

Activity: Privilege Walk



TIME ESTIMATE
45 minutes



MATERIALS
Question sheet (for facilitator) and large physical space for movement

PURPOSE

To become aware that our privilege, position in society, and life experiences deeply impact how we see and experience the world.

DESCRIPTION

In this movement-based activity, participants will observe the intricacies of privilege and power in society. Participants will explore and reflect upon the ways that privilege does or does not manifest in their own lives and social identity groups they belong to. This activity is adapted from the [University of Houston](#).

STEPS

- 1 Introduce the activity. Have participants form a straight line across the room, facing the same direction, leaving space in front and behind.
- 2 **State the following:** "Listen to the following statements, and follow the instructions given. If the statement read applies to you, you will be asked to either take one average-length step forward or backward. This activity will be done in silence. If anyone feels uncomfortable taking a step after any of the statements, please stay where you are, but remember the statement read. This is a reflective exercise to understand how privilege affects your life, however you do not have to share things which you don't wish to share."
- 3 Read the questions below, allowing time for participants to move. Select 15-20 of the questions below that fit best within your context:
 - If your ancestors were forced to come to Canada not by choice, take one step back.
 - If your primary ethnic identity is "Canadian", take one step forward.
 - If you were ever called names because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
 - If there were people who worked for your family as house cleaners, gardeners, nannies, etc. take one step forward.
 - If you were ever ashamed or embarrassed of your clothes, house, car, etc. take one step back.
 - If one or both of your parents were "white collar" professionals: doctors, lawyers, etc. take one step forward.
 - If you were raised in an area where there was prostitution, drug activity, etc., take one step back.
 - If you ever tried to change your appearance, mannerisms, or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed, take one step back.
 - If you studied the culture of your ancestors in elementary school, take one step forward.
 - If you went to school speaking a language other than English, take one step back.
 - If there were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up, take one step forward.
 - 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, take one step back.
 - If you were taken to art galleries or plays by your parents, take one step forward.

MODULE 1: FOOD JUSTICE PRIMER

- If one of your parents was unemployed or laid off, not by choice, take one step back.
- If you have health insurance take one step forward.
- If you attended private school or summer camp, take one step forward.
- If your family ever had to move because they could not afford the rent, take one step back.
- If you were told that you were beautiful, smart and capable by your parents, take one step forward.
- If you were ever discouraged from academics or jobs because of race, class, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were encouraged to attend college by your parents, take one step forward.
- If you have a disability take one step backward.
- If you were raised in a single parent household, take one step back.
- If your family owned the house where you grew up, take one step forward.
- If you saw members of your race, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation portrayed on television in degrading roles, take one step back.
- If you own a car take one step forward.
- If you were ever offered a good job because of your association with a friend or family member, take one step forward.
- If you were ever denied employment because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were paid less, treated less fairly because of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were ever accused of cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you ever inherited money or property, take one step forward.
- If you had to rely primarily on public transportation, take one step back.
- If you attended private school at any point in your life take one step forward.
- If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If you were ever afraid of violence because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If your parents own their own business take one step forward.
- If you were generally able to avoid places that were dangerous, take one step forward.
- If you were ever uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation but felt unsafe to confront the situation, take one step back.
- If you use a TDD Phone system take one step backward.
- If you were ever the victim of violence related to your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, take one step back.
- If your parents did not grow up in Canada, take one step back.
- If your parents attended university or college take one step forward.
- If your parents told you that you could be anything you wanted to be, take one step forward.

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Debrief the class. Use the following reflection and discussion prompts:

- Have each participant share one word that captures how they are feeling right now. If they do not want to share, have them say, "pass".
- Personal location: How does your position make you feel? What social identity groups do you feel a part of and how do those impact your position? What elements of your position can't be shifted or changed and why?
- Representation within the group: What privileges does the group collectively hold? How might this influence perspectives and discussions within the classroom? Who is not represented in the classroom and why?
- How did it feel to be one of the students on the "front" or "back" side of the line?
- Which questions stood out the most to you?
- How does your responses to the questions affect how you engage with the food system?

ASSESSMENT

Write a ~3 paragraph reflection on the experience, using the “What? So What? Now What?” Model, reflective model was researched and [developed by Rolfe et al. in 2001](#) and has also been attributed to Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless, the creators of [Liberating Structures](#).

[This post](#) by Gustavo Razzetti, of the Liberationist, provides a good overview of the reflection format:

- What: Understanding the event
- So What: Make sense of the facts and their implications
- Now What: Identify course of action or new solutions based on the reflection

These reflections can be picked up at the end of the class as an ‘exit ticket’, where learners submit their short reflection before leaving the class or workshop.

NOTES: