

**USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender  
Special Emphasis Program (LGBT- SEP)  
Caribbean Area – Quarter #3 - May-2014**

**May 17<sup>th</sup>. is the International Day Against Homophobia**



The *International Day Against Homophobia*, held on May 17 every year, is a rallying event offering an opportunity for people to get together and reach out to one another. Fondation Émergence promotes, mainly on a pan-Canadian level, the *International Day Against Homophobia* and encourages organizations and individuals to highlight this event in their environment.

Why May 17<sup>th</sup>? Because is symbolic due to its significance in the improvement of the status of gays and lesbians. IDAHO proposed this date for annually holding a day set aside to fight homophobia. In removing homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses on a May 17, the World Health Organization (WHO) put an end to over a century of homophobia in the medical field.

Borne out of the International Conference on LGBT Community Human Rights held in Montréal from July 26 to 29, 2006, prior to the opening of the first World Outgames, the [Declaration of Montréal](#) included a recommendation to have an International Day Against Homophobia on May 17 of each year recognized.

**All information was obtained from [FondationEmergence.org](#)** ARTICLE LINK: <http://www.homophobiaday.org/>

**What is Homophobia?**

The *Fondation Émergence* gives the following definition of sexual diversity:

**Heterosexism** - Is the belief that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is the only acceptable way of being. This belief, which relies on the idea that the majority rules and is therefore normal, is often the source of homophobia.

**Homophobia** - It's all the negative attitudes that can lead to rejection and to direct or indirect discrimination towards gay men, lesbians, and bisexual, transsexual or transgender people or toward anyone whose physical appearance or behaviour does not fit masculine or feminine stereotypes. The following are variants of homophobia:

- Bi-phobia: aversion towards bisexual people or bisexuality;
- Gayphobia: aversion towards gay men or male homosexuality;

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- Lesbophobia: aversion towards lesbian women or female homosexuality.

**Transphobia** - Is a negative attitude or feeling, an aversion towards transgender people, transsexuals or people who are transitioning.

**Transgender Person** - Person who perceives themselves and identifies as belonging to a different sex and who feels the need to live that way. In contrast to a transsexual person, the transgender person refuses gender reassignment or a sex change. Also a transgender person is someone who does not conform to the norm imposed by male and female gender identities; some people consider themselves gender-fluid.

**Transsexual Person** - Person who has already changed their sex physically or a person who is making that transition through medical treatment or surgery. This transformation is usually irreversible.

**Two-spirited Person** - A two-spirited person is some who according to Amerindian tradition has two spirits, one female and one male.

**Intersex Person** - An intersex person is someone who shows physical features of both sexes.

**LBTI Communities** – LBTI is acronym used by the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender and Intersexes communities.



### **Where Does It Come From?**

The word **homophobia** appeared in the 1960's. George Weinberg, an American psychologist, seems to have been the first to use it in a study in 1969. He used it again in his 1972 book "Society and the healthy homosexual". K.T. Smith also used this word in 1971 in an article called "Homophobia: A Tentative Personality Profile".

Francophone authors quickly followed suit. Here is how Weinberg defined **homophobia** in 1972: "The fear expressed by heterosexuals of being in the presence of homosexuals, and the loathing that homosexual persons have for themselves."

Many have suggested using the term **heterosexism**, but the term **homophobia** has won the day. Other neologisms are gradually appearing such as **lesbophobia**, which is defined as an aversion for lesbians and lesbianism, and **biphobia**, which is an aversion for bisexuals and bisexuality.

### **Awareness**

Hostility towards homosexuals, men and women, has unfortunately always existed. What's new is that people are more aware of its existence and have started denouncing it. The mere absence of the word homophobia for so many years clearly illustrates society's refusal to recognize the legitimacy of a sexual orientation that was thought to be abnormal.

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Homophobia stems from individual, social, and systemic prejudice. It reveals a real hostility for or exclusion of homosexual persons, men and women, which has repercussions on every walks of life.

Like all attitudes and behaviour based on prejudice and hatred, such as sexism or misogyny, racism and anti-Semitism, homophobia has no serious foundation. It comes from one's and society's inability to grasp the differences of others, which are then perceived as a threat to individuals, and, consequently, society in general. Some secular and religious movements even pretend that full legal and social recognition of homosexuality will put the perpetuation of the human race in peril. Homophobia's premise is that homosexuality is inferior, abnormal and marginal.

### ***Manifestations of Homophobia***

Both on a conscious or sub-conscious level, homophobia surfaces in various ways and can even be internalized.

- **Homophobic Attitudes**  
Feelings or convictions that gays and lesbians are abnormal or sick
- **Homophobia-inspired Heterosexism**  
The false belief that everybody is heterosexual and that only heterosexuality is acceptable and legitimate. This belief is based on the idea that the majority sets the norm
- **Homophobic Language**  
The use of vocabulary and expressions that can span from jokes to insults
- **Interpersonal Homophobia**  
Non-verbal displays of being ill-at-ease, feeling unsafe or experiencing fear when in contact with gay men and/or lesbians
- **Institutionalized/Systemic Homophobia**  
The built-in institutional practice of putting gays and lesbians at a disadvantage
- **Opportunistic Homophobia**  
Being interested in homosexuality solely for financial or personal gain, and not wanting to be associated with being homosexual or with gay men and lesbians
- **Internalized Homophobia**  
An often sub-conscious form of homophobia that is a product of education and social values passed down by society' Gay men and lesbians, too, can adopt homophobic behaviour
- **Condoned (passive) Homophobia**  
Silence or lack of response to acts of homophobic language or behaviour that call for someone to intervene and put an end to them
- **Homophobic Violence**  
An extreme display of homophobia that leads to violence and can range from verbal assault to hate crimes

### **How to intervene when youths display homophobic behaviour?**

- Put an end to harassment by identifying the aggressor(s)'
- Identify the type of harassment by stating that it degrades sexual orientation'
- Open the debate by informing those involved that such behaviour will not be tolerated'
- Require the aggressors to modify their behaviour by asking them why they said or acted as they did'
- Put the victim's mind at ease by inviting him or her to inform you on such behaviours should they reoccur'.