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## **LEARNING ACTIVITY # 1 The Underground Railroad Trail at Guilford College: Examining Justice and Citizenship**

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## LEARNING ACTIVITY # 1

# The Underground Railroad Trail at Guilford College: Examining Justice and Citizenship

### TIME

75-90 minutes

### FORMAT

4-5 Small Groups of equal size (3-4 students per group)

### PURPOSE

Students will walk the Underground Railroad trail on Guilford's campus and reflect on themes of persecution, refuge, equity, and civic responsibility in relation to past and present-day issues. This activity aims to spur critical thinking about the meaning of citizenship and belonging while connecting to local history.

### OVERVIEW

After learning about the college's history as a sanctuary for freedom-seekers on the Underground Railroad, students will walk the trail to the champion tree. Along the route, students will document key reflections in a written journal, considering the questions listed below.

### OUTCOME

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

### GROUP SIZE

18-20

### MATERIALS

Blank paper/journal, pencils/pens.

## Instructions

1. Students will walk in groups of 2–3 along the Underground Railroad Trail to the champion tree (approximately 20 minutes) and learn more about the history of the Underground Railroad at Guilford College.
2. Once they get to the champion tree and seating area, students will document key reflections in a written journal, considering questions like:
  - What parallels do you see between the struggles for freedom in the past and civil rights issues today?
  - What lessons can we take from the risks and sacrifices made by abolitionists and allies providing refuge?
  - How can we translate the concept of a “sanctuary campus” to broader communities as responsible, engaged citizens?
  - How do you think the natural elements like the forest, plants, and night sky may have guided and protected escaping slaves? What connections with nature might they have relied on?
  - What conversations around equality and justice do we still need to have on campus or as a broader society? What questions remain unresolved?
3. **For the next few minutes, students will take turns sharing some of the different things you wrote about. It is up to them to decide what and what not to share with their group.**
4. **The class will spend the last 20 minutes of the class session doing a large group debrief. Some questions that we might consider for the larger group debrief are as follows:**
  - What was that like? Any first thoughts or reactions?
  - Do you think experiences like these campus tours should become part of curriculums nationwide? Why or why not?
  - How could place-based learning initiatives like this further inclusion, truth-telling and reconciliation considerations on campuses and in communities today?
  - What parallels or connections did you draw between the issues of equality, justice and immigration/refuge highlighted on this tour to current events and debates today?
  - Any closing thoughts?