

INEQUALITY IS

Carmen Vazquez on inequality and LGBT rights

Carmen Vazquez, an LGBT activist and organizer since 1978, explains how discrimination against LGBT people leads to many different kinds of inequality. Despite recent wins with marriage equality, many people still fear losing their jobs, healthcare, and basic rights because of their sexual orientation.

A conversation about inequality in all its forms.

Transcript begins.

CARMEN VAZQUEZ: There's a civil rights frame in the United States that promotes equality, but I don't think it works. Equality is the floor and justice is the goal.

[Inequality is logo. A graphic black equal sign with an orange slash through it. #InequalityIs. Carmen Vazquez, LGBT activist and organizer since 1978. A woman with gray hair softening her glass frames, wearing a blue shirt and jacket.]

Equality is not justice. The concept of removing inequality and moving towards justice is hugely important to communities of color and to the lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender movement. So we recently had a huge victory. We have marriage equality, and that's great, it's something we should have the right to choose. But it doesn't guarantee us that we will not be fired from our jobs; it doesn't guarantee access to the kind of healthcare that you need; it doesn't guarantee that our youth will not continue to be 40 percent of the homeless population. Discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people leads to many different kinds of inequality. It leads to lesbian, gay, transgender people being treated with hostility in the schools, being bullied, which then leads to them dropping out of the system, which then leads to them being on the streets. It means that in many, many, many states in this country people are afraid they'll lose their jobs if they are open about their sexual orientation. It leads to older people not being able to get treated adequately in nursing homes. The notion of equality ends legal discrimination, but it doesn't do much to change hearts and minds. That's the struggle. That's the work that we still need to do. Equality is not where we need to stop, justice is where we need to continue to move forward.

[Inequality Is Logo. Join the conversation. #InequalityIs.]

End of transcript.