

JUSTICE TALKING



A CURRICULUM FOR REFLECTIVE DISCUSSION

Developed by the Center for Civic Reflection for ServeOhio

CENTER *for* CIVIC REFLECTION

 **SERVE OHIO**
Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism

This curriculum includes approximately 80 discussion plans. To get the most out of this curriculum, please consider participating in a Center for Civic Reflection Facilitation Training Workshop. CCR workshops help develop skills and confidence in leading the kinds of discussions this curriculum supports. For more information and a CCR workshop schedule, go to www.civicreflection.org

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Center for Civic Reflection • *Community, Leadership, Dialogue*

CONTENTS

THEME: LEADERSHIP & RESPONSIBILITY	4
SHORT READING: Mary Oliver, “The Buddha’s Last Instruction”	4
LONG READING: Tracey Kidder, Excerpt from <i>Mountains Beyond Mountains</i>	5
IMAGE: Todd Heisler, “2nd Lt. James L. Cathey”	6
AUDIO/VIDEO: Derek Sivers, “How to Start a Movement”	7
AUDIO/VIDEO/SPEECH: John F. Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, 1961”	8
ARTICLE: Jodi Wilgoren, “Wendy Kopp, Leader of Teach for America”	9
SHORT READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Franz Kafka, “The Helmsman”	10
LONG READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Toni Bambara, “The Lesson”	11
THEME: SERVING	12
SHORT READING: Linda Gregg, “The Shopping-Bag Lady”	12
SHORT READING: Rachel Naomi Remen, “Helping, Fixing or Serving?”	13
LONG READING: Flannery O’Connor, “The Life You Save May Be Your Own”	14
IMAGE: Alan Fisher, “Lou Ambers Tips His Hat”	15
AUDIO/VIDEO: Adam Davidson, <i>The Lunch Date</i>	16
ARTICLE: Peter Levine, “The Path Not Taken (So Far): Civic Engagement for Reform”	17
ARTICLE: Catherine Rampell, “More College Graduates Take Public Service Jobs”	18
ARTICLE: Peter Levine, Excerpt from “The Case for Service”	19
LONG READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Drum Major Instinct”	20
THEME: POVERTY & NEED	21
SHORT READING: Lowell Jaeger, “Okay”	21
SHORT READING: Charles Baudelaire, “Let’s Beat Up the Poor!”	22
SHORT READING: Gabriela Mistral, “The House”	23
LONG READING: Barbara Ehrenreich, Excerpt from <i>Nickel and Dimed</i>	24
IMAGE: Dorothea Lange, “Migrant Mother”	25
IMAGE: Shelby Lee Adams, “The Home Funeral”	26
AUDIO/VIDEO/SPEECH: Lyndon Baines Johnson, “State of the Union Address, 1964”	27
AUDIO/VIDEO: Mark Horvath, “Shining a Light on Invisible People”	28
ARTICLE: Lane DeGregory, “Panhandlers Have Many Strategies for Getting People’s Sympathy in Order to Make Money”	29
ARTICLE: <i>The Economist</i> , “The Rich are Different from You and Me: They are More Selfish”	30
SHORT READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Gwendolyn Brooks, “The Lovers of the Poor”	31
THEME: DIVERSITY & DIFFERENCE	32
SHORT READING: Etheridge Knight, “A Wasp Woman Visits a Black Junkie in Prison”	32
SHORT READING: Michael Lassell, “How to Watch Your Brother Die”	33
LONG READING: Tobias Wolff, “Say Yes”	34
LONG READING: Raymond Carver, “Cathedral”	35
IMAGE: Eliot Elisofon, “Students of Mixed Races Sitting Together”	36
AUDIO/VIDEO: Mary Morten, Clip from <i>Woke Up Black</i>	37
ARTICLE: Touré, “Preconceptions”	38
ESSAY: Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”	39
SHORT READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Imtiaz Dharker, “They’ll Say, ‘She Must Be from Another Country’”	40

THEME: JUSTICE & EQUALITY	41
SHORT READING: Tony Hoagland, “America”	41
LONG READING: Kurt Vonnegut, “Harrison Bergeron”	42
LONG READING: Chitra Divakaruni, “Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter”	43
IMAGE: Jimmy Holt, “First Day of School Desegregation”	44
IMAGE: James Karales, “Selma-to-Montgomery March for Voting Rights”	45
IMAGE: Mark Abramson, “Pushing for Immigrant Law and Citizen Status” Second Photograph	46
AUDIO/VIDEO: David Guggenheim, Clip from <i>Waiting for Superman</i>	47
ESSAY: Cecilia Muñoz, “Getting Angry Can Be a Good Thing”	48
SPEECH: Cornel West, “What It Means to Be a Leftist in the 21st Century”	49
LONG READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”	50
THEME: IDENTITY & COMMUNITY	51
SHORT READING: Anna Swir, “The Same Inside”	51
SHORT READING: Rhina Espaillat, “Bilingual/Bilingüe”	52
ESSAY: “This I Believe: Ali, Mansfield, TX”	53
LONG READING: John M. Oskison, “The Problem of Old Harjo”	54
LONG READING: Leslie Marmon Silko, “The Man to Send Rain Clouds”	55
AUDIO/VIDEO: Hussein Rashid, “On Being Muslim in America”	56
ESSAY: James Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village”	57
LONG READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Ralph Waldo Emerson, Excerpt from “Self-Reliance”	58
SHORT READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Franz Kafka, “Fellowship”	59
IMAGE: Banaras Khan, “Afghan Women Voting”	60
THEME: MOTIVES & VALUES	61
SHORT READING: Mary Oliver, “Sunrise”	61
ESSAY/SPEECH: Ivan Illich, “To Hell with Good Intentions”	62
LONG READING: Kelli Covey, “What I Didn’t Know Then”	63
IMAGE: W. Eugene Smith, “Tomoko Uemura in Her Bath”	64
ESSAY/SPEECH: David Foster Wallace, “Commencement Speech to Kenyon College Class of 2005”	65
ESSAY/SPEECH: Toni Morrison, “Commencement Speech to Rutgers University Class of 2011”	66
ARTICLE: David Brooks, “If It Feels Right...”	67
AUDIO/VIDEO: Nicole Holofcener, Clip from <i>Please Give</i>	68
LONG READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Adam Davis, “What We Don’t Talk About When We Don’t Talk About Service”	69
LONG READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Jane Addams, “The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements”	70
THEME: CHANGE	71
SHORT READING: Martín Espada, “Imagine the Angels of Bread”	71
SHORT READING: Naomi Shihab Nye, “Trying to Name What Doesn’t Change”	72
LONG READING: Shirley Jackson, “The Lottery”	73
IMAGE: Shepard Fairey, “Change”	74
AUDIO/VIDEO: Father Michael Pflieger, “What Does It Mean to Be a Voice of Conscience?”	75
ESSAY/SPEECH: César Chávez, “The Mexican-American and the Church”	76
SHORT READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Bertolt Brecht, “A Bed for the Night”	77
LONG READING FROM <i>The Civically Engaged Reader</i> : Dave Eggers, “Where Were We”	78

THEME: LEADERSHIP & RESPONSIBILITY

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Mary Oliver, "The Buddha's Last Instruction"

Link: http://www.poetryconnection.net/poets/Mary_Oliver/3120

Description: "The Buddha's Last Instruction," from Oliver's 1990 collection *House of Light*, describes the Buddha's final moments and his imperative to his "frightened crowd" of followers: "Make of yourself a light." This poem offers an opportunity to explore the nature of good leadership, the mystery of death, and what wisdom we would most like to pass on to those we lead or serve.

Opening Exercise: Think of one time in your life when you were *led well*. What was the situation, who were you led well by, and what struck you as effective or good about the way that person led you?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does the Buddha say "make of yourself a light"? Why not just say "make yourself a light" or "make yourself *into* a light"?
- Why are the faces surrounding the Buddha frightened?
- What does the speaker mean when he says, "clearly I'm not needed," and how does this square with the feeling of becoming valuable?
- Based on what you see here, is the Buddha a good leader?
- As a leader, what do you hope to pass onto others, and how do you hope to pass it on?

Closing Exercise: Think of a time you led someone well. What was effective about how you led this person or group, and how do you know you were leading well?

LONG READING

Author/Title: Tracey Kidder, Excerpt from *Mountains Beyond Mountains*

Link: <http://www.tracykidder.com/books/mountains/excerpt.php>

Description: Published in 2003, Tracey Kidder's book, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, tracks Harvard graduate, Dr. Paul Farmer as he "brings the... tools of modern medicine to those who need them most," living by a philosophy that "the only real nation is humanity." This excerpt documents Dr. Farmer's time in Haiti, as he confronts an American captain with the hope that U.S. soldiers will realize that their government's plan for fixing Haiti's economy is doing nothing to relieve the average Haitian's suffering. Indeed, the narrator tells us that when the soldiers leave Haiti, "the country [is] just as poor and broken-down as when they arrived." Kidder's account elicits questions about leadership and responsibility as it relates to poverty and need, and serves as an example of how one person can make a difference.

Opening Exercise: Think about a time when your opinion of a leader changed. What were your initial impressions? What changed your mind about him/her?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about Dr. Farmer?
- Why does the narrator sense that Dr. Farmer knows Haiti "far better" than the captain?
- How does the narrator's opinion of Dr. Farmer change? Why does it change?
- What do you make of the narrator's statement that Farmer's way of thinking about a place like Haiti is hard to share because it implies "an extreme definition of a term like 'doing one's best'"?
- What, if anything, is complicated about Dr. Farmer's leadership?
- Why does Dr. Farmer leave Haiti instead of staying there year-round?
- Is "living comfortably" a priority for you? Does "living comfortably" interfere with the work that you do or help with the work you do?

Closing Exercise: Identify *three* things that you associate with living a good life. Does taking a leadership role at work conflict with any of these three things?

IMAGE

Author/Title: Todd Heisler, "2nd Lt. James L. Cathey"

Link: <http://fallenheroeslinks.blogspot.com/2006/08/james-cathey.html>, Top Picture

Description: Winner of the 2006 Pulitzer Prize in Feature Photography, "2nd Lt. James L. Cathey" depicts Lt. James Cathey's body arriving at the Reno Airport soon after his death in Iraq. In the photograph, marines climb into the cargo hold of the plane and drape an American flag over his casket as passengers watch the lieutenant's family gather on the tarmac. This photograph offers an opportunity to reflect upon civic responsibility and leadership in a uniquely American context.

Opening Exercise: Identify *one leader* in this photograph. Why is he/she a leader?

Discussion Questions:

- As literally as possible, how would you describe what is happening in the image?
- What do you think the passengers on the airplane are thinking? What/who are they watching and why?
- What, if anything, is challenging or troubling about this image? Why?
- What is one question that this image provokes?
- Where do you see responsibility in this image? Where do you see leadership?

Closing Exercise: Name *one thing* you heard today that helped you think more deeply about leadership.

AUDIO/VIDEO

Author/Title: Derek Sivers, "How to Start a Movement"

Link: http://www.ted.com/talks/derek_sivers_how_to_start_a_movement.html

Description: In his 2010 video, "How to Start a Movement," Derek Sivers uses humorous footage to explain how a movement really gets started, exploring the significance not only of leaders, but of those who have the courage to follow. This video offers an opportunity to discuss leadership and risk, the glorification of leadership, the validity of the belief that "everyone can lead," and the transformative power of followers in both large-and small-scale movements.

Opening Exercise: First, think of one person you know who strikes you as a good leader. Then, think of *one word* to characterize how this person leads. Finally, describe one specific instance in which you saw this person leading in a way that warrants the word you chose (if you said "demanding," for example, then describe one instance in which you saw this person being demanding).

Discussion Questions:

- Is the shirtless dancing boy in the video a good leader?
- Why do you think the first follower joins the shirtless dancing boy?
- Do you think that the shirtless dancing boy wants others to join him?
- Why don't we "glorify" followers the same way that we "glorify" leaders?
- Do you believe that everyone can lead? Is it important for you to think about your work as 'leadership'? Why or why not?
- Does being a leader mean being part of a movement?

Closing Exercise: What is *one word* you would like the people you lead to use to describe you? What questions do you have for yourself about being the kind of leader you want to be identified as?

AUDIO/VIDEO/SPEECH

Author/Title: John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, 1961"

Link: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm>

Description: In his 1961 Inaugural Address, President John F. Kennedy speaks of the need for all Americans to be active citizens domestically and globally. At this pivotal national and international moment, Kennedy encourages American citizens to reach out to each other, to reach out to their adversaries, and to reach out to their country, famously encouraging Americans to ask "not what your country can do for you," but "what you can do for your country." JFK's address both exhibits his leadership qualities and tests pre-conceived notions about what it means for America, as a nation, and Americans, as a people, to lead. Reflecting on his speech conjures up many questions about if/how JFK's vision of leadership has been carried out in the twenty-first century and how everyday citizens can do their part to lead.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you brought people together around a common cause or concern. What was the purpose of bringing these people together? What strategies did you use to bring them together? Was it successful?

Discussion Questions:

- Which parts of this speech stand out to you? Which phrases seem most meaningful or powerful?
- What does Kennedy take responsibility for? What does he ask his fellow citizens to take responsibility for?
- What does Kennedy mean when he says that we must "[help people] help themselves"? How do we go about doing this?
- What does he mean when he says, "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich"? What kind of leadership does this require?
- Do you think that reaching out to one's adversary is an effective and/or realistic pursuit?
- Where do you see Kennedy showing leadership in this speech and why?

Closing Exercise: Identify two ways in which you could be a better leader. Spend a few minutes writing these down and then share one of your two ways aloud.

ARTICLE

Author/Title: Jodi Wilgoren, “Wendy Kopp, Leader of Teach for America”

Link: <http://partners.nytimes.com/library/national/111200edlife-kopp-edu.html>

Description: Written by Jodi Wilgoren and published by *The New York Times* on November 12, 2000, “Wendy Kopp, Leader of Teach for America” looks closely at the life and leadership philosophy of Wendy Kopp. Kopp, the CEO and founder of Teach for America (TFA), created TFA in an attempt to eliminate educational inequality in the United States by enlisting future leaders to teach for two years in low-income communities across America. Kopp also founded TFA on the belief that “good teachers are good leaders,” and that personal characteristics are more telling of leadership than training. Wilgoren’s article and Kopp’s story elicit questions about what makes a good leader and how leadership is learned.

