

Opportunity/Lack of Opportunity Walk

Objective: Raise awareness of various forms of opportunities and disadvantages; understand the intersectionality of race, socioeconomic class, gender and other demographic variables that shape individuals; appreciate the diversity of individual backgrounds; and team-building.

Stepping Forward

1. If one or both of your parents graduated from college, take one step forward.
2. If you ever attended a private school or a summer camp growing up, take one step forward.
3. If you were told by your parents that you were beautiful, smart, or successful, take one step forward.
4. If you knew since you were a child that it was expected of you to go to college, take one step forward.
5. If you have immediate family members who are doctors, lawyers, or work in any degree-required profession, take one step forward.
6. If you studied the history and culture of your ethnic ancestry in elementary and secondary school, take one step forward.
7. If you grew up with people of color or working class people who were servants, maids, gardeners, or babysitters in your home, take one step forward.
8. If you or your family never had to move due to financial inabilities, take one step forward.
9. If you almost always see members of your race, sexual orientation, religion, and class widely represented on television, in the newspaper, and the media in a POSITIVE manner, take one step forward.
10. If you were to walk into a business and asked to speak to the person "in charge" you would likely see a person of your race, take one step forward.
11. If school and work is not in session during the major (religious) holidays or other cultural events that you celebrate, take one step forward.
12. If you never worry about crime, drugs, rape, or any other violence threats in your neighborhood, take one step forward.
13. If you almost always feel comfortable with people knowing your sexual orientation, take one step forward.
14. If you feel certain that you will not be followed, harassed, or watched under close surveillance while shopping, take one step forward.
15. If walking alone at night, you never have to worry about anyone feeling threatened because of your presence, take one step forward.

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Stepping Backwards

16. If you are going to be the first person in your immediate family to graduate from college, take one step back.
17. If you started school speaking a language other than English, take one step back.
18. If you have ever been the only person of your race/ethnicity in a classroom or place of work, take one step back.
19. If you grew up in an economically-disadvantaged or single-parent home, take one step back.
20. If you were ever discouraged from any personal goal or dream because of your race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, or physical/learning disability, take one step back.
21. If you have ever had to sacrifice personal interests to help your family, take one step back.
22. If you have ever been called names regarding your race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexual orientation, or physical/learning disability and felt uncomfortable, take one step back.
23. If you or someone you know has ever been mistrusted or accused of lying, stealing, or cheating without sufficient evidence, take one step back.
24. If you were ashamed or embarrassed of your clothes, house, or car and wished to change it to avoid being judged or teased, take one step back.
25. If you have ever been hesitant to speak to avoid being ridiculed because of your accent or speech impediment, take one step back.
26. If you have been mistreated or served less fairly in a place of business because of your race or ethnicity, take one step back.
27. If you have ever skipped a meal or went away from a meal hungry because there was not enough money to buy food, take one step back.
28. If anyone in your immediate family has ever served time in a state or federal penitentiary, take one step back.
29. If anyone in your immediate family has ever been addicted to drugs or alcohol, take one step back.

Reflection Questions

- What was the purpose of this exercise?
- What did you learn from it?
- What happened during the exercise? Were you surprised by anything?
- How did it feel to be in the group that took a step forward or a step back?
- How did it feel to be in the front or back of the space?
- Was there a time when you wanted to be a part of the group moving forward?
- What might we draw from this exercise that can help us in our everyday lives?
- How can you apply what you have learned here to the work you will do as a leader?