

## Oppression Basics

### Oppression

A system based on a belief in the supremacy of some people above others, and the institutional power to enforce that belief. Oppression involves the unequal distribution of systemic power for people with certain privileges in four main areas:

- The power to make and enforce decisions;
- The access to resources, broadly defined;
- The ability to set and determine standards for what is considered appropriate behavior; and
- The ability to define reality and have other people accept it as if it were their own.

Oppression is different from *prejudiced behavior* – individual harmful acts based on a prejudgment

### Common elements of oppression

- It is set against a norm in society, a standard of rightness and often righteousness
- It is backed by institutional and economic power
- It is backed by institutional and individual violence
- It is reinforced by institutions
- It leads to socio-economic imbalance

### Internalized Oppression

The process by which a member of an oppressed group develops, comes to accept, and lives out oppressive beliefs, values, inaccurate myths and stereotypes applied to the group; the systemic enforcement of the oppressor's belief system within a marginalized group.

### Intersectionality

A particular way of understanding social location in terms of crisscrossing systems of oppression. Intersectionality is an “analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization” (Greenlining Institute).