

A group of diverse people are shown from behind, hugging each other in a supportive embrace. The image is split diagonally, with a white background on the left and a purple background on the right. The text is overlaid on the purple background.

# EQUITY IN ACTION

The Power of  
Inclusive Advocacy

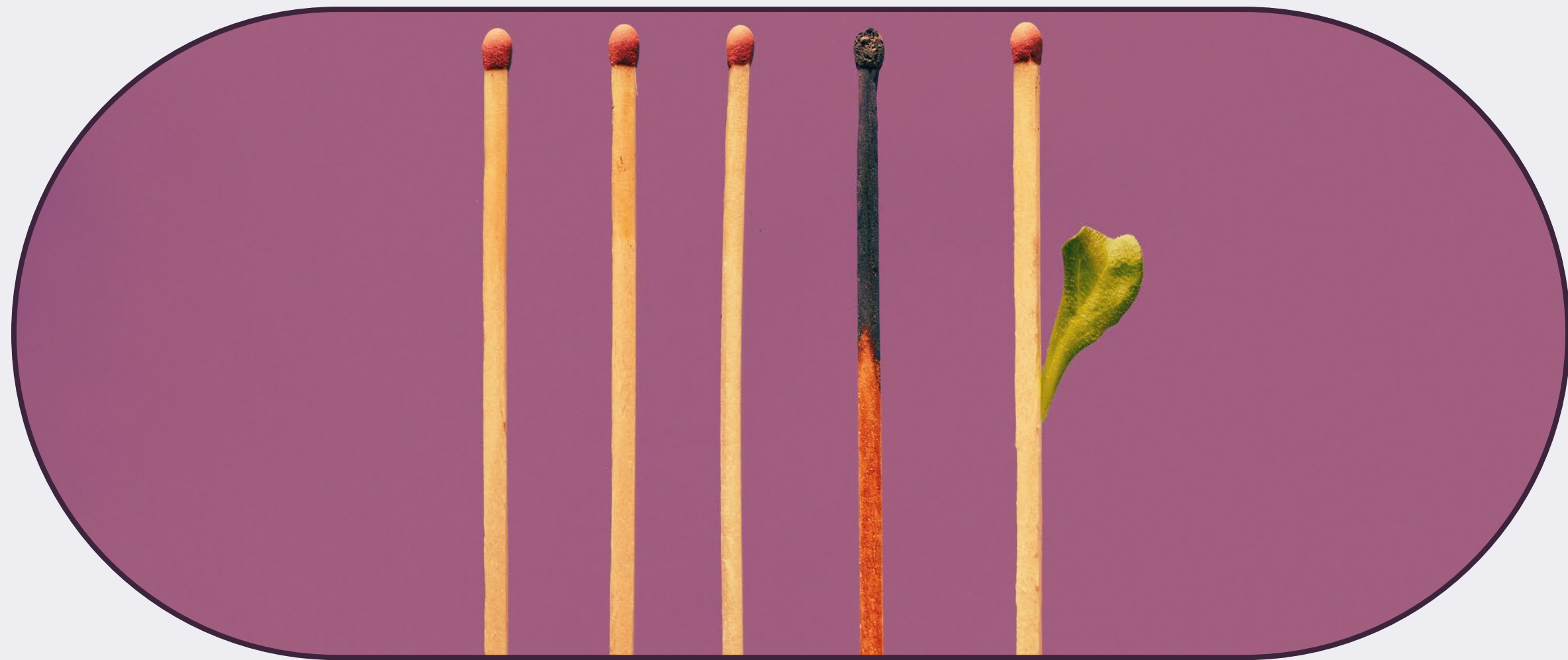
Presented by:  
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# Trigger Warning

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This workshop explores sensitive topics related to domestic violence. Please prioritize your well-being and step away or reach out for support, if needed. Remember, your health and wellness matter!



