

NUANCE OF WORDS WEBINAR: Q&A

Q: Regarding “detainees,” can you expand on how to avoid that term or how to rewrite to avoid that word?

A: We do recommend just saying detained immigrant person or detained people, and that would be how to avoid the word and how to rewrite that with the correct terminology. Also, we can acknowledge that the term detainee is dehumanizing.

Q: Do you know of any resources that demonstrate the impact of language on solutions for staff or board members who might not understand the importance of this reframing?

A: We do have some resources, for example, on racial equity and gender-based language in the link that we sent out earlier that you can find on the resource page of baskinfoundation.org. Those resources can be for staff who don't understand the importance of this reframing. I think it can be helpful to do the exercises that you are going to see in the recording and through the link. I really think that helps people understand why it matters because even just that sentence of “how many girls were raped versus how many boys raped girls” by itself is going to make a difference. So I think that the key is to then also do your own research on language, and to make sure that you're really listening to the population that you're serving and asking for input from the population that you're working with so that it's not just you coming up with the idea.

Q: With all the increased knowledge about gender and language, do you get pushback when you use language like men rape women?

A: One of the things that I talk about in my category is that 98% of breast cancer survivors are womxn, and 2% are men. What happens is that most people are not upset that the focus is on womxn and gender-expansive individuals. There are people who are upset by the pink color and the gendered connotations of that, but, aside from that, I like to ask people why they're not upset about breast cancer programs and initiatives being focused on womxn because they are the majority of individuals affected, and why they are upset when we focus on the fact that womxn and gender-expansive individuals are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence is it upsetting when we bring up the fact that. That is what is happening, and specifically also violence against trans people. What makes it so that you are not upset about this focus in the realm of breast cancer, but you are upset about this focus in gender-based violence? That is one of the things I talk about.

Also, it goes back to the issue of all of us having to check our own privilege in a variety of different categories. It is uncomfortable, and that is something we should acknowledge, is to say to



somebody, "This is an uncomfortable thing." It is not fun to be part of a group that is contributing to the oppression of others. So, the question then becomes, "What are you doing about it?" What I also say often is all NFL players are men, but not all men are NFL players. So, just like there are many sexist men, not all men are sexist. All men and all womxn can check in with their own privilege for whatever group they belong to. As a white feminist, I can check in and ask myself, "What privilege do I have? How have I not been centering the voices of women of color in my work and what can?" That is an example that I can use, and I think using examples of what you have done in your discussions helps open the door. Also, pointing people to resources and doing your own research on resources. I hate to say it, but sometimes I give a book called Macho Paradox by Jackson Katz to men because, unfortunately, we are not in a place where hearing about this topic from womxn is always palatable. In that case, I also ask "Why is that?" Let's talk about that, because that isn't how it should be either.