

## Session 4: If This Is What We Need To Do, How Might We Do It Best?

### Learning Objectives:

- To develop analysis skills and perspectives (or “lenses”) that will help facilitate the work in productive, useful ways.
- To find ways to make sure that the work that is done is beneficial for all.

### Session Summary:

This session will provide three lenses for examination and analysis of homophobia and heterosexism. The lenses will allow the group to further develop their skills of analysis, by using these skills both in an exercise and in examining their world. In addition, the group will begin to understand identity through caucus groups and through a set of questions before closing. This will set the stage for the upcoming work around a particular topic.

### Background:

Oppression has many faces. Sometimes it is malevolent, sometimes it is unintentional. Either way, it affects people. Some people view oppression as an individual act, others see it as systematic. It doesn't matter from where or even how it occurs, oppression still affects people. Caucuses allow people a chance to acknowledge identity as a part of this work. It is helpful for people of all sexual orientations to spend time with people of their own sexual orientation. Because some people are not ready to be out yet in a group, these people are asked to join the group in which they have presented themselves to the group—and those that don't give their identity can be put in the “other” group. Some people may react negatively to caucusing. Encourage them to try it anyway. Most people eventually find it beneficial.

### Materials:

1. Newsprint
2. Markers
3. Charts
4. Copies of *Jerry's Secret* for everyone

### Preparation:

- Prepare the newsprint and create the charts as shown.
- Prepare copies of *Jerry's Secret* so that everyone can have one.

### Workshop Plan:

#### Opening Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)

*(You are invited to pick a reading and/or an opening hymn. Singing The Living Tradition is an excellent resource. Other options are a moment of silence, a prayer, or a brief check-in. You are encouraged to also begin with a chalice lighting. Please submit any readings and/or hymn choices that you have used successfully to the OBGLTC as feedback for possible inclusion in future editions of LWC.)*

### Activities:

#### Jerry's Secret (90 minutes)

Distribute the reading *Jerry's Secret*. Tell people they are going to use this piece to further develop analysis skills around homophobia and heterosexism and the way they operate.

Tell participants they are going to read the story and then they must find examples from within the story in small groups that show homophobia and heterosexism.

Allow twenty minutes for reading. Take ten minutes for people to talk in pairs about their responses and feelings to the story. (What surprised them, intrigued them, etc.?)

Have people work in groups of 2. Have the groups list as many examples of oppression as they can find—whether they are directly stated or suggested from the story. Allow ten minutes for the group to create their list.

While the group is working on their list, post the following. (These can be prepared ahead of time, or while groups are working on their lists.)

Individual Oppression (where one person is responsible)	Systematic Oppression (where the systematic structure keeps homophobia and heterosexism in place)

**Chart 1**

Where the Oppressor Doesn't Know S/he is being oppressive	Where the believes s/he is superior to the other person	Where the person is being mean to the other person	Where the oppressed person believes s/he is inferior to the oppressor

**Chart 2**

Where the oppressor is intentionally being oppressive	Where the oppressor is unintentionally being oppressive

**Chart 3**

Ask each group to then categorize their list based on the three charts. Note that many examples will be on several charts. Tell them these charts are three different lenses in which to understand oppression.

Allow the group ten to fifteen minutes to place their findings on these charts. Tell the group when they are done, the entire group will discuss the list and to avoid comments on postings now.

When the time is up, ask the participants to focus on the first chart: Individual and Systematic Oppression.

- 1) What do they notice?
- 2) What questions do they have?
- 3) How are individual and systematic oppression alike and different?

**Move to chart #2—Ignorance/Superiority/ Malevolence/Inferiority**

- 1) What do they notice?
- 2) What questions do they have?
- 3) Does it make a difference which category the oppression appears under? Why or why not?

**Move to chart #3—Intentionality**

- 1) What do they notice?
- 2) What questions do they have?
- 3) Does it make a difference which category the oppression appears under? Why or why not?

Ask the participants to get back in their groups of two. Ask the pairs to think of other examples of homophobia and heterosexism that they have witnessed that could be placed on these charts. Tell them if they are really brave they could use themselves as examples. After 10 minutes ask each group to give one example for each category. Invite a general discussion of how oppression works (if it has not already happened). What have they learned from this?

## Caucuses (30 minutes)

Tell the group they are going to divide into two groups. One group of people should be those who openly identify as bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender. The other group should be everyone else.

Inform the groups that caucusing is an important part of any anti-oppression work. In undoing sexism, for example, it is important for women to give women support and men to give men support. The purpose of these caucuses is to allow people to give each other that support and to have people experience doing this work with only people they are like. If you have only one of a group, that person may pick an ally to be with. If you have no people of a group, contact OBGLTC at the UUA.