# Objectives



## Build Empathetic Awareness

Recognize and empathize with the systemic barriers faced by BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled, and other culturally marginalized, underrepresented survivors



## Develop Inclusive Strategies

Gain practical, relevant tools to create inclusive systems that elevate marginalized voices and ensure their active participation in shaping policies and services



## Champion Systemic Change

Commit to ongoing actions that promote equity, inclusion, and survivor-centered justice within advocacy spaces and beyond

# Pause & Reflect

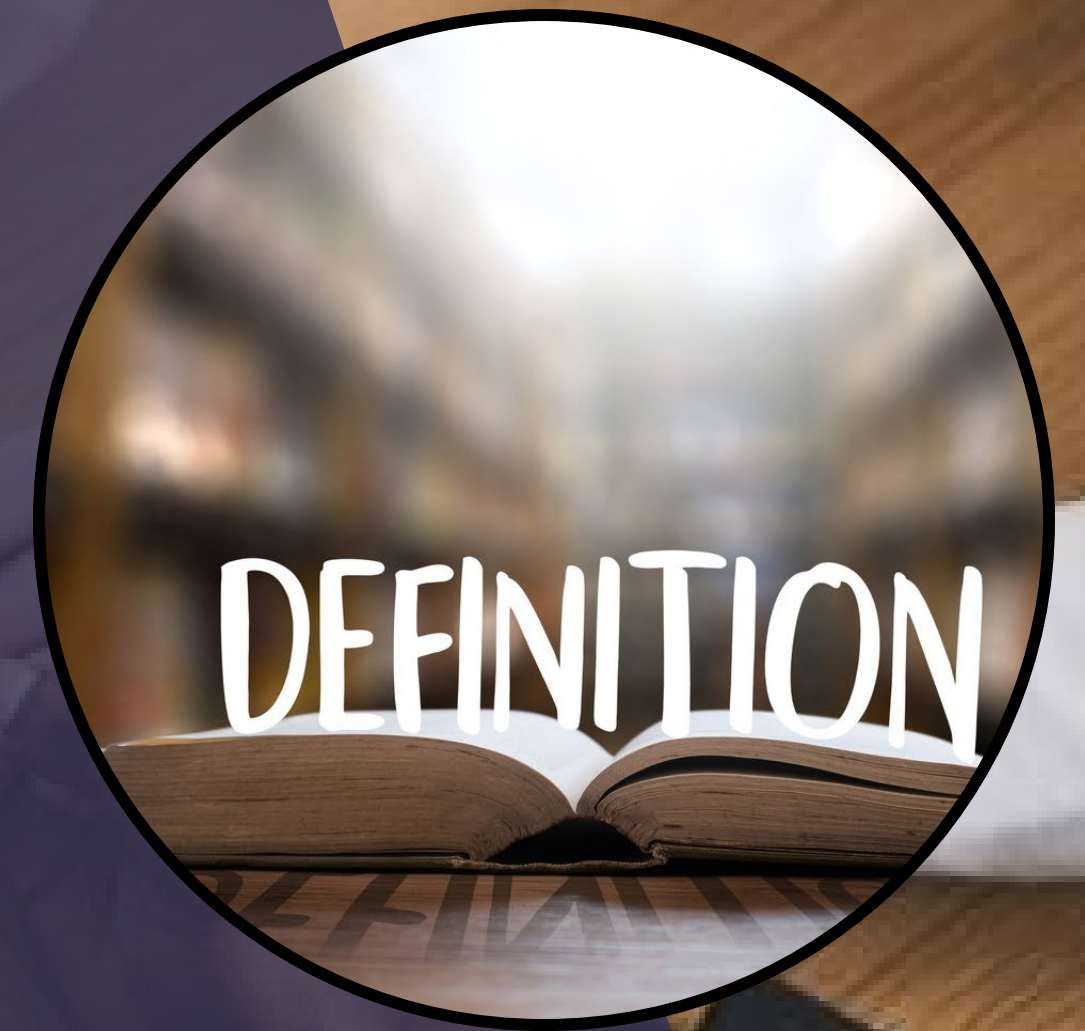


When you hear the term “inclusive advocacy”, what comes to mind?