Opening Exercise: Imagine that you are hiring someone for a leadership position and you have two great candidates. One of the candidates has all of the skills and training that you’re looking for in a leader. The other has all of the personal qualities that you’re looking for in a leader. Who do you choose and why? Discuss with 1-2 people sitting next to you and then pick a representative from your group to share what you discussed with the group as a whole.

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about Wendy Kopp’s background?
- What are the qualities that, according to this article, make Kopp a good leader?
- What do you make of Kopp’s assertion that “Teach for America has suffered from the fact that I did not teach, in a major way. I also think if I had taught, I wouldn’t have started Teach for America.” What does this say about the kind of leadership Kopp offers? Who or what “suffers” from her not having been a teacher herself?
- Do you agree with Kopp’s assertion that personal characteristics are more important than training when it comes to leadership?
- What do you think of Pat Wasley’s quote, “inspiration isn’t enough. You also have to have knowledge and skills”? Are knowledge and skills important to leadership or can they come later in one’s training as a leader?
- Is disregarding “the public’s view” an important part of leadership? Why or why not?
- Do you identify as a leader? If so, how have you learned to lead, and who do you think has taught you how to lead?
- Do you think that you are a good leader? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise: Write down *three* leadership qualities that you have and *three* leadership qualities that you would like to gain in the future. Share one quality you have and one quality that you would like to gain with the larger group.

SHORT READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Franz Kafka, “The Helmsman”

Source: Find in *The Civically Engaged Reader*, eds. Davis & Lynn, (Great Books Foundation, 2006).

Description: Franz Kafka, a Jewish Czechoslovakian who wrote in German, was one of the most acclaimed writers of the twentieth century. During his lifetime, Kafka wrote many stories about oppression, failure, alienation, and despair in his own unclassifiable style—a mixture of the surreal, fantastic, and darkly humorous. In “The Helmsman,” a one-paragraph parable about leadership, Kafka depicts a dreamlike power struggle and its aftermath. The ousted leader’s question, “Am I the helmsman?” elicits only nods from his former crew, while the same question, from Kafka to his readers, elicits deeper thought on the nature of leadership.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time in your life when you were a leader. Do you think that you led well? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does the narrator ask the stranger and then the crew, “Am I the helmsman”?
- Why are we *not* told the reason that the “tall, dark man” wants control of the helm?
- What does the narrator expect from the crew when he summons them? Why does he call them both “men” and “comrades”?
- Why is the crew both “tired” and “powerful”? What strikes you about them?
- Why is it that the crew “had eyes only for the stranger”?
- What is the meaning of the nod that the crew gives to the narrator as they withdraw?
- Contrast the ways in which the narrator and the stranger try to establish their leadership of the crew.
- What is the meaning of the narrator’s questions at the end of the story?

Closing Exercise: Think of a time in your life when you were asked to follow the leadership of someone else. Were you a good follower? Why or why not?

LONG READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Toni Bambara, "The Lesson"

Link: <http://cai.ucdavis.edu/gender/thelesson.html>

Description: "The Lesson," from Bambara's 1972 collection *Gorilla, My Love*, is the story of a group of poor inner-city children who meet regularly with a not-quite-insider, not-quite-outsider community member, Miss Moore, who has taken it upon herself to educate them. What, exactly, is the lesson Miss Moore is trying to teach them, and why don't they want to learn it? Has Miss Moore learned anything from her students? Bambara's story raises questions about social class and status, leadership potential, and the relationship between leadership and social, racial, and cultural identity.

Opening Exercise: Think of the *most enduring lesson* you've learned so far in your life. What was the lesson? How did you learn it? Whom did you learn it from?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does Miss Moore "take responsibility for the young ones' education"?
- Why does Miss Moore take the children to the toy store?
- Why doesn't Miss Moore tell Sylvia how much a real boat costs?
- Why does Sylvia feel "shame" about going into the toy store?
- What lesson is Miss Moore trying to teach the children? Do any of the children learn it?
- How would you describe Miss Moore's style of teaching? Is it the right style for the children in the story?
- Is shame an important part of leadership? Why or why not?
- What is happening to Sylvia at the end of the story?
- Is being a good teacher the same as being a good leader?
- How can you lead those who seem not to want to be led?

Closing Exercise: Think of a time that you tried to teach a lesson to someone else. What was the lesson? How did you teach it? How did you know if it was successful?

THEME: SERVING

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Linda Gregg, "The Shopping-Bag Lady"

Link: <http://bibliosity.blogspot.com/2010/04/shopping-bag-lady.html>

Description: In this poem, from Gregg's book *Alma* (1985), the narrator reflects on a murder victim—one of the anonymous urban women who "carry all they own in bags." Describing the "sideways and disconcerting" way the woman solicited money from strangers on the subway, the narrator identifies "disgrace" and "failure" in the encounter. How do you think she responded to the woman? How would you respond (or have you responded) in her place? This poem can lead to dialogue about the possibilities and limitations of human connection, especially as it pertains to service.

Opening Exercise: Over the course of the previous week, have you paid particular attention to any people you do not know? Why, and what have you noticed about them? Have you talked with any of them? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions:

- Why wouldn't the narrator guess at the contents of the murdered lady's sack?
- Why does "the nice girl" walk at an angle not exactly away?
- What does it mean for the woman to "stand in our attention as if it were a palpable thing"? What effect, if any, does it have on those watching?
- How many homeless women are there in this poem?
- Why is the disgrace "God's" and the failure "ours"?
- Who do you identify with in the poem? Who can you *not* identify with in the poem?

Closing Exercise: Share one word or phrase to describe "the most important place we have yet devised."

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Rachel Naomi Remen, “Helping, Fixing or Serving?”

Link: http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2328

Description: Written in 1999, Remen’s short essay clearly distinguishes between the verbs ‘help,’ ‘fix,’ and ‘serve.’ Remen argues that helping and fixing is the “work of the ego” whereas serving is the “work of the soul.” While one can help or fix from a distance, Remen believes that “we cannot serve at a distance. We can only serve that to which we are profoundly connected.” These ideas elicit powerful questions about what is or is not service and whether service is, or needs to be, as profoundly deep and personal as Remen suggests. Is Remen’s a good working definition of service? Is serving distinct from helping or fixing? Why or why not?

Opening Exercise: Name *one person* you have helped with something, big or small, in your work over the past few months. How did you help this person and how do you know you helped?

Discussion Questions:

- What distinctions does Remen make between fixing, helping, and serving?
- What does she mean by “My pain is the source of my compassion; my woundedness is the key to my empathy”? Why and how are pain and woundedness important?
- What does she mean by “wholeness”? How do you know when you are whole or not whole?
- Why does the woman with Crohn’s disease feel connected to the woman who is serving her?
- Should we keep a distance from the people we serve?
- Remen says, “Service is a relationship between equals: our service strengthens us as well as others.” Has this been your experience? How do you make sure your service is “equal”?
- Have you ever been torn between “what is most professional” and “what best serves”? Which did you choose and why?

Closing Exercise: First, describe an instance in which “professionalism” or distance helped you do your job well. Then describe an instance in which doing your job well required you to be “unprofessional” in some way.

LONG READING

Author/Title: Flannery O'Connor, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own"

Link: <http://faculty.smu.edu/nschwart/2312/lifeyousave.htm>

Description: Mary Flannery O'Connor was a novelist, short-story writer, and essayist who was one of the most important voices in twentieth century American literature. A Southern writer from a Roman Catholic background, O'Connor often wrote in a Southern gothic style and reflected on issues of faith, ethics, and morality in her writing. "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" is one of O'Connor's most famous pieces. Published in her short story collection *A Good Man is Hard to Find* in 1955, "The Life You Save..." is about an old woman, Lucynell Crater, and her daughter, also named Lucynell Crater, who come into contact with a disabled tramp named Tom Shiftlet. The growing relationships between the three characters and the events that follow inspire discussion about service, trust, and the assumptions we make about the people we serve.

Opening Exercise: Think about a time that you made an incorrect assumption about *someone you served*. What was the assumption? How was it proven incorrect? How did you feel afterwards?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about Lucynell Crater? What do we know about her daughter?
- What do we know about Tom Shiftlet?
- Why does the old woman think that Tom Shiftlet is "no one to be afraid of"?
- What criticisms does Tom make about 'men' and 'the world'?
- How does Tom serve the Crater family? How does the Crater family serve Tom? Does it appear to be an equal relationship?
- Why does Tom leave Lucynell at the restaurant?
- Did you trust Tom at the beginning of the story? Do you trust him now?
- Have your personal needs ever conflicted with the needs of the people you are serving? How did/do you choose between them?

Closing Exercise: Think about a time that you made an incorrect assumption about *someone who either served you or served with you*. What was the assumption? How was it proven incorrect? How did you feel afterwards?

IMAGE

Author/Title: Alan Fisher, “Lou Ambers Tips His Hat”

Link: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001696793/>

Description: In this 1935 photograph, Alan Fisher depicts a man, Lou Ambers, tipping his hat as he accepts a sandwich from a hand reaching out of a doorway. This photograph inspires discussion about service—both those who are serving and those who are being served.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you have served someone else. What did the person you were serving receive? How did you know that they had received it?

Discussion Questions:

- What is one word that comes to you as you look at this image?
- What is one question that this image provokes?
- How would you describe the look on the man’s face?
- Does there appear to be a connection between Lou Ambers and the other person? Why or why not?
- How would you describe this interaction? Is it service or something else?
- Is this an equal exchange? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise: Identify one question you have about service after having this discussion.

AUDIO/VIDEO

Director/Title: Adam Davidson, *The Lunch Date*

Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePuTZigxUY8>

Description: This Oscar-winning short film from 1989 tells the story of a wealthy white woman whose goal is to catch a train. The story is simple and done with very little dialogue. As the woman hurries toward her train, misses her train, and deals with the aftermath, viewers discover much about her character—including her relationship with the many homeless people in the station and with an African-American man who bumps into her and causes her purse to fall to the ground. *The Lunch Date* offers an opportunity to discuss fear of difference, race, social class and status, and the power of unexamined privilege.

Opening Exercise: What is something you have learned about a person/the people you serve that has surprised you? Why did it surprise you?

Discussion Questions:

- What is your first impression of the woman as she walks through the train station?
- How do you think the woman would describe the other people at the train station?
- How would you describe the woman's interaction with the African-American man who bumps into her and causes her purse to fall to the ground? What is her reaction?
- What do you make of the moment when the woman goes to buy the salad, is told it will cost \$3, and she says "I'm not sure I have that much"?
- Why does the woman start eating the salad that the homeless man is eating in the booth?
- Does the woman's interaction with the homeless man ever change? If so, when and why?
- What does the woman think has happened to her bags when she comes back to the booth? Why does she think this?
- How do you think the woman feels upon making the second train?
- Who do you identify with in the film and why?

Closing Exercise: Identify two assumptions that you have made about the people you serve. Take five minutes to write and reflect about these assumptions.

ARTICLE

Author/Title: Peter Levine, “The Path Not Taken (So Far): Civic Engagement for Reform”

Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-levine/the-path-not-taken-so-far_b_437317.html

Description: In his 2010 article, “The Path Not Taken (So Far): Civic Engagement for Reform,” Levine laments the fact that while much of Obama’s election campaign was based on the premise of “reclaiming the meaning of citizenship” and “restoring our sense of common purpose,” neither he, nor any other politician, has made great strides to implement concrete ideas for civic empowerment. Levine argues that tripling the size of AmeriCorps and focusing on service programs do not necessarily build civic skills, and believes that civic empowerment needs to be integrated into issues such as healthcare and climate change rather than standing separately from the most pressing issues today. Levine’s article gives us the opportunity to imagine a future where civic empowerment is a priority and to discuss the challenges that our society faces when it is not, reflecting on the role that service plays in creating a successful future.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you felt truly engaged in your community. Why were you engaged and how did it make you feel?

Discussion Questions:

- What does Levine mean by “active citizenship”? Is this your definition as well?
- Why do you think civic engagement as a priority goes largely unreported by the press?
- What do you think Levine means when he talks about reclaiming “the meaning of citizenship”? Is service an essential part of this meaning?
- Levine cites discussions and dialogues as key to social change. Why does he think these are so important? Can you relate?
- What do you think of Levine’s claim that “service does not necessarily build civic skills or address fundamental problems”?
- What do you think could be done to make service seem more “edgy”? Is this possible?
- What does it mean for “civic engagement to run deep”?

Closing Exercise: Think of an issue that you really care about, then think of a civic approach to this issue. What is a way to get ordinary Americans engaged? What are the challenges that get in the way?

ARTICLE

Author/Title: Catherine Rampell, “More College Graduates Take Public Service Jobs”

Link: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/02/business/02graduates.html?pagewanted=all>

Description: In this 2011 article, Rampell writes about the increasing popularity of public service, particularly among “young college graduates who ended up doing good because the economy did them wrong.” In examining this shift toward public service, Rampell examines the motives of young people as they enter public service and raises questions about the relationship between service, egos, and intentions.

Opening Exercise: First, list *three reasons* you are doing service work right now. Then talk about which of the reasons feels best to you and which—if any—feels troubling.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think that many young Americans view public service as a fallback option if they fall short of a for-profit job?
- What do you think of the assertion that “The millennial generation is a generation that is just more interested in making a difference than making a dollar”? Does that hold true for you and those you serve with?
- What can young people who never intended to serve bring to public service work?
- Is service the same as a job? Why or why not?
- Are young people who serve superior to those who do not serve?
- Why did you choose to serve? Was it a choice or a necessity? Does this make a difference in how you serve?

Closing Exercise: Pick *one word or phrase* to describe what you imagine yourself doing 5 years from now. Then briefly describe what gets you there.

ARTICLE

Author/Title: Peter Levine, Excerpt from “The Case for Service”

Link: <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+case+for+%22service%22.-a0192975416>
(read sections entitled “Service and Civic Engagement” and “Expanding the Agenda”)

Description: In this excerpt from his 2008 article, Levine discusses the value of service, particularly among young people, identifying its benefits and its pit-falls, its advantages and its limitations. Levine also suggests several policies that he believes could make a substantial difference in restoring active citizenship in America. A more practical perspective on service, Levine’s article makes way for conversations around service and policy, service’s role in strengthening civic engagement, and about who can get the most out of serving.

Opening Exercise: Has serving made you feel more connected to the country where you serve? Discuss with the people next to you.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you agree that national service should be a rite of passage for young Americans?
- Can community service be damaging? In what contexts?
- Levine says that Congress is on record saying that “focused national service efforts can effectively tackle pressing national challenges, such as improving education for low-income students, increasing energy conservation, and improving the health, well-being, and economic opportunities of the neediest individuals in the Nation.” He also says it “remains to be seen whether this proposition is true.” Do you think it’s true? Does your service tackle any of these issues?
- How do you think leaders should determine “each candidate’s likelihood of benefiting from participation in service”? Is this a realistic criterion to measure?
- What do you think of the policies that Levine suggests at the end of the article?
- Does the word “service” trouble you? Why or why not?
- Who do you think service helps most—you or the people you serve?

