

Building the Beloved Community

Lesson 6: Mobile Activity: Unequal Distribution of Resources

3.10.2024

Objectives: Consider institutional racism via the impact of differing resources on outcomes.

Materials: Flipchart, index cards, candy prizes, 10 types of materials for making mobile: branches, yarn, pipe cleaners, coat hangers, colored paper, scissors, hole punch, glue, tape, snowflakes.

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:
 - ▶ What groups of people are well-represented in shows you watch? What groups of people are often stereotyped?
 - ▶ What is the difference between a *stereotype* and a *generalization*?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

2. Silly Fun: “Who am I?” (10 minutes max)

Give each youth 2 blank cards to write 2 little known facts about themselves, not trivial facts but something that helps others know and understand them better. (Teachers included, too!) For example: *I was born prematurely, I have a half-sister, I want to be a professional musician.* Teacher collects and mixes cards in a basket, then draws one card at a time and reads aloud for youth to guess whose fact it is. (Please don’t guess aloud if it’s your own card!) See how many youth can guess correctly.

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 Kwame Ture, originally Stokely Carmichael, organizer in the civil rights movement and later the Black Power movement)

“When white terrorists bomb a black church and kill five black children, that is an act of individual racism, widely deplored by most segments of the society. But when in that same city – Birmingham, Alabama – five hundred black babies die each year because of the lack of

proper food, shelter and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination in the black community, that is a function of institutional racism.”

(from white industrialist, business magnate, and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie)

“I resolved to stop accumulating and begin the infinitely more serious and difficult task of wise distribution.”

4. **Mobile Activity** (25 minutes)

Instructions: Divide youth into 3 teams (or 2 depending on size of class) for a contest to make the best winter-themed mobile. Provide each team with their bag of materials for building their mobile, *making sure that one team gets the bag with all 10 items/materials for use*. Youth may use only materials their group has been provided: they do not have to use all the materials provided but may use only the materials supplied to their team and nothing else. Distribute materials as follows:

- **Team 1** gets: coat hangers, branches, sheets of paper (same color), glue sticks, yarn, scissors.
- **Team 2** gets: coat hangers, branches, sheets of paper (3 different colors), yarn, scissors, pipe cleaners, tape.
- **Team 3** gets: coat hangers, branches, sheets of paper (various colors), yarn, scissors, pipe cleaners, tape, hole punch, glue sticks, snowflakes.

Youth will have 20 minutes to complete their mobiles. One representative from each team will have a chance to speak and present their mobile, to influence the judges/teachers and advocate for their mobile.

Teachers call time after 20 minutes and ask one representative from each team to present to the whole class and judges/teachers:

- Announce that each team representative will speak as follows: Team 1 gets 5 seconds; Team 2 gets 20 seconds; Team 3 gets 60 seconds.
- Judges/teachers will evaluate “objectively” (*i.e. ignoring any consideration or reference to how resources were distributed*).
- Judges select winning team and award candy. (After a few moments of reactions from youth, distribute candy to whole class and begin discussion using following questions.)

5. Questions for Discussion (15 minutes)

- How did you feel about this doing this project? Fun, easy, hard, frustrating?
- How did you feel when you realized that teams had different resources?
- Think of a situation in school where some students start off with a greater advantage or more resources/supplies than other people. What are some examples? When does this happen? How do people feel in this situation?
- What happens when people are judged by the same criteria for outcomes, when they have unequal and varying access to necessary resources or opportunities?

Teacher talks: Racism between one person and another is an example of *individual racism*. When the culture of one group is believed to be superior to that of another group, we have an example of *cultural racism*. There is another kind of racism – ***institutional racism*** – when institutions and organizations like schools, businesses, or governments take advantage of certain groups or do not allow those groups to have opportunities or resources that others have based on race.

- Reread the earlier quote from Kwame Ture. Why do you think that it may be easier to focus on individual racism than addressing institutional racism?
- Just as some teams started with more and less resources for their project, in what ways do people in our society start with varying and unequal access to resources and opportunities? How does such institutional racism and unequal distribution of wealth/resources/opportunities affect their lives? Is this a problem? Why or why not?
- Think about a specific form of institutional racism called the “achievement gap” in Minnesota. Nationally, 85% of white students graduate high school on time, compared to 68% of blacks and 76% of Hispanics. In Minnesota, the situation is more extreme, with just 58% of black students and 59% of Hispanics graduating on time. (from Minnesota Department of Education website). The inequities also include harsher discipline and higher rate of suspension for students of color compared to their white peers. What ideas and suggestions do you have for addressing such institutional disparity?

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