

Building the Beloved Community

Lesson 2: Circles of Identity

1.28.2024

Objectives: Begin to understand the concept of culture as a set of norms. Families are where we first become “acculturated.”

Materials: Flipchart, pictures/objects related to family traditions from youth, lesson attachment.

Time allotments suggested for 50 minute class, followed by 25 minute closing service.

1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
 - ▶ Draw a picture that describes an important family tradition (especially if you didn’t bring a picture or object related to a family tradition).
 - ▶ Do you have a family tradition that you find quirky? Please describe.
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

2. Sharing Exercise: “One Minute, Please!” (5 minutes max)

Pair youth up randomly. Each taking turns, the aim of the game is to talk for one minute straight on a given subject. **Youth must try to speak non-stop for the full duration of their minute!** Teacher announces the topic related to this course, and first person begins speaking for one minute on that topic. Teacher calls time for second person to talk, staying with the topic or announcing a new topic. Continue alternating as time permits.

Choose subjects to stimulate the imagination and which gradually helps youth to share more personally on topics related to the course. Topics might include:

- If you could create a holiday for your family to celebrate, what would it be?
- What are some mannerisms/habits/traits you inherited from your family?
- What is one culture—foreign culture or subculture or pop culture—that really interests you, and why?

- What is an early encounter you have with race or culture?
- What do you think makes talking about race or culture difficult?

3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: *“We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”*

Teacher reads: (from Buddhist monk, teacher, and peace activist, Thich Nhat Hanh)

“When we respect our blood ancestors and our spiritual ancestors, we feel rooted. If we find ways to cherish and develop our spiritual heritage, we will avoid the kind of alienation that is destroying society, and we will become whole again... Learning to touch deeply the jewels of our own tradition will allow us to understand and appreciate the values of other traditions, and this will benefit everyone.”

4. Sharing Family Traditions (35 minutes)

Have youth take turns presenting a family tradition they have chosen to share with the class. If they have brought picture/object, invite youth to use them to help further illustrate. After each presentation, teachers can check if others have similar traditions in their family.

Questions for Discussion: After everyone has presented, teachers can ask appropriate questions from below, and deepen the conversation:

- Why do you think many/some of you had some traditions in common?
- Why do you think some traditions were unique to your family?
- When did you realize that not everyone shared your particular tradition?
- Were there any traditions that your parents held when they were your age?
- Were there any traditions that your grandparents held when they were your age?
- Have any of the traditions changed over the generations?
- Does anyone know the origin of the tradition they shared? What part of the world did it come from? What culture? What religion, if any?
- Do you think you will continue this tradition with others (perhaps your own children or partner) when you are an adult?

Teacher summarizes: Many traditions are passed on through family and community, and can seem “normal” and “natural,” something that everyone does or would want to do. Someone else’s tradition, then, can seem not only different but strange and abnormal.

Sometimes, learning the background, history, and context can help. For example, someone who never heard the biblical nativity story might wonder why the birthday of one baby in the Middle East is celebrated by so many people around the world. Even more, they might wonder why families celebrate that nativity by writing a letter about major family events during the past year. Others might wonder why images of snow are used in depictions of this child's birth that occurred in an area of the world that doesn't have snow.

5. Circles of Identity (10 minutes)

We have spent much of our time today sharing a little about our families of origin. We will now turn inward to share a little more about ourselves. Using the *Circles of Our Multicultural Selves* handout, please place your name in the center circle. Take a few minutes to identify 3 elements of your identity that are key to who you are. Partner up and share with someone what you chose and why. Leave completed handouts in classroom, as we will talk more about identity during next class.

6. Extinguish the chalice, saying together:

“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”

7. Help clean up classroom before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets