# Out For A Change

## A Discussion Guide

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INTENDED AUDIENCE 12 years old and up
ESTIMATED TIME
Pre-view Discussion, 5-10 minutes
Setup and video screening, 30 minutes
Post-viewing discussion, 20-40 minutes
MATERIALS NEEDED
Out For a Change videocassette and Discussion Guide, TV and VCR, optional handouts

#### Introduction

Out For A Change is a documentary video focused homophobia in women's sports and how women of all sexual orientations in sport are affected. The video includes interviews with professional tennis players Martina Navratilova and Zina Garrison and Women's Sports Foundation Executive Director Donna Lopiano. In addition, college athletic directors, athletes and coaches talk about homophobia affects their participation in sport and their relationships with teammates and coaches. A homophobia workshop with a college women's basketball team shows how open discussion of this topic can help women athletes understand how homophobia can intimidate all women and stigmatize lesbian and bisexual women in sport. The video makes connections between homophobia and sexism in sport and describes several strategies for addressing homophobia.

The purpose of this three-part discussion guide is to assist groups learning about heterosexism and homophobia in women's athletics. This discussion guide is intended for use by anyone interested in assisting a group that is learning about homophobia and heterosexism in women's athletics. Among the settings in which this unit can be used are in classes, with athletic teams, at coaching conferences, at athletic administrators' meetings, and in meetings with parents of athletes.

The three parts of this video and discussion guide are: A preview discussion (20 minutes), the video (27 minutes), and a post-viewing discussion (40 minutes). The times for the preview and post-viewing discussions are minimum times. We recommend expanding these discussions with the use of preparatory preview readings and post-viewing activities, some of which are suggested in this guide) whenever possible.

The purposes of this discussion guide are a) to understand what homophobia and heterosexism are and how they affect women's athletics, b) to encourage fair treatment of all women in athletics regardless of sexual orientation, c) to identify actions individuals and athletic departments can take to address heterosexism and homophobia in women's athletics.

#### Preparing the group for discussion:

Because the purpose of discussion is to encourage interaction among participants, having the participants sit in a circle for the preview and post-viewing activities is most effective.

To create an open dialogue, identify guidelines for group discussion. Post the guidelines on the chalkboard or on newsprint during the discussions.

During the discussions, remind participants about the guidelines as needed

Some suggested guidelines include the following:

- Make sure everyone has a chance to speak
- No put downs
- Listen respectfully, No interrupting
- Everyone sets own boundaries for personal sharing

- Expect different perspectives
- Respect confidentiality
- Be open to learning something new

Try to set a discussion climate in which everyone can listen and talk respectfully even when conflicting perspectives are shared. Take care not to place any participants in the position of feeling pressured to disclose more about their personal identities or beliefs than they feel comfortable with.

### Preview Discussion (20 minutes)

1. Describe Out For A Change and explain the purpose for viewing and discussing the video.

Description: Out For A Change is a documentary video focused homophobia in women's sports and how women of all sexual orientations in sport are affected. The video includes interviews with professional tennis players Martina Navratilova and Zina Garrison and Women's Sports Foundation Executive Director Donna Lopiano. In addition, college athletic directors, athletes and coaches talk about homophobia affects their participation in sport and their relationships with teammates and coaches. A homophobia workshop with a college women's basketball team shows how open discussion of this topic can help women athletes understand how homophobia can intimidate all women and stigmatize lesbian and bisexual women in sport. The video makes connections between homophobia and sexism in sport and describes several strategies for addressing homophobia.

Note: Be sure to preview the video so that you are familiar with it before showing it to a group and attempting to lead a discussion about it.

**Purposes**: a) to understand what homophobia and heterosexism are and how they affect women's athletics, b) to encourage fair treatment of all women in athletics regardless of sexual orientation, c) to identify actions individuals and athletic departments can take to address heterosexism and homophobia in women's athletics.

2. Select 2-3 of the following sentence stems. Ask participants to individually write down the completions of the sentence stems you select. Ask participants not to write their names on their papers.

When people call women athletes or coaches "dykes" or make anti-gay comments about women in sport, I.......

A stereotype I've heard about lesbian athletes or coaches is.......

(For men) If I hear that a woman athlete or coach is a lesbian, I.....

(For women athletes) When I think of playing on team that includes lesbian or bisexual coaches and athletes, I.......

(For parents) When I think of my daughter playing on team that includes lesbian or bisexual coaches and athletes, I.......