Closing Exercise: What is *one question or thought* you have about the future of service in America after this discussion?

LONG READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Drum Major Instinct”

Link: http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documententry/doc_the_drum_major_instinct/

Description: In this famous sermon, delivered only two months before his death in 1968 and considered by some to be his eulogy, King explains that we all have in us “a kind of drum major instinct, a desire to be out front” leading the parade. Instead of saying that we should suppress this selfish impulse he instead attempts to wed it to the idea of service: “If you want to be important—wonderful. If you want to be recognized—wonderful. If you want to be great—wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That’s a new definition of greatness.” In this same sermon, King also claims that *everyone* can serve, an assertion that brings into question what it means to be a servant leader, who service benefits most, and what it means to have an inclusive definition of “who can serve.”

Opening Exercise: Think of one specific time when you served others effectively. When was it? Whom did you serve? Why did you serve them in particular? What made your service effective?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does King think that the desire to be first is a problem? Does he think that there is a solution to this problem?
- According to King, what is the relation between the drum major instinct and the race problem?
- What does King mean when he says that the drum major instinct is good “if you use it right”?
- What is the “new norm of greatness” that King invokes? According to King, how can everybody be great?
- For King, what is the relation between death and service?
- How does King finally help us understand what we can do to “make of this old world a new world”?
- How would/do you convince others to serve?
- Does everyone have the capacity to serve? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise: Please write down the following on a sheet of paper: What are the things that you want to be remembered for? When the participants are done writing ask: “Is service included on this list? Why or why not?”

THEME: POVERTY & NEED

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Lowell Jaeger, "Okay"

Link: http://www.civicleflection.org/resource/d/13111/Lowell_Jaeger_Okay.pdf

Description: Lowell Jaeger's poem "Okay" is told from the perspective of a man driving home from a trip with his wife and children to Hot Springs. As they are driving, the family encounters a man waving them down in the middle of the road, later described by the speaker as drunk, smelly, and blubbering. Yet, when his children see that the man is holding a bleeding dog in his hands, they ask their father to stop, triggering an interaction between the two men that explores the nature of shame, fear, and discomfort in interactions with those who are different from us. "Okay" evokes questions about poverty, service, and how/why we choose to stop—or not to stop—when we see someone in need.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time you intervened in a stranger's life to provide help. Why did you intervene? What help did you provide? How did the encounter turn out?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does the narrator pick up the man in the road?
- What sort of help does the man need?
- Does the dog matter? How?
- What help does the narrator offer?
- Why do the narrator's kids cry?
- What does the narrator mean, "my wife trusts me to be the man she hopes I am"? What qualities does that man possess?
- At the end of this poem, which of the characters are "okay," and why?
- How do we learn to stop or not stop?
- Do you judge the narrator or sympathize with him? Or both?

Closing Exercise: If you were driving down the same road as the speaker, would you stop for the waving man?

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Charles Baudelaire, “Let’s Beat Up the Poor!”

Link: <http://baudelairepoems.blogspot.com/>

Description: Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) was a poet who assailed the boundaries of mid-nineteenth century French society with a revolutionary and often scandalous form of satire. He also placed a high value on community and compassion despite the shocking titles he created for his works, such as “Let’s Beat Up the Poor!” In this bizarre urban parable, Baudelaire presents us with a narrator in isolation—a self-titled philosopher—who, after claiming to have read many “fashionable” books about “public happiness,” has a startling revelation about how he can end poverty. What social commentary is Baudelaire trying to convey through his satire? What does the narrator hope to accomplish by his actions? What does Baudelaire think of philanthropy? And who, indeed, is to decide who is “worthy of freedom,” pride and life?

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you saw someone and had the sense that they were poor. What did you see that suggested poverty? What did you feel in response to seeing this poverty, and what, if anything, did you want to do? What *did* you do?

Discussion Questions:

- When the narrator leaves his room, what is he thirsty for?
- What or who are “entrepreneurs of public happiness”?
- What does it mean to have a “demon of action, a great affirmer”?
- What happens between the narrator and the beggar?
- Why is the beggar’s “glance of hatred” an “excellent sign”?
- What is the narrator’s theory, and how does he apply it?
- Why has it caused the narrator grief to try this theory out?
- What is expected of the beggar at the end? What does he “understand”?

Closing Exercise: What, in a word or phrase, makes it possible for people to “restore pride”?

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Gabriela Mistral, "The House"

Link: <http://spanishpoems.blogspot.com/2005/06/gabriela-mistral-la-casa.html>

Description: Chilean poet and prose writer Gabriela Mistral (1899–1957) grew up in a small village in the Andes Mountains, whose beloved landscapes provide the setting of many of her poems. An educator and an advocate for women, children, the poor, the native peoples of Latin America, and other marginalized groups, Mistral often tries to speak on behalf of these groups in her poems. In "The House," a woman talks to her young son about the freshly baked bread they are about to break together, bread which in Chile, Mistral notes, is called "the face of God." Instead of giving her son the bread as we might expect, the narrator tells her son to lower the hand that reaches for it. Do not take the bread "with ashamed hands," she tells him, while "Hunger with his grimaced face" waits outside. This poem opens up questions about giving, compassion, poverty and parenthood.

Opening Exercise: Think of something you want that you choose to deny yourself. What is it that you want, and why do you hold back from having it?

Discussion Questions:

- How would you characterize the mood in the house?
- Why are their fingers hard and their palms soft?
- Why is the son supposed to lower his hand?
- In what way is it better for the boy not to touch the bread?
- Why would the boy's hands be "ashamed"?
- Does it help those without bread for the boy to lower his hand and not take it? How?
- What lesson, if any, is the mother teaching her son? Why?

Closing Exercise: Go around the circle and demand that participants respond with a Yes or No, no explanation, to the following question: If other people don't have it, should you?

LONG READING

Author/Title: Barbara Ehrenreich, Excerpt from *Nickel and Dimed*

Link: http://www.barbaraehreich.com/nickelanddimed_excerpt.htm

(Note: It may also be important to include biographical information about Ehrenreich so that participants can have a better understanding of her background and therefore the implications of her project.)

Description: In her *New York Times* best-selling book, *Nickel and Dimed* (2001), journalist and activist Barbara Ehrenreich moves from Florida to Maine to Minnesota to explore “low-wage America,” working for poverty-level wages across the country and documenting the results. Cited as “changing the way America perceives its working poor,” *Nickel and Dimed* reveals the day-to-day challenges of working for minimum wage in America. Yet, as Ehrenreich acknowledges at the end of this excerpt, “this is just an experiment, you know, not my actual life.” Ehrenreich’s experiment offers an opportunity to discuss the nature of poverty and need in America, as well as the implications of her story for those for whom poverty is an everyday reality.

Opening Exercise: List two words that come quickly to mind when you think of people living in poverty. Then explain why these are the two words that come to you.

Discussion Questions

- What standards does Ehrenreich set for herself at the start for what she will or will not do?
- What challenges does Ehrenreich encounter in starting her low-wage life?
- Why does Ehrenreich rule out certain occupations when she is first finding a job?
- Why does Ehrenreich feel pressure to tell her boss, “this is... not my actual life”?
- Why is Ehrenreich “unwilling to squat down and pee”? How, if at all, does this impact her understanding?
- What does it take to pull oneself out of poverty? Do our expectations about how this can be done align with what Ehrenreich’s project reveals?
- What do you think of Ehrenreich’s project? Do you think it’s effective? Do you think it’s fair?
- In the end, does Ehrenreich “know” what it means to be poor?

Closing Exercise: What question about poverty would you most like an answer to?

IMAGE

Author/Title: Dorothea Lange, “Migrant Mother”

Link: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998021539/PP/>

Description: One of a series of photographs taken in 1936 of migratory farm workers and their families in California, “Migrant Mother” depicts Florence Owens Thompson and her children, leaning on her. Commissioned by the Farm Security Administration to document the impact of federal programs on improving rural conditions, Dorothea Lange was immediately drawn to Thompson’s worn, weather-beaten face, saying that she “saw and approached the hungry desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet.” An iconic photograph from the Great Depression, “Migrant Mother” offers an opportunity to explore issues of poverty, family, responsibility, and need.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you saw a family in need. How did it make you feel? Did you do anything in response?

Discussion Questions:

- Take a minute and write down two things you notice about this image.
- How would you describe the look on the woman’s face?
- What is one feeling that this image evokes?
- Would you react to this photograph differently if it were of the woman alone, without her children? Why?
- What do you find it hardest to look away from in this image?
- Where do you see weakness in this picture? Where do you see strength?

Closing Exercise: Identify *three* specific qualities or circumstances that are likely to make you feel connected to a stranger in need. Then, identify *one* way that you could better support people with these qualities or circumstances in your community.

IMAGE

Author/Title: Shelby Lee Adams, "The Home Funeral"

Link: <http://www.edelmangallery.com/adams2.htm>

Description: One of a series of photographs taken by American environmental portrait photographer, Shelby Lee Adams, to reveal and commemorate Appalachian family life, "The Home Funeral" depicts the funeral of Esther Renee Adams, better known as "Mamaw." As was tradition in many Appalachian families, Mamaw's funeral took place in her own home in Eastern Kentucky where country wakes could last for days. Adams' photograph inspires discussion about family, poverty, connection, tradition, and need.

Opening Exercise: Which "character" in this image are you most drawn to and why?

Discussion Questions:

- How would you describe the young girls in the photo?
- How would you describe the looks on the characters' faces? Do their eyes speak?
- What kinds of relationships do you see in this image? How would you describe them?
- Does anything trouble or concern you in this image? What and why?
- Where do you see trust in this image? Where do you see fear?
- Why take a photograph of a "home funeral"?
- Is this a picture of "poverty" or something else? What clues are available to you to decide?

Closing Exercise: Please go around and share one thing that you will take away from this discussion or image.

AUDIO/VIDEO/SPEECH

Author/Title: Lyndon Baines Johnson, "State of the Union Address, 1964"

Link: Text & Audio:
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/lbj1964stateoftheunion.htm>
Video:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2vHcr-EtEw>

Description: In his 1964 State of the Union Address, President Lyndon B. Johnson declares an "unconditional war on poverty in America," recommending the most federal support in American history for education, health, retraining the unemployed, and helping the economically and physically handicapped. Johnson also makes it clear that this support is for *all* Americans, regardless of race, ethnicity, or background, and that the war against poverty must be won not in Washington, but "in the field, in every private home" and "in every public office." This powerful speech offers an opportunity to critically examine the last 50 years and our progress in the "war against poverty." It also brings up ideas about the symptoms of poverty, the causes of poverty, *where* the war on poverty should be fought, and *how* the war on poverty can be won, that remain poignant and relevant today.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time in your life when someone said something about poverty or people in need that bothered you. Why did it bother you? How did you react?

Discussion Questions:

- After reading the first full paragraph of his speech, what are Johnson's priorities as president?
- What are the "basic hopes" that Johnson lays out? Do you think it is possible to help each and every American fulfill them?
- What kind of people "live on the outskirts of hope" today? Do you think that it is possible to help them?
- What about Johnson's speech surprised you? Alarmed you?
- Do you think we are still "fighting a war on poverty"? Do you believe winning is possible?

Closing Exercise: Identify one thing you could be doing that you're *not* doing right now to fight poverty in your community.

AUDIO/VIDEO

Author/Title: Mark Horvath, “Shining a Light on Invisible People”

Link: <http://www.whatsyourcalling.org/campaign/if-not-you-who>

Description: Mark Horvath, producer of “Shining a Light on Invisible People,” is a former drug addict and survivor of homelessness who now uses social media, including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, to raise awareness about homelessness and poverty in America. In this video, Mark explains his mission to give “a face and a voice to homelessness,” a mission that he accomplishes by traveling around the United States and filming/interviewing the homeless. As Mark says at the end of “Shining a Light...”, “Everytime I try to quit, I hear this voice... that says ‘if not you, who?’” This video lends itself to dialogue about creative ways to address poverty and how to best tell the stories of those in need. Finally, it encourages us all to reflect upon Mark’s question, “If not you, who?”

Opening Exercise: Think of a time in your work when you felt you were not being seen. Who wasn’t seeing you, why weren’t they seeing you, and why did it matter?

Discussion Questions:

- What are the images that stick out to you in Horvath’s video?
- What methods does Horvath use to get people talking?
- Why do you think Horvath characterizes the homeless as an invisible people?
- How do we gain access to other people’s stories, particularly those that we serve?
- How much, if anything, needs to be shared in order to identify with another human being?
- What keeps Horvath motivated to keep doing his work? What keeps you motivated to keep doing the work that you do?
- Can you relate to Horvath’s voice that says, ‘if not you, who?’?

Closing Exercise: Think of one time in your work when your attention to someone else clearly meant something to that person. Why were you paying attention to that person? How do you know your attention meant something to her or him?

ARTICLE

Author/Title: Lane DeGregory, "Panhandlers Have Many Strategies for Getting People's Sympathy in Order to Make Money"

Link: <http://www.tampabay.com/features/humaninterest/article1015963.ece>

Description: DeGregory's 2009 article, published in the *St. Petersburg Times*, discusses the strategies Florida panhandlers use to get money from passersby. He explores the rules of panhandling, as communicated to him by panhandlers themselves, and interviews both people in genuine need and people who view panhandling as a career that is both more profitable and more pleasurable than "flipping burgers or stocking shelves." In bringing panhandlers' diverse range of stories to light, DeGregory offers an opportunity to discuss giving, poverty, and what it means to be "in need."

Opening Exercise: Think of the last time you encountered a beggar: did you give him/her money? Did you try to help him/her in other ways? Why?

Discussion Questions

- When you finish the article, write down one word to describe how you're feeling. What is your word and why?
- Are Roderick Couch and Jazmine Saldana homeless? Why or why not?
- Is making "more than they would... flipping burgers or stocking shelves" a legitimate reason to panhandle?
- Does reading about panhandlers' strategies make you less likely to give money to people on the streets?
- "People in BMWs and Lexuses won't look at you," the panhandlers say. "People in beaters give the most." Why might this be true?
- "A lot of people out here aren't sincere," said Roderick Couch, the "disabled" ex-con. "That messes it up for the rest of us." How do you discern the sincere from "the rest"? Can you ever know for sure? What does this mean for your own giving?
- Is DeGregory's story an important one for the average American citizen to read?

