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Facilitator Guide

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Facilitator's Guide

Introduction: Social Justice Education

This curriculum appears in an era of heightened violence around the world and increasingly visible inequalities of wealth among world nations and world peoples. In several months in mid and late 2001 we have witnessed the limited success of the U.N-sponsored conference on racism and other forms of oppression in Durban, South Africa; the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York; the mounting of international conflict centered in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iraq and neighboring states, as well as continuing violence in Israeli-Palestinian relations; and the beginnings of an "economic downturn" in the U.S. economy, with massive layoffs and other income reductions affecting families across the country. The fallout from each of these events continues into the present. How people are to live, and how to live together, count as the unanswered, anxious questions behind every headline.

One of the great tasks of an educational system is to prepare young people to live and prosper in the world. In a school system this task is undertaken in large part by daily instruction of groups of students roughly the same age. A group includes students and instructor(s); it may be composed of people of the same gender, or race, or first language, or religious or economic backgrounds; it might be slightly diverse, or fully diverse, in one or more of these and other areas. Regardless of likenesses or differences, one thing common to all is that they are participating in a learning community. How students learn as a group, how they are positioned to relate to each other, what and how they are taught—these are all lessons, whether explicit or hidden, about how they are to live with and act toward each other and others in the world as they move on. How people live together, after all, reflects how they define and practice justice itself.

The *topic* of social justice may be unique in bringing students' relationships to each other and to the larger world into the forefront. What are these relationships? How do people "get along with" each other? Is there differential treatment, or inequality of resources, opportunity or access, that separate or bring together students in the room? What differences are represented in, or made invisible in, the classroom as it stands, by race, gender, class, language, physical ability and the rest? How does students' experience of the larger world enter the classroom with them, and manifest itself in who speaks most and who is silent? What does the institutional set-up do to lessen or heighten these differences? How do the histories of all and of each affect them now? And what are they learning from the process about how to be with each other, whether you are consciously instructing them in this or not?

The *teaching* of social justice may also be unique in the process to be used for these questions. However "social justice" is to be defined, it is very concerned with how people get along. It applies to the classroom itself: what separates and unites young people, and how they are as a learning community, becomes part of what they learn together. More than in most kinds of teaching, then, to teach social justice is to *facilitate*—to enable youth to function as a cooperative community, becoming visible to and learning from each other and themselves, examining their differences and commonalities. It is a process in which students come to *consciousness* about race and gender and the rest: about what they have already been taught, what they believe, what they may believe and be committed to without realizing it, and how they can develop, change or confirm their beliefs. Teaching social justice goes beyond the individual or group; students are

taught to become conscious of the institutions in our society and how these institutions affect our lives based on race, class, gender and the others. The purpose of the process is *emancipatory*, preparing them to engage the conflicts of the profoundly multicultural 21st century with a commitment to social justice. This education, again, is not just about how they will live and prosper, but how they will live together.

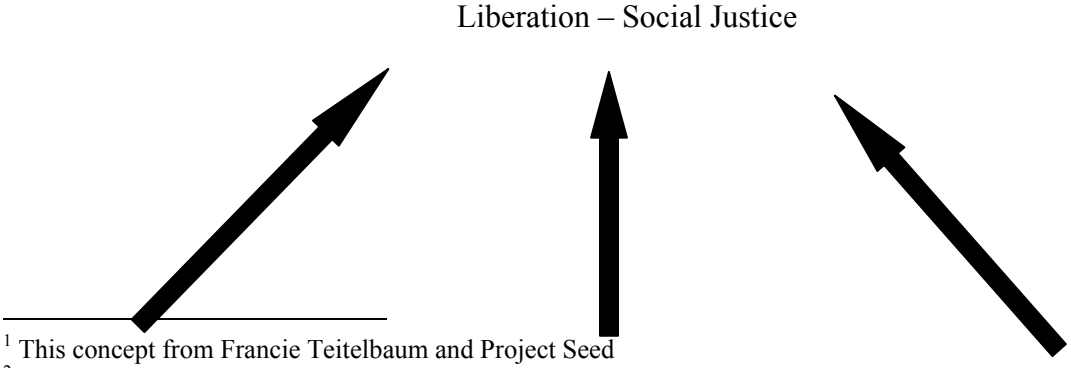
What is "living together"? Some kinds of multicultural education propose that the goal of this education is simply developing awareness of each other's "cultures," as if with awareness what separates us from each other would simply be overcome, and we would all, now, have equal places in the playing field, would in fact be "equal." What may ultimately hardest to face in any classroom, however, is the separation itself: that some students are part of groups which are elevated, and others are part of groups that are made less than. And, more than this, when young people in the U.S. are compared to young people across the world, young people in the U.S. are altogether elevated far above the majority of youth in the world, in privilege and available resources. Awareness here is not enough; stating that we are "all the same" would not only be false but ingenuous. Even supposing that the same resources could be equally provided to all students in a classroom, students already come in to a classroom separated in their abilities to use those resources. Not simply equal *access*, but equal *success* should be the goal of social justice education[1]: how to facilitate students to face, take on, and take down the separations among them. A program not for *equality*, but for *equity*.

How does facilitation work? Obviously it involves the students, the facilitator, and the process itself. In what follows we'll address each of these in turn, closing with how to prepare for implementing the curriculum, building a learning environment in a classroom. But we'll begin by looking at the framework for transformation and change that underlies this approach.

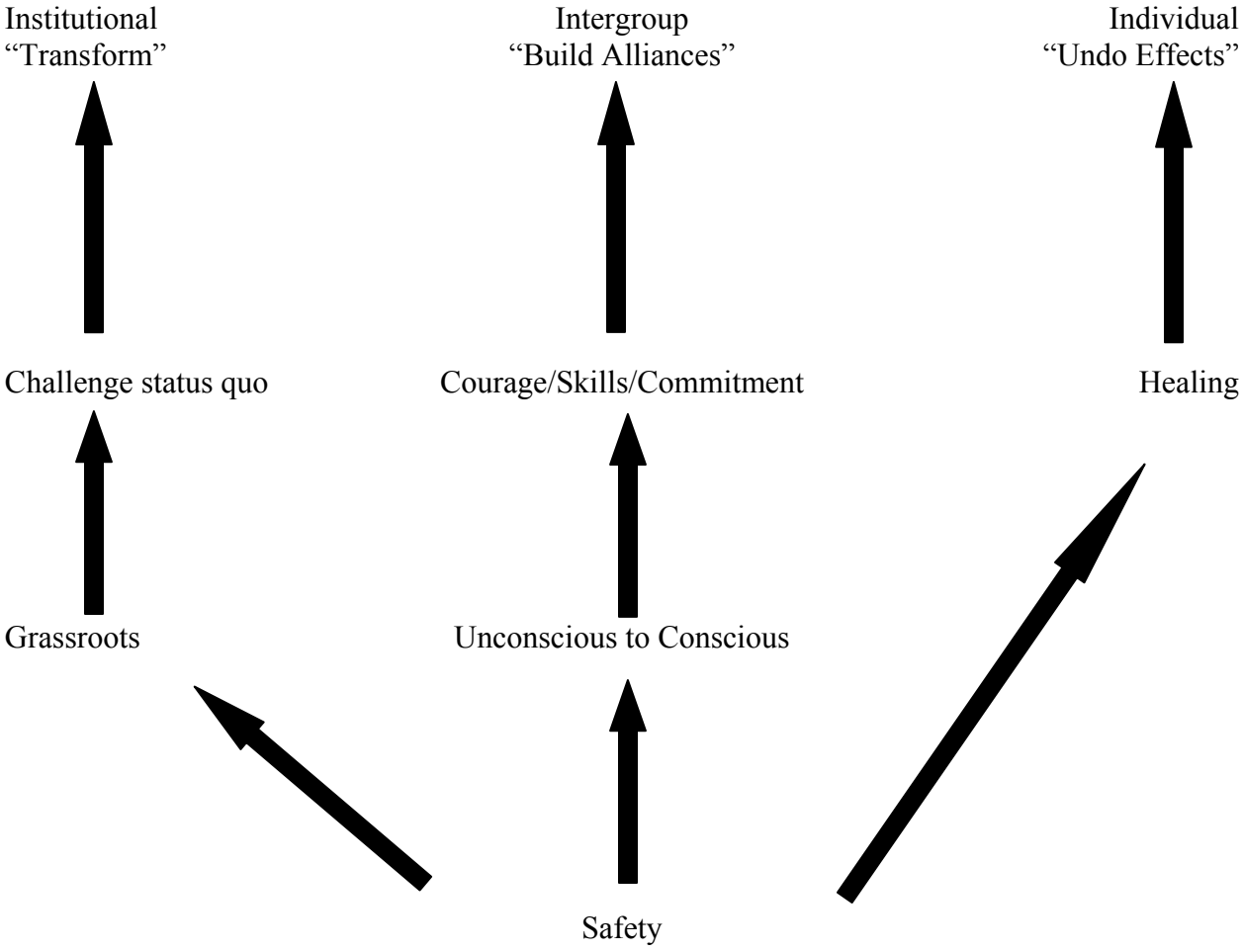
A. Framework for Transformation and Change[2]

As simple as it may sound, the goal of social justice education is liberation through social justice. "Liberation" is described in many ways: freedom, equality, fairness, equal access to resources, respectful treatment, living without the struggles, to name a few. Our society must embark on a transformational process if we are to achieve liberation. Transformation means change, and this change will not come about from well-intentioned people simply wishing it so. It requires action.