After everyone is finished completing the sentence stems, collect all papers and redistribute them to the group so that everyone has one, but not necessarily their own. Ask each person to read aloud one or more of the completed sentence stems on the paper they have. The completed sentence stems should be shared without comment from anyone.

- 3. After everyone has read one or more of the sentence stems they have, ask the group to make some observations about a) the range of perspectives expressed and b) any themes they noticed.
- 4. Ask the group to keep these responses in mind as they view the video.

### Viewing Out For A Change (27 Minutes)

- 1. Post some focusing questions for the group to keep in mind as they view the video. Some suggested focusing questions include the following:
- ⇒ What part of the video made the greatest impression on you?
- ⇒ What new information about homophobia or heterosexism in women's athletics did you learn?
- ⇒ What questions were raised for you by the video?
- ⇒ Give some examples from the video of how homophobia and heterosexism affect women in athletics: Heterosexual women? Lesbians or Bisexual women?
- ⇒ What connections do you see between homophobia and gender roles and sexism?
- ⇒ What are strategies suggested in the video to address homophobia in sport?

### Post-Viewing Discussion (40 minutes)

- 1. After the video ends, ask participants to take some time to write a "one minute paper" on their reactions to the video. Then ask participants to talk for one minute with a partner about some of their reactions to the video.
- 2. Lead a discussion of the participants' responses to the focusing questions identified prior to viewing the video. Remind participants about the discussion guidelines.
- 3. Ask participants to identify examples of how each of the following groups can make athletics a safer place for all women regardless of their sexual orientation.

Athletic Conferences Sport Governing Bodies

Schools and Universities Athletic Directors

Coaches Athletes

Parents of Athletes Sports Fans

Friends of Athletes

Note: This discussion also can take place in small groups (3-5). The advantage with small groups is that people have more opportunity to talk and it isn't as intimidating as speaking in front of a larger group. If a small group format is used, bring the group back together as a whole for a summary and final comments. The advantage of a whole group discussion is that everyone hears everyone else, and the discussion leader has more control over the discussion.

- 4. Close the session by inviting participants to respond aloud to one of the following sentence stems.
- ⇒ Something I learned about homophobia in women's athletics is ...
- ⇒ Something in the video that really challenges me is....
- ⇒ A way homophobia in women's athletics affects me is...
- ⇒ Something I could to do to counteract homophobia in women's athletics is

# POINTS TO MAKE IN GROUP DISCUSSIONS ABOUT HOMOPHOBIA IN WOMEN'S ATHLETICS

- Addressing homophobia in women's athletics is a matter of ensuring safety and fair treatment
  for all athletes regardless of sexual orientation. It is not a matter of promoting or advocating
  any sexual orientation or "lifestyle".
- Homophobia is the problem, not any group of women regardless of sexual orientation.
- Homophobia limits and constrains the enjoyment of sport for all women.
- Women in sport have a right to be evaluated on the basis of their individual qualities and accomplishments, not on the basis of their sexual orientation.
- Regardless of differences in individual personal beliefs, teachers and coaches have a professional responsibility to make schools and athletic teams safe for all student-athletes regardless of their sexual orientation.
- We have all grown up learning to believe myths and stereotypes about lesbians that affect our perceptions and attitudes.
- Sexual harassment is unacceptable under all circumstances. The genders of the people involved is irrelevant.
- Blatant and subtle discrimination against women in sport is often based on erroneous assumptions about sexual orientation and negative stereotypes of lesbians.
- Homophobia is the glue that holds sexism together. Fear of being called a lesbian or being associated with lesbians often makes girls and women reluctant to challenge conventional notions of femininity and unequal treatment based on sex.
- Calling women in sport lesbians is a way to try to control and limit women's participation in sport and the development of women's sport in general.
- As long as women in sport are afraid of the lesbian label, it can be used to intimidate and control all women.
- It is important for all women in sport to learn how their own homophobia affects their attitudes and behavior.
- It is important for all women and men who care about women's sport to speak out against homophobia and refuse to be intimidated by it.
- Discrimination and prejudice against lesbians in sport, solely because of their sexual
  orientation is a social injustice similar to discrimination on the basis of gender, race, religion,
  or physical/mental ability.
- Lesbians in athletics who are also members of other social groups targeted for discrimination because of race, religion, socio-economic class, or culture experience the effects of multiple prejudices and injustices.

