

## **Understanding and Challenging Systematic Oppression Working Assumptions**

- None of us in this room caused racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, or any of the systems of institutionalized oppression.
- Some of us are oppressed by systems of institutionalized oppression.
- Some of us benefit from institutionalized oppression whether we want to or not.
- All of us can take responsibility for challenging institutionalized oppression.
- These systems of oppression compromise everybody's lives.
- Every one of us is willing and wanting to learn.
- People are basically good. We have a core that strives for loving, cooperative relationships with others. It is with pain, fear, and shame that we learn to participate as oppressors. We all resist this learning.
- We can reach back to the core of pride, self-love, caring, and cooperation to find the wisdom that will unlearn oppression.
- People may say things in the course of this program that sound or feel oppressive and ignorant. This may be part of the learning process. In this class we will deal with the comment and the idea it represents, not the character of the person. We all learn misinformation about race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, ability, and other identity categories.
- This program assumes a commitment on the part of the people assembled to work together toward the common goal of eliminating violence. It assumes that we want to learn together, in spite of each other's imperfections.