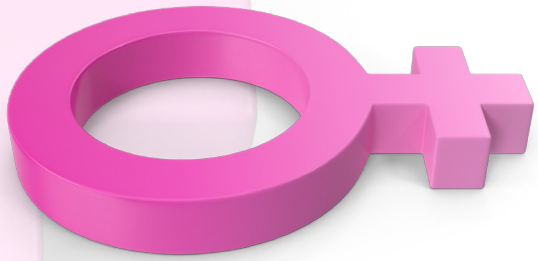
WORDS matter





National Black Justice Coalition

NBJC.org

GENDER JUSTICE TOOLKIT

"Words matter in profound and palpable ways"

—David J. Johns

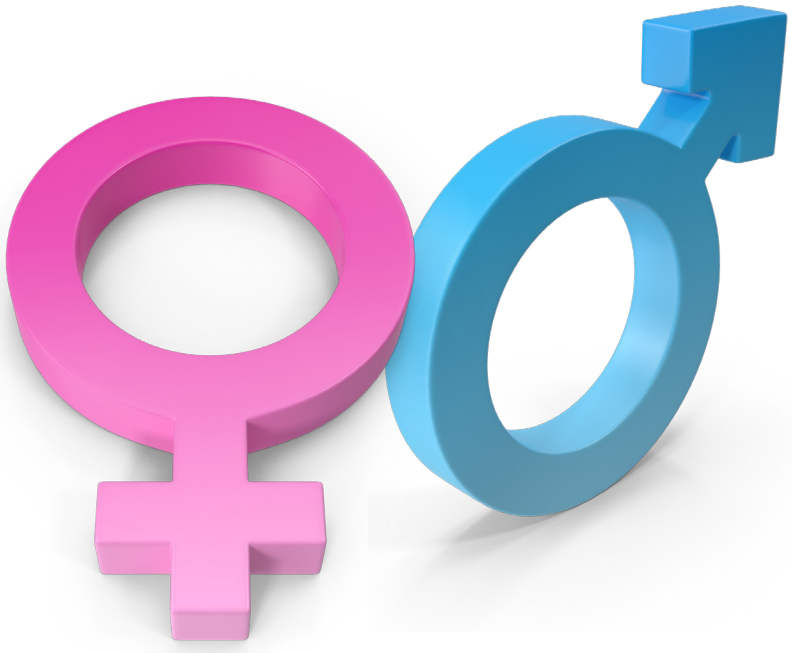
LANGUAGE IS OFTEN A REFLECTION OF CULTURE, and when unchecked, can be used to perpetuate violence and oppression. Words have the power to reinforce stereotypes, marginalize the most vulnerable among us, and support harmful ideas about race, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, socioeconomic status, and other factors. Language also has the power to be a revolutionary tool in dismantling existing power structures. Language has the capacity to liberate and empower.



WHY THIS TOOLKIT MATTERS

The Words Matter Gender Justice Toolkit is a designed to facilitate uncomfortable and, at times, difficult conversations that can save lives. This specific toolkit has been designed with the goal of ensuring gender justice in mind, which means ending the violence that Black women and girls—both cisgender and transgender, as well as gender non-conforming people— experience simply as a result of who they are and how they exist in the world.

The Words Matter Gender Justice Toolkit is a designed to facilitate conversations that can save lives.



In 1962, Malcolm X reminded us, "The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman. The most unprotected person in America is the Black woman. The most neglected person in America is the Black woman." This toolkit has been designed to demand an end to the violence against Black women and girls. The first way to protect, uplift, and empower Black women and girls is to deconstruct and unpack the way violent and oppressive language is used against Black women and girls. The time is now to create a world in which Black women and girls can live full, healthy, and happy lives. We must begin this important work by recognizing that words matter. A powerful way to think about this in practice is to acknowledge that ***when we say "women and girls" we must account for all women and girls, including all Black cisgender, transgender, women and girls.***