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A 1989 Department of Health and Human Services study reported that up to 30% of suicides among young people are lesbian and gay youth who are so isolated and depressed that they kill themselves. College and high school coaches are working with this age group.

Statistics show that hate crimes and harassment directed at many minority groups including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are often committed by high school and college aged young men. Coaches can provide leadership to stop this violent behavior.

Because many LGBT coaches or athletes do not feel safe enough to disclose their identities, other athletes and coaches often believe that destructive stereotypes of LGBT people are true.

Naming the presence of LGBT people in athletics as the problem rather than homophobia perpetuates ignorance, fear, and bigotry.

LGBT athletes learn to feel shame and self-hatred and to hide their identities at great psychological cost.

Homophobia constrains the behavior of heterosexual young people because they are afraid of being perceived as LGB. They restrict extracurricular interests, career choices, and friendships to avoid being labeled lesbian or gay.

Homophobia is used as a way to limit and marginalize women's sport. Many women do not choose to participate because they fear being associated with the lesbian label.

Homophobia is used to make men and boys fear expressing feelings and interests that are outside rigid traditional conceptions of masculinity.

#### LESBIAN, GAY AND BISEXUAL ATHLETES HAVE THE RIGHT TO

- Love themselves and feel proud of their identity
- Be physically safe
- Be as open about their LGB identity as they choose to be
- Be treated with dignity and respect by coaches, teammates, other athletes, athletic department support staff and spectators
- Speak out about LGB issues
- Participate in school or community-based LGB groups or activities
- Attend a school which has specific policies and procedures prohibiting harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation Attend a school where coaches and other educators understand and are sensitive to the challenges faced by LGB young people in a heterosexist society
- Have their athletic and academic performance evaluated without regard to their sexual orientation
- Be considered for all athletic and academic honors and awards without regard to their sexual orientation
- Have their academic, social, and emotional needs met by school programs in the same ways that the needs of other students are addressed
- Participate in all athletic department or team social functions with the partner of their choice when other athletes are invited to bring partners
- Information about safe sex that specifically addresses the needs of LGB people
- Have their families receive support and education about LGB issues

#### **EXAMPLES OF HOMOPHOBIA IN WOMEN'S SPORTS**

When women's sports promoters insist on projecting an ultra-feminine or heterosexy image for women athletes

When people assume that all women who excel in sport are lesbians

When parents, sport administrators, or athletes express a preference for men or married women as coaches for women's teams

When women avoid sport participation altogether or avoid particular sports because they are afraid of being called lesbians

When coaches, teammates, or parents warn athletes to avoid women in sport thought to be lesbians

When lesbian athletes (or women assumed to be lesbians) are harassed by coaches, teammates, administrators, and women athletes from other teams, male athletes from the same school, or spectators

When a lesbian coach is expected to keep her identity secret, stay away from lesbian events in the community or on campus, or pretend she is heterosexual.

When whole teams or an entire school's women's sports program is labeled lesbian by rival coaches or parents

When a coaches tells parents and prospective athletes that lesbians are not allowed on the team

When athletes are uncomfortable with a coach because she is believed to be alesbian

When coaches spread rumors among prospective athletes and parents about lesbians in other schools' programs

When coaches assure prospective athletes and parents that there are no lesbians on the team

When women thought to be lesbians are assumed to be a sexual threat to other woman on the team

When heterosexual teammates assume that lesbian teammates are leering at them in the locker room

When women thought to be lesbians are overlooked for coaching jobs, fired because of their lesbian identity, or threatened with public exposure if they don't resign.

# ASSESSING THE ATHLETIC CLIMATE FOR LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL ATHLETES AND COACHES

### **HOSTILE**

- School and department non-discrimination policies do not include sexual orientation.
- People believe that addressing the needs of LGB athletes is not part of the department mission.
- Anti-gay slurs or comments are commonly used by athletes and are not
- interrupted by coaches or other staff.
- LGB issues are not included in department diversity programming.

- People who believe it is important to address LGB issues in the athletic department are afraid to say so.
- LGB coaches or those thought to be are discriminated against (fired, not hired, harassed).
- LGB people would never bring a same-sex date or partner to team or department social events.
- LGB athletes or those thought to be are isolated or harassed by teammates or coaches.
- A coach's perceived sexual orientation is a factor in hiring: Heterosexual coaches are preferred.
- Coaches have formal or informal policies barring LGBs from their teams.