Tell participants in their caucus they should first get to talk to one another about 1) why they are interested in doing this work, and 2) what sustains them as they do it. They will have 15 minutes to answer these two questions. After fifteen minutes, each group should report for 5 minutes to the other about their conversation and reflect what it was like to have caucus groups. Inform the group that these groups will be used again, from time to time.

## Accountability (10 minutes)

Tell the group that we will end with a quiz. The quiz has questions for everyone, although only certain people will answer the questions. Tell the participants they will answer the questions aloud.

**Question #1**—(transgender people only) Who knows more about what transgender people are like—men, transgender people, or women?

**Question #2**—(transgender people only) Who knows more about what women are like—men, transgender people, or women?

**Question #3**—(transgender people only) Who knows more about what men are like—men, transgender people, or women?

**Question #4**—(women only) Who knows more about what women are like—men, transgender people, or women?

**Question #5**—(women only) Who knows more about what transgender people are like—men, transgender people, or women?

**Question #6**—(women only) Who knows more about what men are like—men, transgender people, or women?

**Question #7**—(men only) Who knows more about what transgender people are like—men, transgender people, or women?

**Question #8**—(men only) Who knows more about what women are like—men, transgender people, or women?

**Question #9**—(men only) Who knows more about what men are like—men, transgender people, or women?

Repeat this process for people of color and white people, left-handed and right-handed people, people with and without disabilities, and finally bisexual, gay, lesbian, and/or transgender.

When finished, ask the group if they noticed anything about the way people answered. In particular, when working on an oppression, who knows more about the oppression—the group that is oppressed or the other group?

Ask the group to consider this question and how it will affect their upcoming work over the next week, and tell them that we will begin with this question the next time.

**Closing Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)**

*(You are encouraged to find a suitable one. The difference between the Opening and Closing is that we suggest that one reading and/or one hymn is selected to be used as the closing for all sessions. The Opening may vary from session to session.)*

**Suggested Hymns**

**Suggested Readings**

**Add Your Suggestion**

Ask participants to hold hands as they are willing, able, and comfortable.

## *Jerry's Secret (Peanut Butter and Jelly) by the Rev. Keith Kron*

Jerry had a secret. He didn't tell anyone about it. He knew what they would think. And these were his friends. Heaven help him if the people who didn't really know him or didn't really like him found out.

You see Jerry had no interest in peanut butter.

Oh, he could talk about it with the best of them. He did a great job of pretending. He could fondle a Skippy jar, suggestively read the label of the Extra Crunchy Jif, and would even wink at Mr. Peanut. But it was all an act.

His friends didn't notice at first. Jerry avoided meals where peanut butter was served. He just said he had to be somewhere else. He got very good at avoiding these meals.

But slowly some of his friends wondered why they had never seen Jerry eat peanut butter. Most of them decided they were mistaken. Everybody eats peanut butter. They thought Jerry just ate his in private. Some people were like that. Other people knew better than to ask. They knew that to ask would mean they might hear an answer they did not want to hear. It was better not to ask; not to know.

Jerry hoped no one would find out. He liked his friends. They played baseball together, went hiking together, and loved to go to the beach. Those things were all important to him.

But Jerry knew with each passing day that he liked jelly sandwiches. And he knew that most people didn't.

Oh, he suppressed the longing at first. But more and more he found himself at his grocery store casting quick glances at the jelly section, afraid to go near it, but hoping to see someone else—a kindred spirit—look that way as well. But he never did. He thought he was the only one.

Then he saw it. Right there on the cover of Newsweek. This man with a warm smile, bright eyes, and Grape Smuckers dribbling down his chin. With a jelly sandwich in his hand, the caption above his head read, “OUT OF THE PANTRY AND INTO THE DINING ROOM: ONE MAN'S JOURNEY TOWARD SELF-ACCEPTANCE.

Jerry started to cry. For the first time in his life he knew he was not the only one. Some of the loneliness that pervaded his life diminished, if just a little bit. There was someone else. Someone else like him. And for the first time that he could remember, he felt hope.

He read the article and learned that an estimated 1 out of 10 people, according to a Welch's study, said they preferred jelly sandwiches to peanut butter. He also read there were a surprisingly high number of people who liked peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. He gained courage.