Closing Exercise: "The panhandlers in DeGregory's article are people in need." Agree or disagree?

ARTICLE

Author/Title: *The Economist*, “The Rich are Different from You and Me: They are More Selfish”

Link: <http://www.economist.com/node/16690659>

Description: “The Rich are Different from You and Me: They are More Selfish” describes a series of studies conducted by psychologists at the University of California, Berkeley, in which the poor prove to be more inclined to charity than the rich. The first study paired participants with an anonymous partner, gave them ten credits (that they were told was worth real money), and told them that their task was to decide how many of these credits they wanted to keep for themselves and how many they wished to transfer to their partner. A week before the study, participants were asked their ethnic backgrounds, sex, age, frequency of attendance at religious services and socioeconomic status. An analysis of the results showed that generosity increased as participants’ own social status fell. Two follow-up studies confirmed these findings. In one study, lower-class participants felt that a greater share of a person’s salary should be used to support charity and in another, lower-class participants showed more spontaneous compassion than upper-class participants. Each of these studies raises questions about giving, poverty, social status, and compassion, and how these variables are connected.

Opening Exercise: Think of someone in your life who frequently gives to others. What inspires this person to give?

Discussion Questions:

- Consider this finding from the study: “It is the poor, not the rich, who are inclined to charity.” What does this make you think about “the rich”?
- Why do you think that “people in... lower social classes” are more inclined to give charity and consider the welfare of others?
- What do you make of the researcher’s conclusion that “the rich are capable of compassion, if somebody reminds them”?
- Do the study’s results match up with your own experience? Why or why not?
- How does one become compassionate? Is it based on experience, or taught, or both?
- How would you rate your own level of compassion? How did it come about?

Closing Exercise: Think about one person in your life who you would like to read this article. Why would you like them to read it?

SHORT READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Lovers of the Poor"

Link: <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-lovers-of-the-poor/>

Description: Renowned for her "small... terse portraits of the Black urban poor" (Richard K. Barksdale), the Pulitzer Prize-winning Gwendolyn Brooks here presents a less than flattering portrait of a few representatives from the Ladies' Betterment League who leave the comfort of their homes to "allot largesse to the lost." Brooks' razor-sharp perceptions of the human mind invite us to look past ourselves and into the eyes, hearts, and circumstances of others, evoking questions about the way(s) we view, think about, and aim to help those in need. Published in 1963, the poem also gives us the opportunity to explore the nature of charity vs. service, the "horror" of poverty, and how or why we, in Brooks' words, might "avoid inhaling the laden air."

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you tried to help someone and it didn't go as planned. How were you trying to help? What didn't go as you had imagined? Was it, all in all, a good experience or not?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does the poem have a double start—first, "The Lovers of the Poor arrive" and then "The Ladies from the Ladies Betterment League arrive."
- How would you describe the narrator's tone toward the ladies?
- What is the purpose of the Ladies' Betterment League?
- What do the ladies hope to accomplish, and why, in this case, do they seem to fail?
- Who is the "citizeness" the ladies encounter? Why does the narrator call her a "citizeness"?
- What does the narrator mean by the word "loathe-love"?
- Why does Brooks make a point of letting us know about the ladies' life of luxury in the midst of describing their visit to a slum?
- Is there anything "good" that happens in the poem?
- How does your own organization resemble or differ from the Ladies' Betterment League?

Closing Exercise: Are the women from the Ladies' Betterment League helpful or hurtful?

THEME: DIVERSITY & DIFFERENCE

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Etheridge Knight, "A Wasp Woman Visits a Black Junkie in Prison"

Link: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/181863>

Description: As the title of Knight's poem suggests, "A Wasp Woman Visits a Black Junkie in Prison" describes an encounter between an upper-class white woman and the black junkie she visits in jail. Although the junkie feels confused and even indignant upon first meeting his visitor, the two begin to fish "for a denominator, common or uncommon" and eventually "summon up the fact that both [are] human." This poem offers an opportunity to explore our shared humanity, the assumptions we make about those who are different from us, and the value of dialogue and conversation, even if, as Knight says, "no shackles are shaken."

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when someone quite different from you intervened in your life. Why did this person intervene, and what was the context within which it happened? How did you respond?

Discussion Questions:

- What is happening with the man in the opening stanzas? How would you describe his mindset?
- Why does the prisoner think, "this cannot be real"?
- What are the reasons the prisoner comes up with to account for the lady's visit?
- Why is the woman there? What sense do you have of her?
- What do you think of the prisoner's question, "You got children, Ma'am"?
- How would you describe the impact of this whole encounter?
- The last lines of the poem are: "But after she had taken her leave, he walked softly/and for hours used no hot words." How do you interpret these lines?
- Should the woman come back for another visit? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise: Think of a time when you intervened in the life of someone quite different from you. Why did you intervene? Do you think you made a difference? How could you tell?

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Michael Lassell, "How to Watch Your Brother Die"

Link: <http://www.lunanina.com/watching.php>

Description: Lassell's poem, "How to Watch Your Brother Die," is a heart-wrenching piece that depicts an HIV-positive man's death from the perspective of his brother. Throughout the poem, the reader discovers important information about the speaker's relationship to his brother, including that the speaker chose to distance himself from his brother after he came out as gay. The speaker's grieving process involves better knowing his brother's partner and better understanding his brother's life, a life that was "not what [he] imagined." Lassell's poem explores the challenges that come with reaching out to others across difference, the pain and alienation that the inability to accept difference brings, and the power both of bigotry and love.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you became aware of important differences between you and someone you were working with. What was the situation that brought these differences to your attention, what differences emerged, and what, if anything, did you do in response to your sense of these differences?

Discussion Questions

- Why is "be calm" the first instruction offered here?
- What shocks the dying man's brother?
- What seems "deeper" about the commitment between the speaker's brother and his lover than between the speaker and his wife?
- Why does his wife say, "Please I don't want to know the details."?
- What does it mean to "get used to another man's hatred"? How does that work?
- Where and how does *hate* operate in the poem? Who feels it? Who is it directed toward and why?
- What does the speaker instruct us to think about on the way home, and why?
- What does it mean to live without challenge?
- How does living without challenge impact your relationships? How does living with challenge impact your relationships?

Closing Exercise: Name one difference between you and the people you work with that seems important and one difference that seems unimportant.

LONG READING

Author/Title: Tobias Wolff, "Say Yes"

Link: Text:
<http://tinyurl.com/7dmarbm>

Description: Contemporary American short story writer, novelist, editor, and journalist Tobias Wolff teaches English and creative writing at Stanford University. His minimalist story, "Say Yes," published in 1996, is part of a larger collection of short stories, *Back in the World*, that examines the possibility of redemption through human connection. This story questions the durability of such connection, as a man and his wife consider the meaning of race and foreign culture in modern American society. What does it mean to "know" another person, one's own prejudices, and oneself? How does such knowledge affect our personal relationships or our decisions about giving to or serving others?

Opening Exercise: Engage in a brief thought experiment in which you change one aspect of your background—race or gender or geographical origin or something else of similar significance. Then think about how your life—and perhaps your work—might be different. If it is helpful to do so, put the thought experiment in the following terms: "If I were _____, then I would have _____." Then do the same equally speculative experiment for someone that you are close to: "If X were _____, then she would be _____."

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think the story starts with the man's thoughts about doing the dishes?
- Why does the man think it's a bad idea for white people and black people to marry, or for people to marry foreigners?
- What do you think of Ann's question to her husband, what "if we had met, and I'd been black"?
- The narrator asks his wife, "How can you understand someone who comes from a completely different background"? How would you answer this question?
- Why does the man repeat the claim, "If you were black you wouldn't be you"? What does this mean?
- What do you think happens at the end of this story?
- What, if anything, has changed for the narrator by the end of the story? What, if anything, has changed for his wife?
- Can you think of a time that someone warned you that someone was "different. Not the same, like us"? How did you feel? How did you respond?

Closing Exercise: Think back to the opening exercise and the aspect of your identity that you changed. Using this same aspect of your identity, respond to the question: If you were _____, would you still be you?

LONG READING

Author/Title: Raymond Carver, “Cathedral”

Link: <http://www.misanthropytoday.com/cathedral-by-raymond-carver-weekend-short-story/>

Description: In Carver’s short story, “Cathedral,” published in 1989, the narrator recounts a night shared with his wife and a visiting friend of hers—a blind man to whom she once read. The narrator’s own journey from figurative blindness to insight into the humanity of the other truly hits home. Raymond Carver, the father of minimalism, uses this story to explore the growth of a reluctant relationship between two very different people, and to show the power that understanding and compassion can have over prejudice.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you felt nervous around someone who was different from you. Why did you feel nervous? How did you treat the other person? Did you ever get to know them, and if so, how?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about the narrator?
- Why is the narrator unexcited about the blind man’s visit?
- Why do the woman and the blind man keep in touch?
- Why doesn’t the narrator “care to know” about the blind man and Beulah’s relationship?
- Why does the narrator stop himself from asking the blind man questions at the beginning of the visit?
- Why does the narrator wish that the blind man had a pair of dark glasses?
- When Robert says that he is comfortable in the house, do you think he means it? Why or why not?
- Why does Robert ask the narrator if he’s religious?
- Why is the experience of drawing the cathedral with Robert “really something”?
- Do you think once Robert leaves, the narrator will change? Has he changed already?

Closing Exercise: Please go around and share one thing that you are left thinking about difference after this discussion.

IMAGE

Author/Title: Eliot Elisofon, “Students of Mixed Races Sitting Together”

Link: <http://images.google.com/hosted/life/f6c9b2c2424f575f.html>

Description: Eliot Elisofon’s photograph, “Students of Mixed Races Sitting Together” was featured in *LIFE* magazine on January 1, 1938. The photograph depicts students of Japanese, Puerto Rican, Filipino, Hawaiian, Chinese, Korean, Part-Hawaiian, and Caucasian descent sitting on the bleachers of their school in an effort to “show... ethnic differences.” Elisofon’s photograph inspires discussion about diversity, difference, and self-identification.

Opening Exercise: Write a list of the things you self-identify as. Then circle the identity descriptor that you feel most strongly about. Share with the person next to you why you made the choice—why was it important?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about the students sitting on the bleachers?
- What do you notice about the students in each group? What, aside from ethnic background, differentiates them from each other?
- How does seeing a group of people categorized like this make you feel?
- Is this group of students diverse? How do we know?
- Is it important to you to highlight the qualities that make you different from others? Why or why not?
- What, if anything, does this picture accomplish? For the people in the picture—and for the people viewing it?

Closing Exercise: Write the identity descriptor from the opening exercise down on a sheet of paper and hold it up. After everyone in the circle has held up their descriptor, go around in a circle and say how this *activity* made you feel.

AUDIO/VIDEO

Author/Title: Mary Morten, Clip from *Woke Up Black*

Link: <http://vimeo.com/13360384> (Clip: 3:57-7:38)

Description: *Woke Up Black* is a 2011 documentary produced and directed by filmmaker Mary Morten that focuses on five African-American college students from the Chicago area. The youth, ages 16-21, represent a diversity of backgrounds and interests, and serve to expand viewers' understanding of both the challenges and triumphs of young African-Americans today. This particular clip follows a nineteen-year-old woman named Morgan, a Bio-Medical Engineering major who grew up in suburban Chicago and is used to functioning in a mostly white environment. Morgan's identity and relationship to race, as displayed in this clip, is complex. She is proud to defy stereotypes for young African-American woman, but still craves an African-American community, something she does not have at her out-of-state university. Morgan's experience elicits questions about diversity, community, difference, stereotypes, and whether we can truly understand and relate to people who have different identities than us.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you felt connected to someone because you shared a common identity. Who did you feel connected to? What was your shared identity? Why did you feel connected to them?

Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the things that we know about Morgan and her background after watching this clip?
- What are some of the challenges that Morgan faces as a young African-American woman?
- Why does Morgan feel like she's "missing something" at her out-of-state university?
- How does your identity impact the people you surround yourself with or the communities that you become a part of?
- Do you think that Morgan needs to have friends who are African-American?
- What can people of other races, class backgrounds, sexual orientations, genders, etc. understand about one another? What can they relate to? What can they *not* understand?
- Where do you see yourself in this video? Where, if anywhere, do you fit?
- Is it important to know—and understand—the experiences of people different from you? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise: What is *one thing* that is needed to create connections across difference? Go around and share.

ARTICLE

Author/Title: Touré, “Preconceptions”

Link: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/07/magazine/lives-a-spanking-question.html>

Description: Toure’s article, “Preconceptions,” published in *The New York Times* in 2011, opens with a discussion of whether spanking is an essential aspect of the black parent-child experience. Touré’s preconception that it is essential is overturned at a party when he encounters differing opinions. One black man argues that home should not be a place of violence. Another woman, who he presumes to be white, is enthusiastically pro-spanking. Later in the night, another of Touré’s preconceptions is turned on its head when he discovers that the woman he assumed to be white self-identifies as black. Touré’s article raises questions about race, parenthood, adherence to tradition, and the preconceptions that shape and inform our lives.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time you made an assumption about somebody you encountered in your service work based on how they looked. What was the assumption? How did it impact your interaction? How did the encounter turn out?

Discussion Questions

- What’s your sense of who the narrator is?
- What is the narrator’s “internal debate”?
- What makes the narrator think the woman at the party is white?
- When the narrator discovers that the “white” woman is actually black, he says “I was shocked that she was shocked and indignant that she was indignant.” Why is the woman so offended? Why is the narrator so shocked?
- What do you make of Touré’s post-script?
- How do you relate this story to your own upbringing? Spank or don’t spank?

Closing Exercise: Think of a time in your work when you felt someone made an assumption about you. How did you respond?

ESSAY

Author/Title: Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”

Link: <http://www.amptoons.com/blog/files/mcintosh.html>

Description: In her essay, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” American feminist and activist, Peggy McIntosh, explores the power of white privilege. To prove this power, McIntosh writes out a list of daily effects of white privilege in her life, including never being asked to speak on behalf of all people in a particular racial group, easily renting or purchasing housing, and the ability to swear, dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters without having people attribute these choices to race. Once these advantages are acknowledged, however, McIntosh questions what to do with this knowledge. How can people in positions of power dismantle the very systems that empower them? How can we become increasingly aware of our own privilege and the privilege (or lack thereof) of others? How do we transfer power to those who are different than us? These are some of the many questions that McIntosh inspires.