Diagram: a Pathway to Liberation and Social Justice



[1] This concept from Francie Teitelbaum and Project Seed
[2] By Hugh Vasquez



As the diagram above indicates, we identify three paths to attaining liberation and social justice. Each path demands transformation. We all have to take action to transform 1) the systems or institutions around us, 2) the relations between various cultural groups in our society, and 3) individual attitudes, beliefs and behaviors towards others. Taking only one path will not suffice; we have to walk all three, taking action as we go.

Path #1: Transformation of Systems or Institutions

Systems, structures, institutions are in place throughout society that maintain inequality. Their greatest force may lie in their "everydayness," their normal taken-for-granted place in sustaining the society. Rather than enacting visible oppression, they operate for the most part by continuing to define, produce, study and adjudicate, over and over, groups of people targeted for "one-down-ness." Taking this path to liberation means dismantling oppressive structures, transforming them into institutions that work to benefit all people. In the broadest sense, it means the elimination of discrimination. It means re-structuring a system that is based on privilege for

some into one that provides equal opportunity to all—opportunities for all members of the society to participate to the extent of their desire, need and potential. Policies would no longer reflect and benefit the needs of the few, but of the whole; justice would be swift and equal for all. Working on this path requires people to come together to use their collective power to bring about institutional change.

Sometimes entire systems have to be dismantled. But much more often certain aspects of existing systems must be transformed. For example, there are aspects of the criminal justice system that keep in place unequal treatment of African-Americans and Latinos, as evidenced by the disproportionate number of people from these cultures in jail. Which aspects of this system reinforce this form of institutional oppression? Again, in our educational system, boys are valued over girls, as evidenced in studies showing that, in classrooms, for every girl called upon nine boys are called. In some schools the dropout rates for Latinos exceeds the population of Latinos in the school. In terms of funding per student, some schools have $4,000 per student to spend on educating them while others have $15,000 per student. Which aspects of our educational system reinforce discrimination against females, against Latinos, against poor or working class students?

Challenge to the status quo. How are institutions or their aspects transformed? Think about a few examples of large-scale institutional transformations that have taken place in our society, such as the abolition of slavery (or women's right to vote, civil rights, and child labor practices, to name a few). The institution of slavery was established and maintained by privileged groups who profited greatly from it. Slavery did not come into question for them; slave-owners, merchants and their descendants did not suddenly wake up one morning with a new belief that there was something wrong and unjust about the institution they created. Instead, the transformation of this institution began with the grassroots, those who were at the bottom of the institution. Those in power were challenged by the grassroots until the current ways of operating no longer worked—the costs for sustaining the system came to far outweigh the costs of changing it.

Grassroots and allies coming together Grassroots groups organize around another vision than the status quo: the vision of liberation. As they build strength, coming together, increasing numbers of people question the institution and demand change. Those controlling the institution begin to realize that they cannot go on in the same way and survive. They recognize that change is necessary. Eventually, people from all sides of an issue come together in alliance to work on transforming the institution.

Path #2: Inter-group Transformation: Building cross-cultural alliances

In addition to taking action to transform institutions, we must address what is happening between various cultural groups and work to build cross-cultural alliances—bonds across all the many cultures or groups of which we are made up, and most particularly across divides between groups/cultures that are oppressed and groups/cultures that oppress them. An ally is someone who intervenes when she/he sees a member of a particular group or the group itself being mistreated. An ally recognizes the inherent worth of all cultures and acts to "lift up" people from

all backgrounds rather than putting them down. The best role models for allies are young children: when a child sees or experience mistreatment she/he immediately calls for it to stop.

Skills, courage, commitment. An ally has to be developed. The social conditioning process—the passing on of already-existing institutional imbalances from generation to generation—leads us away from our tendencies as children to be allies. As children get older, they are taught lessons: "it's none of your business," "they should handle it on their own," "it's up to the individual to stand up for him/herself." We may have a deep inner desire to be allies to all groups, but the skills, courage, and commitment to do so must be developed. Developing the skills is much like preparing for a marathon. One has to build strength and stamina; he/she can't simply get up one morning and run 26 miles without getting into condition. We need to initiate a routine that builds our "alliance muscles" and maintain a program to stay in shape, so that when the opportunity comes to flex these muscles we will be ready to do so. And as we develop our skills, so too must we develop our courage and commitment to act as allies.

Unconscious to conscious. How does one begin to build skills, courage, and commitment? We must first become conscious of the societal conditions that create the need for allies. We must "wake up" to see the social conditions of racism, sexism, classism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, ablism, adultism, and the rest. For the most part, these conditions continue because we remain unconscious of or diverted from recognizing their very existence. The development of an ally begins with an awakening process, that is, moving from being unconscious to being conscious.

Path #3: Individual Transformation: Undoing the effects

The third path toward liberation is about "undoing" the effects of living in a world where oppression exists. Taking this path means attending to the hurt experienced by individuals. This path recognizes that everyone is negatively affected by the "isms": no one escapes unscathed. "Undoing" effects means looking at our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors towards others. It means uncovering prejudice and working to eliminate stereotypes. It means becoming conscious of how we internalize messages that say we are "less than," or "not as good as"—or "better than" someone else. Undoing the effects means noticing how we have been separated from other human beings, noticing how we limit our own intelligences. Undoing the effects means, finally, acting to eliminate these messages.

Healing. In the broadest sense, where there is hurt, there must be healing, and healing takes time. Under the hurry-up conditions of dealing with oppression, anyone may be tempted to push past this crucial stage in the process of working toward liberation. And after all, once the mistreatment has stopped or eased up a bit, people should be able to move on, shouldn't they? But the effects of mistreatment can carry on from one generation to the next if attention is not given to healing; groups that have endured massive mistreatment cannot simply "get over it." For example, we have now lived without the institution of slavery for well over 100 years, but the effects of it still rest within many African-Americans. What is the impact on an individual when her family is kidnapped, killed, or broken apart? What is the effect on a people when they have been beaten down, moved against their will, been infused with messages and treatment that says they are less than human? What happens when the hurt is buttressed by continuing inequalities?

And finally, what happens when the legacy of hurt is belittled or denied by groups now in power?

Most people make a valiant effort to move on. But without healing, the stress of repressing hurt or anger, coupled with the natural desire to have their experiences acknowledged and renewed experiences of unequal resources, cause people to get mired down at each turn in the process. We are likely to take every opportunity to heal from the effects, often by insisting people around us listen to our anguished stories, or by blaming others for what has happened to us. Others hasten to point out that they too have been hurt, or deny that things are really all that bad. Ultimately, confusion and discouragement can drain the enthusiasm and sense of purpose from even the most well-intentioned group.

Healing in liberation work requires the courage to look squarely at the depth of despair, to make the space for each to come forward with his truth without fear of reprisal, and to commit to hanging in with each other. The result of healing is liberation from the areas where one gets hooked or clashes with others. The result of healing is becoming a powerful agent in places where one is the target for mistreatment. For others, the result of healing is the capability of being an ally to all on the planet.

Most of us have anxiety about delving into our subconscious beliefs, feelings and attitudes about people of other groups, as well as our own. For many, past attempts to sort through these confusing and often frightening areas were met with disapproval, criticism and even rejection. Thus, the prospect of having others hear our stories of the messages we got about them, about ourselves, where we are stuck, and what painful emotions we carry can be daunting. We might want to free ourselves from the baggage, but we need some reassurance that to do so will not leave us feeling more disheartened, guilty, blamed or fearful than we already are.

The healing aspect of liberation work is multifaceted, whatever side of the divides one finds oneself within. Not only must we grieve our hurts that result from living with oppression, we need the opportunity to be outraged, discouraged, confused and exhausted. As targets of oppression, we need to tell our stories without apology and have them be heard. At the same time, we need to see how the oppression of those outside our group/s is disastrous for us. As human beings, our ability to empathize with others is what makes us hurt when we see others being hurt. It has been hurtful to be taught one is better than, more human than another individual. It is hurtful to be on the receiving end of discrimination. We carry these experiences around with us no matter where we walk, in the classroom, church, neighborhood, stores, shopping centers, or workplaces. Our liberation is directly connected to the extent that we can heal from these experiences.

Beginning the paths: Safety. If the environment around us is not safe to bring out our experiences of hurt, our thoughts, and beliefs about self and others, then healing, building alliances, working to transform institutions and ultimately liberation and justice will not be realized. How can we expect a white person, for example, to say how she has been conditioned to see people of color as less, to notice how she unawarely perpetuates racism, if she is bashed for being who she is? How can we expect a person of color to heal from hurtful experiences of racism if he is blamed, ridiculed, or ignored for what has happened to him? Our multicultural

work is about creating a sanctuary for people to bring their experiences out without being blamed.