Still he knew he had to hide. The Rev. Pat Robertson appeared on national TV and denounced jelly sandwich lovers as immoral and unnatural. People yelled at the guests on “Oprah” and “Rikki Lake” who said they loved jelly sandwiches. “The National Enquirer” ran pictures of Rosie O'Donnell and Tom Cruise with what looked like strawberry jelly on their lips, but both denied it and had pictures taken of them clutching jars of peanut butter to their chests. Rush Limbaugh and Pat Buchanan wrote vicious articles in their newspaper columns.

So Jerry invited a peanut butter sandwich lover to be his date for the prom. Secretly he wished he could have taken another jelly sandwich lover, but he knew he couldn't. Jerry and his date danced and had a good time. When they stood by the buffet table, Jerry gave his peanut butter finger sandwiches to his date. His date was moved by Jerry's generosity, not suspecting this gentlemanly-ness was anything other

than politeness. Jerry made it through the evening, but it was not easy. He promised himself never to do that again.

When Jerry went to college, he learned of run-down convenient stores that sold lots of jelly. Some customers even ate their sandwiches there together. Jerry knew he had to go.

So one dark night, he slipped down the back alley and into the 7-11. He was worried that the health inspector might raid the place or that it could all be a sting operation, but he knew he had to take the risk.

It was a dirty place, dimly lit with lots of smoke, but Jerry felt peaceful for the very first time. After summoning courage, he sat at the deli counter and shared a raspberry jelly sandwich with another customer. He was elated.

More and more people were talking about loving jelly sandwiches openly. Support groups sprang up. Political organizations formed creating committees and writing by-laws, but made little progress except in California. Bowling leagues began.

The Unitarian Universalist Association became the first religious denomination to pass resolutions supporting jelly sandwich lovers. The American Psychological Association declared that loving jelly sandwiches was not in and of itself a reason for mental illness. Jerry began making a whole new group of friends.

Jerry knew what he had to do. He began to tell his longtime friends the truth. Most understood. They liked Jerry and liked playing ball with him and told him it didn't matter what kind of sandwiches he liked. He was still their friend—as long as he didn't flaunt those sandwiches in front of them. Most of his friends still ate their peanut butter sandwiches in front of Jerry and didn't think twice about it.

When Jerry told his parents, his mother cried. His father asked him if he was going to molest grapevines. They both asked him to live his life without jelly sandwiches. He refused. His parents threw him out of the house for good.

Time went by. Jerry spent more and more time with his new friends and less and less time with his old ones. And he realized he was very good at getting to know other jelly sandwich lovers on the street when he saw them. He wasn't quite sure why this was happening, but he noticed. One day, after he had spent time with his new friends, he was feeling very good. They had laughed and talked and shared jelly recipes. He was on his way home and ran into Chad.

They hugged awkwardly at first. Chad was worried that someone would see them and think he liked jelly sandwiches too—especially with Jerry wearing his “Jelly Rights Now” button. They talked of basketball, the weather, and some of their friends. As someone walked along the other side of the street, Chad began talking of his latest peanut butter sandwich. Jerry sighed and smiled and nodded his head. Yet another peanut butter story. But he listened to the story and came to a decision. When Chad finished, Jerry took a deep breath. Now was the time.

“Chad, I know just how you feel. I had a blackberry jelly sandwich the other night that still makes my mouth water. I had it on a sourdough roll and there were little chunks of blackberry. I can still taste it.”

Chad listened in horrified fascination. Never before had he heard anyone talk so openly about something that no one should talk about. He didn't want to hear this. He realized he was getting angry with Jerry. This is why he had stopped watching “Geraldo”—too many jelly lovers telling tales too strange to tell, too foreign to understand. Everywhere you turned these days there were jelly rights groups screaming for equal rights. It was enough that Jerry liked jelly sandwiches and that Chad could still be his friend. But this was too much.

“I don’t want to hear this,” Chad finally said. “I don’t know why you have to talk about this. All you people ever want to talk about is this. It’s on your mind all the time.” He was surprised when Jerry smiled at him.

“Does this mean you are not going to talk about peanut butter with me?” Jerry asked.

“Of course I am. That’s normal. It’s who I am!” Chad said angrily. And then he stopped. He watched a tear roll down Jerry’s cheek. It was just like a jelly-lover to cry. They were so overly emotional. And yet Jerry was still smiling. And tears rolled down his cheeks.

“So what I hear you saying,” as Jerry began with his effective communication skill training, “is that you can tell me about *all of* your life, but I can’t tell you about all of mine.”

Chad was taken aback. “I don’t talk about my peanut butter life all that much,” he finally stammered.

“I hear it at least once every time we’re together. And I see it all the time—in the movies, on TV, in advertisements, on the streets. How many jelly lovers do you see in a week?”

“Hey, I watch Melrose Place. What’s-his-name is on there. And I know you,” Chad said defensively.