# What is “Inclusive Advocacy”?

Inclusive advocacy means ensuring every survivor’s voice is not only heard but valued—especially those too often overlooked. It requires acknowledging how race, identity, ability, language, and other factors create barriers—and committing to dismantling them.

It’s not about speaking for survivors, but about creating space, sharing power, and building systems that center their lived experiences.





# Understanding the Barriers



## Systemic Inequities

- Lack of culturally competent services
- Underrepresentation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes
- Bias within institutions (e.g., law enforcement, healthcare)
- Disproportionate impact of policies and laws on marginalized communities



## Exclusionary Practices

- Discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.
- Limited access to resources (housing, legal aid, healthcare)
- Negative stereotypes and stigmatization of certain groups
- Barriers in communication (language, disability access, etc.)



## Layers of Oppression

- Intersectionality of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability
- Compounded vulnerability (e.g., LGBTQ+ survivors of color)
- Multiple forms of abuse experienced (economic, physical, emotional, etc.)
- Invisibility of certain identities within advocacy systems

# Why It Matters: A Reality Check

Black women are six times more likely to be killed than white women and experience intimate partner violence at rates 35% higher than white women and 2.5 times higher than women of other races.

([VAWnet](#))

More than 60% of LGBTQ+ people have experienced domestic, family or intimate partner violence and abuse in their lifetime. ([LGBTQ DVAf](#))

Individuals with a disability are [more than twice as likely](#) to be a victim of violent crime as those without a disability. ([OVC](#))

Latina/o partnerships reported higher rates of intimate partner violence (14%) than White couples (6%) with re-occurrence rates of 59% among Latina/o couples and 37% among White couples. ([National Institute of Health](#))

It is estimated that about 50% of the Deaf community has been sexually assaulted in their lifetime. However, approximately only 5% of Deaf survivors report the abuse. ([NSVRC](#))

More than half of AI/AN women (55.5 %) have experienced physical violence by intimate partners in their lifetime. ([NCAI](#))

Transgender people are over four times more likely than cisgender people to experience violent victimization, including rape and sexual assault. ([Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law](#))

# Poll #1



What challenges do you most commonly encounter when advocating for marginalized survivors?

- a) Discrimination or bias from service providers
- b) Lack of culturally relevant or accessible resources
- c) Legal or housing systems that are not trauma-informed
- d) Language or communication barriers



# Scenario: Tasha's Story

Tasha, a 29-year-old black woman, has been living in a local domestic violence shelter with her two young children for three months. With support from her advocate, she secured a housing voucher through the shelter's rapid rehousing program, along with assistance for her first month's rent and security deposit. Tasha works part-time and is pursuing her degree. Despite her commitment to rebuilding her life, her search for safe housing is met with constant obstacles:

- Landlords stop responding after she mentions the voucher.
- One tells her, "We don't take Section 8—too much red tape."
- Another cites "neighborhood fit" and vague concerns about her application.
- At one showing, she's told the unit was just rented—but she later sees it still listed online.
- A leasing agent asks if the children's father is still involved and whether she can "keep things quiet."

## Discussion:

- What would a truly inclusive system look like if it centered the lived experiences of survivors who face not just violence, but intersectional barriers like race, gender, and housing discrimination?

# Pause & Reflect



When systems fail, survivors often blame themselves.

What role can you play in shifting that narrative?



# When Help Isn't Helping: The Gaps We Overlook

## Gatekeeping Services

Eligibility requirements, documentation demands, and complex processes often prevent the most vulnerable survivors from receiving support, reinforcing cycles of harm, re-traumatization, and exclusion.

## One-Size-Fits-None

Programs built for the “average survivor” often overlook the nuanced needs of those navigating race, gender identity, disability, or immigration status — leaving them unseen and unsupported.

## Silenced Voices

When survivors are excluded from program development or policy decisions, systems often fail to meet their real-world needs—prioritizing efficiency over empathy and, in many cases, falling short of both.