Creating safety does not mean making things "nice" and comfortable. Safety is not comfort. Liberation work is about change, and change is never comfortable. One will have uncomfortable feelings and experiences with others as they continue on these paths. Confronting one's attitudes about others is never comfortable. Embarking on a healing process does not mean one will feel good during the treatment for the hurt. However, the change can occur in an environment of safety with discomfort.

The diagram above identifies three paths to liberation. In our society, we believe, all three paths need to be walked; liberation will not be achieved if we only focus on one of the paths. If we strictly paid attention to the right side of the diagram, the "undoing" of the effects upon individuals, then we would have a society where individuals receive help to recover from the challenges of "isms" while the institutional structure that reproduces "haves" and "have nots" will remain in place. We can establish effective mechanisms, strategies, interventions, and treatments to help individuals recover from the negative effects of oppression, but without institutional change and building alliances we will be forever reactive rather than proactive. Each generation will need the same treatment as the previous one. As a society we would become adept at treating the symptom of the problem, but not the root of it.

On the other hand, if our attention only goes to the path on the left side of the chart, if we only focused on "transforming" institutions, societal structures may change, but the world would be full of the walking wounded. Time and time again we have witnessed the results of liberation movements working to change the structure without helping individuals recover from the effects. More often than not, without recovery these individuals continue to suffer from the effects by turning the destructive ways inward or by passing the oppression on to others in another form.

Therefore, all paths need to be walked if we are to truly move towards liberation through social justice. Although we may focus on one path or another at various times, it is important to understand the need for action on all. So how does this model apply to the classroom?

B. Some assumptions about unlearning the isms with young people

Here is your classroom, a gathering of young people of differing or uniform gender, racial background, economic background, religious culture, age, sexual orientation, body size, abilities and first language. Left to themselves, they would probably form smaller groups, the ubiquitous "cliques," filling the room with jokes, loud or continual conversation, and pockets of silence. The room may hold students with personal friendships, or intimate relationships, or indifferent contact, or momentary or longer-term dislikes, even enmities. They likely form a society with one another and experience themselves as common by generation, more or less separate from you. They have each had profound experiences of being treated unequally, as well as strong concerns about fair play and respect. They may not, or not yet, experience the class itself as a group, much less a "learning community." Before the first session even begins, what do they already know about differences?

1. Isms in the lives of young people

Building Justice makes the following very broad assumptions about the young people you engage:

- Young people are alike in coming into the world hungry, curious, eager to learn, expecting to be cared for, not hesitant to proclaim their needs and display feelings. They are ready to engage with one another and with adults around them. This openness is a great strength of childhood.
- The world they come into is structured by existing disparities in wealth, privilege and power among peoples identified by race, gender and many other differences, as well as the conflicts generated by these disparities. These are the *isms*—racism, sexism, classism, Jewish oppression and others. The isms appear most obviously as prejudicial attitudes, which may be used to justify disparities; but the disparities themselves count as the foundation.
- The process by which young people are made part of the world is a *conditioning* process: of course children are taught, but they are also shaped and handled. They "learn" not only by programmed instruction, but also by how they are treated and by witnessing how others are treated.
- Much of how children are conditioned is hurtful. Hurts come systematically in a society where there are existing disparities. All young people experience mistreatment just by virtue of being young in a world defined by adults. They may also further experience mistreatment directly, as members of a group on the "down side" of a particular disparity, based upon their gender, skin color, economic background, and the like; and they experience it indirectly by being "taught" in hurtful ways that others are different or less than them.
- It is a measure of children's resilience that they learn to deal powerfully with hurt. One obvious way is to adapt to the conditioning. Another is to resist—to resist mistreatment directly, or to make alliances with others who are being mistreated.
- A major negative end effect of the day-to-day "lessons" or experiences of hurt is to condition young people to accede to and continue structural inequality, generation by generation. One way inequality is sustained is through outright prejudice against "one-down" groups that young people are taught. Prejudice can be exposed and "unlearned" in a classroom relatively directly. A more serious and intransigent way inequality is continued is in the institutions that function to cover up inequality, or make it appear normal, inevitable and beyond the ability of people to transform.
- A major positive end effect of the day-to-day experience of curiosity, hunger to learn, engagement with the world and resilience to hurt is young people's ongoing enthusiastic engagement with the world and each other and their ongoing commitment to fair play.
- In any classroom, as a result, young people already have powerful stories and experiences of their own curiosity and intelligence; mistreatment of and misinformation about themselves and others; and acts of resistance and alliance.
- Given a chance to share stories and "unlearn" together, young people will readily act as allies to one another, across the lines that separate them, to build equality and further social justice.

Working from these assumptions, a course on building justice requires students to pay attention both to their own and each other's stories and the institutional frameworks within which these

stories are generated. Some stories will involve pain or unawareness and may be hard to express and hard to listen to. A general criticism that has been applied to "diversity work" of various kinds, especially that of the women's and civil rights movements, is that it focuses participants on their experiences of victimization, rendering them helpless or setting them up to blame their own shortcomings on others. But it is crucial to note that inequality *is* painful to those victimized by it and will bring discomfort to people who may unawarely benefit from it. And, developing skills to overcome inequality will be a central concern of the course. So expression of difficult feelings when inequality is unearthed will be part of the work; facing it and working through it together will not be a renewed experience of victimization but the overcoming of victimization. In the end you will be calling upon and celebrating the most powerful strengths of your students…and you.

2. In the classroom

How do these assumptions apply to your classroom? The first thing to notice is that students will come to the discussion of "unlearning isms" with many experiences of misinformation or outright falsehoods and mistreatment or outright hurt, as well as some expertise in each of the areas you address. The process of taking on the isms will invariably at one point or another touch both upon difficult memories from their lives outside and current separations, visible and not, among youth right in the room. And it will also call upon students' equally powerful experiences of taking stands against unequal treatment, and having others take a stand with them.

Moreover, the classroom and the educational system it represents is one of the basic institutions of the society, along with media, business, the family, government, the health system, religious communities, and others. You can expect that disparities of the larger society will be mirrored in the differential treatment students in your institution witness and receive, in noticing who is elevated and who is put back or left out. It will be live in the ways students treat each other, see each other, and see and treat you.

At the very least, every student in the educational system will at one time or another had her/his intelligence questioned or invalidated by an adult, even in the seemingly objective "standards" process of grading. Doubts about one's own thinking count as some of the most profound barriers young people (and we as ex-young people) have to deal with, a basic pillar of "adultism," the mistreatment of young people. Often the doubts are instilled or enhanced right in the classroom. (You will have to weigh this fact in deciding whether and how to use the "you're stupid" visualization in the foundation unit.)

At the same time, the educational system is and historically has been a powerful vehicle of emancipation, in which students can learn, together and across differences, to recognize inequality and organize against it—actual democracy in action. To this you can add the great strengths and ingenuities students have adopted to survive mistreatment; their curiosity about and interest in each other; and ideals of fair play and equity live in young people's cultures.

3. Through the lens of race

Building Justice addresses ten forms of oppression—ten "isms." Each of the oppressions (and the others not spoken to directly here) is systematic, institutionalized, carried out and undergone day by day in the United States. None of them is "less than" the others in their immediate importance

and overall effect on students' lives. To highlight one ism without keeping others in sight is to ignore how oppressions actually operate in tandem, playing off youth, people of color, women, poor people, lesbians and gay people against each other. The point of considering multiple oppressions is finally to show that everyone in the room has been targeted by oppression of one kind or another; and everyone has *also* been on the up-side of an oppression, learning misinformation about people on the bottom and, often unawarely, enjoying privileges the one-down people don't have. Everyone has a stake, with everyone else, in unlearning isms.

In the American context, racial disparity can often be the most apparent (or invisible) and contentious difference in a classroom. Because of its profound role in the shaping of American society, race continues to structure most school populations, showing up most obviously in who goes to which school, who is elevated and who is expelled, who sits with whom, who is on the inside and who is on the outside. If students are not able to talk about racial difference and come to alliance, their capacity to address other equally important isms is fatally impaired.

How can students be brought willingly to look at racial difference? Young people have had plenty of exposure in American culture to the tensions and divisions aroused by race in America, including lectures and exhortations from adults. Of course they will resist stepping into this painful topic. Educators have known for years that already-established personal connections across racial lines are essential for any direct work on this divisive issue. Having students get to know each other and work on common projects together is a first step in building the trust to address race.

For this reason, *Building Justice* begins with foundation sessions in which students are mixed with one another and introduced, building a foundation to stand upon. With some established trust and mutual commitment, they can turn to race, and using race as a lens through which to work with the other isms. Experiencing alliance on this issue can propel students to mix across racial lines to take on the other isms more readily

C. Your place as facilitator

What will be required of you to facilitate this curriculum, and how can you be prepared?

As a successful adult "survivor" of childhood conditioning, you are modeling for your students how adults successfully take on and address the isms. The above assumptions about young people apply to you as well. Like them, you came into the world hungry, intelligent and vulnerable. Like them you have negotiated your way through mistreatment, misinformation or no information, resistance and alliance on matters of race, gender, sexual orientation, class and more. And now you are an adult, with a specific relationship to young people as an adult ally.

