



Disability & Police Brutality:

TNC Community Safety Development Toolkit

6 Steps Towards Facilitating Community Conversations About Defunding the Police and Community Safety:

Community conversations on safety should include discussion and information sharing around intersectionality. Marginalized identities around race, disability, sexuality, gender or mental health compound issues of safety and disproportionately lead to negative interactions with law enforcement.

Background:

It is widely known that Black and Indigenous people are significantly more likely to be assaulted or killed by the police. What is less widely known is that nearly half of all people killed by the police are people with disabilities. Black and racialized communities are always disproportionately impacted, but when you add disability, mental illness, or identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+ the adverse impacts multiply. The aim of this discussion is to gain a better understanding of the intersection of racism, ableism, and discrimination.

1. **To begin, you can present an example of police violence that involves a racialized person with a disability. This will engage discussion around race, ableism, intersectionality and discrimination.**

<https://www.google.ca/amp/s/www.cbc.ca/amp/1.4602916?espv=2>

Question:

Ask participants to identify different aspects of the narrative, i.e. racism, discrimination, ableism, classism etc. Make note of their thoughts, struggles.

2. **Define pertinent terms and then revisit participant input and ensure a baseline understanding of all terminology.**

Ableism: Ableism characterizes people with disabilities as inferior to the non-disabled.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2020/10/25/words-matter-and-its-time-to-explore-the-meaning-of-ableism/?sh=4a99b20d7162>

Intersectionality: Intersectionality describes the interconnected nature of social categories such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability as they apply to an individual or group. These categories overlap and result in layered discrimination, disadvantage and oppression.

3. **Discuss the history of social thought on mental health:**

Historically mental illness has been viewed with suspicion and derision. In the Middle Ages a person experiencing mental health issues was determined to be possessed.

<https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/stigma-and-discrimination/>

Disability:

Around the world people with physical disabilities have often been treated with cruelty and exclusion. Despite improvements, persons with disabilities are still fighting the perception of being unhealthy, defective, and disposable.

<https://www.djno.ca/history-of-disability-justice-right>

2SLGBTQIA+:

Homosexuality was medicalized and criminalized as a disorder in the late 19th century. While acceptance of some members of this community has grown, trans people are still stigmatized and receive a lot of violence from the general public and within the justice system.

4. Make it personal by drawing connections to values:

Discuss the following statement: “If you are lucky, you'll live long enough to have a disability.”

How can we create systems of safety with the core goal of inclusion in ways that ensure that everyone is protected?

5. Use additional resources to add perspective.

Videos: Access to Justice

<https://irisinstitute.ca/2020/12/11/panel-presentation-videos-access-to-justice-for-indigenous-racialized-and-2slgbtq-people-with-disabilities/>

Suggested vignettes and discussion questions:

Fran Odette

Can you see how much deeper the impact of discrimination is when race, disability, and sexual orientation combine in intersectional layers of oppression?

Quinn Saretsky

Around 30-36% of the Indigenous population in Canada are people living with disabilities. This is a very high number, why do you think this is?

Ingrid Palmer

How can we ensure that we maintain a disability lens in community safety?

6. Go deeper with thought provoking questions.

How are racism and ableism connected? In what ways are they similar? - They are oppressive systems that create deliberate barriers, around the assumption that some people have less value than others.

<https://www.pushkin.fm/episode/ableism-racism-roots-of-the-same-tree/>

How do racism and ableism impact community safety?

What comes up when you realize that half of violent encounters with the police involving a Black or Indigenous persons are people with disabilities or mental health challenges?

<https://www.wthr.com/article/news/33-50-percent-of-police-use-of-force-incidents-involve-a-person-who-is-disabled-has-disability/531-011bddff-a5f0-4d2a-9ad2-6964623bc32d>

What are some possible different approaches to issues involving disability and the police?

How do we close the safety gap?

Additional Resources:

Under Suspicion: Issues Raised by Indigenous Peoples

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/under-suspicion-issues-raised-indigenous-peoples>

Disabled People for Black and Indigenous Lives

<https://www.autisticsunitedca.org/blog/disabled-people-for-black-and-indigenous-lives>

No Pride in Police History of Neglect And Violence Against Queer Communities

<https://www.hilltimes.com/2020/06/17/no-pride-in-police-history-of-neglect-and-violence-against-queer-communities/252953>

Disability And Police Violence in Pandemic Times

<http://www.socialist.ca/node/4116>

