



Class Privilege Exercise (Adapted by Kumea Shorter-Gooden)

This exercise is designed to make people more aware of power and privilege in our society. Since many privileges are implicit and invisible, this exercise aims to raise participants' consciousness about socioeconomic and class privilege. The exercise works best with 8 to 35 or so participants.

Equipment needed:

- List of privileges-- Make as many copies of the Privilege List as there are participants. Then cut the privileges out so that they are all separated.
- A room large enough for the participants to sit around an open space and later to sit in a circle.

Time needed: at least an hour and a half

Instructions:

- Tell participants that you will read a privilege, and that they are to consider whether it applies to them. After reading the first privilege, put all of the written slips of paper for that privilege in the middle of the group. Give participants a moment to reflect and then to pick up a privilege if it applies to them. After they have finished, collect the privileges that participants have not taken and put aside or discard.
- Tell participants that they are never obligated to pick up or not pick up a privilege slip, but what's important is to be aware of their thoughts, feelings, and reactions as they make these decisions.
- Then read the second privilege, and proceed as above.
- When you have read all privileges and participants have selected the ones that pertain to them, ask them to count the number of privileges they are holding.
- Then ask them to sit in a circle according to the number of privileges. To do this, they must share with each other their total number. On one side of the Instructor should be the participant with the least number of privileges. On the other side of the Instructor should be the participant with the most privileges.
- Once the group is seated in order, ask the participants to talk about what it felt like to engage in this exercise. What were the feelings, which emerged when hearing privileges? Deciding whether or not to pick one up? Counting them? Sharing the number with others? Lining up based on number of privileges? Was there discomfort? Hesitancy? Shame? Pride? What do they think is behind those feelings?
- Then ask the group to discuss what they notice in the line-up: Are there patterns, with regards to ethnicity and race, in terms of who has more privileges and who has less privileges? Are there other patterns?
- Help the group to process what this exercise means to them, what they're surprised by and what they learned from it.

List of Privileges:

As a child, I never shared a bedroom.
I've lived in a home with four or more bathrooms.
As a child growing up, I never lived in a rented apartment.
My family owns a summer home or second home.
I've never worked at a fast food restaurant.
I expect to get an inheritance from my family.
No one in my immediate family has ever been on welfare.
Neither of my parents ever collected unemployment benefits.
I don't have to work in order to survive as a graduate student.
As an undergraduate student, during the academic year, I never worked more than 10 hours a week.
As an undergraduate student, I was not eligible for need-based financial aid.
I've never had to work a paid job on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.
No one in my immediate family has ever been in jail.
I've never bought anything using a layaway plan.
I've always had health insurance.
I've traveled to a country outside the United States where I have no relatives.
I have a trust fund or stocks or bonds in my name.
I have purchased and worn a pair of shoes that cost more than \$150.
As an undergraduate, I had a credit card that my parents paid for.
I've never shopped with food stamps.
I've never worked a paid job that involved an evening or night shift.
I've never lived in a neighborhood that I considered unsafe.
At some time in my life, I've owned a brand new car.