“And I see two peanut butter lovers every 30 seconds most days. That’s thousands every day. And seven times that every week by the time you’ve watched Matt on Melrose Place (he does have a name by the way), and seen me,” Jerry replied quietly. “And you are quite right. I do think about the fact that I am a jelly lover all the time. Each and every time I see a Jif jar, each time I see two peanut butter sandwich lovers smoking a Camel cigarette together, each time I see the Cosby’s or the Brady Bunch sitting around a picnic table eating peanut butter sandwiches, I can’t help but think about the fact that I am a jelly lover. And yet this is the second time I have really talked to you about my loving jelly. And I hear you telling me I talk about it all the time.”

The anger was rising in Jerry’s voice. He noticed this and thought he had worked through his anger but realized how much of it was still there. He continued, “Twice. And you tell me it’s all the time. At what point do I reach my limit? There is a limit, isn’t there? I can only talk about being a jelly lover only so often. And then I surpass my quota and you get angry at me and complain and stop liking me because it has no meaning in your life. And yet you expect me to get meaning and listen to all of your peanut butter stories. And even when you don’t talk about peanut butter, it’s there. The same way every time I tell a story, the jelly is there, whether it’s part of the story or not. You just try to forget that it’s part of my story. And so often you can. If I don’t mention jelly, then you can still hold on to the belief that I’m really not a jelly lover. Well let me tell you something, mister: I am a jelly sandwich lover and I am a human being equal to you. Even though you don’t think I am.”

There was silence. Jerry was amazed at himself. He realized he was sweating and his fists were clenched very tightly. He was breathing very heavily. And though he hadn’t figured it out yet, he had just named his biggest secret.

Chad spoke in a very hurt, subdued voice, “I do think you’re a human being, an equal human being. How can you say I don’t?”

“Because I’ve never felt treated like one by you,” Jerry’s voice was softer, sadder now. “What’s it like to be able to talk about eating peanut butter anywhere and not wonder if you run the risk of being disliked or hated? What’s it like to eat peanut butter openly in public and not have in the back of your mind that someone may come at you with a knife or gun or spit or yell at you? What’s it like to have people listen to you talk about your life and not have them flinch in disgust or horror—or even pity?”

What’s it like to think about the fact that you can’t get legally married to the person you love and share bread crumbs in bed with? What’s it like not to have to work up the courage to tell your friends you like peanut butter? What’s it like to have everyone assume you like peanut butter and have them be

right? What's it like to think about these questions for the first time as opposed to all of your life? What's it like not to have to work twice as hard to be treated half as good?"

"Hey, I know what it's like to work hard. I work hard," Chad pouted. "And I often don't feel half as good."

Jerry looked up at Chad, "Does that mean you understand what I am feeling?"

"Maybe a little. Not entirely. But more than I did a few minutes ago. Do you really think you are not an equal human being?" Chad asked.

"I'd like to think that I am. But sometimes the message that I am not equal from you peanut butter lovers wears me down."

"Hey, we're not all alike you know," Chad said quietly with a bit of disgust.

"Oh, how you talk. I can't tell you how many times I've said just those words." Jerry smiled and brushed away a tear. Chad just nodded. Jerry continued, "But I do get that message from many peanut butter lovers again and again and again—and even some jelly lovers who see themselves as less than equal because of their internalized jelly-phobia. It's just hard when you feel like you have to constantly censor what you do or say in order to have friends—because you feel they will never quite get it.

"And it would be easy to give up on peanut butter lovers all together and go and live in the Castro in San Francisco now that the gays have moved out and the jelly lovers have moved in. But I can't help but want to get to a place where you and I can live side by side—you with your peanut garden, me with my strawberry garden. And as we stand by the fence, we can talk about basketball, hiking in the woods, whatever, and we can admire and talk about our different gardens and know that we value all the other person is and can be. We have something to offer one another. You can learn about yourself from my making jelly, and I can learn about me from your making peanut butter. We will also learn about each other." Jerry smiled, realizing what his other secret had been.

Chad nodded, "I would like that. And maybe we can compare notes sometime?"

"Maybe. I've got to go. I've got a date with a boysenberry jelly-lover tonight."

Chad smiled. "Have a good time. See you soon. And don't forget to wear your napkin." And Chad leaned forward and hugged Jerry, more assuredly this time. They said good-bye. Jerry walked off feeling elated. And while he wondered how many times in his life he would have to have this conversation, and how many times a similar conversation would not go as well, this one had gone well. Sure, more hard work with Chad was yet to come, but it had started. And he was very grateful he wouldn't be doing all the work alone.