Opening Exercise: Think of a part of your identity that gives you an advantage over most other people. What things in life are made easier because of it? What things in life would be made harder if that part of your identity did not exist?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does McIntosh start her essay by saying “I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group”? Why is this important for her to say?
- The author says, “I have often noticed men’s unwillingness to grant that they are overprivileged, even though they may grant that women are disadvantaged.” How do you make sense of this statement? Is it possible for one person’s overprivilege to be unrelated to another’s disadvantage?
- What do you think McIntosh means when she says that recognizing privilege “makes one newly accountable”? To whom are we accountable? What are we accountable for?
- Which of the “daily effects of white privilege” in McIntosh’s list sticks out to you and why?
- What do you think McIntosh means when she writes about “people whom I was trained to mistrust”? What kind of training is she referring to? Who has she learned to mistrust?
- What do you think McIntosh means when she writes that admitting white privilege means giving up “the myth of meritocracy”?
- Does acknowledging privilege matter? What if we acknowledge privilege without “doing anything to lessen or end it”? Is acknowledgement an action in and of itself? Is it enough?
- Does McIntosh’s essay make you feel encouraged or discouraged? Why?
- How do we lessen the impact of our privilege? Is this required or desired?

Closing Exercise: Take out a sheet of paper and write down one thing that you will do “with such knowledge.”

SHORT READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Imtiaz Dharker, "They'll Say, 'She Must Be from Another Country'"

Link: <http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poem/item/2824>

Description: Imtiaz Dharker is one of the most important Indian poets currently writing in English. A recurring theme in her poetry is the danger of exclusion, as she noted in a recent interview: "In a world that seems to be splitting itself into narrower national and religious groups, sects, castes, subcastes, we can go on excluding others until we come down to a minority of one." The title of this poem—which is also the refrain—reminds us how quickly we often dismiss those whom we categorize as "other." The narrator wonders if there is "another country" for such outsiders, though notices that "from where we are it doesn't look like a country, it's more like the cracks that grow between borders." Published in 2003, Dharker's poem raises questions about the possibilities of transcending one's own culture and prejudices.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you felt that you were an outsider. When was it? What was the situation? What made you feel like an outsider?

Discussion Questions:

- What was your impression of the narrator? How would you describe her?
- Who are the "they" she refers to? Are they always the same or do they change?
- Why is the statement "She must be/from another country" an answer to all the situations Dharker's narrator describes? What is meant by it?
- What does the narrator mean by "country of freaks"? Who lives there?
- What does the narrator mean when she says the country "where all of us live... doesn't look like a country"?
- To whom is the narrator referring as "we" in the last stanza?
- Why is the narrator finally "happy to say... I must be/from another country"? Why is she happy? Do you believe her?
- Have you ever heard anyone say, "he or she must be from another country"? If so, what did they mean? How, if at all, did you respond?

Closing Exercise: Take out a sheet of paper and reflect on the following question: Would you rather live in "a country" or in "the cracks that grow between borders"?

THEME: JUSTICE & EQUALITY

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Tony Hoagland, "America"

Link: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/171302>

Description: The author of three volumes of poetry, Tony Hoagland received the 2005 Mark Twain Award for his contribution to humor in American poetry, as well as the O. B. Hardison prize for poetry and teaching. His poem "America," published in 2003, is a look at a teacher presented with the anger and frustration of a disaffected, blue-haired, tongue-studded student. At first the teacher seems to reject the student's complaint about modern materialist culture, pausing to "wonder if this is a legitimate category of pain." But then he reconsiders, privately acknowledging that "I am asleep in America too,/ And I don't know how to wake myself either." Hoagland's poem explores the effects of American consumerism and the barriers to identifying with others of a different class, nation, or generation.

Opening Exercise: What—if anything—do you find to be wrong with your home country? How—if at all—do you contribute to what you find to be wrong? How—if at all—do you contribute to redressing what is wrong?

Discussion Questions:

- Why, for the blue-haired student, is America a maximum-security prison?
- Is this student, in your view, expressing "a legitimate category of pain"?
- What does the narrator mean when he says, "I am asleep in America too,/and I don't know how to wake myself either"?
- How would you describe the narrator's attitude toward the student?
- What do you make of the instructor's dream?
- What is the "nightmare" described at the end of the poem?
- Who might be "drowning underneath you"? What does the narrator mean by that?
- Why does the speaker feel that it is "your own hand/ Which turns the volume higher"?
- What do you think of his vision of America? Does it resonate? Which parts?

Closing Exercise: Think about yourself for a moment: are you awake or asleep?

LONG READING

Author/Title: Kurt Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron"

Link: <http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/harrison.html>

Description: Originally published in 1961, "Harrison Bergeron" is a satirical, dystopian science fiction story written by Kurt Vonnegut, one of the most famous American writers of the twentieth century. The story, set in the year 2081, takes place after the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution have been passed and all Americans have been mandated equal. Yet, as the reader discovers, this mandated equality is neither as fair nor as humane as it may seem. Vonnegut's story inspires discussion about the challenges that come with "absolute equality," what people are willing to give up for equality, and the relationship between equality and individual freedom, ultimately asking whether it is possible to pursue *both* liberty and justice for all.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you felt guilty for having something that someone else didn't. What was it that you had? Who didn't have it? Why did you have it and why didn't they?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about the year 2081?
- What do we know about George? What do we know about Hazel?
- Who in the story has handicaps? Why?
- Why is George kept "from taking advantage of [his] brain"?
- What do you make of Hazel's statement that the announcer "should get a nice raise for trying so hard"? Should people be rewarded for trying?
- Imagine for a second that the handicaps in this story are based on identity—so white people had to have handicaps, people from upper-class backgrounds had to have handicaps, heterosexual people had to have handicaps, men had to have handicaps, etc. How would you react?
- Would you be willing to give up certain skills, qualities, or rights for equality? What would you be willing to give up?
- Is it possible to pursue individual freedom/happiness and equality at the same time? How do these things conflict?

Closing Exercise: What is one thing that you would be willing to give up in the name of equality? What is one thing that you wouldn't be willing to give up?

LONG READING

Author/Title: Chitra Divakaruni, “Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter”

Link: <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/98apr/dutta.htm>

Description: Chitra Divakaruni was born in Calcutta, India in 1956. When she was 19, she immigrated to the United States. The short story “Mrs. Dutta Writes a Letter” was published in two parts in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1998. Mrs. Dutta is an Indian widow who left her home in Calcutta two months earlier to live with her son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren in the U.S. She recently received a letter from her best friend in India asking if she is happy in America. Struggling with the cultural gulf between herself and her son and his family, who seem unappreciative of her gifts and her attempts to be helpful, Mrs. Dutta finds the question difficult to answer. While composing possible replies, she reflects on her past and her decision to leave her native land. This story, whose parts can be read together or separately, inspires discussions of justice, identity, immigration, equality, and how we cope with change and cultural difference.

Opening Exercise: Where are you from? Have you ever been treated unfairly because of your national or geographical origin? When and by whom?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we find out about Mrs. Dutta in the first three paragraphs of the story?
- Why do you think Mrs. Dutta feels an “uneasy pride” when thinking about her daughter-in-law passing as American?
- How would you describe Mrs. Dutta’s relationship to her daughter-in-law?
- Why is Mrs. Dutta disappointed in her grandchildren?
- What do you think Mrs. Dutta means when she says, “ignorance... is a great promoter of harmony”?
- What does Shyamoli mean when she says, “All these years I’ve been so careful not to give these Americans a chance to say something like this”?
- What do you think Mrs. Dutta “owes herself” after overhearing Shyamoli and Sagar’s argument?
- What do you think Mrs. Dutta means when she says “now that she no longer cares whether tears blotch her letter, she feels no need to weep”?

Closing Exercise: Name one thing that you could do to be more of a support to outsiders in your community?

IMAGE

Author/Title: Jimmy Holt, “First Day of School Desegregation”

Link: <http://www.library.nashville.org/civilrights/photos.htm>, Second Photograph

Description: “First Day of School Desegregation” was taken on September 9, 1957 outside Buena Vista School in Nashville, Tennessee. The photograph shows three African-American women walking a young African-American boy toward the entrance of the school. Meanwhile, a single white woman and three white children stand and sit on its steps. This photograph offers an opportunity to discuss justice and equality in America, as well as space, body language, prejudice and perceived difference.

Opening Exercise: What is one thing you think you deserve more of? Why do you deserve more of this thing and why do you think you haven’t received more of it yet?

Discussion Questions:

- What is *one word* and *one feeling* that come to you as you look at this image?
- Which character are you drawn to? How would you describe that person?
- What do you find it hardest to look away from in this image?
- Where do you see difference in this image? Where do you see connection?
- What do we know when we look at this image? What do we not know?
- Who does Buena Vista School appear to belong to and why?
- Where do you see yourself in this image? Anywhere?

Closing Exercise: Name *one specific thing* you do in your work that seems to you to move toward the achievement of justice.

IMAGE

Author/Title: James Karales, “Selma-to-Montgomery March for Voting Rights”

Link: <http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/picturing-freedom-selma-montgomery-march-1965>

Description: Taken by photojournalist James Karales, “Selma-to-Montgomery March for Voting Rights” depicts one of three marches in 1965 that marked what many consider the political and emotional peak of the American Civil Rights Movement. Karales captures men and women, black and white, dressed in suits and skirts and head scarves, with two American flags flying in the air. This photograph explores the nature of diversity and inclusion in the U.S., eliciting questions about who makes up America and who chooses to partake in movements to create a more just and equitable future.

Opening Exercise: Write down *three* words that describe the people you know who fight for justice. Explain why these words come to mind and discuss with two people sitting close to you.

Discussion Questions:

- What is *one word* and *one feeling* that come to you as you look at this image?
- What do you notice first? What do you notice second?
- What do you find it hardest to look away from in this image?
- What is one question that the image provokes in you?
- Where do you see action in this image? Where do you see outcomes?

Closing Exercise: Think of a movement for equality or justice that you care about today. Which people are most visibly a part of this movement? Which people are most noticeably absent?

IMAGE

Author/Title: Mark Abramson, “Pushing for Immigrant Law and Citizen Status” Second Photograph

Link: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/gallery/2010/07/20/GA2010072005839.html>

Description: Mark Abramson’s photograph gallery on *The Washington Post* website depicts undocumented students from around the country, demanding the passage of the Dream Act. The Dream Act would provide conditional permanent residency to illegal alien students of good moral character who graduate from U.S. high schools, arrived in the U.S. as minors, and lived in the country continuously for five years prior to the bill’s enactment. If they completed two years in the military or four years at an institution of higher learning, students would obtain temporary residency for six years. Photograph #2 in this gallery depicts Diana Martinez, 18 and an undocumented student, being arrested after refusing to leave an organized sit-in in the Hart Senate Office building. The photograph inspires discussion about issues of immigration, equality, non-violent resistance, and methods of achieving freedom and justice for all.

Opening Exercise: Think about a time you stood up for something you believed in even when it was difficult. What were the consequences of your actions? What made you decide to take a stand?

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think is happening in this image?
- How would you characterize the students?
- Why do you think the girl’s eyes are closed? What do you think she’s feeling?
- What stands out to you about the policemen and women in this photograph?
- How do the young people in graduation gowns compare with the officers in uniform?
- Where do you see strength? How would you describe it?
- What is one question that this image provokes?
- Is this an image of justice or injustice? Or neither?
- Is there anything in your life that you would risk getting arrested for? If so, what? If not, why?

Closing Exercise: Name one thing you heard today that makes you think more deeply about justice.

AUDIO/VIDEO

Director/Title: David Guggenheim, Clip from *Waiting for Superman*

Links: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bj3iOMxD_7w&feature=related (0:00-8:23)

Description: This clip from the 2010 documentary, *Waiting for Superman*, analyzes the future of public education in America and discusses high school drop-out factories where over 40% of students don't graduate on time. In looking at the failing schools it becomes clear that there are certain students in America who are being set up to succeed and others who are being set up to fail. *Waiting for Superman* lends itself to dialogue about public education in America and how this system contributes to racial, social, and economic injustice across the country, as well as to imagining how we can create a more equitable future.

Opening Exercise: Think about one of your elementary, middle, or high schools. What was this school like? What were your teachers like? How do you think this impacted your future?

Discussion Questions:

- How does the image of a race represent the challenges of which the narrator speaks?
- What is a "drop-out factory"? What do you know about this kind of place?
- How would you feel if you were a student who knew that you were going to attend a "drop-out factory"?
- What do you think the relationship is between failing schools and failing neighborhoods?
- What do you think of the scene where the elementary school teacher shows her students their future middle school? Does it make sense to show young students their future schools if they are "academic sinkholes"?

Closing Exercise: When you think about equality, what is one thought or question that comes to mind, based on today's discussion?

ESSAY

Author/Title: Cecilia Muñoz, “Getting Angry Can Be a Good Thing”

Link: <http://thisibelieve.org/essay/2/>

Description: Cecilia Muñoz, the Vice President of the Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation at the National Council of La Raza, wrote “Getting Angry Can Be a Good Thing” in September 2005. The piece, based on the idea that “a little outrage can take you a long way,” describes the value of anger in activism and social justice work. Muñoz claims that she feeds off her anger and relies on “that hollow place that outrage carves in your soul” to continually sustain and inspire her work. Muñoz’s piece explores the place of anger in activism and the fight for equality, eliciting questions about how to use these feelings to propel us forward, seek justice, and recommit ourselves to our work.

Opening Exercise: Describe a time in your work when things just felt right to you. What was going on and why did things feel right? How did this feeling affect the work you were doing?

Discussion Questions:

- Why is Muñoz angry after the dinner conversation with her family and friend?
- What does Muñoz mean when she says that “anger has a way... of hollowing out your insides”?
- How does Muñoz see anger as sustaining her work?
- Do you believe that your setbacks at work outnumber your victories? How does this impact the work that you do?
- Do you think that anger is productive in activism and social justice work? Does it propel you to do good?
- Is there an alternative to anger? What might that be?
- Is there anything that makes you angry in your work? Why and how do you respond to that feeling?

Closing Exercise: Name the most important emotion for you, in your work, and explain why it is the most important.

SPEECH

Author/Title: Cornel West, "What It Means to Be a Leftist in the 21st Century"

Link: http://www.democracynow.org/2007/3/13/cornel_west_on_what_it_means

Description: Cornel West is an American philosopher, author, critic, and activist. A professor at Princeton University in the Center for African-American Studies and the Department of Religion, West is one of the most famous public intellectuals in the United States and is known for his political, social, and moral insight and criticism. In his 2007 speech, "What It Means to Be a Leftist," given at the 2007 Left Forum in New York, West discusses what "being a leftist" means in the twenty-first century, distinguishing it from political parties in the U.S. and tying it to a willingness to fight for social justice in radical ways. West's speech inspires discussion about what it means to make justice and equality "your calling" and whether radicalism is the best/only way to achieve justice and equality today.

