

Vulnerabilities may be temporary - acute illness, family breakup, unemployment, community disasters or other severe losses. But many vulnerabilities people face are long term - their race, gender, sexuality, immigration status, housing. Talking about these vulnerabilities can be scary and can be difficult, but they are essential in fighting for justice. We understand some of these topics might be new for you, so we compiled some information and some talking points to help you get the conversation started. Are you ready to engage your community?

RACE

- **The facts**

- While people of color make up about 30 percent of the United States' population, they account for 60 percent of those imprisoned
- According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, one in three Black men can expect to go to prison in their lifetime
- Students of color face harsher punishments in school than their white peers, leading to a higher number of youth of color incarcerated
- According to recent data by the Department of Education, African American students are arrested far more often than their white classmates
- Black youth have higher rates of juvenile incarceration and are more likely to be sentenced to adult prison
- As the number of women incarcerated has increased by 800 percent over the last three decades, women of color have been disproportionately represented
- The war on drugs has been waged primarily in communities of color where people of color are more likely to receive higher offenses
- Once convicted, Black offenders receive longer sentences compared to white offenders
- Voter laws that prohibit people with felony convictions to vote disproportionately impact men of color
- Studies have shown that people of color face disparities in wage trajectory following release from prison
- Black students account for 18 percent of the country's pre-K enrollment, but make up 48 percent of preschoolers with multiple out-of-school suspensions
- Black students are expelled at three times the rate of white students
- American Indian and Native-Alaskan students represent less than 1 percent of students, but 3 percent of expulsions
- Black girls are suspended at higher rates than all other girls and most boys
- American Indian and Native-Alaskan girls are suspended at higher rates than white boys or girls
- Nearly one in four boys of color, excepting Latino and Asian American students, with disabilities receive an out-of-school suspension
- One in five girls of color with disabilities receive an out-of-school suspension
- Less than half of American Indian and Native-Alaskan high school students have access to the full range of math and science courses, which consists of Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, calculus, biology, chemistry and physics
- Black and Latino students account for 40 percent of enrollment at schools with gifted programs, but only represent 26 percent of students in such programs

- Black students are more than three times as likely to attend schools where fewer than 60 percent of teachers meet all state certification and licensure requirements, and Latino students are twice as likely to attend such schools
- **The connection**
 - Racism is woven throughout the horrifying tapestry that is human trafficking
 - The majority of trafficked people in the U.S. are people of color
 - Seventy-seven percent of victims in alleged human trafficking incidents reported in the U.S. were people of color, according to a Bureau of Justice Statistics Report
 - Racism is deeply embedded in human trafficking and must be racially inclusive and explicitly included in its literature, statistics and advocacy
 - To combat this modern-day slavery, the trafficking cycle should recognize explicitly the connections between trafficking, migration, poverty, racism, gender and racial discrimination
 - Girls of color, particularly Black girls, are especially vulnerable to human trafficking
 - Not only are girls of color disproportionately impacted by human trafficking, but they are also the majority of individuals criminalized for their exploitation
 - According to the FBI, Black children comprise 52 percent of all juvenile prostitution arrests — more than any other racial group
 - Children of color are left vulnerable to retraumatization in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, subjected to the consequences of having an arrest and juvenile record, and deprived of appropriate intervention and treatment services made available to other survivors of sexual abuse
- **The conversation**
 - We need to talk about race because we are often thinking about race in ways that profoundly impact our decisions and understandings. Race has also been an important factor in the way that institutions are designed and the work that they do. It has been a principal force in building, sustaining and shifting the social and political structures and organizational arrangements that control the distribution of opportunity and resources across all populations. Race also plays a significant role — either explicitly or implicitly — in many of the most important decisions that we make in our personal, professional and social lives: where we live, who our children’s friends are, who our friends are, which political candidates we vote for, what social programs we support, etc.

For most Americans, all of these issues include some consideration of race and while these considerations are often very subtle, they have the power to shape and control individual attitudes, values and behaviors. It is not possible to talk coherently or truthfully about the history of our democracy or the future well-being of the American people without talking about race. The process of racialization continues to depress our aspirations as a nation as well as our economic and civic well-being, and while this process impacts racially marginalized and non-marginalized groups differently, it impacts us all.