It is simple; ***our call to action is gender justice***. Gender-based violence disproportionately impacts Black women and girls. The statistics on poverty, sexual violence, lack of access to quality and affordable healthcare, mistreatment and misrepresentation in media, unemployment, and incarceration, among others should, remind everyone of the importance of ending the violence against the most vulnerable among us. This toolkit is a roadmap to help facilitate community conversations, meaningful dialogue, and authentic exchanges that can bridge the gap between violence and language, especially where Black women and girls are concerned. Because words play an important role in how we engage with the world and each other, it is important for us to have asset-based conversations to dismantle and disrupt existing harmful power structures.

It is important to note that gender injustice also affects the Black transgender and gender non-conforming communities in unique ways. We must remember that our Black transgender siblings face gender-based violence simply for existing as themselves. The National Center for Transgender Equality conducted **the largest survey examining the experiences of transgender people in the U.S**. They found that Black trans people face higher rates of unemployment, poverty, homelessness, sexual assault, police violence, and healthcare disparities than both the general U.S. population and the the Black U.S. population. Because of the unique discrimination and prejudice that Black trans people face, it is imperative that we uplift and support the empowerment of Black trans people, so they can live their lives free from hate and injustice.

As you explore this toolkit, we would like you to consider the following questions:

1. What role does language play in disrupting and preventing gender-based violence?

2. How can you contribute to ending gender-based violence in Black communities?



Part I:

Learning and Unlearning

Let's begin the learning and unlearning process by exploring individual views and understanding of gender justice.

Gender Justice includes:

1. **Addressing gender-based barriers** like language, symbols, and signs that assigns masculine or feminine traits to objects or people based on perceived characteristics and cognitive bias or assumptions implicitly made about people based on socially engineered expectations of what is "normal";
2. **Ending gender-based violence**, especially towards Black women and girls;
3. **Using language to uplift and affirm** all Black women and girls; and
4. **Ensuring equal access** to human, civil, and legal rights.

Gender Injustice is pervasive in our society. It is the reason why women are paid less, why Black women have such high rates of mortality during childbirth, why the reproductive rights of women are often under attack, and why Black trans women have high rates of incarceration and unemployment. Gender injustice is the manifestation of the signs, systems, and symbols used to support a patriarchal society that treats anyone who is not on a white cisgender, heterosexual man as a second-class citizen. Gender justice is essential to ensuring equity—to ensuring that our country lives up to its founding principles.

What follows is the term guide that has been adapted from the **International Women's Development Agency** with the goal of exploring and focusing on personal views and ideas about gender equality, human rights, and violence against women and girls. This exercise is a quick way to explore what participants know or think about gender, gender equality, human rights, and violence against Black women and girls.



Terminology Guide

The following terminology guide acknowledges that words matter and that there is power in precision. It is designed to support asset based conversations about concepts and experiences that may be unfamiliar. It is important to note that language and terms are ever changing. While useful some of these terms and what they convey may change over time. It is also important to appreciate that terms, especially those connected to a person's identity are personal, which means it is important to engage in conversations with people, with the goal of learning.