Opening Exercise: Think about a time when you cared about a social issue and you didn't feel like people were fighting for it hard enough. What was the issue and how do you wish people had been fighting for it?

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think West means when he says that most Americans are "sleepwalking"?
- What is the difference for West between being a "Leftist" and being either a Democrat or a Republican? What does being a "Leftist" mean to him?
- What is the difference between what West calls "cheap PC chitchat" and a "calling that you're willing to fight against and try to understand the sources of"? Where do you see this difference playing out today?
- What are the challenges of making justice and equality "your calling"? How do you deal with those challenges?
- Do you think that radicalism is the best way to achieve equality? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise: What is one question that you have about the relationship between justice and radicalism after this discussion? Spend 2-3 minutes writing down the question and your thoughts about it, then have a few people share their questions with the group at large.

LONG READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"

Link: <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/dunnweb/rprnts.omelas.pdf>

Description: Le Guin's beautiful, perceptive short story unfolds a moral conundrum as it reveals the stunning costs of a seemingly utopian town's comforts. If our comfort depends on the suffering of others, Le Guin asks, how should we feel about these comforts, and what should we do? Is the "greater good" worth the sacrifice? Is such sacrifice even practical? This fairy-tale-like story raises deep moral questions for every member of society, and demands that we, like the citizens in the story, break away from our blissful ignorance and pay close attention to the sources of our own comforts and freedoms. Who is the child who suffers in the story, and what is its relationship to those who walk away from Omelas?

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you saw a person who was suffering as a result of injustice or inequality. Who was the person? How did you react?

Discussion Questions:

- How would you describe the city of Omelas? What do we know about it from the opening pages?
- Why does the narrator seem to doubt that we will believe in and accept the description of "the festival, the city, the joy"?
- What is the "function" of the suffering child?
- Why do the people of Omelas understand that the child "has to be there"?
- How and when do they explain the suffering child to their children? How do the children respond?
- What "terrible paradox" must those who observe the suffering child face? Why do they come to accept the child's confinement as "the terrible justice of reality"?
- Who are the ones who walk away from Omelas? Why do they leave? And why go alone? Is it a brave act or something else?
- Why do some people stay? What do you think of those who stay?
- Have you ever made a decision to walk away from Omelas? What happened?
- How does Omelas resemble our current society, if at all? Do we have "a suffering child" on whom our lives depend?

Closing Exercise: Go-round: Stay or walk away?

THEME: IDENTITY & COMMUNITY

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Anna Swir, "The Same Inside"

Link: <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-same-inside/>

Description: Anna Swir was born in Warsaw in 1909 and lived there until the Warsaw uprising of 1944, during which time she served as a nurse and experienced the city's near-total destruction. Her poetry, which she began to publish in the 1930's, takes up themes such as war, sexual love, and motherhood. In "The Same Inside" the speaker of the poem tells about encountering an old beggar woman on the street while en route to a romantic tryst. Falling into conversation with the needy stranger, the speaker experiences an intense moment of recognition and communion and loses interest in the planned rendezvous. The poem, addressed to the lover with whom the original tryst was to take place, delves into the forces that attract us to others and then maintain our connections with them. How trustworthy is the sense of identifying with another human being? Do we connect with others because of what we feel we can give to them? Take from them? How do we decide which relationship takes precedence when?

Opening Exercise: Think of someone you have felt close to in your service work. Why have you felt close to that person? Do you think that person has also felt close to you? How has your work with that person compared to your work with others?

Discussion Questions

- Where, at the start of the poem, is the speaker headed?
- What does she mean by "a love feast"?
- What stops the narrator from going to the initial destination and how does this happen?
- What do we know about the speaker? What do we know about the beggar woman? Is our knowledge of them equal?
- The narrator says, "she was/the same inside as I am,/from the same kind./I sensed this instantly/as a dog knows by scent/another dog." How do you interpret those lines? What's the same? How does she know?
- Who do you think the speaker is referring to when he/she says "one needs someone who is close"?
- Why can't she leave the woman?
- On the whole, does this seem to you to be a positive encounter? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise: In a word or phrase, name one place you know you should be headed.

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Rhina Espaillat, “Bilingual/Bilingüe”

Link: <http://myweb.northshore.edu/users/mleavitt/rhina/bilingual.html>

Description: Rhina Espaillat was born in the Dominican Republic in 1932, but her family was exiled in 1939 by the dictatorship there and emigrated to the United States. “Bilingual/Bilingüe” explores her experience growing up speaking both Spanish and English. Her father, she says, wanted her to speak English outside the house and Spanish inside, but she, wanting badly to comprehend the world in both tongues, stubbornly opposed that separation. The poem centers on themes of identity and association. How does language itself define our world view? To what extent does being bilingual really makes us bi-cultural?

Opening Exercise: Think of two worlds you inhabit. Then think of three ways in which the two worlds you inhabit do not fit perfectly well together.

Discussion Questions:

- What does the narrator’s father like to be separate, and why?
- Why does the narrator’s father set the rule about English outside and Spanish inside?
- What does the narrator mean, “And still the heart was one”?
- How does the narrator feel about her father?
- How does the narrator’s father feel about the narrator?
- At the end of the poem, the daughter says that her father lives “half in fear of words he loved but wanted not to hear.” What is he afraid of? Why does he love them?
- How would you describe the speaker’s relation to language?
- What has the narrator learned—about her father, her language, her life?

Closing Exercise: What is one question you have about identity after our discussion today?

ESSAY

Author/Title: “This I Believe: Ali, Mansfield, TX”

Link: <http://thisibelieve.org/essay/34037/>

Description: Ali from Mansfield, TX’s essay is written as part of the This I Believe project, founded in 2004 to engage youth and adults in writing, sharing, and discussing essays about the core values that guide their daily lives. Throughout her essay, Ali explores the evolution and complexity of her Asian-American identity, inspiring questions about identity, assimilation, community, and language. How do people who straddle two distinct cultures find their place in both? How do we manage multiple parts of our identities at once? What does it mean to act “American” and how does this definition differ for those who are not born within the U.S.?

Opening Exercise: Think of a culture that you care about fitting into. What do you do to assimilate or fit into that culture?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about the narrator?
- What is the narrator’s relationship to other white students? To other Asian students?
- The narrator, Ali, says, “I was stripped of my “Asian identity” and “quickly transformed into a Caucasian.” Is this possible? What does she mean?
- What do you think of her parents’ way of raising her? What do you think her relationship will be with them in the future?
- Why does the narrator “believe” in thick eyeliner?
- What do you make of the narrator’s statement, “I didn’t like being known as just another ‘white girl’ because I’m not”? Can you relate?
- Does Ali have a community? Who is it comprised of?

Closing Exercise: Think back to the culture that you talked about fitting into in the opening exercise. Identify *three* words that describe how assimilating made you feel. Share these words with someone sitting next to you, then choose *one* of those words to share with the group at large.

LONG READING

Author/Title: John M. Oskison, “The Problem of Old Harjo”

Link: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/OskProb.html>

Description: The Cherokee author John M. Oskison was born in Vinita in Indian Territory. His short story “The Problem of Old Harjo,” published in 2006, tells of the troubles of a young missionary named Miss Evans who tries to negotiate a clash between the hard-headed director of the Indian mission Mrs. Rowell and a potential Creek convert named Harjo. Moved by Miss Evans’s preaching, Harjo wants to join the church, but Mrs. Rowell insists that before he can do so he must first give up one of his two wives. The text raises provocative questions about leadership in cross-cultural situations. What are the limits of cross-cultural compromise when it comes to questions of principle? What are the consequences of actions that exclude? Are they always bad? How does this impact community?

Opening Exercise: Think of a time that you felt torn between two opposing perspectives or beliefs in your community. Why did you feel torn?

Discussion Questions:

- Why, at the beginning of the story, does Miss Evans feel proud?
- Why can’t Harjo be a member of the church?
- What moments of miscommunication are there between Harjo and Miss Evans? What do you think accounts for these miscommunications?
- What do you think Miss Evans means when she says, “She began to understand why Mrs. Rowell had said that the old Indians were hopeless”?
- Why does Miss Evans feel stuck?
- Are Miss Evans and Old Harjo part of the same community?

Closing Exercise: Think of a time when you have chosen to “not run away from... perplexity.” How did not running away feel? Why did you choose it?

LONG READING

Author: Leslie Marmon Silko, “The Man to Send Rain Clouds”

Link: <http://www.sgsd.k12.wi.us/homework/kanne/webpage%20stuff/HEng%2010/Am%20Lit/Modern%20Literature/The%20Man%20to%20Send%20Rain%20Clouds.htm>

Description: Published in 1969, “The Man to Send Rain Clouds” depicts the story of an old man who is found dead in a sheep camp and his grandchildren who make the arrangements for his funeral. Silko, a Native-American writer, explores the tensions between the grandchildren, who want to give their grandfather a traditional Indian burial, and the local priest, who wants to give the man a Catholic burial. Silko’s story elicits questions about tradition vs. modernity, intergenerational conflict, and the place of religion in identity formation and in the creation of communities.

Opening Exercise: Think of a tradition that you are committed to. Why are you committed to it? What makes you maintain your commitment to it?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we learn about the grandfather from the first two paragraphs of the story? What do we learn about his grandsons?
- Why don’t Leon and Ken tell Father Paul about their grandfather’s death when they pass his car?
- Why does Louise speak softly when she tells Leon that she’s been thinking about the priest sprinkling holy water for their grandfather?
- What is the “something” that Father Paul is reminded of when the water disappears in the grave?
- What is it that Father Paul is trying to “understand”?
- Why does Leon ultimately feel happy about the “sprinkling of the holy water” at the end of the piece?

Closing Exercise: What is one question you have about community after the discussion today?

AUDIO/VIDEO

Author/Title: Hussein Rashid, “On Being Muslim in America”

Link: <http://www.whatsyourcalling.org/campaign/muslim-in-america>

Description: Hussein Rashid is a Muslim and native New Yorker who teaches Religious Studies at Hofstra University. His video, “On Being Muslim in America” looks at what it means to be Muslim-American, particularly in a post-9/11 world. Rashid believes that being Muslim and being American are not incompatible, yet these identities often seem, from an outsider’s point of view, to clash. The video explores issues such as the politicization of identities, how we articulate identity, racial and religious prejudice, the importance of having a diversity of definitions for identity categories, and how we tell our identities through stories.

Opening Exercise: What about your appearance or background makes some aspect of your work more difficult for you?

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think Rashid means when he says that he wants to move us toward a “more intelligent discussion about religion”? Why is his emphasis on the discussion?
- Why are people resistant to having conversations about religion in the United States? What’s at stake?
- How do you make sense of the the dissonance between the treatment of some women in Muslim-majority countries and the fact that there have been more female Muslim Heads of State than female American Heads of State. Is this important? What does it say about how women are valued?
- Do you think that it is fair to expect people to be able to articulate their identities? Why or why not?
- Are there parts of your identity that you feel are incompatible? How do you deal with this?

Closing Exercise: Imagine that you could design your own demographic criteria to put at the bottom of any survey you and your colleagues have to fill out. What would the three criteria or questions be, and why?

ESSAY

Author/Title: James Baldwin, "Stranger in the Village"

Link: <https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/gjay/www/Whiteness/stranger.htm>

Description: Published in 1955, Baldwin's powerful essay recounts his stay in a tiny Swiss village in which "from all available evidence no black man had ever set foot." He contrasts his experience as a black man in this village with his experience as a black man in the United States, and from this point of view offers an insightful critique of the history of American race relations. He notes, "What one's imagination makes of other people is dictated, of course, by the laws of one's own personality and it is one of the ironies of black-white relations that, by means of what the white man imagines the black man to be, the black man is enabled to know who the white man is." Baldwin's essay illustrates the different ways we influence and reflect each other's identity, and calls for us to obtain a strong hold on reality so that we may refrain from deluding ourselves and recognize racial strife for what it is in order to overcome it.

Opening Exercise: Think about a place that, when you first arrived, felt foreign to you. Why did it feel foreign? Did it ever stop feeling foreign? If so, what made it stop?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about the villagers?
- Why is it a "great part of the American Negro's education (long before he goes to school) that he must make people like him"? Where do you think this education takes place?
- Does it matter that the villagers do not *mean* to be unkind?
- What do you think the narrator means when he says "people are trapped in history and history is trapped in them"? Do you feel like your history is trapped in you?
- What are the things that the narrator does to try and feel differently about the villagers? What are things that you, in your own life, have done to try and feel differently in similar situations?
- What do you think the narrator means when he says, "there is a great deal of will power involved in... naïveté"?
- Does the narrator become more or less of a stranger over the course of his time in the village? Why?

Closing Exercise: "This world is white no longer, and it will never be white again." Agree or disagree?

LONG READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Excerpt from “Self-Reliance”

Link: <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/triumphnationalism/cman/text8/selfreliance.pdf>

Description: Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), famously associated with the Transcendentalist movement of the nineteenth century, was variously occupied as a teacher, poet, essayist, and Unitarian minister throughout his life. The idealism and individualism of the Transcendentalist movement is apparent in this brief excerpt from his best-known essay, “Self-Reliance,” which begins, “Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist.” (The passage is the seventh full paragraph in the online version.) Emerson goes on to suggest that “the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong what is against it”—and concludes from this view of goodness that sometimes the dollar given to a philanthropic cause is “a wicked dollar, which by and by I shall have the manhood to withhold.” Emerson’s piece brings up a number of compelling questions, including what it means to be an individual and what it means to be a non-conformist, especially with regards to philanthropic giving and determining what is “good.”

Opening Exercise: Think of three ways in which you do not conform to societal expectations. Think of three ways in which you do conform to societal expectations. Discuss and share with the person next to you.

Discussion Questions:

- What does Emerson mean by a “nonconformist”? Why does he say that a nonconformist “must not be hindered by the name of goodness”?
- What does Emerson mean when he advises, “Your goodness must have some edge to it”?
- What does Emerson mean when he says, “I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong”? Is it good and right to give only to those persons to whom you belong and who belong to you?
- What does it mean, to you, to be an individual? Does your individuality ever make it hard for you to be part of a community?

Closing Exercise: Would you rather do good work but have people think poorly of you or do bad work but have people think highly of you?

