examples]. Be satisfied with a small list; add a few of your own if appropriate.*

**Away:** The AWAY step invites learners to connect their new understanding to the real world context of their lives. (e.g. a personal action plan, commitment, projection into future, etc.)

## 8. Closing [10 min]: Everyone

*Hand out sticky notes. Have Sprogers think of an initiative that they will take as a mainstreamer during Sprog to help build a more inclusive community. They can also reflect from their marginalized roles, and think of an initiative that they want their mainstream peers to take during Sprog. Give 5 minutes for reflection and/or journaling; then ask Sprogers to **write down** these initiatives on their sticky notes.*

*Have everyone turn to a neighbor and share the initiative they wrote down on their sticky note. Then, have everyone stick their notes on the flipchart. Hang the flipchart in a visible place for the remainder of the week.*

## 9. Pluses and Deltas [5 min]: Everyone

*Collect feedback on the training session by asking Sprogers for training **pluses** (things that went well) and **deltas** (things that could have gone better/could be improved/that are growth zones).*