Term	Definition
Advocate [1]	(noun) (1) A person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized group. (verb) (2) To actively support/plead in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance, educate others, etc.
Assigned or Assumed Sex [1]	Refers to the sex someone was assigned at birth according to physical, hormonal, and/or chromosomal characteristics.
Cisgender (cis)[3]	(adj) A term used to describe people who identify as the gender they were assigned at birth.
Transgender (trans)[2]	(adj) A term that describes people whose gender identity is different from the gender they were assigned at birth.
Equality [8]	(noun) The state of being equal. It's foundational in a democratic society. The fight for equality is the fight to attain different kinds of equality, like racial, gender, or the equality of opportunity between rich and poor, is often associated with progress toward that ideal of everyone being truly equal.
Gender Non-Conforming (GNC)[1]	(adj) Someone whose gender presentation does not align with pejorative gender-based expectations or norms.
Gender [1]	(noun) The internal perception of one's gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options to be.
Interpersonal Violence or Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) [6]	Intimate partner violence includes physical violence, sexual violence, threats of physical or sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression (including coercive tactics) by a current or former intimate partner.
Intersex [1]	(adj) Someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the two expected patterns of male or female.
Intersectionality [8]	(noun) A legal term created by Kimberle Crenshaw that holds the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, species or disability do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination.
Reproductive Rights [8]	The rights of individuals to decide whether to reproduce and have reproductive health, including an individual's right to plan a family, terminate a pregnancy, use contraceptives, learn about sex education in public schools, and gain access to reproductive health services.
Cognitive bias [5]	An assumption implicitly made about the world and people based on cultural inputs.
Non-Binary	An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do.

Terms to Avoid

Terms to avoid	Explanation	Preferred language
Biological Sex [1]	This is a medical term used to refer to the anatomical, chromosal, and hormonal characteristics used to classify individuals as female or male. This is often seen as a binary, which excludes intersex individuals.	Assigned or Assumed Sex or Sex Assigned at Birth
Dyke [1]	This is a derogatory term that should not be used by anyone who does not identify as a lesbian. Many lesbians consider this term offensive when used by people who are not members of the lesbian community.	Lesbian, Woman who Loves Women, or Same-gender Loving
Female(s)	While not inherently derogatory, the term has been used to dehumanize Black women and girls. It reduces women to their sex characteristics.	Woman, Women, or Girl(s)
Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria* [3]	This is a clinicl (DSM-IV) diagnosis given to transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. It is considered offensive because it labels them "disordered." *"Dysphoria" is used by many trans people to describe experiences of discomfort and/or alienation from one's mind and/or body, but cis individuals should not use this term to "diagnose" or label trans people's lived experiences.	There is no preferred language
Hermaphrodite [1]	This is an outdated and derogatory term used to justify the genital mutilation of many intersex individuals. There has been increasing advocacy and awareness to shift conversations away from medical professionals and others feeling the need to "fix" intersex individuals and toward providing intersex individuals with opportunities to remain intersex past infancy.	Intersex
Lifestyle [2]	This is often used as a negative term used incorrectly to imply that being LGBTQ/SGL is a choice.	Life or Lives
New or Chosen Gender [2]	These terms imply that an individual's gender was not always their gender or that the gender was chosen rather than in existence.	Affirmed Gender

Sex Reassignment Surgery or Sex change (Surgery)[1]	This is a term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person's anatomical sex characteristics. While not inherently derogatory term, it is reductive.	Gender Confirmation Surgery
Sexual Preference [3]	This term implies sexuality is an individual's choice. This term has a negative connotation and should not be used.	Sexuality or Sexual Orientation
"Shim", "He-She", "It*", "She-male", etc.[3]	These words dehumanize trans people, especially trans women, and should never be used. They are both defamatory and derogatory. *Many trans people consider "it" to be a dehumanizing pronoun because it is almost exclusively used for non-human animals and objects.	Trans(gender) person or their pronouns

1. https://thesafezoneproject.com/activities/vocab-extravaganza/
2. https://pflag.org/glossary
3. https://www.wearefamilycharleston.org/lgbt-a-z-glossary/
4. https://jezebel.com/the-problem-with-calling-women-females-1683808274
5. https://www.genderjustice.us/cognitive-bias
6. https://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf
7. https://family.findlaw.com/reproductive-rights/what-are-reproductive-rights-.html
8. http://theangryblackwoman.com/2009/08/02/intersectionality/
9. https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/equality





Part II:

Activities to Connect Theory to Practice

The Group Think actvity is adapted from the
International Women's Development Agency

Instructions

Facilitator note: For this session to go well participants must respect each other's views, perspectives, and lived experiences. Participants must be willing to listen to others and engage in constructive dialogue.