SHORT READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Franz Kafka, "Fellowship"

Source: Find in *The Civically Engaged Reader*, eds. Davis & Lynn, (Great Books Foundation, 2006).

Description: Franz Kafka's one-paragraph story "Fellowship", published in 1909, depicts a group of five friends responding to an "annoying" man who would join them as a sixth. This short story raises questions about why these five men stand together, why this latecomer wants to join them, and why they resist accepting him as their sixth, bringing up questions of shared identity and what it takes to create a community.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time that you felt excluded from a particular group or community. Why did you feel excluded? Who was excluding you? Why do you think you were excluded?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does the narrator say that he and the other four are "friends"? What is the reason that they continue to associate with one another?
- How is the sixth one annoying to the first five? Why don't they "want to be six"?
- Is there anything that the first five would need to know about the sixth for him to join them?
- Why is the narrator skeptical about "long explanations"?
- Why does the sixth keep coming back?
- Why do you think Kafka titled this piece "Fellowship"?
- Have you ever been "the sixth"?

Closing Exercise: Think of a time that you excluded someone from a particular group of community. Why did you exclude them? How did excluding them make you feel?

IMAGE

Title: Banaras Khan, "Afghan Women Voting"

Link: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-06-16/afghanistan-most-dangerous-place-for-women/2759810>

Description: In this image, taken by photographer Banaras Khan, five Afghan women in burkas present their voter registration cards during the September 2010 Afghan Parliamentary Elections. This photograph offers an opportunity to explore issues of identity, community, (perceived) safety, and freedom.

Opening Exercise: What do we know about the women in this image? What do we not know?

Discussion Questions:

- How do you think the women in this image are feeling?
- What do you think these women's relationships are to their community?
- What tensions (social, political, etc.) do you see in this image?
- What is unfamiliar to you in this image? Does anything bother or trouble you? Why?
- Is this an image of freedom? If so, describe the freedom you see.
- What is one question that this image provokes?

Closing Exercise: What is *one thing* in this photo you'd like to know more about?

THEME: MOTIVES & VALUES

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Mary Oliver, "Sunrise"

Link: <http://www.panhala.net/Archive/Sunrise.html>

Description: "Sunrise," originally published in Oliver's 1986 collection *Dream Work* and republished in her 1992 collection *New and Selected Poems Volume One*, explores how and why we do the work we do. Are we willing to die for our work? Does our work come out of a love for shared humanity? Do we work to be something greater than ourselves? To reach out to those who are different than us? To create ourselves? Does it make us happy? What does it mean to, as Oliver puts it, "enter the fire"? This poem offers an opportunity to explore all of these questions and reflect on the motives and values that inspire us.

Opening Exercise: Think boldly for a moment about your work in the world—the work you do or want to do. What do you hope this work accomplishes? How do you hope this work makes you feel?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does the narrator begin with, "You can/die for it—/an idea,/or the world." How does that opening strike you?
- Why does the narrator think of China and India and Europe?
- Why does the speaker ask, "What is my name"?
- What is the happiness this person seems to describe?
- Would you want to enter the fire as the poet describes it?
- Are their ideas worth dying for?

Closing Exercise: Identify *three* things about the work you do or want to do that feels overwhelming to you. Then write *one* line about what, despite those things, makes your work feel worthwhile.

ESSAY/SPEECH

Author/Title: Ivan Illich, "To Hell with Good Intentions"

Link: http://www.swaraj.org/illich_hell.htm

Description: An Austrian philosopher who founded the Intercultural Documentation Center in Mexico, Ivan Illich was known as a "maverick social critic" of contemporary Western culture. It is from this stance that Illich delivers his 1968 address at the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects (CIASP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico. In his usual biting and sarcastic style, Illich's address, for whom his audience is a group of U.S. volunteers, depicts the dangers of paternalism inherent in voluntary service, but especially in any international service "mission." Just as he brought American volunteers' motives, values, and capacity to 'do good' into question in 1968, Illich equally brings volunteers' motives, values, and capacity to 'do good' into question today. Is national and/or international service pretentious? Do we impose our own way of life on the people we serve? How do we serve people if we cannot communicate in the same language as them? Is this possible?

Opening Exercise: What is one element of your service work that gives rise to some serious questions or doubts for you? What are your questions or doubts, and how do these questions or doubts affect your work?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does Illich find the American volunteers' "work" in Mexico offensive?
- What do you think of Illich's claim that "there is no way for you to really meet with the underprivileged, since there is no common ground whatsoever for you to meet on"? Do you agree that there is no common ground?
- Do you agree with Illich's claim that we should take responsibility for what is happening in American communities before we take responsibility for the greater world?
- Why does Illich repeatedly refer to the volunteers' work as a "vacation"?
- How do we serve people if we cannot communicate in the same language as them? Is this possible?
- Do volunteers serve primarily to receive?
- How can volunteers be trained to serve? What should this training entail?

Closing Exercise: If you could take one thing away from you and your colleagues in order to improve the work you are doing, what would that thing be, and why?

LONG READING

Author/Title: Kelli Covey, “What I Didn’t Know Then”

Link: http://www.civicreflection.org/resource/d/56069/COVEY_What_I_Didnt_Know.pdf

Description: In her essay, “What I Didn’t Know Then,” Kelli Covey, the Associate Director of Project on Civic Reflection, uses her personal experience as an AmeriCorps VISTA member to examine three questions: What impact does national service have? Is it truly a strategy for change? And if it is, what kind of change does it result in? Covey’s story of her year of service on a North Dakota Native American reservation inspires discussion about the value of service, the motives that drive people to serve, the relationship between service and self-interest, and the value of following the questions that shape our lives, instead of racing to their answers.

Opening Exercise: Think for a moment about yourself as you came into your current work: what, when you started, did you think you knew about this work and your place in it? What, if anything, has changed about what you know? How has this change impacted the way you do your work now?

Discussion Questions:

- What does Covey say she didn’t know at 22? What does her age have to do with it?
- What is the “dismantling” that Covey says was required?
- What was “the plan” when Covey started working as a VISTA?
- What leads Covey to direct so much frustration at the Just Say No organization?
- In this piece, what or who does Covey seem to learn from?
- Why was “the lake *meant* to be a mystery”?
- What does Covey think she knows at the end of her VISTA year?
- How does Covey’s conclusion strike you—that “the greatest change occurs in the people who serve, not in the communities where they offer themselves”?

Closing Exercise: Who gains more: the community where you are working/serving or yourself?

IMAGE

Author/Title: W. Eugene Smith, "Tomoko Uemura in Her Bath"

Link: <http://iconicphotos.wordpress.com/2009/05/06/tomoko-uemura-in-her-bath/>

Description: "Tomoko Uemura In Her Bath" is part of a 1971-73 photographic essay by W. Eugene Smith, published in *LIFE* to bring attention to Minamata disease. Minamata disease is a neurological syndrome caused by severe mercury poisoning that was first discovered in Japan in 1956. The above photo shows Ryoko Uemura holding her daughter, Tomoko, who is severely deformed by Minamata disease, in a Japanese bath chamber. This photograph offers an opportunity to discuss care, need, fear, and sacrifice.

Opening Exercise: What is one thing that is important for you to provide to the people you work with? How do you know this thing is important for you to provide?

Discussion Questions:

- Take a few moments and write down, uncensored, whatever you see, feel, notice about the picture.
- What do you think the relationship is between the person who is doing the holding and the person who is being held?
- Does anything in this image scare you or make you nervous? Why?
- What is one question that this image provokes in you?
- Where do you see need in this image? Who is in need and how would you describe the need that that person is in?

Closing Exercise: Name one thing you need to get from your service work, and explain why you need it.

ESSAY/SPEECH

Author/Title: David Foster Wallace, “Commencement Speech to Kenyon College Class of 2005”

Link: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122178211966454607.html>

Description: David Foster Wallace was an American author of novels, essays, and short stories, including *Infinite Jest*, recently included in *TIME* magazine’s list of All-time 100 Greatest Novels. Widely regarded as one of the most prolific American authors of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Wallace’s fiction was often concerned with irony, loneliness, and existentialism, themes that, although addressed more subtly in his fiction, are confronted directly in his only commencement address. Wallace gave the following speech to the 2005 graduating class at Kenyon College, a small liberal arts school in Gambier, Ohio. In an attempt to avoid commencement speech clichés, Wallace writes about the day-in-day-out difficulties of adult American life, invoking the significance of compassion and mindfulness, and rejecting the selfishness and self-centeredness on which we often base our lives. Wallace’s essay provides an opportunity to discuss our motives, values, freedom, how we treat our fellow human beings, and how to live a conscious, meaningful life.

Opening Exercise: What is one thing that you wish someone had warned you about on the day of your most recent graduation (high school, college, graduate school, etc.)? Discuss with the person next to you.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you think it is “natural” to be self-centered, as Wallace suggests?
- What does Wallace find to be the most dangerous thing about college education? Has this been dangerous in your own experience? Why or why not?
- What does Wallace mean when he says, “learning how to think really means learning how to exercise some control over how and what you think”?
- What does Wallace surmise about adult American life? How do the pressures of the day-in-day-out life that Wallace describes impact the “good” that you are trying to do in the world?
- What do you think of Wallace’s “more socially conscious... default setting”?
- What choice does Wallace think we have when we look at and/or interact with others?
- What do you make of Wallace’s statement that, “everybody worships”?
- What does real freedom look like to Wallace? What does real freedom look like to you?

Closing Exercise: Name one thing you worship that has a positive impact on your life. Name one thing you worship that has a negative impact on your life.

ESSAY/SPEECH

Author/Title: Toni Morrison, "Commencement Speech to Rutgers University Class of 2011"

Link: <http://lanoralleyne.com/2011/05/toni-morrison-commencement-address-to-rutgers-university-class-of-2011/>

Description: Toni Morrison is a Nobel Prize and Pulitzer Prize-winning American novelist, editor, and professor. Some of her most famous works include the novels, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Beloved*. Morrison gave the following speech to the 2011 graduating class at Rutgers University, a large public university in New Brunswick, New Jersey. In her speech, Morrison examines what others have called America's "current social justice failings," looking closely at whether the pursuit of happiness should be privileged over the fight for social justice. Morrison's speech raises questions about happiness, change, social justice and the work it requires, and the values that guide and shape our lives.

Opening Exercise: Think about your current goals. What are they? Do any of your goals make other goals harder to accomplish? How will you adjudicate between these?

Discussion Questions:

- Why doesn't Morrison think that the third unalienable right in the Declaration of Independence should be "the pursuit of happiness"? Do you agree?
- Why do you think that Morrison refers to happiness as a "covert" goal?
- What is the "serious work" that Morrison thinks needs to be done?
- Does getting "serious work" done and "changing the things that need changing" conflict with happiness? How?
- Should happiness be our primary life goal? Is it yours? Why or why not?
- What would a world that is "worthy of you" look like? What changes would there be?

Closing Exercise: Fill in the blank. "Life, liberty and the pursuit of _____"

ARTICLE

Author/Title: David Brooks, "If It Feels Right..."

Link: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/13/opinion/if-it-feels-right.html?ref=davidbrooks>

Description: Written by David Brooks and published by *The New York Times* on September 12, 2011, "If It Feels Right..." analyzes a study conducted by sociologist Christian Smith about young peoples' moral lives. The results of the study indicate that young Americans are "bad... at thinking and talking about moral issues" and that they lead their lives with an individual moral compass instead of thinking more broadly about a "shared moral framework." Brooks' article elicits questions about morality, values, motives, individualism, youth and whether it makes sense to have "what feels right" guide our moral decisions and lives.

Opening Exercise: Name three moral commitments that shape your life. Then discuss whether this exercise was difficult for you to fulfill.

Discussion Questions:

- What does Brooks find disheartening about the results of Christian Smith's study? Why does he find it disheartening?
- What do you think it means to have a "shared moral framework"?
- To what extent do you think moral choices should be a matter of individual taste? To what extent should they be based on a "framework" that we share with other people?
- What do you make of the student's quote, "I guess what makes something right is how I feel about it. But different people feel different ways, so I couldn't speak on behalf of anyone else as to what's right and wrong"? Is moral nonjudgmentalism (as Brooks calls it) a bad thing? Why or why not?
- Why does Brooks say that Smith's study ultimately says more about adult America than youthful America? Do you think he's right? Is this fair?
- What do you think it means for "sturdy virtues" to be "diluted into shallow values"? Do you see this happening today?
- Do you have a strong sense of right and wrong? If so, how have you learned it?

Closing Exercise: Name one thing you heard today that helped you to think more deeply about your motives or values.

AUDIO/VIDEO

Director/Title: Nicole Holofcener, Clip from *Please Give*

Link: Show trailer first to give context:
<http://www.imdb.com/video/imdb/vi3345875993/>
Then show clip on which discussion should be based:
<http://www.imdb.com/video/imdb/vi4022731801/>

Description: The film, *Please Give*, is a 2010 dark comedy about a couple, Kate and Alex, living in New York with their teenage daughter, Abby. Troubled by the contrast between homeless people in her neighborhood and her own comfortable life, Kate looks for ways to assuage her guilt, including volunteering and donating to the homeless. In this scene, Kate attempts to give 20 dollars to a homeless man on the street, much to the dismay of her teenage daughter who is frequently denied money from her mother for her needs. Written and directed by Nicole Holofcener, this excerpt from *Please Give* explores guilt, values, shame, people's motives of giving, and the tensions between serving our families and serving others.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time that you have been torn between the needs of your family and the needs of the people you serve. Why were you torn? Who did you choose? How did you choose between them?

Discussion Questions:

- Why doesn't Abby want her mother to give the homeless man the 20 dollars?
- Why do you think the mom wants to give the homeless man the money? What are her motives?
- What is the significance of giving the man a \$5 bill versus giving him a \$20 bill? What difference, if any, does it make?
- Why does the mom feel "ashamed" at the end of the interaction?
- Where do you see yourself in this clip?

Closing Exercise: Who should have gotten the \$20 bill and who should have gotten the \$5 bill?

LONG READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Adam Davis, “What We Don’t Talk About When We Don’t Talk About Service”

Link: http://www.civicreflection.org/resource/d/76496/Davis_What_we_dont_talk_about%E2%80%A6pdf

Description: Adam Davis is the Director of Project on Civic Reflection. He founded *Justice Talking*, a social justice seminar series for AmeriCorps members, as well as the *Camp of Dreams*, a non-profit organization that provides programs for underserved Chicago youth. With Elizabeth M. Lynn, he co-edited *The Civically Engaged Reader* (Great Books Foundation, 2006), from which this essay is taken. Davis begins the essay by commenting on the recent “vogue for service” that is sweeping the nation, but notes that we seem reluctant to reflect on that service. “It seems to be so clear that Service is Good (SIG) that we do not need to question service or to talk about it; we only need to do it.” Davis goes on to question the assumption that service is good, as well as the assumption that we need not reflect on it, asking why we serve, whether service is always good, and why we are so reluctant to talk about it. Davis’s piece also brings up questions about motives and values in relation to service and how these impact why we serve.