To prepare for facilitation is, first, to take some time to think through your own experience of the isms and how this will affect the live discussions about to come up in your classroom. Then, turning to your role as an adult: what does an adult, acting as an ally, do to support young people? In the following sections, you are invited to take some time to prepare. Discussions about hurt, separation, conflict and privilege—and resilience, resistance and alliance—among young people can become very personal; it is essential for you to examine ahead of time where particular issues might affect you, or even get in your way.

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1. Looking at your heart

The foundation sessions of *Building Justice* present the underlying curriculum model, fleshing out the assumptions listed above. Take some time to review the heart, heart art and power chart exercises in the curriculum, answering the discussion questions using your own experience. The exercises present something like a listing of the issues that can arise for you in the course of facilitating the curriculum.

Your experience as a young person

Complete the "heart art" questions for yourself.

- What has been your experience of your own qualities?
- What limits or hurts were placed upon you?
- What qualities are still strong within you (e.g., curiosity, openness, etc.)?
- What "shields" have you developed to deal with those hurts?
- In what ways have you resisted, fought back against, or just said no to these hurts?
- Who are some allies who stood up for you?
- How do the negative, limiting experiences and shields still affect you, and how might they surface in your work with young people now?
- What qualities, strengths of resistance and experiences of alliance can you bring to your work with young people now?

Your experience as a person on the downside

Pick the slots on the "target" side of the power chart that you fit in, in the ten "isms" addressed in this curriculum—those that you were part of as a child, are part of now, and/or will be part of in the future.

- What experiences do you have, as part of each group, of being mistreated directly, or learning that your group was "less than" the group on the other side?
- Think of any ways this mistreatment was "internalized": ways you were made to feel less intelligent or less valuable yourself, and/or ways you were made to separate yourself from other people in your group.
- What experiences of overcoming mistreatment have you had?
- What experiences of overcoming internalized mistreatment have you had?
- Think of allies you have had in this area: people from the opposite group who stood in the way of the mistreatment, even if only once. Who are they, and what did they do?
- Which of these categories that you belong to are likely to bring up most personal feelings for you in facilitating the curriculum? What kind of support or preparation will you need to handle these feelings?

Your experience as a person on the upside

Turning to the "nontarget" slots:

- What are the earliest experiences you have, as a member of this category, of being told that people in the opposite, "downside" category were different or less than you?
- How might this early experience still affect you?

- What are your earliest experiences of learning about how people in your category were supposed to act?
- How might this experience still affect you? How might it cost you?
- As thoroughly as possible, list the benefits that come to you relative to the other group—what privileges you have as a member of each of your particular nontarget groups, even if sometimes these don't feel like privileges.
- Think of a time when you have felt anger or resentment at a person or people in the target group. As best as you can, think about what parts of those feelings might have been motivated not by the target of your anger, but by misinformation or prejudice.
- Think of a time when you have felt anger or resentment at a person or people in a target group where in another category that person was also a nontarget group member in relation to you: for example, you are an adult woman teacher, and find yourself angry at a male student younger than you for his sexist remarks. In what ways do you risk using our privilege as a member of a nontarget group to suppress or limit or punish the person from the target group—as opposed to confronting him directly with his oppressive actions?
- Think of a time when you felt guilt toward a person or people in the target group. How did the guilt affect you—what about it might have been useful, and what might have hindered you or kept you from acting?
- What are your earliest experiences of challenging or saying no to mistreatment of members of the target group?
- Which of these categories that you belong to are likely to bring up most personal feelings for you in facilitating the curriculum? What kind of support or preparation will you need to handle these feelings?

Your experience of both upside and downside positions

Pick the slots where it feels difficult to pick one category or the other: for example, class, if you feel you are neither rich nor poor; or age, where you may be an adult but are still young, e.g. under age 25; or approaching "elder" status, e.g. over age 40 or 50; or you have disabilities, but they are hidden, or "not that bad."

- What pressures have you experienced in your life to separate yourself from the "target" group, and get into or stay in the nontarget group?
- In what ways do you experience mistreatment or "less-than" status from people clearly in the nontarget group?
- In what ways do you have privileges or benefits that people more clearly in the target group are denied?
- Which of these categories that you find yourself toward the "middle" of are likely to bring up most personal feelings—or confusion—for you in facilitating the curriculum? What kind of support or preparation will you need to handle these feelings?

2. Your role as an ally: your freedom is my freedom

"Ally" is employed in this curriculum, for the most part, to stand for the person from a nontarget, "upside" group who takes a stand against the mistreatment of the target group. More loosely, it can mean people in target groups who stand up for each other within the group, and/or stand up for members of other target groups; this kind of alliance is **solidarity**, with a powerful,

longstanding and inspiring history from political movements across the world. An ally steps in the way of oppression, interrupting mistreatment and/or internalized mistreatment—not by rescuing, taking care of, or taking over from, but by standing shoulder-to-shoulder with. As you worked through the questions above, you will have pictured people who have acted as your ally when you were young, and you will have thought of your own experiences of acting as an ally to target people across the line from you. Finally, as an adult who agrees to work with young people, you are already in the position of being an ally.

In the work of building justice, you are inviting young people to acknowledge and make a commitment to each other across lines that separate them. In particular, you are asking for an ally's commitment: to see violence or discrimination against a target group which is not one's own as an injury to oneself, and so to pledge to join together against the mistreatment—to see someone else's freedom as their own. What will this commitment mean for you?

At the very least, you will encounter barriers to being an ally. Some of the most prominent are already in place, in the conditioning you will have received:

- *The oppression itself*. Misinformation or lack of information that you have been told throughout your life about the other group limits your awareness.
- *Privilege*—the benefits or comforts that accrue to you, many of which are invisible to you, for occupying your position, while others are subordinated.
- *Your own "target" experiences*. Mistreatment you have received on the down side of other isms can make your hurt prominent for you, hindering your capacity to recognize other's hurt
- *Guilt/resentment.* Either sentiment hinders alliance. Guilt about past actions of you or members of your nontarget group can put you in the position of feeling hopeless, or, alternatively, trying to prove your "innocence" to target group members. Resentment is the closely related feeling that you've already done too much, "bent over backward," and shouldn't have to do any more.

Other barriers arise when you take a stand:

- *Sanctions.* To take a stand against an ism exposes you to the mistreatment the target group receives, and may expose you to even greater enmity from members of your own group—friends, colleagues, relatives included—as someone who interrupts or embarrasses or is perceived as a traitor by them.
- *Anger of target group*. To make yourself available as an ally is, sometimes, to commit yourself to hearing the anger about oppression that target groups feel. In fact, it may be a mark of genuine alliance when target group members trust you to be able to listen to their anger.

Against these barriers you have the rewards:

- *Your strengths.* Taking action as an ally calls upon your strengths, contradicting limits or negative messages that may have been imposed on you by conditioning.
- *Your community.* To engage in alliance is to build and sustain community that will sustain you.
- *This is how the world really is.* To the extent that existing institutions hide or mystify inequality, acting as an ally enables you to recognize and bring reality into the room: the

real conditions of inequality and the rich and untold history of alliances, individual and organized, which are part of our daily lives.

- *Witnessing transformation.* Education on the face of it transforms young people; witnessing emancipatory transformation and alliance in young people is one of the greatest experiences of inspiration for those who educate.
- *Hope.* With inspiration comes hope that social justice and peace can be sustained. Especially for adults, the renewal of hope against ongoing conditioning is crucial; and hope is certainly the principle most important for us to pass on to young people.

What does an ally do?

a. *Take action.* Before everything else, the mark of an ally is taking action against inequality or mistreatment.

b. *Listen/learn*. A gift of alliance is finding out, from the target group experience, how the world is perceived and experienced by someone whose life is different from yours, providing information that has been withheld from you by the conditioning you received. A first act of alliance is to make space for target groups, with unconditioned support from you, to define the issues with which they grapple, the structure of the "ism" from their own experience. A companion act of alliance is to research and discover in detail how the relevant "ism" works: statistics, facts, and history you can pass on to your students.

c. *Use your privilege.* As an ally you identify the resources you have and use your resources on behalf of the target group, gaining them access and opportunity.

d. *Support the target person's leadership*. True alliance means getting out of the way of the target group members, supporting them in taking charge of their lives and making their own decisions about what must be done. To rescue, or attempt to rescue, or take over removes the power once again. Conversely, to step out of the way without offer of support or tactful guidance is to abandon.

e. *Go after other nontarget members.* Target group members, engaged in their own work, need you to intervene with and educate other members of your group. Moreover, your intervention must be from the standpoint of support, not differentiating yourself as better than the others of your group. To the extent you reject or push them away, you are pushing away part of yourself.

f. *Take a chance; make mistakes*. Expect to make mistakes, and to agree to fix them when you do. Alliance work is built upon trying things, making mistakes, and going on.

g. *Take care of yourself.* Alliance is a lifelong activity. It can't be sustained unless you are rested, replenished, and hopeful. So, in light of that:

h. *Get support, accept support.*

D. The facilitation process

To facilitate is to instill and sustain—literally "to make easy"—a process. The process enables students to recognize, examine, and speak to their various experiences while being attentive to each other's. Where the topic, social justice, concerns how we are to live together across differences, no one left out and no one left behind, the process also invites them to try out living together under conditions of out-in-the-open equality. Elements of the process include:

- Clear ground rules, regularly reviewed and practiced, for how to talk to each other;
- A commitment, regularly reinforced, to building emotional safety with each other to articulate difficult or painful experiences;

- The expression of feelings;
- Facts about structural inequality in the United States and the histories of acts of resistance to inequality;
- Critical analysis of how inequality operates in U.S. institutions;
- Hands-on activities—games, art, roleplays, brainstorms and other cooperative exercises;
- And plenty of practice, with plenty of mistakes, in students building alliances with each other across the lines that have heretofore separated them.