1. Prior to the session, prepare a flipchart with questions and answers (Yes, Not Sure, No) for this exercise. You will use the flipchart to document number of people responding to particular prompts. You will want to explain this process to the group.
2. Place large signs with 'YES', 'NOT SURE' and 'NO' at different places around the room so that the participants can move freely between to answer questions.
3. Introduce the exercise by saying: **"I am going to ask you a few questions. Please answer each question by 'voting with your feet'. This means, that depending on your answer, you will move to that area of the room where the appropriate sign is."**
   a. Let participants know that there are three areas around the room designated for them to move to signal their response: 'Yes', 'Not Sure', and 'No'."
   b. Point out where each sign is. Invite participants to give their honest, initial response.
   c. Explain to the group that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. All answers are important.
4. Read each question individually. After each question, invite participants to move toward one of the 'YES', 'NOT SURE' or 'NO' signs to indicate their answer. When everyone has decided on their answers and moved to an appropriate area, count how many people are in each area. Write down the numbers before moving to the next question.
5. After all the questions have been asked, start a dialogue with the participants about their answers. You do not have to answer all the questions, but it is important that each person has a chance to voice their opinions, ideas, and lived experiences related to each question.



Group Think Questions

Question	Yes	No	Unsure
Can you explain what the word “gender” means?			
Can you explain what a “stereotype” is?			
Can you describe what “stigma” looks like?			
Can you explain what “human rights” are?			
Do you feel comfortable and confident promoting gender equality in your family, church or community?			
Can you explain the difference between civil rights and human rights?			
Do you feel comfortable and confident promoting human rights in your family, home town, church or community?			
Is there discrimination in your community?			
Do people have equal rights in your family, home town, church or community?			
Can you explain the difference between equity and equality?			
Is violence against Black women and girls a problem in your community?			
Are women generally in positions of decision making or leadership in the spaces you move through?			
Add your own question(s)			

Community Conversations

Community conversations are about facilitating meaningful, group conversations rooted in empathy, understanding, vulnerability, and humanity. The goals for these conversations include: increasing competence and ensuring that participants feel supported in expressing their beliefs and discussing their experiences. What follows is designed to support you in facilitating conversations that meet the unique needs of your community in engaging in this important work. The following steps are designed to support culturally competent facilitators in facilitating brave and safe conversations about bias, sigma, and positive disruption.

Please note that speaking about stigma may bring up trauma or painful memories. Consult the **Association of Black Psychologists Family-Care, Community-Care, and Self-Care Toolkit** for support beyond that which the group may be able to provide.

Instructions

Step 1: Prepare for Conversations by Centering and Grounding.

Facilitator Note: Begin with a moment to breathe together or a moment of silence before starting the conversation. This can help set the tone and invite everyone into the conversation. Here's a quote that may prove useful for this purpose: "How precious words are and how real speech is in its impact on the way people live and die." - Nelson Mandela

1. Introduce yourself and your pronouns before inviting all participants to do the same.

   Note: As the facilitator, introduce your pronouns to model for the other members of the conversation. Explain why you are saying your pronouns and invite others to introduce their pronouns. If someone does not want to disclose their pronouns, refer to that person by their name. Respect how people identify and to not use labels to "diagnose" people.

Pronoun Chart

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Refelxive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers. She made herself a sandwich.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his. He made himself a sandwich.
They	Them	Theirs	Themself	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs. They made themself a sandwich
Ze (Pronounced: "zee")	Hir/Zir (Pronounce "here" or "zere")	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs. Ze made hirself a sandwich

Adapted from the **Trans Student Educational Network**
This is not an exhaustive list. All pronouns are valid.

Community Conversations

Step 2: Identify Guiding Principles.

Facilitator note: Use guiding principles to maintain shared expectations throughout the conversation. Invite volunteers to read one of the 4 grounding principle aloud. Hold 5 minutes for the group to react to the principles and to add others.