Opening Exercise: Think of the most recent time you did community service. Whom did you serve? Whom did you serve with? Why did you serve in the first place?

Discussion Questions:

- What distinguishes community service from other forms of service?
- Why, according to Davis, do people serve? Do you agree with these explanations? What else might motivate service?
- For whom is service good, and in what ways?
- Why might service be a difficult subject to discuss?
- Where do you see inequality in the world around you? Which instances of inequality are troubling? Which instances seem acceptable or just? Any?
- Does service address inequality?

Closing Exercise: The “dirty little secret” is that “we cherish inequality.” True or false?

LONG READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Jane Addams, “The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements”

Link: http://wps.prenhall.com/wps/media/objects/107/110377/ch21_a2_d1.pdf

Description: In this sixth chapter of *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, published in 1892, Jane Addams makes a compelling case for settlement work—that is, for living and working among those in need. She writes with conviction and humility about the way in which the character of our life is connected to that of other lives, and looks specifically at America’s “fast-growing number of cultivated young people who have no outlet for their active faculties.” Addams claims that “nothing so deadens the sympathies and shrivels the power of enjoyment as the persistent keeping away from the great opportunities for helpfulness and a continual ignoring of the starvation struggle which makes up the life of at least half the race.” She encourages youth to engage actively with the social problems around them, to act on the “sense of humanity” learned from parents, church, or simple observation, and to make the world they must inherit a better place.

Opening Exercise: What are three things that motivate you to work for social change? Spend a few minutes writing down three things, then share with two people around you.

Discussion Questions:

- What does Addams mean by the desire of young people to share “the race progress”?
- According to Addams, what is the central message of Christianity? How does she think this message can lead to service?
- What is the experience, accompanied by a “forlorn feeling,” that Addams describes in the second paragraph of her speech? What are the “glimpses” that this experience provides?
- What prevents us from acting on the sense of our connection to other human beings that Addams describes?
- How does Addams think that the Settlement can “relieve, at the same time, the overaccumulation at one end of society and the destitution at the other”?
- Does Addams help you to understand your own motives for service and those of young people today who join youth service programs?
- When it comes to service work, which do you value more: flexibility or conviction? Do you feel, like Addams, that you must give up one or the other to do good service work?

Closing Exercise: Name one motive that Addams leaves out of her account and how/why it motivates you to serve.

THEME: CHANGE

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Martín Espada, "Imagine the Angels of Bread"

Link: http://www.martinespada.net/Imagine_the_Angels_of_Br.html

Description: "Imagine the Angels of Bread" was written in 1996 by Latino poet and professor at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Martín Espada. Repeating the phrase "this is the year," Espada helps readers to reflect on oppression and power imbalances in our society, and to think critically about when these things are going to change and/or how change has already come about. Espada's poem offers an opportunity to discuss social change, power and if/how it can be reversed, poverty, justice, vision, and imagination.

Opening Exercise: Think of something in the world that needs to change. What is it, why does it need to change, and what would have to happen—in the world and in your life—for this change to take place?

Discussion Questions:

- Why does the narrator repeat the phrase, "This is the year"?
- What do the different events for which this is the year have in common, if anything?
- Why does the second-to-last stanza introduce the word "if," and repeat it?
- Is this the year?
- How does this poem leave you feeling?

Closing Exercise: Fill in the blank. If _____ happens, then this is the year.

SHORT READING

Author/Title: Naomi Shihab Nye, “Trying to Name What Doesn’t Change”

Link: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/178320>

Description: Poet and novelist Naomi Shihab Nye was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1952 to an American mother and a Palestinian father. Known for poetry that lends a fresh perspective to ordinary events, people, and objects, Nye has said that, for her, “the primary source of poetry has always been local life, random characters met on the streets, our own ancestry sifting down to us through small essential daily tasks.” “Trying to Name What Doesn’t Change,” published in *Words Under Words: Selected Poems* in 1995, inspires discussion about what changes, what does not change, and what feelings both change and non-change elicit within us.

Opening Exercise: Think of one significant change you have experienced in your work over the past several months. What caused the change and how has the change impacted your work?

Discussion Questions:

- Why is Roselva watching the train tracks?
- Why is she sure that train tracks do not change?
- Why isn’t Peter sure about this?
- What do the observations in the third and fourth stanzas suggest about change?
- What does the train whistle take with it when it goes away?
- How does Roselva feel about change? How does the narrator feel? How do you feel?
- What is subject to change in your life? What does not change?

Closing Exercise: Name *one specific change* you would like to see in your service—for yourself and those you serve.

LONG READING

Author/Title: Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery"

Link: http://www.d.umn.edu/~csigler/PDF%20files/jackson_lottery.pdf

Description: First published in the June 26, 1948 issue of *The New Yorker*, "The Lottery" is a short story written by American author Shirley Jackson and is widely considered to be one of the most famous short stories in American literature. Jackson's story focuses on a small-town community and its annual ritual of "the lottery." Though the lottery has been abandoned by surrounding communities, the community that is central to Jackson's piece remains attached to the tradition. An emotionally suspenseful piece, "The Lottery" elicits questions about our attachments to traditions, our resistance to change, and the relationship between change and inequality.

Opening Exercise: Think of a tradition that you participate in but have doubts about. What is the tradition? Why do you have doubts about it? Do you think you'll continue to participate in the tradition in the future?

Discussion Questions:

- What do we know about the community where the lottery takes place?
- What is the lottery?
- How do the townspeople seem to feel about the lottery?
- What about the lottery hasn't changed over the years? What about the lottery has changed?
- Why do the townspeople only "half-listen" to Mr. Summers' instructions?
- How does Old Man Warner react when Mr. Adams tells him that they're "talking of giving up the lottery" in a nearby village?
- When and why does Ms. Hutchison claim that the lottery is unfair?
- Why hasn't the lottery been stopped?
- What do you think it would take for this ritual to change?
- Where do you see yourself in this piece?
- Are there traditions or rituals in your work or community that you question and/or think are damaging? Have you done anything to try and change them? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise: What is one question about change that you're taking away from this discussion?

IMAGE

Author/Title: Shepard Fairey, "Change"

Link: <http://www.fadwebsite.com/2010/12/23/barack-obama-change-poster-by-shepard-fairy-to-sell-at-bonhams/>

Description: Shepard Fairey is an American contemporary graphic designer and illustrator whose work became widely known during the 2008 U.S. presidential election. Fairey's "Change" poster was considered by some to be "the most efficacious American political illustration since 'Uncle Sam Wants YOU.'" Because it departed from the political art status quo, both in dissemination and design, the "Change" poster became a symbol for change on a number of different levels. Fairey's poster evokes questions about nationalism, identity, leadership, and change.

Opening Exercise: Think of one change that you would like to see in your community. What is it? Is it realistic for such change to happen?

Discussion Questions:

- What is one thing that stands out to you about this image?
- What do you see in the image that represents change?
- What do you see in the image that represents tradition or what stays the same?
- What is one question that this image raises for you?
- Do you believe in the change in this poster? If so, how would you describe the change you believe in?
- Do posters like this one make change happen? If so, how? If not, why not?

Closing Exercise: Does the word "change" make you feel hopeful or less hopeful? Why?

AUDIO/VIDEO

Author/Title: Father Michael Pfleger, “What Does It Mean to Be a Voice of Conscience?”

Link: <http://www.whatsyourcalling.org/campaign/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-voice-of-conscience>

Description: The Rev. Dr. Michael Pfleger, pastor at the Faith Community at Saint Sabina in Chicago, is a tireless advocate for the poor and the voiceless. Father Pfleger gained national notoriety during the 2008 presidential elections for making controversial statements concerning Senator Hilary Clinton. In this clip, Father Pfleger talks about why it’s so important to speak up for what you believe in and speak out against that which you don’t. “What’s Your Calling?” explores issues of leadership, silence, sacrifice, conscience, and how to create change.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when you encountered someone who pushed you and made you uncomfortable in some way. Who was this person, what was he or she pushing for, and what was the upshot of your interaction with this person?

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Father Pfleger emphasizes the importance of “sitting at tables where we’re not invited”?
- What do you make of Father Pfleger’s statement that “Wherever you go, things should change”?
- Would you be willing to sacrifice the same things Father Pfleger has (physical safety, family, opportunities, relationships) to speak up for what you believe in?
- What drives us to speak up about the issues we care about? What keeps us quiet?
- What do you think it means to have a voice of conscience?

Closing Exercise: Name one thing you hope your current work changes in the world and one thing you want your *future* work to change in the world.

ESSAY/SPEECH

Author/Title: César Chávez, “The Mexican-American and the Church”

Link: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/cesarchavezspeechmexicanamerican&church.htm>

Description: César Chávez (1927–1993) was a Mexican-American labor activist who founded the United Farm Workers labor union to protect the rights of migrant workers. Chávez brought national attention to his cause by organizing nonviolent protests, including hunger strikes, in the spirit of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. In 1968 he went on a widely publicized twenty-five day fast that ended with an outdoor Roman Catholic Mass. During this fast he wrote the speech included here, a plea for the Church to realize a calling to be God’s presence in the world, a calling that in Chávez’s view primarily involves serving the world’s poor. But Chávez has a radical view of how that service should take place: he exhorts his listeners to engage the poor directly, to take the money spent on food baskets for the needy and use it instead “for effective action to eradicate the causes of poverty.” The speech raises hard questions about the best use of charity and about the role of religion in bringing about social change.

Opening Exercise: Think of a time when an organization or institution that you belonged to was misusing its power or making decisions that you felt were hurtful. What did you do and how did you react?

Discussion Questions:

- How does Chávez describe most of his friends’ first reactions to the strike? What do they do and why?
- Why does Chávez emphasize the need for a friendly spiritual guide? How does friendliness, above other attributes, address different needs?
- Who knows that there is “tremendous spiritual and economic power in the church” and why do they choose to keep it for themselves?
- Should we support institutions that we do not benefit from solely because they help others? Can you think of examples of this in your own life?
- What is Chávez advocating for when he laments the fact that “money is spent for food baskets for the needy *instead of* for effective action to eradicate the causes of poverty”? Is one more important than the other? Why or why not?
- Does community organizing and direct action have a greater impact than direct service? What’s the difference in impact?

Closing Exercise: Take a sheet of paper and answer the following questions—What is one change that you would like to advocate for in your neighborhood, workplace, or country? What, if any, are the powerful groups that could stand in the way? What would it take to challenge their power?

SHORT READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Bertolt Brecht, "A Bed for the Night"

Link: <http://jessecurtis.blogspot.co.uk/2008/11/bed-for-night.html>

Description: Bertolt Brecht was an influential German poet and playwright whose most famous works are *Mother Courage and Her Children* and, in collaboration with composer Kurt Weill, *The Threepenny Opera*. Brecht insisted that a playwright should both make his audience aware of social problems and move them to bring about change. Brecht's simple poem, "A Bed for the Night" tells of a man who procures beds for the homeless by standing on a corner and "appealing to passers-by." This seems like a good deed, so why does the narrator tell us that "it won't change the world"? Are we to be glad that "a few men have a bed for the night" or despair that "it will not shorten the age of exploitation"? This poem marks a rich beginning for a conversation about the relationships between philanthropic giving, direct service, and social change.

Opening Exercise: Take a few minutes to think about an individual who has made meaningful social change. How did you hear about this person? What strikes you as meaningful about what this person has done?

Discussion Questions:

- Literally, what is the man on the street doing? What is his appeal to passers-by?
- Why does the man in the poem solicit help for the homeless by standing outside in the winter weather?
- Why does the narrator make a point of telling us that a bed for the night "won't change the world/It won't improve the relations among men/It will not shorten the age of exploitation"? What do you think this means?
- In speaking of the men who have a bed for the night, why does the narrator say that the snow is "meant for them"?
- What does the narrator mean by "don't put the book down on reading this, man"?
- What kind of change is the man making?
- Who do you identify with most in the poem—the man on the street, the narrator, the passers-by, or the homeless? Why?
- What motivates people to try to put themselves into situations similar to those of people they would help? Is this useful?

Closing Exercise: What is *one question* about impact that you are taking with you from this discussion/reading?

LONG READING FROM *The Civically Engaged Reader*

Author/Title: Dave Eggers, “Where Were We”

Source: Find in *The Civically Engaged Reader*, eds. Davis & Lynn, (Great Books Foundation, 2006).

Description: Dave Eggers rocketed to fame with his memoir *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000). “Where Were We,” originally published in *The New Yorker* in 2002, is adapted from his novel *You Shall Know Our Velocity*. Eggers’ narrator, having received a windfall he does not feel he deserves, sets out with a friend to travel around the world in a week to distribute the money. Their giving is sometimes personal, as when they give to a Senegalese boy with whom they have played basketball, and sometimes random, as when they scheme to tape some of the money to a donkey. In a 2002 interview, Eggers said the story shows how “the decisions givers make between potential recipients is troubling, always fraught with subjectivity, hypocrisy, and plain stupidity.” Eggers’ piece urges us to think more critically about how we choose to give and how these choices can change in the future.

Opening Exercise: If you could make a donation to any person, organization, or cause and money was no object, who would you donate to and why?

Discussion Questions:

- Why aren’t we told the narrator’s name?
- Why does the narrator want to get rid of the money that came to him “in a windfall kind of way”?
- Why does he consider getting rid of it a “purging” that “would provide clarity”?
- Why do the narrator and Hand combine the ideas of traveling around the world in a week and getting rid of the narrator’s money?
- Why do so few situations seem “right” to the narrator? What does it mean for a situation to be “right”?
- How does Jack’s death influence the narrator’s actions when he receives the money?
- What does Raymond mean when he says, “There is travel and there are babies... Everything else is death”? Why does he suggest that the narrator and Hand stay in Senegal?
- Why is the narrator so disturbed, toward the end of the story, when he is called “the big boss”?
- What do you think the narrator and Hand should have done differently in giving away the money?
- How do you choose to give now? Why? Do you think this will change in the future? Why or why not?

Closing Exercise: Respond with a Yes or a No to the following two questions: Does money “pollute” Hand and the narrator’s interactions? Are all human interactions involving money polluted?