

## **OBSERVING PRIVILEGE: Activity Guide**

### **GOAL:**

To examine unearned privilege based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, etc

### **OBJECTIVES:**

Participants will be able to:

- Recognize that privilege is unearned
- Recognize the diversity present within the group
- Explain different types of privilege
- Recognize the importance of not making assumptions
- Recognize how and why diversity is valuable to an organization

### **TIME:**

45 minutes

Can be shortened if needed by using fewer statements

### **GROUP SIZE:**

15 or more (ideally)

### **MATERIALS:**

List of Statements

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

#### **Setup:**

Check the activity area for hazards, such as rocks, roots, logs etc. which may be tripping hazards as people are moving around. The ideal activity area will be quiet, away from distractions and in a large enough space for the group size you have. The circle formation requires less space than the line formation. By using an outside space an unfamiliar 'learning' environment is presented, which will allow participants to become alert and introduces sensual consciousness.

#### **Introduction:**

It is important to create a safe environment, and establish ground rules. If the group is unfamiliar, spend time on introductions and ice breakers. Explain that once the activity and discussion are over, while the general activity may be discussed the specifics of the activity, and specific details of participants responses may not be discussed.

Explain that everyone will stand in a circle (or line) holding hands with the people on either side of them. A series of statements will be read out to the group, and they will respond by either taking steps forwards, backwards or remaining stationary as each question pertains to them. As people begin to move forwards or backwards, they are to continue holding the hands with the people they are connected to for as long as possible, stretching out where necessary. However,

eventually it may no longer be possible to stay connected, and at that point they need to break the connection and let go.

Explain to participants that this activity is meant to challenge them - however, it is important that they feel safe, therefore participants may remain stationary if they are uncomfortable moving forward or backward on any question asked.

No one other than the facilitator may speak during the activity.

**Activity:**

Move participants to the space where the activity will take place. Create transition by asking them to remain silent as they move to the activity space. Participants form the circle (or line) holding hands. The facilitator will then begin reading the statements aloud, pausing for a few seconds after each statement.

**Statements:**

- If when you walk into a store, the workers sometimes suspect you are going to steal something because of your race, take one step back
- If you have attended private school, take one step forward
- If you studied the history and culture of your ethnic ancestors in elementary and secondary school, take one step forward
- All those who come from, or whose parents came from rural areas, take one step back
- All those who have been taken to art galleries or museums by their parents as a child, please take one step forward
- If you had negative role models of your particular identity (religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity) when you were growing up, take one step back
- If school is not in session during your major religious holidays please take a step forward
- All those with immediate family members who are doctors, lawyers, or "professionals", take one step forward
- If you or your ancestors have ever learned that because of your race, skin color, or ethnicity, you are ugly or inferior, take one step back
- If you can turn on the television or open the front page of the paper and see people of your ethnicity or sexual orientation widely represented, please take one step forward
- All of those who ever got a good paying job because of a friend or family member, please take one step forward
- All those who have never been told that someone hated them because of their race, ethnic group, religion or sexual orientation, take one step forward

- If you have ever been afraid to walk home alone at night, please take one step back
- If there were times in your childhood when you went hungry because your family couldn't always afford food, please take one step back
- All those who were given a car by their family, take one step forward
- If you can walk down the street holding hands with your partner without fear, please take one step forward
- All those raised in homes with libraries of both children's and adult books, please take one step forward
- If you have difficulty finding products for your hair or someone to cut your hair, please take one step back
- All those who commonly see people of their race or ethnicity as heroes or heroines on television programs or in movies, take one step forward
- All those with parents who completed college, take one step forward
- All those who were told by their parents that you were beautiful, smart and capable of achieving your dreams, take two steps forward
- If your parents had to sit you down when you were young and explain to you "this is what people might call you, and this is how they may treat you, and this is how you should deal with it" because they knew you were going to encounter it and because it was an important issue in your family and community, take one step back
- If, prior to your 18th birthday you took a vacation outside the US, not including Mexico, take a step forward
- If you were raised in a home where the newspaper was read daily, take one step forward
- If one of your colleagues or students ever wished you a Merry Christmas when you left for break, forgetting/or not knowing that you did not celebrate Christmas, please take one step back
- If you can easily find public bathrooms that you can use without fear, please take one step forward
- Hispanic children are three times more likely than White children to have no medical insurance. Even though African Americans are more likely than White children to be covered through publicly subsidized health care programs, they are still twice as likely to be uninsured as White children. All Latinos and African Americans, take one step back (S.F. Chronicle 10/6/92 report of study by Institute for Health Policy Studies)
- If your parents spoke English as a first language, please take one step forward
- If you have ever had a crush on someone, but were unable to tell anyone because you were afraid that people would judge you, please take one step back

- If you can go into a supermarket and easily find staple foods which fit into your cultural traditions, please take one step forward
- If you were afforded the opportunity to attend summer prep courses at a local community college before going to university, please take one step forward
- All those who commonly see people of their identity (religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity) on television or in movies in roles that you consider degrading, take one step back
- If you can arrange to be in the company of people of your identity (religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity) most of the time on campus, please take one step forward
- All those who have ancestors who, because of their race, religion or ethnicity, were denied voting rights, citizenship, had to drink from separate water fountains, ride in the back of the bus, use separate entrances to buildings, separate restrooms, were denied access to clubs, jobs, restaurants, were precluded from buying property in certain neighborhoods, take one step back
- For every dollar earned by white men, women earn only 72 cents. African American women earn only 65 cents; and Hispanic women earn only 57 cents to the dollar. All white men please take 2 steps forward

**Evaluation:**

Circle up (sitting or standing) and process the activity as a group. Questions to ask the group include:

- How did it feel to take part in the activity?
- What did you observe?
- What were you aware of?
- How did it feel to take steps forwards?
- How did it feel to take steps backwards?
- How did it feel to be left behind as people took steps away from you?
- How did it feel to move forward and leave others behind?
- How did it feel to be in the front?
- How did it feel to be in the back?
- What did it feel like when you had to let go of someone's hand?
- What was the point of this activity?
- How can you apply what you learned here?