1. **Intentionality:** Remember, words matter. Be intentional with language. Begin by discussing and committing to respect names and pronouns. Avoid language that is intended to harm and be mindful of bias that may be reflected in words and how they are communicated. If you do not feel that you have the language to communicate a particular feeling or express a point, come from a place of love and consider asking for assistance in finding the language that comes closest to communicating how you feel. Respect others and expect to be challenged and to grow as a result of remaining committed to the process.
2. **Respect** everyone by remaining present, physically, emotionally, and otherwise during the duration of the conversation.
3. **Mindfulness:** Listen to learn, not to simply respond. Before responding reflect upon what you heard and may have learned before sharing your thoughts and feelings.
4. **Open mind:** Expect to be made to feel uncomfortable as you learn and grow. Keep an open mind and commit to learning throughout the process.

Step 3: Establish Intent.

Answer these questions together aloud:

1. What do you hope to accomplish as a result of engaging in this conversation?
    a. What do you hope will happen after this conversation?
2. What do you know that you have questions about or that makes you uncomfortable or anxious?
3. What do you not know that you have questions about or that makes you uncomfortable or anxious?
4. What do you know or feel that you want to ensure is understood or considered?

Answer these questions individually:

1. What is your definition of stigma or bias?
2. How does feeling silenced or experiencing bias make you feel?
    a. This make me feel…
    b. It make me think of doing…
3. How do I react when I witness or experience stigma or bias?
    a. How does this reaction make me feel?
4. How does stigma or bias show up in my language/communication?

Community Conversations

Step 4: Establishing and Checking Vocabulary.

Vocabulary Extravaganza adapted from The Safe Zone Project is designed to ensure understandings of key terms.

*Facilitator note: Participants will need paper, a copy of or access to the terminology list below and a writing utensil to complete this activity. The facilitator can access the complete list of terms and definitions **here**.*

Goal and Objectives

1. To increase understanding of the importance of language.
2. To debunk stigma and address questions about terminology or common phrases.

Instructions

Answer these questions together aloud :

1. Start the activity by instructing participants understand expectations.
   - Provide participants 5 minutes to read through the list of terms.
   - Invite participants to highlight or star terms they may not understand or want to further discuss.
   - At the end of the 5 minutes read through the list, stopping to further discuss the terms flagged by participants.
2. Highlight the following:
   - None of these definitions or labels are universal (some people who identify with these labels will describe their identity using different words/terms).
   - It's important to respect how others self-identify, and not use these labels to "diagnose" people.
   - Feel free to add more terms additional terms that are important to participants.

Terms

Advocate	Ally	Androgyny/Androgynous	Cisgender
Cisnormativity	Feminine Presenting	Masculine Presenting	Gender Identity
Gender Non-Conforming	Heteronormativity	Intersex	Same Gender Loving (SGL)
Transgender	Ze/Hir Pronouns	Transitioning	Sexual Orientation
Passing	Mx.	Nonbinary	Sex assigned at birth

Click here for a more exhaustive list of Terms.

Community Conversations

Cognitive Bias activity: to learn about and address cognitive bias (adapted from Gender Justice).

Instructions

Answer these questions together aloud:

1. Develop a list of common terms, consider the following list of occupations/professions. Read through each term and invite participants to describe (in writing or out loud) what the person they picture, associated with each term looks like.

Scientist	Teacher	Doctor	Nurse	CEO
Secretary	Police Officer	Professor	Politician	Add your own

2. After participants describe the individuals they imagine discuss the stereotypes, biases, and assumptions that may be operating. Consider the following prompts used to facilitate this discussion:
   - Why do you imagine a certain type of person would be a CEO as compared to a secretary?
   - How do our socio-cultural biases inform the assumptions we make about the people?
   - How do cultural influences (television, media, etc.) normalize certain identities while marginalizing others?
   - How can we re-examine biases and challenge popular assumptions?
3. Discuss why the work of identifying and deconstructing biases and pejorative assumptions matter—why understanding gender based violence can help to disrupt it.