To initiate the process is to build a climate, involving agreements, environment and the pacing of sessions.

1. The agreements

An elementary requirement for discussing differences is the safety to discuss: the rights of all voices—and silences—to be heard, not attacked, minimized or ignored. The basic tools for safety in this curriculum are the agreements you establish with students for the discussion. The agreements resemble, and sometimes just are, the ground rules teachers use, spoken or unspoken, to manage students' interactions. What makes them *agreements*, however, is the process by which students and you decide together what they are, make commitments with each other to follow them, and practice keeping them. An agreement is not, in this sense, a rule; breaking an agreement is not breaking the law, and punishment does not ensue. Rather, to live by an agreement is to practice, make mistakes, be gently reminded, and renew. Sometimes just learning how to keep the agreements can be the real point of social justice education across differences—this is how we should live in the world.

Safety is not the same as comfort. The process of unlearning previously-held beliefs can often be uncomfortable, especially with respect to target/nontarget dynamics. A nontarget person may not feel comfortable about remarks made by a target person about the latter's own experience, and so feel "unsafe." She/he may call on you to sanction or silence the target person. If you are the nontarget person who feels uncomfortable, you may find yourself wanting to sanction or silence the target person. An example recurring again and again in youth diversity work is the scene in which a white student is uncomfortable with students of color talking about their experience of racial discrimination. Feeling uncomfortable, a white student may feel she or he is "unsafe," even though they are not the subject of other's remarks, and want you to silence the speakers. If you are white and also feeling discomfort, it may be hard to stay clear in facilitating the process in which the students work out how to keep talking and listening to each other.

It is important, then, to be able to distinguish feelings of discomfort from actual lack of emotional safety, as mentioned above. Safety is violated when someone attacks another, puts them down, calls them names and the like. Discomfort as a reaction to what someone else says about his or her own experience is certainly discomfort, but it is not lack of safety. That one can be allowed to feel discomfort is actually a sign that there is some safety in the room. Silencing anyone who is talking about his or her experience, on the other hand, is a genuine lessening of safety in the classroom

Take some moments to review the sample agreements that we suggest in the foundation sessions (defined at the end of foundation session 1). They include:

a) Confidentiality
b) Amnesty
c) Put-Ups, Not Put-Downs
d) Right To Pass/Try It On
e) Respect/Listening
f) Share The Mike
g) Let It Stand
h) Feelings are OK here
i) Speak For Myself, Using "I-Statements"
j) Access

Consider the following:

- Which agreements will be most important in building safety in your classroom?
- Which may be hardest for students to keep?
- Draw a scenario of one of these: a situation in which a student breaks an agreement. What will come up for you? What are some strategies for enabling this student, and other students, to intervene and restore the agreement?
- Which agreement may be hardest for you to keep?
- Think of a situation in which you are likely to be pushed to break an agreement—lose your patience, even your temper, and blame a student or put her/him down. What makes this scene especially hard for you? What are some strategies for keeping the agreement, and/or using your experience here to help students keep agreements?

2. Environment

The students' interrelationships are among the primary concerns of the curriculum. Accordingly, the classroom setup should foreground them. Especially for general discussion and exercises, sit in a circle (if possible) without intervening tables, so that everyone can make eye contact with everyone else, with other spaces in the room reserved for separate small group work when called for. While there are brainstorm and artwork projects that may require desk or table-surface space, students will not need desks to take notes. Make room on classroom walls a) to post and keep the agreements, b) to hang posters and photographs relevant to current subjects (e.g. posters prepared for the sexism unit) and c) to display brainstorm posters and murals produced by students.

Other factors in the environment are the usual tools educators use. A major resource for students' analysis is popular media—TV, magazines, videos, music, and fashions. Much media is directed to youth; here the examples of the isms—stereotypes, resistances and alliances about race, gender, age, appearance and ability—abound. You may wish to stock popular magazines, CDs and videos, for class projects. At the same time, music, artwork, games, even food count as ways to instruct by other means.

3. Pace

Part of facilitation is the regulation of the flow of a class, moving from an introductory phase through content, personal experience and practical application, all the way through to a closing. A class session has a particular flow; a unit of sessions exploring a particular ism has a flow; and the overall series of units has a flow.

a. facilitating from a script

Unlike the usual teacher's lesson plan, *Building Justice* is a script, outlining step by step points to be covered, in some places modeling actual speech to be uttered. Teaching, facilitation and learning itself cannot happen when you read aloud from a script, of course, and you may occasionally find the script detail to be cumbersome, interrupting exactly the face-to-face work of a real classroom struggling with equity. Even more to the point, lecturing or superimposing an agenda upon a classroom is in many young people's experience another form of adults imposing their views of the world upon youth.

Why, then, a script? Just because oppressions or isms in reality are complex and intersect with one another, picking one's way through them is tricky. There has to be free speech and open dialogue in the classroom to work them out; at the same time, without maps or guidance what looks like open, free discussion among equals can be just the old structure of inequality covered up by the rhetoric of "we're all the same here." For this reason we have elected to produce a script charting our suggestions for facing and working through the issues of difference that will arise. You can read the script through, adapting it to your class and your approach. Use directly what you can, and adapt other parts that could be helpful. From there, turn to your class.

b. the session

A session extends for a normal class period, 45 minutes to an hour. (The session period we have adopted is 55 minutes.) You will notice several elements in each session:

- An opening, "checking in," reviews the last session, introducing the day's theme and reviewing agreements
- The content to follow involves a general context-setting and one or two interactive exercises.
- The balance of the period is spent in discussion in large or small groups, and sometimes the completion of particular, hands-on projects.
- Every session closes with a few moments for students to reflect upon, respond to, or mention highlights from the session, or offer appreciations to participants.

c. the unit

Building Justice begins with a unit of "foundation sessions" to set the underlying model of alliance-building as an introduction to handling the difficult issues of oppression. The unit for each of the following "isms" extends from four to six sessions, following a general pattern.

- The first session of each unit engages students with the photos—particular scenes of interpersonal discrimination that students analyze collectively.
- The middle sessions take on the ism as an oppression, a) mapping out how it happens; b) how target people are affected and how they resisted; and c) how nontarget people are affected and how they can become allies.

- The later parts of these sessions move from the interpersonal to the larger scale institutional forms of the oppression.
- The unit closes with work on next step personal commitments students can make, and organizing strategies they can develop as a group, to carry on the work of undoing the ism.

d. the series

The series itself has a pace, beginning with the unit of sessions on "the foundation," turning serially to the units on the various oppressions, closing with recommendations for organizing with young people.

While the order with which you address oppressions may turn on particular situations your students face, there is a rationale for beginning with race indicated above. (It may also be the case, of course, that racial issues are so divisive that it makes sense to come to them only after more preliminary work.) Matters of Jewish oppression are closely allied with race, making that unit a natural concomitant to race. Language oppression often applies to recent immigrants of color to the United States, linking it to racism. Similarly sexism and heterosexism share enough commonalities to link them, the former introducing the latter. Ableism, the discrimination against people labeled as physically or mentally different, is allied with "appearance" oppression, sizeism, in some ways underlying it, and might follow this "ism." Because of the embedded nature of class in American life, it makes sense to approach this ism, classism, later in the series.

Adultism and ageism are obviously interrelated. While adultism, as an oppression all young people are "on the same side of," may seem an obvious way to begin the series, we have found that lots of adults and youth aren't aware of the concept of "adultism," making it harder to discuss. Moreover, some of the experiences of adultism students bring into the room are too painful to address, or even notice, without a lot of safety already generated in the room. This should not surprise us: adultism is for most of us a source of earliest painful memories, and our earliest experiences of "internalized" adultism may well be young people mistreating each other. For young people to look at it in the presence of adults requires some time to build trust. Generally this means coming to these sessions later, toward the end

For some groups, beginning focus with more obvious instances of discrimination against individuals by appearance—sizeism, for example—may make it easier to begin to address more "invisible" isms like class. For others, the very personal nature of remarks about size and other kinds of appearance may make it easier to address in later parts of the course. One (just one) possible order is:

Foundation sessions
Racism
language oppression
anti-Semitism
sexism
heterosexism
classism

sizeism
ableism
ageism
adultism

As a final note, the entire series comprises between 40 and 60 class sessions, obviously an immense investment in time and curriculum. Most users will undoubtedly focus on one or a few isms at a time, or may intersperse isms in other curricular material over an extended period. However you decide to proceed, climate, environment and pacing will be primary elements to consider—there have to be agreements, there has to be a foundational process leading into the particular oppressions, and sessions will need their own rhythm of moving into and out from the oppression.

