

Tool 14: Reflection on intersectional voices

Consider how dominant social views impact on people's experiences, and how intersectionality can change this.

Read the testimony below:

So this is a personal one. I got diagnosed with breast cancer in Feb this year and there's been a few issues as I went through this cancer journey. First I should acknowledge that the whole healthcare system was very supportive. Everybody I met was kind and understood what they were doing and what was happening to me as best they could. However, there were still a few issues and there were times I felt I could have been treated better, or times I felt that maybe because of my colour there was an issue. The first one was when I was being offered – I was told I might have a mastectomy – if I did the first thing I questioned was I to be given a prosthesis to replace my breast. Unfortunately, there's no black ones, all of them were white.

After that I had to go through radiotherapy. The radiotherapy team was excellent, they bent over backwards for me and did everything they could to make me feel comfortable, however when it came to dye they used to mark where the rays were going to pass, to mark your breast. Unfortunately my skin is dark and so they really struggled to see the marks. And as the radiotherapy carries on the darker my skin becomes, so actually at the moment my skin is very dark, and they really struggled. And you would have thought after all these years, surely, of treating many women with black breasts they would have thought of a different way of addressing this issue around the dye. They had to use something to trace it every time I went.

The other thing I also noticed was that I could have done with someone like myself to help me understand things better and also explain things a little bit better, because there are some things that were difficult even though I see myself as quite able. So I was just thinking if someone who doesn't understand English, somebody can't understand how the system works, it was very very difficult for myself to understand what was being explained on the phone, making appointments and all those things. So as a personal experience, I kind of thought maybe if I was a white woman it would have been a little bit easier for me to go through this.

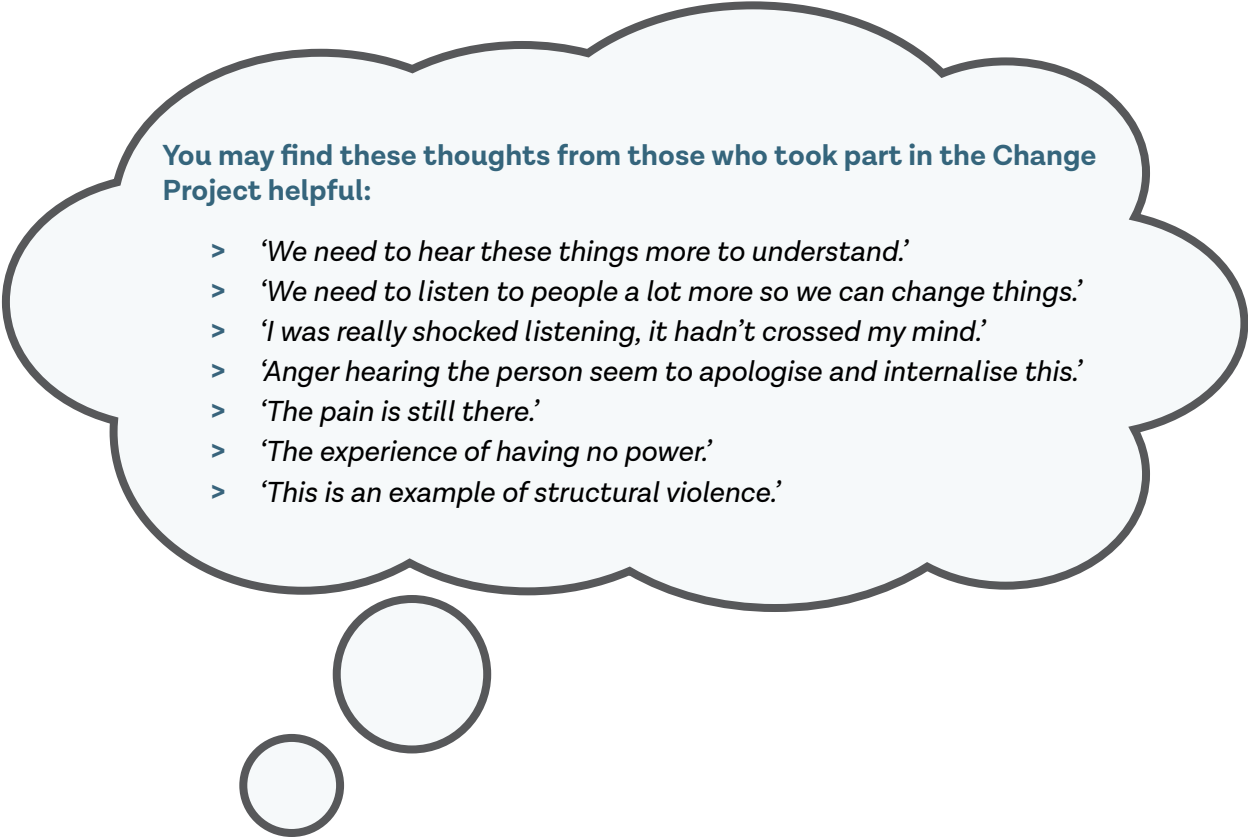


Click below to listen to the audio of the above testimony



Reflective questions:

- > In what ways have dominant views impacted on this person?
- > How have forms of oppression and inequity intersected and interacted?
- > How does the lens of intersectionality make this visible?



You may find these thoughts from those who took part in the Change Project helpful:

- > *'We need to hear these things more to understand.'*
- > *'We need to listen to people a lot more so we can change things.'*
- > *'I was really shocked listening, it hadn't crossed my mind.'*
- > *'Anger hearing the person seem to apologise and internalise this.'*
- > *'The pain is still there.'*
- > *'The experience of having no power.'*
- > *'This is an example of structural violence.'*