

OLD LESBIANS OF COLOR INTENSIVE SESSION REPORT

Context/Goals, Objectives

- To begin a conversation (the tip of the iceberg). Open a space that gives Women of Color the opportunity to recognize themselves and each other.
- Identify where we are, individually and collectively, and how we got here (to this phase of our life and to the Gathering).
- To share information and knowledge.
- To explore our diversities.
- To identify challenges and strengths.

This intensive session brought together **a very diverse group of 25 Lesbian Women of Color who are active and committed, with diverse interests and life experiences, with long-time involvement in collective and organized work in different movements.**

Civil Rights

Social Justice

Spiritual

Black Lesbians

Latina Lesbians

Political Campaigns

Anti-racism

Feminist

Cultural

Transgender

LGBTT

Lesbian

Women of Color (spiritual)

Butch

LGBTT Elders

Sororities

Lesbian Mothers

Gay and Lesbian Adoption

Sexuality

Human Rights

AIDS

Lesbian Cancer Survivors

Dykes on Bikes

Black Lives Matter

FALN

Black Panthers

Operation PUSH

Womanist Theology

Puerto Rico pro-independence mov.

Michfest

CARA (retired Americans)

NOW

ACA (Obama Care)

among others

Nationalities, races, and languages, among other characteristics and identities, were broadly diverse. The richness of ideas and experiences open a wonderful space for reflection.

We laughed, were moved, heard each other, and connected.

We noticed interesting things during the session, but select two to share with you this morning.

First - Many of the women identify native/Indians as part of their mix of cultures and races.

Second – Different interpretations for many of the questions.

(designed like that, respecting the diverse ways of receiving and delivering information)

We reaffirm the different ways communications need to be recognized and respected.

Some of the general comments of the participants about the Intensive for Old Lesbians of Color include:

“Most valuable experience was sharing my experience of what has been my involvement with social movements. Great to see how much I have accomplished in my life.”

“We need to continue to fight the good fight in order to leave a legacy.”

“We are all powerful, limited only by our imagination. If you can imagine it, God will make it so.”

“Somos iguales.” (We are equal.)

“Claiming our identity is a way of defending ourselves.”

“I let my sexual orientation hold me back. I promise myself I will leave a legacy beginning now.”

“Great session for introspection and self-realization.”

“My legacy is important to me. My spiritual self is flying.”

“I learned about myself and found all the women in the group had similar challenges and various cultural backgrounds. Now I feel more connected to these women.”

“It was good to share my personal information about the legacy that I am leaving and the legacy that has impacted me from others.”

“If it had not been for this Intensive, I would not be here.”

“I want to express gratitude for the Women of Color session and for the space held by Olga and Ali at OLOC. The affirmation afforded by the visibility of other Women of Color lifted my spirit and expanded my sisterhood.”

Some strong thoughts were shared on the conversation related to the question: *Why do you identify yourself as a Woman of Color?*

It is an “inner” thing

A way of rebelling in this country

Heritage

How I feel love

A sense of power

A feeling more than a skin color

Who are your people

Defending who I am

Learning where my power is

Where my heart is

Part of the answers when asked for one word to complete the phrase “diversity is...”

Accepting

Natural

Everyone

Us

Essential

Multi-cultural

Energizing

Freedom

Inclusive

Variety

Universal

Love

Spicy

Challenging

Answer

Negative

Completion

Presence

Space

Safety

Divisive

Good

Sexy

Spice of life

(.) period

A reflection on: Do I live or have lived as I imagine? brought similar reactions, a majority of YES at the individual level and NO when talking about society or social advances.

Among the main community of each participant, they mention:

As general as the planet and as specific as CARA, Amazons, and Black psychologists. Including also:

African-American Lesbians	Family
LGBT	Circle of Friends
Lesbians	LGBT in Church Congregation
Boricuas in California	South Florida

Most of the women mention **haters** as a group they definitely don't consider "their community."

Some of the challenges identified in a short exercise at the end of the session include:

- Need for more inclusion of Women of Color in OLOC
- Lack of information on OLOC
- Invisibility
- Need to address Lesbian survivors of cancer
- Lack of financial resources in Lesbians of Color communities
- Lack of laws for protection of LGBT communities
- Colonization of mind

Among important strategies that should be considered to advance our work, the following were mentioned:

- Positive outreach from OLOC to Women of Color
- Personal invitations
- Visibility
- Popular education
- Join organizations and committees
- Use peers for empowerment
- Create a target committee for writing grants for funds for Lesbians of Color
- Culture as tool of resistance
- Letters, marching, protest
- Run for office

The conversation, the exchange, the network begun a few days ago, opened here in this OLOC Gathering, NEED TO BE CONTINUED.

We recommend and propose that OLOC organize future activities, including retreats of Lesbians of Color, to strength participation of these communities in OLOC at local and national levels.