Cycle of Oppression

Dehumanizing The “Other”

GROUP or INDIVIDUAL TARGET OF OPPRESSION

Oppression is Internalized
When the target group comes to believe the negative stereotypes and prejudices about them as if they were actually true. The target group may begin to believe that their oppression is normal and deserved and begins to act in a self-destructive manner. TOXIC SHAME

HORIZONTAL HOSTILITY
displacement onto a safer target

Violence to Self
Self-directed violence includes a range of behaviors and beliefs, such as: substance-abuse, low self-esteem, suicide, self-mutilation/cutting, self-sabotage, feelings of worthlessness, lack of self-care, neglecting to assert boundaries, passivity, etc. DEPRESSION

Violence to Others
Violent behaviors or beliefs that are displaced onto a ‘safe-target’ include the following: war, homicide, genocide, psychological, sexual, or physical abuse, prejudice toward other similarly oppressed groups, etc. HOSTILITY

In either case, Violence to Others or Self, oppressive attitudes and beliefs propagated by cultural ideologies and the institutional structures that grow out of them, are internalized by the oppressed group or individual.

“The most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed…we are aware of the terrible role played by our education and religion in creating amongst us a false understanding of ourselves. We must be our own authorities, rather than wait to be interpreted by others.” ~ Steve Biko

Diagram Developed by Amal Kouttab, MA RDT San Francisco Women Against Rape (SFWAR)