   Consider the following:
   - Assuming can be another word for stereotyping, and brain researchers tell us that the stereotypes stored up in our brains can affect our perceptions, our memories, and our decisions and that can lead to bias.
   - Sometimes assumptions can be good—even life saving; however, we want to be mindful of how assumptions can negatively impact someone by contributing to stigma, discrimination, and gender based violence.
   - Harboring biases makes us a part of the problem.



Community Conversations

Step 5: Reflection. *(adapted from the International Women's Development Agency and Understanding and Challenging HIV Stigma).*

For individual reflection, allow 10-15 minutes for participants to write reflections on the activities, challenges, and lessons learned. The goal should be to identify tools that can be used once participants engage with people who have not participated in the activities to facilitate gender justice and to otherwise support all Black women and girls.

Following individual reflection time, allow participants who want to share their reflections with the group.

Individual Reflection:

1. Write about how gender injustice has affected you:
   - How did you feel when that happened?
2. Write about a time when you perpetuated stereotypes or harmful ideas relating to gender identity:
   - What thoughts, feelings, or words do you associate with gender injustice?
   - What beliefs, philosophies or lived experience could influence the way in which I perpetuate injustice?

Group Reflection:

1. How does gender-based violence exist within your community?
2. What will you do when you go back to your community to dismantle gender-based barriers?
3. What language should not be used going forward and why?
4. What language should replace problematic language or otherwise be used to ensure gender justice?

Step 6: Closing Discussion.

Facilitator note: Be sure to close the discussion after engaging in meaningful conversation. Each person should answer the following questions to the others out loud. After ending the discussion, take a moment to breathe deeply, and allow participants to fully acknowledge their emotions. Thank each participant for their input, and close with a moment of silence.

Invite each person to answer these questions:

1. What challenged me?
2. What did I learn from?
3. What will I do as a result of this experience?
4. What are the necessary next steps to ensure gender justice in our communities?



Part II:

