

Family, Community and Sexuality Project Building a Movement

from the Ground Up

Progressive Family Values Principles

The following ten principles were developed through conversation at the Family, Community and Sexuality Summit (Boise 2006). Participants agreed that these principles or values are critical to moving gender justice organizing in ways that can successfully counter the conservative “family values” agenda devastating our communities and offer a vision and strategy for supporting families and communities across issue and constituency.

Families are defined by the communities they are a part of and reflect their own cultural and historical experiences. They are seldom solely a mom, dad and children. Families are multi-generational, chosen, multi-household and international.

Self-determination and self-expression for communities are interconnected with family security and safety. This self-determination requires resources and infrastructure in our communities so that we can provide for ourselves without cultural or language translation. Self-determination also requires the political power to represent ourselves at policy making tables.

Supporting families and communities requires justice and equity in education. Families and communities that have experienced economic and racist oppression must be able to tell their own stories that set the record straight around colonialism and slavery. Gender justice means ridding our communities of the “master’s narrative” and taking control of how our communities are studied and explained.

Relationships between families and communities are more important than national borders. The current immigration debate is critical and yet it does not explicitly address family security. A gender justice agenda must prioritize immigrant and refugee families and address sexism, heterosexism and the individualistic nature (anti-family and community) of immigration policy.

Gender justice work requires a clear racial justice analysis and strategy. There is a disproportionate impact on communities of color by public policies that undermine women, families and LGBTQ communities. Gender justice organizing must support the leadership of people of color in defining these impacts and proposing solutions. Gender justice organizing must also support white people’s development as allies in the struggle for racial justice and create opportunities for white people to educate each other about white privilege.

Gender Justice must address gender roles. Gender roles are often manifestations of sexism and heterosexism and limit our ability to create strong families and communities. Within our communities, we must examine and dismantle the gender binary system, acknowledge the fluidity of gender and support women’s leadership. All communities are affected by the historical, economic and social context in which they exist. Challenging gender roles may mean drawing upon the strengths of traditional cultural understandings of roles within families and communities that have been damaged by legacies of colonialism and slavery.

Gender justice demands alternatives to state forms of power, like the police and courts, in order for families and communities to thrive. Gender justice organizing must build the capacities within communities to create safety and accountability. It must also build support between communities to ensure that there are resources and power at the community level to address violence against women and children, other family violence, intra-community violence and homophobic violence.

Valuing human rights over military power stabilizes families. Our families and communities are stronger when we have access to jobs and education and the military is not our only option. Our multi-national families are threatened and killed when the US government wages war to gain power and wealth. Marginalized communities, communities of color, low-income communities and immigrant and refugee communities are targeted by both military recruitment and military violence. A gender justice agenda means directing resources toward building and supporting families and communities and not toward the military industrial complex.

Valuing people's multiple identities is critical to creating solutions to the problems we face. The ways that oppressions like sexism and racism are connected affects whole people, whole families and whole communities. Organizational members and leaders have multiple identities and experiences. We must draw on their complex experiences as we develop our analysis and create solutions to the problems we are trying to solve.

Progressive family values must address basic family needs of security and human dignity including: comprehensive and accessible health care; food, housing and jobs; safety; cultural and spiritual expression; and access to participation in civic life.

The following organizations participated in the Family, Community and Sexuality Summit and the development of these principles:

- Asian and Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center's Queer Network Project – Seattle, WA
- Communities Against Rape and Abuse – Seattle, WA
- Casa Latin's Women's Program – Seattle, WA
- Idaho Human Rights Education Center – Boise, ID
- The Interfaith Alliance of Idaho – Boise, ID
- Montana Women Vote – Helena, MT
- Montana Human Rights Network – Helena, MT
- Mujeres Unidas de Idaho – Boise, ID
- Odyssey Youth Center – Spokane, WA
- Pro-Choice Public Education Project – New York, NY
- Reproductive Freedom Network – Seattle, WA
- Trikone Northwest – Seattle, WA
- Utah Progressive Network – Salt Lake City, UT
- Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition – Seattle, WA
- Women's Opportunity and Resource Development, Inc. – Missoula, MT
- Your Family, Friends and Neighbors – Boise, ID
- Western States Center – Portland, OR