4. The curriculum in modules

[*space for description of possible modules*]

E. Preparing your learning community

The following are questions to address as you plan to use *Building Justice* in the classroom, followed by some steps to prepare students for the course.

Assessing

Review your class, your history with them, their histories with each other, some things you may know and some things that may be hidden from you.

Outline a profile of the group. How many are they? What ages? What do they look like by race, gender, economic background, languages, physical and mental abilities assigned to them, religious cultures, physical appearances, "out" or "not out" sexual orientation? What may be hidden from you about these categories?

Consider the overall institutional setting. What forms of inclusion and exclusion occur here, acknowledged or not? Who is more likely to be suspended or expelled? Who is more likely to be in the honors courses? How do students in this class fit in with the rest of the school? What inclusions or exclusions or discrimination are students likely to be aware of? Unaware of? What recent events having anything to do with any of the isms —at school, in the community, in popular culture, or in the headlines—are likely to be on students' minds, whether they identify these as isms or not?

As you look over the list of "isms" in *Building Justice*, which ones stand out as most topical? Most obviously difficult to address?

Identify day-to-day examples of any of the isms that students are most likely to be aware of at school. Write these down. Then, about each of them, what would you like to be different—what actual change would you like to be achieved?

The following are suggestions for curriculum use based on the particular make-up of your students.

Race

When addressing racism it is important for you to be aware of the ethnic heritages of your students. Racism affects white students differently than it does students of color, and although there are some similarities in how any student reacts to racism, there are also significant differences that are based on whether someone is white or a person of color.

Of course, a large majority of students in the United States attend schools exclusively, or almost exclusively, with students of their own racial grouping. This profound instance of institutional discrimination will mean that your group is mostly likely to be segregated, with more or most students to be either white or of color. Some dynamics of addressing racism, and the other isms to a lesser extent, will vary according to what grouping you have; but in any configuration, you are likely to run in to the same issues among white youth and the same issues among youth of color addressed below.

White youth

You can assume that most white youth will have a mix of awareness and unawareness about racism. Their information, true or false or in between, will have come for the most part not from people of color, but images of, representations of, and stories about people of color, gleaned in the usual ways—from family, popular media, textbook representations, and jokes. Even people of color actually within some white youths' geographical communities, such as immigrant groups, Native Americans and people whose first language is other than English, may be hidden from white youth. At the very least, you can be assured that most of their information involves falsifying stereotypes, and most of it is tinged with feelings of uncertainty or hesitation or outright resentment, passed on from the previous generation.

The flip side of this awareness/unawareness is the information about being "white." While textbooks are full of European-American history, much of how it is taught hides the real ethnic backgrounds of white people, whether from European countries of origin or from generations of residence in particular regions or enclaves within the United States. Partly this represents suppression of ethnic differences, especially in the processes of immigration from countries in southern and eastern Europe and Ireland over the last 150 years—the homogenizing process called assimilation. Irish people and people from Mediterranean countries may strongly resist being identified with white people, whom they perceive to be people of northern European extraction. Jewish youth with white-skin privilege will nonetheless feel separated and different from other white people; white culture in the United States is predominantly Christian-based.

But further, conflicts about race in the last 50 years may make some young white people identify whiteness or "white culture" as stereotypically "wonderbread" or featureless, or fostering overt racial hatred, and so will dissociate themselves from it. The absorption with hiphop culture by white suburban youth across the country, redolent of previous white generations' fascination with jazz and blues, may fuel white young people's wishes not to be identified as white.

These factors, intrinsic to a situation of existing racial inequality, are predictable grounds for white youth to resist hearing information about racial disparity. Having unawareness challenged is difficult. Some white students may feel they are being put in the wrong for something they didn't do. Moreover, they may strongly resist the principle that racism *oppresses* people of color but not white people, confusing individual experiences of mistreatment they may have experienced from people of color with wholesale racial oppression. If there are a small number of people of color in the class, they may in turn go along with white resistance, to evade feeling like victims, as well as evade resentment from the majority.

These responses are to be expected, and you can prepare for them.

- White students are not to be blamed for holding misinformation.
- You can gently, supportively correct misinformation you hear, and invite this correction from other students in the room. Take the time to correct *every* and *any* misinformation or stereotype that you hear, without putting students in the wrong; this models for young people how to intervene with each other successfully.
- If students express guilt, you can point out that the system of separation is not of their making
- Expect that some early experiences of learning whiteness are painful, and make room for youth to discuss this
- If there are only one or two youth of color present, don't make them the spokespeople for other people of color. At the same time, make sure their voices are heard.

In covering the unit on racism, it will make sense to conduct the white hand-up exercise, with special attention to early painful experiences of "white conditioning"—learning that people of color were "less-than" and learning what it means to be "white." Unless there are more than one or two youth of color in your class, do not use the people of color hand-up exercise or speak-out process. The latter might be replaced with research projects for students: to find and present statistics and facts about how different groups of people of color are discriminated against in housing, education, criminal justice, medical care and income.

- Focus on opening descriptions of race and white conditioning
- Allow students time to think about and report on their ethnic identities.
- Encourage them to try on being proud of being white, reclaiming "white pride" from its use by white racist groups, to recount the positive histories of European immigration and survival in the United States and of white alliances with people of color against racism
- Prepare yourself completely with facts and statistics about how African-, Arab-. Asian-, Latin- and Native-American groups have been discriminated against
- Allow students time to identify and recount their experiences of a) successful resistance to conditioning and b) alliance with people of color.
- Expect white students to want to be allies, and encourage their commitments to racial equality.

Youth of color

Youth of color may be able to identify racial oppression more easily, but may rightly resist any characterization of people of color as victims. Students may also want to say, "it's not so bad," or in turn, feel hopeless about possibilities for change. Having heard all the same misinformation that white students have heard, they may also want to deny the severity of racism, or hold that

white people can be oppressed too, confusing racial prejudice that people of color can hold against white people with full-blown racism itself.

There may be racial divisions between students of different ethnic groups, between native-born and immigrant youth of color, or with students of biracial origins. Students may separate from each other over other differences, like gender or sexual orientation or religious culture or class; target groups of the latter may be pressured to ignore these differences in the interest of racial solidarity.

If you are a white teacher, they may feel unsafe discussing racism in your presence, or may go out of their way to take care of you. In turn, whatever your racial background, you will have been conditioned by the usual mainstream sources to be fearful of youth of color; in this environment, you may feel reluctant to bring up racial issues at all. Against these barriers you can take the following steps.

- *Always* (gently, firmly) interrupt any stereotype or putdown related to people of color, whether students are directing these to their own group or other groups
- When racial solidarity is subtly or overtly invoked against looking at other oppressions, you can invoke racial solidarity as the very point of looking at other oppressions. E.g., young men of color may not want to talk about sexism in the curriculum, because they fear it will divide young men and women of color and they need to stay together to fight racism. But their genuine solidarity against racism will only happen if young women and men of color can build gender equality with each other.
- Never minimize the salience of racial difference—its presence—in the context of other oppressions.

When covering the racism unit:

- Make room for youth of color to identify their own experiences and provide their own information about experiences of racism; have them define what should happen
- Pay attention to difficult relations among ethnic groups
- If you are white, think about using guest facilitators of color; consider having students of color lead people of color hand-up exercise.
- Take time to have youth explore, in small groups, the effects of internalized oppression—how people in the same racial group are set up against each other, and how people of different ethnic groups are set up against each other. If you are a white teacher, it will be appropriate for you not to facilitate, rather assigning questions to groups and having them facilitate themselves.
- Omit the white hand-up exercise; have students, instead, brainstorm misinformation that white young people will have heard
- If different groups of youth of color are present, consider conducting the speak out as groups of youth of color taking turns speaking out to each other, and having each other as allies
- If white youth are present, don't make them the spokespeople for white culture, or become the targets for anger or resentment against white people, and avoid altogether the dynamic in which youth of color feel they have to take care of white youth
- Always call on young people's experience of resistance to racism, over against being simply victims of racism or racist conditioning.

Jews and Gentiles

The particular context of assimilation of Jewish people in the United States brings its own complexity to the classroom. Many Jewish people, as part of assimilation, will have become "white," enjoying white-skin privilege. Jewish and non-Jewish students will have been raised in a culture whose mainstream institutions have a profoundly Christian base, even if highly secularized; at the very least, Christian holidays still structure the school year. You can assume that your students, both Jewish and Gentile, lack information about Jewish oppression, and about Jewish culture as such; some will have heard outright anti-Semitic prejudice, all the way from the "blood libel" that Jewish people "killed Christ" to the belief that Jewish people run Hollywood media, or the newspapers, or the banks, or all three.

Moreover, within U.S. Christian and secular culture there are differences. Some Christian students may be participants in newer "fundamentalist" or "born again" revivals of Christian practice, in reaction to mainstream secularism. They may feel under attack from, or have experienced discrimination from mainstream forms of Christianity, and so may resist acknowledging the presence and importance of Jewish oppression as secondary to their concerns.

