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LEARNING ACTIVITY # 3 Intersectional Story Circles and Fostering Deep Belonging

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Recommended Citation

Sapra, Sonalini, "LEARNING ACTIVITY # 3 Intersectional Story Circles and Fostering Deep Belonging" (2024). *Teacher Scholars Civic Engagement & Voting Rights*. 35.
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/teacher_scholars/35

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LEARNING ACTIVITY # 3

Intersectional Story Circles and Fostering Deep Belonging

TIME

75–90 minutes

FORMAT

Start in a large circle so everyone can see each other. Then group together chairs for story circles.

PURPOSE

In this class, we have been discussing dynamics related to equity, belonging, and justice across different identities and experiences. Story circles provide a methodology for people to listen and be heard across divides.

OVERVIEW

This 75–90 minute activity invites students to participate in small storytelling circles focused on themes of equity, belonging, and social justice. The goals are to foster deeper understanding across differences and envision collective action.

OUTCOME

Develop self-awareness around what issues compel you to take an active role as a citizen.

GROUP SIZE

18–20 (split into groups of 4–5)

MATERIALS

Large, flip chart sheets for recording cross-cutting themes, markers for flip chart, overview of [Story Circles](#) (Theater of the Oppressed).

Instructions

1. Provide a 5-minute overview of what a Story Circle is. The main points to highlight are as follows (from the [Story Circles Overview document](#)):
 - There are no observers—only participants.
 - The Story Circle facilitator is also a participant, and must tell his or her story as well.
 - Participants speak only when it is their turn.
 - The order of telling is either clockwise or counterclockwise from the first teller.
 - When it comes to one's turn, the person decides the timing of when to speak, and may decide to pass, knowing their turn will come around again.
 - After everyone in the Circle has had the opportunity to speak or pass, the rotation begins again for those who have passed.
 - Listening deeply is the most important part of the Story Circle experience.
 - Participants should not distract themselves by thinking ahead about what story they will tell.
 - Rather, participants should listen to the stories told, and, when it is their turn, tell a story brought to mind by the previous stories, or pass.
 - Participants and the facilitator never argue with or debate another participant's story.
2. Prompt: "In two minutes or less, please share a story about a time when you gained a deeper realization around issues of equality, discrimination, inclusion, or social justice. What were the circumstances? What changed for you?"
3. Allow every person in the group story circles to share their story.

Large Group Debrief (Sharing Across Circles)

Allow everyone to come back from their small groups to the larger group circle and do some large group debriefs based on the following prompts:

- What new understanding, empathy, or commitment was sparked for you through this story-sharing experience?
- Did hearing diverse experiences expand or challenge any assumptions you held? If so, how?
- How did storytelling illuminate the interconnection between various justice issues we explored?
- How can we hold ourselves mutually accountable to advancing belonging in our schools and neighborhoods?