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LEARNING ACTIVITY # 2 Civic Engagement and Political Awakenings

Sonalini Sapra
Guilford College

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LEARNING ACTIVITY # 2

Civic Engagement and Political Awakenings

TIME

75-90 minutes

FORMAT

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

PURPOSE

This activity explores the genesis of civic identities and political convictions. By sharing formative stories in an intimate yet diverse circle, students will illuminate diverse influences while identifying shared hopes for society.

OVERVIEW

Students will recount early political memories in small storytelling circles, then analyze recurring themes and emotional impacts in a large group discussion. The goal is to humanize ideological diversity.

OUTCOME

Examine how your own social location and personal background shape your civic perspectives and engagement.

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 your earliest vivid memory related to politics. What do you recall seeing or hearing? What emotions come up? How do you think it shaped your civic identity and engagement?"
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 common themes or feelings emerged across stories?
- Did any account expand your assumptions about how civic identities evolve?
- What realizations surfaced on political socialization in childhood and family life?
- How can this methodology strengthen discourse and coalition-building across ideologies?