Steps for Dealing with Oppressive Behavior in a Community

In order to create a safe and productive environment for activism and community, we have a zero tolerance policy towards oppressive behavior.

Oppressive behavior is herein defined as behavior that demeans, marginalizes, threatens, or rejects people or non-human animals based on a characteristic that cannot readily be justifiably changed. Examples are a person's gender, age, sexual orientation, race, mental health, culture, general appearances, income status as homeowner, renter or squatter, being a parent or a child, employed or unemployed, level of experience in activism, etc....

Whereas each instance of oppressive behavior is unique, each situation has the potential to be handled differently depending on the people involved. However, the following is a suggested continuum:

1. **Initial Warning:** If the offence is minor, an informal conversation between the affected parties may be sufficient to reach an agreement. If an initial warning is not sufficient, an intervention should be called. In addition to this, it might be necessary to ask the offender to temporarily leave the group and not to enter any of the groups affiliated gathering place(s) until the issue is sorted out and an intervention can be arranged.

2. **Intervention:** Anyone exhibiting oppressive behavior can be subject to an intervention by a group of concerned and/or affected people. The purpose of the intervention is to make it known to the offender that their behavior is not acceptable and that there are consequences for oppressive behavior. Also, it is an opportunity for the affected parties to settle the dispute, mediate an agreement, or find closure. The offender may be asked to make commitments to the person/people involved in the dispute and the larger community. If a person feels they have been unjustly singled out as an oppressor, they have the right to call an intervention of their own.

3. **Commitments and Ejection:** If the offender is not fulfilling the commitments they made to the person/people involved in the dispute and the larger community, the offender will be asked to leave the campaign. In order to prevent "campaign hopping" someone who has been asked to leave the group because of oppressive behavior will be identified to other campaigns, as well as the activist community at large.

4. **Follow Up:** The purpose of the follow up is for the community and/or individuals to make sure that the survivor of the oppressive behavior is receiving the support or other services they need.

Any type of sexual, verbal, or physical assault will be taken especially seriously. In addition to the above-mentioned continuum, it is suggested that a meeting be called without the offender before an original intervention. The purpose of the initial meeting is to come to a consensus about how the intervention should be handled, and what consequences the offender may face. Also, to make sure that the survivor is provided with the support structure and/or counseling, therapy, or additional services that they may need.

This is an evolving policy that is open to suggestions and change.
From Common Ground Relief