Finally, students may be more or less aware of the prominence of Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the wake of the World Trade Center bombing and the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq. This can be as divisive in the classroom as it is in the world. Jewish students may be drawn to defend, or harshly criticize, Israeli policy. If students representing other Middle East or East Asian groups are present, they may be strongly resistant, precisely because of their experience of racism and anti-Islamic, anti-Arab sentiments in America and in Israel, to any acknowledgement of Jewish oppression. In turn, Gentile students critical of Israeli action may be critical of Jewish people as such. Even in well-meaning acts of alliance with middle Eastern people of color, they may deny the realities about Jewish oppression. Historical uses of Israel to divide middle-eastern countries and enable western countries and corporations to control and benefit from oil may be too far outside students' experience to easily explain. In short, the complexity, contradictions and confusion that mark Jewish oppression as such can easily surface in classroom discussion. (The term "anti-Semitism" itself, most often used as the name for oppression of Jewish people, bears its own complexity, addressed in the opening session of unit on the Jewish oppression.)

For these reasons, a central exercise of the Jewish oppression unit, the Diaspora game, is devoted to unearthing information about historical roots and practices of Jewish oppression. In your work with students:

- Familiarize yourself in depth with historical and current forms of Jewish oppression. If questions arise that you are unable to answer, contact the local Jewish Federation or synagogue as a resource for you and your students.
- Expect students, both Jewish and Gentile, to lack information about Jewish oppression. As with racism, don't blame them for the lack of information; rather, have them think about why they lack information, and who benefits from this lack.
- Provide clear information about Jewish oppression
- Interrupt (gently, firmly) any uses of stereotypes about Jews. Interrupt (gently, firmly) any statements from Jewish youth that may count as internalized oppression. Insist

(gently, firmly) that Jewish oppression as an oppression be taken as fully and seriously as the other oppressions.
- Continue to draw distinctions between the actions of the government of Israel and Jewish people as such
- Continue to acknowledge both Jewish oppression and racism, including racism against middle-eastern people; these isms are not to be ranked against each other in severity, and students should not have to choose one or the other to address alone. They get to make commitments against both.
- Call on historic alliances between Jewish people, people of color, and politically progressive people in general in struggles for social justice in the United States
- Expect that Jewish and Gentile students want to be allies with one another.

Gender

Your class will be mixed in gender, or all or mostly young women or young men. While different dynamics may appear in each configuration, what they have in common is the daily experience of socialization to "act like a man" and "act like a woman." This has consequences for all of the units, in particular for the units on sexism and heterosexism.

Men

In any gathering of young men, there is liable to be camaraderie, young men who are on the inside and on the outside, plenty of competition, and plenty of teasing, which can include putdowns of women, lots of jokes, and comic-to-serious putdowns of each other as being "less-than" fully male: a powerful mix of friendship, sexism and homophobia. Part of their interactions can be traced to male socialization as such: the learning of stereotypes about women; the inculcation of serious lessons abut how to be a man and what to fear from other men; nervousness about one's own manhood; and overall, sometimes panicky, uncertainty about how to negotiate a class which invites participants to look at some of their feelings. You can expect the above tensions to be heightened in the unit on heterosexism. To the extent that you or participants in the class challenge heterosexism, you and they will be subject to homophobic putdowns or jokes. The slurs "fag" and "gay" are in fact enforcers of male socialization—terms young men learn to use to keep each other in the "act like a man" box.

Much male "bonding," by now a joke-word indicating false or excessive feeling, involves putting women down as a way to feel safer around one another, "being one of the guys." But the power of young men's actual friendships and understanding of what it means to give and receive respect can be called upon as a strength. When young men's closeness is not based upon or reinforced by putdowns or competition, it becomes a genuine closeness. In large part you can achieve this closeness in the unit on sexism by spending lots of time focused on male socialization: young men's common experiences of being conditioned to "act like a man." Being able to talk about these experiences without fear of putdowns can bring young men powerfully into connection with one another. If your group is mixed by race and you have already covered the unit on racism, cross-racial alliances and common experiences about being male across racial lines can deepen this connection.

Further suggestions include:

- Interrupt or challenge all putdowns of women, subtle or otherwise, both because they are putdowns as such and because they lower male-to-male safety in the group
- Interrupt, challenge and simply stop all putdowns of each other, in particular homophobic putdowns: "you're so gay," or "faggot"; ask anyone who uses these terms to look at his usage—what feelings he might be covering for, what fears it might really mask.
- Young men are not to be blamed for misinformation they have. In particular, male socialization will have subjected young men to early experiences of being shamed or made to feel less-than. As a result, being blamed or put down in any way for them can only trigger these feelings, provoking plenty of resistance.
- Expect young men to be allies to women, and hold them to this expectation. Make it clear that being allies in this case does *not* mean taking over or rescuing, but rather supporting women's taking charge and being in control.

Women

With women, you will have a chance to look more closely at how women are socialized and how they get hurt. Without the presence of, interruption by, or commentary from young men, they may feel more permission and less embarrassment in talking about body-image, pressures about looks, and the expectations placed upon them from family life, young men around them, and other young women around them. It will also provide an opportunity to look at how sexism separates young women, pitting them against each other for the attention of young men. Finally, you can assume that most young women have experienced sexual harassment—unwelcome whistles, catcalls, touches, unwanted sex or attempted assault, and many have experienced abuse, including sexual abuse, from boyfriends or other men or young men with who they are acquainted. If you are a male teacher, obtain female facilitation or cofacilitation for the sexism unit.

You should be prepared for the possibility that a young woman will disclose being abused. Of course this is scary, both for you and for her, so it will be helpful to make and rehearse a plan for handling disclosure well Your school probably has a system for reporting abuse; review the system with a counselor or administrator and make the plan with them for this eventuality. In the unit, make local guidelines about reporting abuse clear and public, and prepare a safety net of local counselors or therapists. Part of your work will be to have young women recognize all the ways they have resisted socialization or outright abuse; part of it will be to forge and strengthen relationships among young women to stand up for one another. Here again, already-established cross-racial alliances can make these relationships even more powerful.

Young women and young men

Much of the above, about each gender, applies to the experiences young people will bring into a regular co-educational class. Such class can be a perfect laboratory for young women learning to expect alliance from men, and young men learning about how women have experienced sexism from men and how men can be allies. And, if your class is like most U.S. classrooms, young men will speak and be called upon by name up to 9 times as much as young women; they will be much louder, much more likely to tease. The full vocabulary of names and other putdowns of women is available to them, from overt to subtle. This will require you carefully to monitor speaking order—who speaks first, who speaks most often—to make room for women to speak.

About heterosexism in the classroom

On a school campus, the word "fag," as a called-out name, can bring about one of the most instantaneous—and physically dangerous—responses students face. It is a profoundly invisible truth about this dynamic that what students say they fear represents, in fact, a stereotypical falsehood: that they may be attacked by gay people. What they fear in reality is violence from heterosexual youth, the violence that comes to you if you are successfully identified as gay. If, as suggested in this curriculum, words like "fag" are used by peers to enforce gender roles—to get boys to "act like men" and girls to "act like ladies"—it makes sense that young people will hear, and use, these words every day. So every day there are potentially explosive interactions among students that are part of the oppression of heterosexism, a standing threat to anyone, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning their sexuality—or straight.

The ferocity that attends this issue deepens when we approach transgendered issues. In recent years, transgendered people, defined broadly to include people of "either" sex who, through clothing, conscious preference, surgical change, under biological or non-biological impetus, or other means, inhabit a gender different from the one they were "assigned" or labeled at birth. (This can include the 1 in every 2000 newborns whose otherwise "ambiguous" genitalia are surgically altered, at the ungoverned discretion of a doctor, to make them "fit" one gender or the other.) Assigning sex is one fundamental way people have been taught to define themselves and each other and to assign characteristics, emotions, clothing and looks, even lifetime professions to one another. To allow gender to be confusing, to present more possibilities than two, can generate great anxiety.

Under these circumstances, whatever the gender make-up of your room, some guidelines are in order.

- Regardless of feelings involved on the issue of heterosexism, and whatever position students take on it, all must be able to agree that no one deserves to be called names or hurt or violated—oppressed— for their sexual orientation. This is the bottom line you can take.
- Unlearning heterosexism does not involve a student who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning her/his sexuality, or transgendered disclosing her/his sexual orientation, or someone else's. In many or most cases it makes more sense, obviously, not to self-disclose. So an important goal for you is to not "out" anyone, or bring students to "out" themselves unless they so choose.
- If you are lesbian or gay, you can decide whether to disclose to your students, going by what makes sense for you as an adult. If you are heterosexual and a student asks if you are gay, it can be an act of alliance with lesbian/gay people for you make this a teaching moment by refusing to answer, but instead asking the student to think about why he is asking, what fear if any might be behind the question, and even why he thinks he has a right to know.
- *Always* interrupt and challenge any names or jokes related to sexual orientation. You can do this not by shaming the speaker, but by questioning, discussing, bringing in other students, appealing to everyone's sense of fairness.
- *Always* assume that lesbian or gay or bisexual or questioning or transgendered people are in the room. The degree to which they may be "hidden" is a good indicator of how safe or

unsafe the room is. (You can also assume that most students in the room, whether they know it or not, have friends or family members who fit the above categories.)

