



Making a Connection with Oppression (from a paper by Dena Samuels¹, shared by Arnie Kahn, and also by Corey Isaacs, from Steve Samuels)

Journal entry: Write or draw a picture about a situation in which you have felt oppressed and how it made you feel; share feelings in small group or with class as a whole.

Silently standing in the face of oppression: Room is set up with chairs in a circle; everyone is seated and instructed that as a “prompt” is read, if the situation applies to you, stand up. This activity is to be done in silence. After each prompt, the facilitator asks “Please look around and notice who is standing and who is sitting.” Those who are standing can sit down before the next prompt.

Prompts:

If people routinely mispronounce your name....(stand up)
If you worry semester to semester about whether you’ll be able to afford your college tuition....(stand up)
If you represent the first generation of your family to attend college.....(stand up)
If an educator, counselor, or other authority figure ever discouraged you from pursuing a particular field of study or profession....
If you ever had a job where you received less pay than somebody for doing equal work...
If you have ever been afraid to walk to your car at night on this campus...
If there is any dimension of your identity that you have to hid from most people in order to feel safe....
If you have ever felt you were being ignored because of your social class.....
Once the prompts are completed, students are asked to address the following questions in their journals and then to discuss in class:

“How did it feel to stand up? How did it feel to be sitting while others stood?”

¹ Samuels, D. R. (2003), What’s in your student’s “Invisible Knapsack”? Facilitating their connection with oppression and privilege. In B. Scott, J. Misra, & M. Segal (Eds.), *Race, gender, and class in sociology: Toward an inclusive curriculum* (pp. 5-14). Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.