

“Thinking about Privilege”

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Name _____

As I read the statements aloud, keep a tally of the number of statements that apply to you. If you feel uncomfortable with any statement, you do not have to respond. This activity has been designed to provide you and your classmates an opportunity to understand the intricacies of privilege, and how we tie the construct of privilege to our social identities. This exercise is not to make anyone feel guilty or ashamed of their privilege or lack of, but it is to highlight that everyone has some privilege, even as some have more than others. By recognizing our privileges, we can recognize how to work for social equality. This is an introspective activity, and it is not designed to make you share things which you do not want to share.

Discussion with your group: (questions for you to think about as you process the activity)

1. Did anyone think that they had experienced an average amount of privilege, but it turned out to be more or less than they thought?
2. Were there certain statements that were more impactful than others on your understanding of privilege?
3. Were there statements made that you hope would not be asked? Were there any you wish had been asked? (Feel free to write them down)

Negative Privilege Statements

- If you were ever called names because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- If you were raised in an area where there was prostitution, drug activity, etc.
- If you ever tried to change your appearance, mannerisms or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed.
- If you ever had to skip a meal or were hungry because there was not enough money to buy food when you were growing up.
- If one of your parents was unemployed or laid off, not by choice.
- If your family ever had to move because they could not afford the rent.
- If you were ever discouraged from academic pursuits or jobs because of race, class, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- If one of your parents did not complete high school.
- If you ever had to rely primarily on public transportation.
- If your ancestors were forced to come to the USA not by choice.
- If you were ever ashamed or embarrassed of your clothes, house, car, etc.
- If you went to school speaking a language other than English.
- If you have a disability.
- If you were raised in a single parent household.
- If you saw members of your race, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation portrayed on television in degrading roles.
- If you were ever denied employment because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- If you were paid less, treated less fairly because of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- If you were ever accused of cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.
- If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- If you were ever afraid of violence because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- If your parents did not grow up in the United States.

Positive Privilege Statements

- If your parents were professional, doctors, lawyers, etc.
- If there were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up.
- If your parents brought you to art galleries or plays.
- If you attended a private school or private summer camp.
- If you were ever encouraged to attend a college by your parents.
- If prior to age 18, you took a vacation out of the country.
- If your family owned your own house.
- If you were ever offered a good job because of your association or connection with a friend or family member.
- If you ever inherited money or property.
- If you were generally able to avoid places that were dangerous.
- If your parents told you that you could be anything you wanted to be.
- If there were people who worked for your family as servants, gardeners, nannies, etc.
- If your parents attended college
- If your parents told you that you could be anything you wanted to be

- If you have health insurance
- If you own a car.
- If you were ever ashamed or embarrassed of your clothes, house, car, etc.
- If you went to school speaking a language other than English
- If you have a disability.
- If you were raised in a single parent household
- If you saw members of your race, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation portrayed on television in degrading roles.
- If you were ever denied employment because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- If you were paid less, treated less fairly because of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- If you were ever accused of cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.
- If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- If you were ever afraid of violence because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.
- If your parents did not grow up in the United States.