



Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

3.4 Participating in a New Community

Objectives

Develop and complete a “community participation” experience, designed to stretch the comfort zone and give students direct knowledge about ethnic, religious, or other groups with which they are currently unfamiliar.

Materials needed

Copies of the handout

Time needed

Several hours

Instructor directions

Have your students choose a group that represents people who are substantially different from them in terms of cultural background, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, physical ability, or one of the other criteria you are studying.

Ask them to get permission and participate in that group’s activities over a span of five hours.

Have them report on the experience as it relates to the social justice issues you are studying.



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3.4 Participating in a New Community Handout

Directions

Develop and complete a “community participation” experience, designed to stretch your comfort zone and give you direct knowledge about an ethnic, religious, or other group with which you are currently unfamiliar.

Choose a group that represents people who are substantially different from you in terms of cultural background, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, physical ability, or one of the other criteria you are studying. Suggestions for groups include:

- A local ethnic group or cultural center
- A local lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender alliance
- A local women’s crisis center
- Your chapter of the NAACP
- Your chapter of AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons)
- A local disabled citizens’ task force
- Your city’s Human Rights and Relations Advisory Committee (or equivalent)
- A church-affiliated shelter or soup kitchen
- A local religious association or club
- Your state’s Immigrant’s Rights Coalition (or equivalent)

Approach that group and get permission to be actively involved in one or several of their activities, spanning five hours or more (only “live” contact counts toward the five hours).

Interview two people for whom this group provides community or service.

Take notes or keep a journal during the time you participate with the group.

Report on the following:

Which group you selected

Why you selected the group you did

A description of the activity or activities in which you participated

The information you gleaned from your interviews

A description of how you observed social justice issues at work in this experience. How does the information you learned in class apply to this situation?

How were you affected by your participation? What did you learn or gain from the experience?

(This exercise is adapted from an exercise by Lani Roberts, Ph.D., assistant professor of philosophy, Oregon State University.)