A transformative dialogue on race can be beneficial on many levels: it can explicate the structural dynamics of social, economic and political disparities, and it can assist us in dismantling racial hierarchy and deconstructing racialized “symbolic attitudes” that energize and perpetuate this hierarchy. It can help us to invigorate a strong inclusive democracy that invests both in its infrastructure and its people. It can also lead to a profound increase in focus around how it affects those vulnerable to being trafficked.

To get the conversation started about the role race plays in your community, [visit this website](#).

GENDER

- **The facts**

- In 2016, just 57 percent world's working-age women are in the labor force, compared to 70 percent of working-age men
- Women with full-time jobs still earn only about 77 percent of their male counterparts' earnings
- Black women earn 64 cents and Latina women earn 56 cents for every dollar earned by a white man
- 62 million girls are denied an education all over the world
- Every year, an estimated 15 million girls under 18 are married worldwide, with little or no say in the matter
- 4 out of 5 victims of human trafficking are girls
- At least 250,000 maternal deaths and as many as 1.7 million newborn deaths would be averted if the need for both family planning and maternal and newborn health services were met
- On average, 30 percent of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence by their partner
- Female genital mutilation affects more than 200 million girls and women alive today in 30 countries
- Over 150 countries have at least one actively sexist law
- 223 colleges in the United States have a total of 304 pending Title IX sexual violence investigations
- Women around the world aged 15-44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, car accidents, war and malaria
- Around the world, only 32 percent of all national parliamentarians are female
- One in five women on U.S. college campuses have experienced sexual assault
- Women currently hold 24, or 4.8 percent of CEO positions at S&P 500 companies
- More than 43 million people around the world are forcibly displaced as a result of conflict and persecution, and half of all refugees are women
- There are approximately 781 million illiterate adults worldwide – two-thirds of whom are women

- **The connection**

- Violence against women and girls is the root cause for the majority of their trafficking
- Women and girls make up 96% of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation
- Gender inequality and discriminatory laws that trap women in poverty and fail to protect them from violence, render them vulnerable to prostitution and trafficking
- Women who lack access to resources, such as housing, land, property, and inheritance, are at increased risk
- Women and girls trafficked for prostitution are caught in cycles of sexual violence and assault
- women and girls represent the largest share of forced labor victims with 11.4 million trafficked victims (55%) compared to 9.5 million (45%) men
- Many victims entering the sex trade as teens are runaway girls who were sexually abused as children
- Trafficking women and children for sexual exploitation is the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world

- In some parts of the world, women trafficking women is the norm
 - Women and girls represented a large proportion of victims trafficked for purposes other than forced labour or sexual exploitation, such as forced begging, selling of children, forced marriage, etc.
 - 35% of labor trafficking victims worldwide are women and girls
 - It is primarily women and children who experience domestic violence, and that leaves them more vulnerable to further exploitation
- **The conversation**

- Gender equality is a concept that has only been introduced into our educational lexicon in the last century. Title IX, the first federal legislation that disallowed discrimination in schools, was considered groundbreaking when it passed in 1972. Patriarchy was the norm in our recent past and the result was a culture where men held legal power over their families and domestic violence was rarely acknowledged. Title IX radically changed the world of education by challenging schools to eradicate gender bias in all areas of education — in sports, scholarship and admissions policies, to name a few. However, lingering and often unconscious gender bias still exists in classrooms.

Recent studies of school-aged children have shown that the effects of even the slightest gender discrimination are powerful. When Michigan elementary school students were asked to consider life as a member of the opposite sex, 40% of the girls reported that life would be better as a boy, citing more respect and better jobs. Conversely, 95% of the boys surveyed saw no advantage to being a girl. Sexual harassment, a more insidious form of discrimination, is still commonly reported in schools.

Perhaps entirely unconsciously, girls and boys are often treated differently in their environments. Boys benefit from more attention, even if the attention is negative. Girls are encouraged to be quiet and polite, and are disciplined or abused more. By opening up conversations around even the smallest inequalities between boys and girls, women and men, we might be able to recognize those who are more vulnerable in our communities.

