



HARMONY EDUCATION SERIES

EDUCATOR'S EQUITY COMPANION GUIDE

HARMONY MOVEMENT



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Educator's Equity Companion Guide

This guide is part of Harmony Movement's *Harmony Education Series*. It has been developed with support from the Ontario Ministry of Education.

While the *Educator's Equity Companion Guide* has been written with a focus on the school system, it is relevant and useful in other contexts, such as the workplace, social services or the community in general.

For more information about Harmony Movement's equity education programs and training resources, please visit www.harmony.ca

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PART

1

THE BASICS



CHAPTER 1

A Love Story

Eric is a young, gay, white man who did not finish high school because he had to work to support his parents. His employment opportunities are limited and he holds jobs that are unstable and underpaid.

Eric recently became engaged to his partner of three years, Marco, and is looking forward to their upcoming wedding. Eric's parents are upset that their son identifies as gay, and they think his friend Marco is a bad influence.

Marco is a young, gay, Filipino-Canadian man. He was raised in a middle-income neighbourhood and both his parents are lawyers. He attended university and has an MA in economics.

Marco loves Eric and knows they will have a great life together, but Marco's parents do not want him to marry Eric because they think he doesn't have much of a future.

There are many aspects of our personalities and they all have an impact on our lives. The story above is about two young men who are getting married. Although both Eric and Marco identify as gay, their identities and experiences are different.

- What stereotypes does society hold about gay men? How likely are we to consider other aspects of who they are, such as their ethnic background, socioeconomic status or ability?
- How closely does Eric fit the stereotype of a gay man? What impact might this have on his experiences both inside and outside the LGBTQ community?

- How closely does Marco fit the stereotype of a gay man? What impact might this have on his experiences both inside and outside the LGBTQ community?
- How might classism or racism influence the ways in which Eric and Marco experience homophobia?
- What does this story tell us about how homophobia intersects with other forms of discrimination?



I am a woman, a black woman born in London to Nigerian parents, a Muslim woman (who does not wear a hijab or veil). I am educated and self-employed but relatively low-earning. These things, as standalones or collectively, define how I see the world. One often bleeds into the other so comprehensively, they seem almost interchangeable. This is, in its most basic form, what we call intersectionality: the idea that we wear a lot of caps, and often in challenging one wrong, we are challenging many.

~ Bim Adewunmi, freelance journalist and blogger

Identity and Intersectionality

The story of Eric and Marco highlights the idea that we each carry a variety of identities, whether or not we are conscious of them. The many parts of our identity inform how we experience and perceive inequity in society. We cannot separate one part from another. This is called intersectionality.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, a prominent U.S. law professor, first wrote about the theory of intersectionality in 1989, introducing the idea that there is a relationship or intersection between different forms of discrimination. This is an important concept that helps us understand the complexity of systemic privilege and disadvantage. We will refer to it throughout this guide.

Intersectionality explains how we can experience discrimination and social privilege at the same time. Often, we are most aware of the parts of our identity that present obstacles. For example, Marco might be extremely aware of his sexual orientation and race because of the barriers he faces due to discrimination. He might be less aware of his middle-class status because this part of his identity allows him social privileges he may take for granted, such as access to university or safe and reliable housing.

Eric, on the other hand, may be very aware of the homophobia and classism he faces on a regular basis, but may not notice the systemic advantages he experiences based on his race.

The relationship between these different forms of discrimination is not a simple matter of mathematics, i.e. “racism + homophobia = double the discrimination”. Classism, homophobia and other inequities interact to create complicated experiences of discrimination for Eric and Marco.

There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.

~ Audre Lorde, writer and civil rights activist