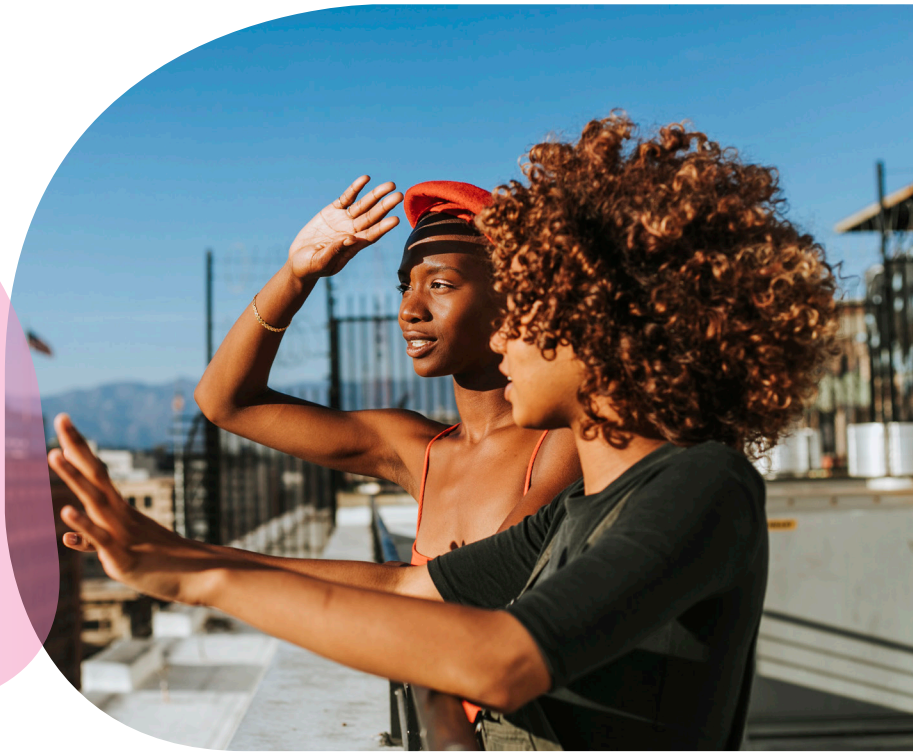
Get Engaged to Ensure Gender Justice

We must counteract the most harmful consequences of gender injustice by dismantling the gender-based barriers that prevent Black women and girls from full participation in economy, political, and social enterprise. This work begins by appreciating the fundamental fact that words matter. By avoiding the use of language that contributes to or justifies gender based violence we can begin to destroy the stigma that leads to violence against Black women and girls. By replacing deleterious terms with asset based language designed to to uplift, affirm, and empower Black women and girls we can create spaces and advance policies designed to ensure all Black women and girls feel safe and supported by their community and in the spaces they move through. The work of ensuring that all Black women and girls thrive is our shared responsibility.

Beyond being more conscious of the words that we use to communicate we can support the codification of legislation designed to address the structural barriers that Black women and girls in the United States face.

Consider committing to the following four steps to help facilitate your gender justice journey.

The work of ensuring that all Black women and girls thrive is our shared responsibility.





I. Take The Pledge to be an Informed Advocate

I Pledge to be an informed advocate by:

1. Using the power of my words (and my privilege to disrupt the use of negative and harmful words and terms) to ensure gender justice.

2. Supporting the Equality Act and other legislation designed to ensure equity and fundamental economic, legal, and social protections for Black women and girls.

3. Engaging in conversation with family, friends, co-workers, and members of the networks that I am a member of to enroll others in the work of ensuring gender justice.

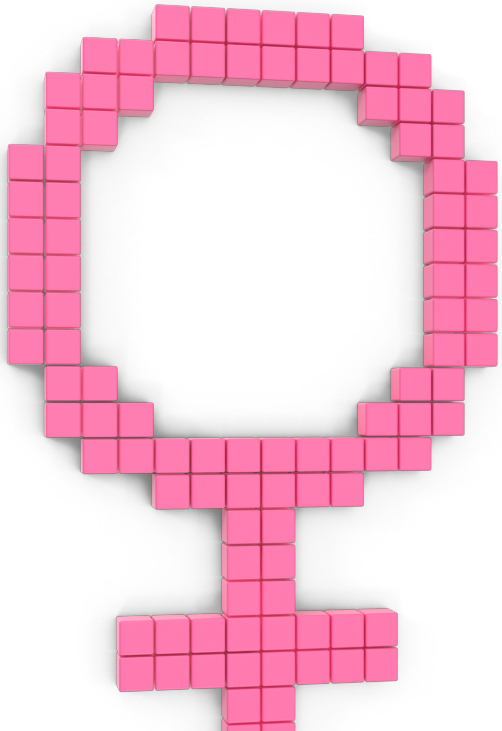
II. Be A Champion for Gender Justice

Leverage your digital platforms and technology to share what you know and are doing to ensure gender justice. Use the following hashtags so we can follow and celebrate your work.

1. **#WordsMatterGenderJustice**
2. **#WordsMatter**
3. **#NBJCAdvocacy**

Sample Social Media Posts

1. “The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman.” -- Malcolm X. Let’s create a world where Black women are respected, uplifted, and heard. #WordsMatterGenderJustice #WordsMatter #NBJCAdvocacy
2. Support Black women! Empower Black women! Listen to Black women! #WordsMatterGenderJustice #WordsMatter #NBJCAdvocacy
3. Trans rights are human rights. #Periodt #WordsMatterGenderJustice #WordsMatter #NBJCAdvocacy
4. Support your sisters, not just your cisters. #WordsMatterGenderJustice #WordsMatter #NBJCAdvocacy
5. Words are tools that have the power to liberate and empower the most vulnerable among us. #WordsMatterGenderJustice #WordsMatter #NBJCAdvocacy
6. “Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence. It does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge.” -Toni Morrison #WordsMatterGenderJustice #WordsMatter #NBJCAdvocacy
7. “I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood.” – Audre Lorde #WordsMatterGenderJustice #WordsMatter #NBJCAdvocacy



