

*Betrayal in the Land of the Free: Understanding the Impact of Erasure, Humiliation, and Exploitation of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Peoples of the United States*

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Abstract

The marginalization and social opprobrium of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender peoples has become an important sociopolitical agenda for the conservative right-wing government of the United States. While the double-bind of oppression of gender and sexual diversity in a nation founded in a philosophy of personal liberty and freedom may be self-evident to people of social conscience, the traumatic developmental impact that has in the lives of the GLBT communities is a topic that has been under-discussed even in GLBT mental health discourse. The concept is currently being pioneered as Oppression-Based Trauma by the faculty of Walden University.

The lived experiences of Oppression-Based trauma are, paradoxically, often recognizable through visible strategies of coping. These strategies can include: use of humor to minimize social stress or to gain approval by the dominant group; sexualized behavior that reflects a deeper desire for human contact and connection; the endeavor to feign lack of concern for social mistreatment or denial of social pain, apathy, and loss of voice; attempts to gain worth by conspicuous consumption and outward displays of capitalist success symbols; over-adaptation of dominant cultural paradigms for the purpose of gaining social and political justice; or overt rejection of friends and allies out of a lived experience of utter hopelessness. These strategies of coping are routinely misunderstood and misappropriated by a dominant group who maintains unearned privilege through the perpetuation of negative and controlling images of GLBT individuals.

The responsibility of changing the sociopolitical climate from one that operates through the perpetuation of social shaming and fear is shared by all who have a vested interest in the advancement of human dignity. Necessarily, this invites scrutiny of how the dominant culture, and its political machine in the conservative government of the United States, serves to perpetuate its unearned privilege through an elaborate system that scapegoats not only the experiences of gender and sexual diversity, but also racial/ethnic communities (including non-Christian communities) and other under-politically represented groups.