#### **CONDITIONALLY TOLERANT**

- School policies on non-discrimination and harassment include sexual orientation, but few
  people are aware of it and there is no direct connection between the policies and
  programming.
- LGB coaches and athletes are tolerated as long as they keep their identity hidden.
- Administrators allow individual coaches or teams to address LGB issues but prefer that it be done privately.
- The needs of LGB athletes are treated as individual counseling issues.
- If parents or athletes complain about the athletic department addressing LGB issues the program is immediately in jeopardy.
- LGB coaches or athletes who become too visible in the community or on-campus are warned that their visibility is a problem.

#### **OPEN AND INCLUSIVE**

- LGB coaches, staff, and athletes are publicly out if they choose to be.
- School non-discrimination policies include sexual orientation and are known and used by staff and athletes.
- LGB athletes and staff are welcomed to bring partners to department or team social events.
- LGB athletes have access to school-based support and social programs designed to meet their needs.
- All athletic department staff members participate in staff development programs designed to help them address homophobia among athletes and to respond to the needs of LGB athletes.
- The athletic director publicly supports programming to address homophobia in athletics and the needs of LGB athletes.
- Coaches and staff regard making athletics safe for LGB and heterosexual athletes as a part of their professional responsibilities.

- Athletes or coaches who engage in anti-gay actions are disciplined.
- Parental complaints or concerns about LGB coaches or athletes are received cordially, but administrators support and coaches value diversity in the athletic program.

A coach or athlete's sexual orientation is not a factor in determining their eligibility for teams or coaching positions.

# MAKING ATHLETICS SAFER FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL COACHES AND ATHLETES

- Educate yourself and colleagues about homophobia in sport (read, attend workshops, talk with school counselors or community groups).
- Speak up to object when you hear slurs, jokes or other comments or actions that demean or attack lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) people.
- Use inclusive language that does not assume that all coaches or athletes are heterosexual.
- Use the words "lesbian," "gay," and "bisexual" in positive ways.
- Always assume that there are LGB people on athletic teams, among the coaching and support staff even if they have chosen not to identify themselves.
- Monitor your own stereotyped beliefs about LGB people and commit yourself to unlearning them.
- Ask LGB friends or colleagues how you can show support for them.
- Propose a non-discrimination policy for your athletic department that includes sexual orientation.
- Know what campus groups or agencies provide support for LGB students and staff.
- Make it clear to athletes and coaches that anti-gay prejudice will not be tolerated.
- Prepare to answer questions from parents about lesbian, gay, or bisexual people in your program in ways that do not support anti-gay prejudice.
- Prepare to answer questions from the media about homophobia or LGB people in sport in ways that do not support or accept anti-gay prejudice.
- Treat all athletes and coaches fairly and respectfully regardless of their sexual orientation.
- Make clear your expectations for acceptance of diversity among all members of athletic teams.
- If LGB athletes or coaches identify themselves to you, respect their right to confidentiality and privacy.
- Be prepared to provide information about Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) to parents of LGB athletes.
- Expect the same standards of behavior from all athletes regardless of their sexual orientation.

#### WHAT CAN ATHLETES DO TO MAKE SPORTS SAFE FOR ALL

- Stop using anti-gay or other slurs or comments that demean groups of people
- Speak out against prejudiced comments and slurs made by others
- Do not let others intimidate you by calling you gay or lesbian
- Judge teammates and coaches on the basis of their character and personality, not their sexual orientation
- Support teammates who are targeted by anti-gay harassment, vandalism, or violence
- If you are targeted by anti-gay discrimination, harassment, or violence, tell someone who can help
- Support lesbian, gay, or bisexual teammates who choose to identify themselves to others
- Respect the rights of all teammates to safety and privacy
- Respect the rights of all teammates to set boundaries on relationships with other teammates
- Do not make assumptions about teammates' or coaches' sexual orientation based on appearance
- Do not make assumptions about teammates or coaches based on their sexual orientation
- Assume that every team is a mixed group of gay/lesbian, bisexual, and straight people
- If a teammate is depressed or afraid about sexuality issues, encourage them to seek help (counselors, coaches, trained peer support groups)
- Do not tolerate anti-gay harassment directed at individuals or teams from spectators, opponents, coaches, or teammates
- Encourage your athletic department or coach to schedule seminars on homophobia, racism, sexual harassment in sport
- Understand that when someone uses anti-gay slurs or harasses lesbian, gay or bisexual people they are expressing prejudice and fear
- Take classes or seminars that will help you to better understand prejudice and discrimination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and religion

#### WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN A PARENT POPS THE QUESTION?

Suggestions for coaches' responses to parents' questions

Most coaches of women's college athletic teams have been asked "the lesbian question" by parents of prospective recruits. Typically, parents ask this question because they have concerns about their daughter associating with lesbian athletes or coaches based on stereotypes and prejudices about lesbians.