III: Advocacy & Action

Talk to your elected representatives about why gender justice matters to you and the Black women and girls in your life. Learn more about the Equality Act, the Violence Against Women Act, and other legislation related impacting Black women and girls by visiting the National Black Justice Coalition website. We invite you to join the "**All of me. All the Time**" campaign that the National Black Justice Coalition is proud to co-chair with the National LGBTQ Task Force.

Use these resources to identify your Federal Congressional Representative:

- U.S. House of Representatives: * Telephone: 202-225-3121. * Website: http://www.house.gov/
- Use these resources to Senators: U.S. Senate: * Telephone: 202-224-3121. * Website: http://www.senate.gov/

IV. Meet with legislators and public officials:

The best public policy in the world will not be signed into law if not supported by the advocacy of empowered citizens like YOU. Remember that the most likely thing to change the mind of a Member of Congress are the following: .#1 meeting a constituent, #2 other lobby/advocacy visits, #3 personal phone calls, #4 personalized letter or email, #5 Letter to editor, #6 postcards or petitions. Policy change requires sustained engagement and relationships strengthened over time.



PREPARATION FOR MEETING

1. **Learn** about where your representative is on the issues you plan to discuss.
   - www.govtrack.us: provides basic information on Members of Congress, voting records, etc.
   - http://capwiz.com/fconl/directory/congdir.tt: provides background information on Members' votes, staffers, PAC's, committee assignments.

2. **Review your talking points.** You will want to discuss the reasons why you are advocating for specific positions and legislation. If requesting specific action on active legislation use www.govtrack.us to see what action the member may have taken.

3. **Don't go alone.** Leverage the resources of advocacy organizations like the National Black Justice Coalition to help prepare for and to follow up after your meeting(s).

4. **Know your role.** If meeting in a group decide ahead of the meeting who will say what.

5. **Be humble.** If you do not meet with the elected official do not fret--often elected and public officials designate staff to manage key issues and priorities. It is important to develop relationships with these gatekeepers as they are critical in helping to inform the understanding and actions of the members they work for.

6. **Have an ask.** You Can't Get What You Don't Ask For. ALWAYS HAVE AN ASK! Know what you want to get from the meeting, before requesting the meeting. Making an ask facilitates accountability. It provides something to actionable to follow up on. Clear asks include asking a member to cosponsor legislation, vote in favor of or in opposition to legislation, and to support committee or chamber activity.

7. **Focus on outcomes.** You may not get an answer to a question or request in real time and that's ok. Follow up.If you don't have an answer to a question, that's ok too. Follow up.

8. F**ollow up.** Focus on strengthening relationships over time. Consider the following:
   - Send a thank you note and include the ask one more time.
   - If you promised to follow up or provide additional information, send it ASAP.
   - Send information that would be useful to your legislator at least four times a year.
   - Be helpful and keep it friendly. Identify opportunities to be a resource to the member and their office.

If you remember nothing else remember the following: you are the expert, you are the boss when engaging with the elected /public official responsible for serving you. You know best how your elected officials can support you, your family and community. Whatever you decide to do, do something with the knowledge gained from this toolkit and the activities engaged in as a result. Do something to support language and to advance policies that empower, protect, and support Black women and girls.



NBJC ENDORSING PARTNERS

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
NAACP
FOUNDED
1909

NATIONAL LGBTQ TASK FORCE

WOMEN'S MARCH

NATIONAL ACTION NETWORK
NAN
Founded 1991
NO JUSTICE NO PEACE