- **Go further**
- Although gender has not looked the same in all places, at all times, during the last few hundred years (and under western influence) gender has become widely divided between two opposing options. If you are male, you must look, act, and dress according to a certain set of rules. If you are female, you must look, act, and dress according to a different set of rules. In our patriarchal, cisnormative, binary society, gender is a form of categorization and social control. It tells us how to treat and respond to others (similar to other identity markers, such as race, class, and ability). Our learned responses to gender cover a wide range of interactions.

Gender is a complex and layered concept that reaches deeply into every aspect of our lives, from our clothing to our interactions, into our personal and collective histories and myths. Gender is a difficult concept to pin down, built as it is with so many subjective pieces. In order to dig into it a little bit more, I'm going to break up gender into several different categories to explore, including gender roles, expression, attribution, and identity.

Binary gender and the connection of binary sex to gender identity and expression are constantly enforced by our cisnormative society. In the hundreds of media images people are exposed to everyday, two genders are always the only options presented, often to the feminine or masculine extreme, and if transgender people appear at all, they appear as freaks, jokes, and rejects. Gender norms are also enforced by the government, legal system, schools, religious groups, family, social groups, and other systems. We are bombarded with these binary images and messages and trained into a binary view and language of gender from birth, and then, in turn, we contribute to the construction of the binary system and its power.

It can be hard to figure out if one doesn't fit in the gender binary when those are the only options presented, and the only language available to discuss gender is binary and linked to biology. But when given new options, like genderqueer, bigender, androgyne, neutrois, agender, butch, femme, boi, grrl, demiboy and demigirl, suddenly a world opens up where one can explore to find a word that feels right to describe one's gender.

To get the conversation started in your organization around gender, [visit this website](#). For more important resources about gender equality, [visit this website](#).

SEXUALITY

- **The facts**

- 42% of people who are LGBTQ report living in an unwelcoming environment.
- 80% of gay and lesbian youth report severe social isolation
- Six in ten LGBTQ students report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation
- 90% of teens who are LGBTQ come out to their close friends
- Young people who are LGBTQ and who are “out” to their immediate families report feeling happier than those who aren’t
- While non-LGBTQ students struggle most with school classes, exams, and work, their LGBTQ peers say the biggest problem they face is unaccepting families.
- One in five LGBTQ people have experienced a hate crime or incident because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the last 12 months
- Two in five trans people have experienced a hate crime or incident because of their gender identity in the last 12 months
- A quarter of patient-facing staff have heard colleagues make negative remarks about lesbian, gay or bi people, and one in five LGBTQ folks have heard similar disparaging remarks about trans people
- One in eight LGBTQ employees would not feel confident reporting homophobic bullying in their workplace
- Nearly half of LGBTQ students - including 64 percent of trans pupils - are bullied for being LGBT
- 72 countries criminalize same-sex relationships
- The death penalty is either allowed, or evidence of its existence occurs, in eight countries
- In more than half the world, LGBTQ people may not be protected from discrimination by workplace law
- Most governments deny trans people the right to legally change their name and gender from those that were assigned to them at birth
- Between 2008 and 2014, there were 1,612 trans people murdered across 62 countries, which is equivalent to a killing every two days
- A quarter of the world’s population believes that being LGBTQ should be a crime

- **The connection**

- There is a disproportionate number of LGBTQ youth in the commercially sexually exploited population
- The majority of U.S. based organizations working with this population attribute this to the high levels of homelessness among LGBTQ youth
- 46 percent of homeless LGBTQ youth report running away from home due to family rejection of their sexual orientation and 17 percent ended up on the streets after they aged out of the foster care system
- Spending time on the streets as a vulnerable young person can have dire consequences, and within 48 hours of running away, one in three homeless youth will be recruited by a trafficker into commercial sexual exploitation
- LGBTQ youth face higher rates of discrimination, violence and economic instability than their non-LGBTQ peers

- When faced with fewer resources, employment opportunities, or social supports, LGBTQ youth who are away from home must find ways to meet their basic needs and may therefore enter the street economy, engaging in commercial sex to meet these needs
- Traffickers seek to exploit vulnerabilities in order to compel LGBTQ youth into commercial sex
- Traffickers often seek to meet the LGBTQ youth's needs as a way to build rapport and dependency
- Traffickers frequently target LGBTQ individuals who lack strong support networks, are facing financial strains, have experienced violence in the past, or who are marginalized by society
- Without adequate community support, youth who identify as LGBTQ may be at particular risk for sex trafficking
- 58.7 percent of LGBTQ homeless youth have been sexually victimized compared to 33.4 percent of heterosexual homeless youth
- **The conversation**
 - When conversations about LGBTQ issues are rooted in the common ground we share — when we emphasize the values, hopes and beliefs we have in common, instead of differences — it's difficult to cast gay people as being “other,” “different” or “not like me.” It also makes it more difficult for Americans to dismiss or ignore the harms and daily injustices that LGBT people face

