

Growing Up Racially

GOAL: Participants are given an opportunity to explore their own racial/ethnic heritage and to discuss what they were taught to believe about individuals who are racially/ethnically different from themselves.

TIME REQUIRED: 60 minutes for two racial/ethnic populations. Add 45 minutes for each additional racial/ethnic population.

MATERIALS: Handouts of the five questions participants respond to or newsprint with the five questions listed. Blank newsprint and markers.

PHYSICAL SETTING: A large enough room for the participants to form two circles. One of the racial/ethnic groups forms an inner circle. All other participants form a large circle around the first, inner circle.

PROCESS: Introduce activity as an opportunity for individuals to learn more about their own and other participants cultural backgrounds and for them to learn what each racial/ethnic group was taught to believe about the other represented racial/ethnic groups.

Have the participants form small groups based on their racial/ethnic heritage. Have a facilitator join each group. It is ideal if the facilitator can be of the same racial/ethnic heritage, but not necessary. The small group facilitator has the group respond to the five questions listed below, "Growing Up Racially". After the five questions are answered the facilitator lets his/her group know that they are going to have to share these responses with all of the other participants. We let them first explore these questions in the safety of their own group. When they share their responses with the larger group they don't have to personalize the responses, they can state "the group said". Take twenty minutes to do this part of the activity.

After the first twenty minute small group activity is complete, form one group again. Have one racial/ethnic group form an inner circle (example, African American). Have all other participants form a larger circle around the inner circle. The African American group will be asked to share their responses to the "Growing Up Racially" questions. All of the participants in the outer circle are asked to remain silent while the inner circle responds to the questions. The outer circle is asked to actively listen and pay attention to their thoughts and feelings.

After the inner circle responds to the five questions, have another racial/ethnic group move to the inner circle (example, Latino). The inner circle responds to all five questions, while the outer circle remains silent and actively listens to the inner circle. This is repeated until all racial/ethnic groups have been in the inner circle and responded to all five questions.

After each of the racial/ethnic groups have had their turn in the inner circle, the facilitators ask the participants to discuss: (1) What their reactions were when they were in the inner circle responding to the questions. (2) What did the participants learn about how each ethnic/racial group views their own people. (3) Ask the participants what their reactions were to hearing the racial/ethnic groups share what they were taught to believe about the other racial/ethnic groups. (4) Finally, were there common beliefs, stereotypes, or misinformation that more than one group had about the other groups.

"Growing Up Racially" questions:

- 1) What things were you told and encouraged to believe about people from your own racial/ethnic group?
- 2) What things were you discouraged from believing about people of your own racial/ethnic group?

- 3) What things were you told or led to believe about people who are XXXXXXXXXXXX? (include only the racial/ethnic groups representative of the participants). Example: African American, Asian American, Euro-American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American.
- 4) Were there things you were discouraged from believing about people from any other the other groups?
- 5) How or in what ways were you taught to interact or not to interact with people from other racial/ethnic groups?
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SOURCE: This exercise was written by Rosemary E. Simmons, Ph.D., Counseling Center, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. This activity was created by Dr. Simmons, for use in a racial awareness retreat.