Ability and Appearance

In your class people will be distinguished by and rated according to appearance: body size, complexion, hair, clothing, verbal mannerism, comportment, facial expression and the like. All of us live in a mainstream culture in which visual images are highly valued. No amount of "unlearning," it would seem, can reach down to the immediate judgments we make of one another based upon how we look. To get at what assumptions we make about what is "normal" and what is "aberrant," and challenging these categorizations, is a major goal of the units on sizeism and ableism (and language oppression), and is an underlying constituent of all the others.

Where the label of disability is concerned, this goal is foremost. Disability historians have recently pointed out that putative disability has, up to the recent past, been used as sufficient grounds for unequal treatment. People of color, women, Jews, and generations of immigrants from Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia have been serially labeled as mentally, emotionally, or physically unfit or outside the norm. Where people have rightly fought against these classifications, they often let the classifications as such go unchallenged. *These* people—women, people of color, &c—are not disabled, or crazy, or stupid, or retarded, &c.; if someone *were* disabled, the unspoken argument goes, unequal treatment would be justified. It is only with the raising of disability as a civil rights issue in the last several decades that the right of people with disabilities to equal treatment has even been suggested.

In your class there will be students with different learning styles and different "intelligences." Some will have experiences with illnesses. Some may have learning disabilities, known or not. Some may be under medication for a variety of mental, emotional or physical symptoms. Some may have visible emotional, mental, physical or verbal disabilities. Some may require overt accommodation in order to be present. Much more likely, your class will be segregated: students labeled with physical or mental disabilities—youth who are deaf or blind, in wheelchairs, with attention deficit disorder or learning disability, kept on antidepressants, and so forth—will be absent, precluded.

To address disability in a school setting, thereby touching on any of these visible or invisible differences among students, can bring up plenty of discomfort. Shame intimately attaches to being identified as "abnormal" in emotion, body or mind. After "fag," it might be said, "stupid," "lame," "ugly," "freak" and "retard" are among the primary daily catchwords by which students are brought to tease—and police—one another.

For this reason, and because disability itself is still a relatively new civil rights category being explored, you can expect awkwardness, your own and your students, to be present in any discussion of disability. What counts as disability, who has it, and how this might separate them from others are lightning rod questions with answers that are never completely clear. These issues and others are addressed in the ableism unit. In that unit, as throughout the course, you can continually bring home to students the following points:

- People are not to be identified as or by their disabilities, but are simply people

- People with disabilities have the right to have access to everything that people living without disabilities have access to
- Question and interrupt (gently, firmly) *all* jokes/putdowns related to physical, mental/intellectual, emotional or verbal differences, sometimes labeled as disabilities. As with heterosexism (and all other isms involving namecalling) it is always appropriate to ask the speaker what he thinks may be behind his statement or joke. When you do this, everyone in the room is learning how to do this.
- Use teaching techniques that vary and involve auditory, visual and kinesthetic methods.
- Think about and prepare for mobility issues before conducting any activity.
- Where access or accommodation is a concern—how to make the classroom, the curriculum and the conversation accessible equally to everyone in the room—your most valuable teaching will be the empowering of students to make improving access their own responsibilities, whether they are disabled or not. Invariably, when everyone works to make sure everything that happens in a classroom is audible and/or seeable and/or accessible to all movement and/or physically comfortable and/or free of environmental elements (perfumes, hairspray and the like), everyone in the room benefits.

Class

Your school, like most, will be broadly homogeneous in the class standings of its students: it may be a private school with "elite" students from privileged communities or a public neighborhood-based school linked to the class patterns of its community. Within this overall conformity there will nonetheless be class differences in its student population.

Who is on the inside and who is out is a dynamic tacitly at work in any given gathering of young people. It is tacit because everyone knows about it, a room is often filled with visible cues about where everyone belongs—"fits"—, but it is most often unspoken. At least one of the primary differences associated with this separation is class. The young people who are on the inside are more likely to come from—and be headed toward—environments of economic privilege, entitlement, well-being and resources, with easier access to goods and services; or, if they are from "lower class" backgrounds, they may be admitted into the inner circle by "upper class" choice. The people on the outside may have other differences, by race, religious culture or other categories, but woven into these is likely to be "lower" class status.

Difference in resources, of course, is how other isms are played out. An obvious way is that people in the target groups of other oppressions will usually have fewer resources, and so be in the target group for class. A less obvious way is when people who are nontargets elsewhere are targeted in class. A fateful form this has taken in America is the category of white working class and poor people. Famously, white working class/poor people targeted by class (exploited for work and stereotyped and ridiculed up into present time) have been routinely directed to turn anger and resentment not against the nontarget group, wealthy people, but against people of color, over whom, at least by skin color, they have relative privilege. So white working class people receive both the stigma and labels of poverty, and the blame for being the most made-visible group of white people acting out racism. Here again the real histories of low-income white people and people of color organizing together, for example in the labor movement, are likely to be hidden.

Class is particularly hard to get at because of its tacit dimension and the intimate feelings of worthiness and unworthiness it may provoke in different young people. Moreover, part of the American story is the emphasis on being a class-free society of equal opportunity, where everyone can pull her/himself up and get ahead. This makes for the hidden-in-the-open quality of much that has to do with class differences in a school setting. A primary feeling for most students, especially students in the "middle," can be simple confusion about what class is and where they "fit," even though intuitively they may be quite aware of where they "belong." Class can be hardest to acknowledge, yet everyone is more or less conscious of its weight and presence.

These and other dynamics will be present in your classroom in various degrees. For example, if there are white working-class youth present, they are likely to be seen by youth with more resources—"middle" or "upper middle" class youth, e.g.—as outsiders; in turn, they may often be the white youth put in the position of conflict with youth of color. Pressures to have the right, highly-visible and expensive markers of status in shoes and clothes may sit heavily on students. Fights outside the classroom, particularly over money or theft of items, are one of the violent ways class may be playing out. Students will certainly resist revealing their own lower-class—or upper-class status. Trying to "tell" or guess who belongs to what class can be oppressive in itself. Finally, the tacit dimensions of class, the way it's hardly talked about, will continue to bring about confusions for some students.

The power of addressing class in this context may just be the ability to talk about it, to reveal, and to learn. The unit on class does not focus on self-identifying or revealing one's own class status, although that may occur for some students. The much more important aim is to enable students to see how all of them are affected in their interrelationships by class, and how all of them have a stake in examining how and why this is so, bringing class into the open and forging alliances. You can appeal precisely to this common stake; after all, they also have been exposed to the above-cited American ideal of a society of freedom and equality, "class-free."

F. Assessing your institution

What's going on now

As a final preparation for your course, take some time to evaluate your institution, considering the following questions:

- What is the make-up of your class demographically, by race, gender and the other markers addressed in this curriculum?
- What is the make-up of the community served by the school?
- How would you describe relationships between the school and the community? How might parents of your students describe it?
- What is the make-up of your teachers demographically? Administrators? Support staff?
- What differences might be present by race, gender, &c. between students and teachers? Among teachers, administrators, support staff, and community members?
- What differences might students be most willing to address? Least?
- As you look over the isms of the curriculum listed below, what recent events or incidents at the school regarding these are likely to stand out? What examples of mistreatment or

unequal treatment? What examples of resistance to mistreatment? What examples of alliance?

Ism	***Recent events/examples***
Race	
Gender	
Sexual orientation	
Jews and Gentiles	
Ability Disability	
Size/appearance	
Language	
Age/youth	
Age/elder	
Class	

In light of the above, go back to the isms and, as carefully as you can, establish a specific, hands-on goal for yourself for addressing each ism you undertake: What specifically do you want students to learn? What do you want them to be able to do? And finally, what if anything do you want to have happen at your institution as a result?

Ism	***goals***
Race	To learn: To do: To have happen:
Gender	To learn: To do: To have happen:
Sexual orientation	To learn: To do: To have happen:
Jews and Gentiles	To learn: To do: To have happen:
Ability Disability	To learn: To do: To have happen:

Size/appearance	To learn: To do: To have happen:
Language	To learn: To do: To have happen:
Age/youth	To learn: To do: To have happen:
Age/elder	To learn: To do: To have happen:
Class	To learn: To do: To have happen:

G. In conclusion

Institutional resistance and support

Your course will make changes in your own life and the lives of your students, and will effect the larger institution in which you work. Consider the following list of people connected to the institution. As you review the goals you have set for yourself above, where are you likely to encounter institutional limitations or restraints—resistance to your work?

Institution members	***Kinds of resistance***	***Strengths***
Teachers, co-workers, cofacilitators		
Aides and Support staff		
Administrators		
Community members		
Students		
Family, friends		

Then, consider who might be allies to you in each of these areas, and what strengths of such allies or the institutions they represent that you can call on.

Your support system

Finally, take some time to think about a network for yourself—people of like mind or potentially-like mind you can get unqualified support from. In each of the areas below, list potential support for you as you plan for, deliver and evaluate your course.

Network members	***Names***
Teachers, co-workers, cofacilitators	
Aides and Support staff	
Administrators	
Community members	
Students	
Family, friends	

Consider picking a group of from 2-4 of the above to form such a network, with a scheduled time to plan, check-in, and get support, as informally or formally as is useful to you. With this in place, you are ready to begin.

Organizing beyond the curriculum for justice
[a separate chapter]