In conversations about marriage, employment protections and non-discrimination laws, adoption and parenting, military service or hate crimes, it can often be easy to fall back on abstract jargon or angry rhetoric that can derail discussions with those who are not familiar with the issues. These guides offer ways that LGBTQ organizations, community members and allies alike can build common ground with moveable audiences, show them how their actions (or inaction) can hurt gay and transgender people, and help them understand issues of LGBTQ equality through the lenses of their own values and beliefs.

Equality for LGBTQ people is really about basic human values and needs: the ability of everyday Americans to pursue health and happiness, earn a living, be safe in their communities, serve their country, and take care of the ones they love. And when we move away from abstract, technical language and toward discussions that connect people to common ground and common values, true understanding can take root.

For helpful terms and guidelines to talk about LGBTQ equality, [visit this website](#). And for some helpful starting points, [check out this guide](#).

IMMIGRATION

- **The facts**

- Undocumented immigrants account for about 3.7 percent of the total U.S. population and about 5.2 percent of the labor force
- When it comes to undocumented immigrants, the overwhelming majority are Latino
- Despite being 13 percent of the population, immigrants comprise 16 percent of the labor force
- Immigrants are overrepresented in low-wage occupations
- Individual earnings are lower for immigrants overall
- Latinos are the nation's largest minority group and among its fastest growing populations
- Latino people are the second most discriminated against ethnic group after Blacks
- In 2011, less than 30% of Hispanic students graduated from high school, and less than 4% earned advanced college degrees
- More than 20% of Latino women under the age of 18 live below the poverty level
- 22% of Latino workers reported experiencing workplace discrimination, compared to only 6% of whites
- Latino women earn roughly 54 cents for every dollar earned by a white man, which accounts for a loss of almost \$24,000 in a year's time
- In 2011, Latinos had the highest dropout rate (17%) for students ages 16 through 24
- More than 6 million Latino children were in poverty in 2010, 2/3 of whom come from immigrant parents
- Roughly 30% of Latinos in the U.S. lack health coverage
- In 2010, the state of Arizona passed a law authorizing local police to check the immigration status of anyone they reasonably suspect of being in the United States illegally

- **The connection**

- It is estimated that 17,000 to 19,000 foreign nationals are trafficked into the U.S. each year
- Victims are lured with false promises of good jobs and better lives, and then forced to work under brutal and inhuman conditions
- Undocumented immigrants are highly vulnerable to being trafficked due to a combination of factors, including lack of legal status and protections, limited language skills and employment options, poverty and immigration-related debts and social isolation
- They are often victimized by traffickers from a similar ethnic or national background, on whom they may be dependent for employment or support in the foreign country
- In the U.S., victims of trafficking are almost exclusively immigrants
- Most of the immigrants that are trafficked are women
- In the U.S., immigrant women and children are particularly vulnerable to the deceptive and coercive tactics of traffickers because of their lower levels of education, inability to speak English, immigration status and lack of familiarity with U.S. employment protections
- Immigrants are especially vulnerable because they often work in jobs that are hidden from the public view and unregulated by the government
- The majority of trafficking cases in the U.S. have been reported in New York, California, and Florida, states with high concentrations of immigrants

- Aggressive immigration enforcement could further hurt victims of trafficking by instilling fear that leaving their traffickers would guarantee deportation
- Many traffickers threaten victims with deportation to their home countries if they escape, especially in the case of undocumented victims, who may have been told that they were receiving legal status when they accepted the job
- **The conversations**
 - As the world is becoming increasingly interconnected and mobile, individual identities are becoming even more diverse and are encompassing more than one nation, ethnicity or culture at a time. Subsequently, concepts such as citizenship or allegiance are changing and becoming more organic. Some things, however, remain the same, regardless: most people, no matter where they are from, are more alike than different. In essence, they generally all want the same things: better opportunities and a better life for themselves and their offsprings. Most people are neither terrorists nor plan on committing any crimes.

