



MANDELA WASHINGTON FELLOWSHIP

FOR YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS

Promoting LGBTQI Inclusivity

The Mandela Washington Fellowship welcomes Fellows of all backgrounds and identities, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, or intersex (LGBTQI). It is important that every Institute create and maintain an environment of tolerance and inclusion that upholds the human rights of every person, regardless of how they identify.

Through inclusive policies and thoughtful practice, faculty, administrators, and other Institute staff can build an environment that is truly welcoming of all Fellows. Studies show that creating an LGBTQI-supportive environment can significantly improve students' learning, engagement, and educational outcomes¹.

Best Practices for Promoting LGBTQI Inclusivity at Your Institute:

Before Fellows Arrive

- Identify the organizations, networks, and policies at your institution and in the community that aim to support LGBTQI-identifying students. Become familiar with these on your campus and identify entities that are active in the summer when the Institute takes place and that Fellows are able to access.
- Ensure that all documentation, administrative forms, and communication include gender-neutral language and allow Fellows to communicate their gender identity when appropriate.
- Identify or designate gender-neutral restrooms on campus. Binary (women/men) restrooms are not necessarily inclusive and can be unsafe spaces for transgender and intersex Fellows. Allow each transgender or intersex Fellow to use the restroom in which that Fellow is most comfortable, whether it's the gender-neutral restroom or a binary restroom.

During Orientation

- Provide information about LGBTQI organizations on campus or in the surrounding community. Connect interested Fellows with these organizations. This presents an opportunity to build connections between your institution and other organizations, provides Fellows with a welcoming and supportive environment, and may present valuable learning opportunities for Fellows who are working on LGBTQI and human rights issues in their home communities.

¹ GLSEN, *The 2015 National School Climate Survey*. <https://www.glsen.org/article/2015-national-school-climate-survey>.



- Ensure that each Fellow’s gender is listed accurately on paperwork. Work with staff and other Fellows to ensure that all Fellows are always addressed using their correct pronouns.
- Communicate to all Fellows that any harassment, including that based on nonconformity to expectations around gender, gender identity, and gender expression is not acceptable within the Fellowship. Religion can sometimes cause tension because of certain denominations’ perspectives on LGBTQI issues. All Fellows are entitled to their personal religious viewpoints but should understand that those viewpoints may not intrude on the rights of others, particularly in the Fellowship setting. The Fellowship is an inclusive program and the Institute is an opportunity for all Fellows to learn and grow in their leadership and careers. All Fellows are entitled to a safe and supportive environment.
- Communicate to all Fellows the specific courses of action available to them should they experience any harassment, including actions based on nonconformity to expectations around gender, gender identity, and gender expression. Explain ways Fellows can address harassment, identify staff members and resources they can reach out to, and outline the appropriate channels to report these behaviors. Refer Fellows to Section 9 of the Fellowship Terms and Conditions which states that Fellows are expected to maintain the highest levels of respect for all individuals engaged in the Fellowship, and failure to do so may result in dismissal.

During the Institute

- Use inclusive language. Use precise terms like lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) rather than homosexual or gay as an umbrella term. Use gender-neutral terms which include gender-non-conforming and intersex Fellows. Below is a non-exhaustive list of examples you may find useful:

| BINARY LANGUAGE | NON-BINARY INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| He/she | They, He/she/they |
| Open to both genders | Open to all genders |
| Of the opposite gender | Of another gender |
| Dear Sir/Madam | To whom it may concern |
| Ladies and Gentlemen | Honored Guests, Dear Colleagues |
| Guys, Ladies | Folks |
| Men and Women | People |
| Boyfriend or Girlfriend | Partner |
| Husband or Wife | Spouse |
| Mothers and fathers | Parents |
| Brothers and sisters | Siblings |

- Never tolerate abusive language that creates an unsafe environment for LGBTQI-identifying individuals. Always respond to such language and explain that it is inappropriate, hurtful, and creates a hostile environment for other Fellows.



- Maintain confidentiality within the confines of your professional responsibilities. Be careful never to “out” an LGBTQI-identifying person. If someone is not open in their sexual orientation or gender identity and they share that with you, be careful not to share that information with others.
- Keep an eye out for harassment and bullying and act to stop it. Be careful not to make the target out to be the weak one in the situation. The Fellowship does not tolerate harassment or bullying under any circumstances and are included as prohibited activities in Section 10 of the Fellowship Terms and Conditions.
- Respect the needs and wishes of Transgender Fellows. Use the names Fellows wish to be called and the pronouns they use, regardless of what official government documentation may say. When unsure, ask about their choices with empathy and respect and in a safe, private space.
- Encourage respectful disagreement on issues of sexual identity. Dialogue and discussion are helpful and healthy as long as they are respectful. Don’t shut down conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity, but make sure to facilitate the conversation down inclusive roads and to correct misconceptions as they arise. What sometimes begins as a difficult situation can open a productive dialogue and be a growth opportunity for all parties involved.
 - If you facilitate conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity, be careful not to single out LGBTQI Fellows or put them on the spot. Do not put LGBTQI Fellows in situations where they are obligated to debate their personal experience or argue the validity of their identity with their peers. LGBTQI Fellows should not be required to educate other Fellows or speak to all LGBTQI issues if they do not wish to do so.
 - Recognize that you may not be an expert and that each LGBTQI-identifying Fellow is different. Further, recognize that understandings of sexual orientation and gender identity are socially constructed and may differ from one cultural context to another. You will likely make mistakes and could occasionally be insensitive. Apologize when necessary, learn from your mistakes, and try to broaden your understanding of LGBTQI issues so you can best support all Fellows. You may consider attending your university’s Allies/Safe Zones Program to expand your knowledge on the subject.
 - If conversations on LGBTQI issues create significant conflict, it may be helpful to bring in an outside facilitator from your university or community. IREX is available to provide support and can work with you to identify experts to facilitate these discussions.
- Include information about LGBTQI-identifying people in your academic and leadership sessions, whether as examples of organizations working in the community, examples of leadership, or when discussing current events. You may encounter Fellows who express discomfort with attending sessions on these topics. Remind Fellows that all academic and leadership sessions are required, and exposure to challenging and different ideas is an integral part of the Fellowship. Fellows are entitled to their own opinions, and they do not need to agree with all of the ideas they encounter, but they are expected to listen and learn from these sessions and to treat all Fellows, speakers, Institute staff, and other individuals associated with the Fellowship with respect.



- If conflicts arise between Fellows because of issues of gender or sexual orientation, you should notify IREX for awareness and to provide support. You are also encouraged to review Fellowship resources related to appropriately navigating conflicts that arise, including the Interpersonal Conflict Resolution Workshop PowerPoint and the Fellow Module on Respect and Diversity which are available on Oba.
- Acknowledge that building an inclusive community is better for everyone, and make this a priority within the Institute.

Additional Resources for Institute Staff

- Teaching Tolerance Webinars <http://www.tolerance.org/webinars>
- GLAAD <http://www.glaad.org/reference>
- GLAAD <http://www.glaad.org/transgender/resources>
- Outright International <https://www.outrightinternational.org/>
- Human Rights Watch LGBT <https://www.hrw.org/topic/lgbt-rights>
- Council for Global Equality <http://globalequality.org/>
- Trans Student Educational Resources <http://www.transstudent.org/>
- Transvivor <http://transvivor.com/transgender-inclusion.html>