# Scenario: Julio's Story

Julio is a 33-year-old gay Latino man who recently fled an emotionally, verbally, and physically abusive relationship. For months, his partner used threats of outing him to his conservative family and employer as a means of control. When the violence escalated, Julio sought help at a local domestic violence shelter—but was told they primarily serve women and families and had no available space for him.

Determined to find support, Julio reached out to a counseling center. During intake, he was repeatedly misgendered, and the staff made assumptions that minimized his experience, asking, “Are you sure it was really abuse?” and “Were you the aggressor, too?”

Now couch surfing with a friend, Julio fears losing his job because of frequent absences and emotional stress. He's unsure where to turn. Each time he's tried to access help, he's been met with dismissiveness, disbelief, or cultural insensitivity. Julio begins to wonder if the system was ever built for someone like him at all.

## Discussion:

- How do we challenge our own biases and assumptions when working with survivors from communities we may not fully understand, and how can we become more accountable in that process?



# Poll #2



Where do you feel least equipped or confident when supporting marginalized survivors?

- a) Navigating systemic oppression within institutions
- b) Advocating across cultural or language differences
- c) Supporting survivors with disabilities or access needs
- d) Addressing intersectionality in safety planning



# Scenario: Maya's Story



Maya is a 41-year-old Deaf woman who has survived years of abuse at the hands of her partner. In addition to physical and emotional violence, her partner controlled how she communicated, cutting her off from friends and family. When she finally found the strength to leave, her hands were injured in the last assault, making it painful to sign or write. At the local shelter, there was no ASL interpreter available, leaving her unable to fully communicate her needs. When she arrived at the courthouse for her protective order hearing, she learned no interpreter had been arranged. Sitting in the courtroom, unable to follow the proceedings, Maya felt completely powerless, invisible, and unheard. Despite her bravery, the system's barriers left her feeling as though her voice didn't matter.

## Discussion:

- What does it mean for a survivor's voice to truly be heard in a system that doesn't always speak their language—literally or figuratively?



# Reimagining Advocacy, Together

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Center  
Lived  
Experience

Strengthen  
Community  
Networks

Equitable  
Access & Care

“Build With,  
Not For”

# Collaborative Solutions



## Build Diverse Alliances:

Form partnerships with organizations that serve marginalized communities. Collaborating with groups that understand specific cultural, linguistic, or accessibility needs strengthens the overall support system for survivors.



## Inclusive Policies:

Incorporating survivors' voices into policy design ensures systems meet their real-world needs. By co-creating solutions with survivors, policies become more accessible, relevant, and compassionate—reflecting their lived experiences and empowering them to help shape the support they receive.



## Empathy in Training:

Provide continuous training for advocates, service providers, community members, and other key systems that emphasize empathy, active listening, and cultural humility. Understanding the unique experiences of survivors enhances the effectiveness of support.



## Shared Accountability:

Hold ourselves and each other accountable in the advocacy process. Collaborative efforts require shared responsibility to ensure systems, services, and resources evolve to meet the needs of marginalized survivors, promoting healing and growth in every interaction.



# Poll #3



If you could transform your advocacy approach to better support marginalized survivors, where would you start?

- a) Center survivor voices in shaping equitable systems—let lived experience lead the way
- b) Building deeper, more meaningful partnerships with marginalized communities
- c) Break down the silos between agencies to create holistic survivor support
- d) All of the above!





# Pause & Reflect



What is one belief, bias, or blind spot you discovered—or rediscovered—today that you're committed to challenging in your advocacy work?



# Resources

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Women of Color Network

[www.womenofcolornetwork.org](http://www.womenofcolornetwork.org)

Esperanza United

[www.esperanzaunited.org](http://www.esperanzaunited.org)

Asian-Pacific Inst. on Gender-Based Violence

[www.api-gbv.org](http://www.api-gbv.org)

National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

[www.niwrc.org](http://www.niwrc.org)

theNetworklaRed

[www.tnlr.org](http://www.tnlr.org)

Deaf Hotline

[www.thedeafhotline.org](http://www.thedeafhotline.org)







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# *Thank You!*

Stay In Touch!

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