Ideals such as equal opportunity and inclusion are what makes the U.S. a strong nation and attracts many foreign-born, hard-working, productive individuals to this country. For many foreign-born individuals, the U.S. represents a unique place, possibly different than their places of birth, where they can find things that they may not have been able to find elsewhere: opportunities of economic nature or otherwise; respect and dignity; and maybe tolerance. In fact, naturalized Americans may have a deeper appreciation for this country based on their personal stories than someone who may have been born on U.S. soil and never had an opportunity to compare or choose their nationality. Either way, prejudice and biases can only alienate and detach people, whereas fair and equal treatment attract and nurture ties and allegiances.

Everyone — across the political spectrum — agrees that our current immigration system is broken. Although it's by no means certain that Congress will pass comprehensive immigration reform, the issues are too important not to discuss in our communities. And, the issues are perennial. We face many of the same questions policymakers have faced since the 1790s. Immigration policy concerns us all, and we all deserve to be part of the conversation surrounding it. If anything, the fact that the topic is controversial makes it even more urgent that we help each other untangle emotions from facts and see how complex policy can emerge from the democratic process. By doing so, we'll be able to better advocate for immigrants susceptible to trafficking.

For more helpful information about immigrants being trafficked, [visit this website](#).

FOSTER CARE

- **The facts**

- On any given day, there are nearly 428,000 children in foster care in the United States.
- In 2015, over 670,000 children spent time in U.S. foster care
- On average, children remain in state care for nearly two years and six percent of children in foster care have languished there for five or more years
- Despite the common perception that the majority of children in foster care are very young, the average age of kids in care is nearly 9
- In 2015, more than half of children entering U.S. foster care were young people of color.
- While most children in foster care live in family settings, a substantial minority — 14 percent — live in institutions or group homes
- In 2015, more than 62,000 children – whose mothers’ and fathers’ parental rights had been legally terminated – were waiting to be adopted
- In 2015, more than 20,000 young people aged out of foster care without permanent families. Research has shown that those who leave care without being linked to forever families have a higher likelihood than youth in the general population to experience homelessness, unemployment and incarceration as adults
- While states should work rapidly to find safe permanent homes for kids, on any given day children available for adoption have spent an average of nearly two years waiting to be adopted since their parental rights were terminated
- In 2015, of the 428,000 children in foster care, more than 17,000 had case goals of emancipation, or aging out after leaving foster care without a permanent family.
- Youth who age out of foster care are less likely than youth in the general population to graduate from high school and are less likely to attend or graduate college
- By age 26, approximately 80 percent of young people who aged out of foster care earned at least a high school degree or GED compared to 94 percent in the general population
- By age 26, 4 percent of youth who aged out of foster care had earned a 4-year college degree, while 36 percent of youth in the general population had done so

- **The connection**

- Human traffickers typically prey on individuals who are isolated and have a history of abuse, and unfortunately, many foster children fit this description as they have experienced sexual, physical and/or mental abuse prior to entering the system
- Foster children are more likely to be exploited again
- Often without a steady home or school life and without strong support networks, foster youth are at risk for recruitment
- Traffickers recruit foster youth directly from group homes with false promises of money and a family structure
- Youth who have been conditioned to view themselves as a paycheck, due to prior abuse and exploitation by both biological and foster parents, are at a heightened risk and vulnerable to the increased attention and generous overtures commonly used by traffickers

- **The conversation**

- Many of America’s child welfare systems are badly broken — and children can suffer serious harm as a result. Some will be separated from their siblings. Others will be bounced from one foster care placement to another, never knowing when their lives will be uprooted next. Too many will be further abused in systems that are supposed to

protect them. And instead of being safely reunified with their families — or moved quickly into adoptive homes — many will languish for years in foster homes or institutions.

When families aren't able to provide that safe haven, the foster care system should provide the structure, support and belonging that children need to grow. It's a big job to step in for struggling families, but unfortunately, something isn't working. We need to talk about how we can better support children who are thrown around the system.

For more helpful information about foster children being trafficked, [visit this website](#).