The problem is not that there are lesbians in athletics. The problem is the prejudice and fear that prompts parents and athletes to ask the question and coaches to fear answering it.

There are a number of different responses to the lesbian question that are not blatantly discriminatory (I don't allow lesbians on my team) or knee jerk denial (We never have lesbians on my teams). Maybe one will be helpful to you.

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DISMISSAL: I don't know and don't care. That's not a question I ask recruits. If we do, it's not one of my concerns and has never been a problem.

QUESTION: Could you say more about why you ask that question? What is your concern about this?

REFRAME: Yes. College is a time when students learn to live with all kinds of social diversity: racial, ethnic, religious, cultural. Lesbians and gay men are one more kind of diversity all college students encounter. College is a time for young people to learn tolerance for people who do not share their beliefs or life experiences. College athletics is one of those opportunities.

DEFLECT: What I care about is that my athletes are respectful of each other, have good character, get good grades, and work hard to be the best athletes they can be. I've found that an athlete's sexual orientation has little to do with these qualities.

AFFIRM: Yes we do. Of course it depends on the year. Some years we do and others we don't. It's not an issue I'm concerned about and I hope you aren't either.

CITE SCHOOL POLICY: Our school has a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation. The athletic department abides by that policy.

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING HOMOPHOBIA IN ATHLETICS

#### **SAFETY**

- Lesbian and gay athletes and coaches should not be subjected to verbaland physical harassment from coaches, athletes, fans, or the school community (anti-gay slurs, pushing or shoving, property damage, graffiti directed at a particular person or group).
- Lesbian and gay coaches and athletes should be able to participate in a team and athletic
  department free of hostility. This refers to actions not directed to a particular person or
  group, but still create an anti-gay climate (anti-gay slurs, innuendo, comments, graffiti).
- Sexual Harassment Policies should include specific references to harassment based on sexual orientation.
- Coaches, athletes, other athletic department personnel, or students who participate in the
  physical or verbal harassment of lesbian or gay people or who contribute to a hostile
  environment for gay and lesbian athletes and coaches should receive appropriate education
  and discipline.

#### FAIR TREATMENT/EQUAL ACCESS

- Athletic Department non-discrimination policies should prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the department and on teams.
- The Athletic Department should have guidelines for coaches to help them address parental concerns about lesbians and gays in athletics in ways that are consistent with non-discrimination policies.
- Lesbian or gay athletes and coaches should be able to identify themselves if they choose to without fear of negative consequences (loss of job, negative performance evaluation, loss of scholarship, loss of starting position, dropped from team).
- Lesbian or gay coaches and athletes should be welcomed to bring partners to department or team functions when other athletes or coaches are invited to bring their partners.
- Domestic partnership benefits available to heterosexual coaches and other department personnel also should be available to lesbian and gay coaches and staff.
- A coach or athlete's sexual orientation should not be a factor in determining her or his eligibility for teams or coaching positions.
- A coach or athlete's sexual orientation should not be a factor in determining hisor her eligibility for athletic or academic honors or awards.
- Lesbian or gay athletes and coaches should be able to participate in community or school-based LGB social, educational or political events or organizations without fear of reprisal.

#### **SUPPORT**

- Lesbian or gay athletes and coaches should have access to school or community-based counseling, social, and educational groups.
- Parents of lesbian or gay athletes should have access to school or community-based support and educational groups for parents with LGB children.
- Athletes or coaches who participate in anti-gay harassment should have access to school or community-based counseling services.
- Coaches should know about school or community-based groups who can provide assistance in addressing anti-gay incidents and the needs of lesbian and gay athletes.
- Administrators should support coaches and athletes in addressing anti-gay incidents.

#### **EDUCATION**

- Staff development programs for coaches and other support staff should address homophobia in athletics
- Athletic staff should know about departmental policies addressing anti-gay discrimination.
- Educational programs for athletes should address homophobia
- Athletes should know about departmental policies addressing anti-gay discrimination.
- Educational material and department policies addressing homophobia should be given to prospective athletes, parents of athletes, and coaches.

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