

Where do you stand?

Examining Social Inequality

In order to address poverty, it is vital to first understand the underlying factors which create inequality in the first place. Through this interactive activity, students will build empathy and understanding by walking through daily situations in someone else's shoes. As a follow-up, participants will brainstorm ways to build solidarity with others in order to begin to address the issues participants faced.

Materials:	For every 20 students, hand out 8 red, 11 blue, and 1 green cue cards*	Set up:	Large open room, for participants to stand shoulder-to-shoulder
Age:	10-12	Time:	30min + follow-up activity



LEARN

Activities

1. Ask participants to line up, shoulder-to-shoulder across the length of the room, leaving enough space behind to take at least 10 steps back.
2. Hand out the red, blue and green cue cards, one to each participant.
3. Instruct participants to listen closely and follow the instructions specific to their colour.
4. Read the 'Situations and Events', with participants taking steps forward or backwards as instructed. Continue until all the situations have been read out.

***Note:** For visual effect, the cue cards should be handed out using the following proportions: 40% red, 55% blue, 5% green. (20 students = 8 red, 11 blue, and 1 green.) This is based on income statistics from the Government of Canada in 2013 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/lo1/cst01/famil105a-eng.htm>. Whereas 40% of Canadian make less than \$25,000, 55% make \$25,000 - \$150,000, and 5% make more than \$150,000.

***Note:** The situations presented do not necessarily reflect Canadian situations, but rather many global realities

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SHARE

Discuss

1. Once all the situations have been read, participants should look around to see where others are standing, in relation to their own position. Participants may sit in their spot.
2. Together, reflect on the following questions.
 - How did it feel to be able to step forward / How did it feel to stay where you were?
 - For those who stepped forward often, what did it feel like to see others were not moving forward as fast as you?
 - For those who didn't step forward often, how did it feel to watch everyone else get so far ahead?
 - Did anyone feel they were being denied their basic human rights?
 - Which roles were hardest hit by poverty? Which were least affected?
 - Which situations surprised you the most?
 - In which ways does this activity reflect our current society?
 - Did this activity make you think about poverty in a new way? If so, how?

Note: Some participants may express guilt when they discover their position in relation to others. It is important to remind participants that the purpose of this activity is to help us all be aware of where we stand, and what privileges our lives have afforded us. It is important to recognize the ways we experience life, and to understand that others experience life differently. We must learn this before we can work together to solve problems.

Examples of Quotes to Share:

“Guilt is a profoundly conservative emotion and as such is not particularly useful for bringing about change. From a position of insecurity and guilt, people do not change or inspire others to change” Michael Kaufman

“If we inherit injustice, we should never feel guilty. We are not responsible for that past. However, if we choose to do nothing about it going forward, then we have plenty to feel guilty about.” Jamie Utt, Changefromwithin.org

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ACT

Follow Up Activity

1. Divide participants into small groups. Provide each group with the list of situations and events.
2. Together, each group should re-read the situations and events, discussing the reasons why the 'red' character would/wouldn't advance in each case. (If time is limited, assign 3 situations to discuss)
3. After discussing the situations, groups should pick a situation from the list they feel passionate about, and develop a solidarity plan to find ways to address the situation and support this person (See example below)
4. Share your plans with others, and act!

Acting in Solidary to Address Social Inequality

Imagine the person represented by the red card is one of your classmates. Together, pick one of the situations on the list you feel strongly about. As a group, discuss 2-3 different ways that you as an individual, or within a community, could better support this person in the situation. Make a plan, sign your commitment, and take action!

Discuss and Identify

- What programs already exist in our community to address this situation?
- What other programs should exist?
- What individual actions can you take?
- In what ways can you become a better friend to this person?
- Is there an action, small or large, that you can commit to doing right away?

Make your Plan

In order to be a better friend to someone in this difficult situation, I will:

Signed:

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Situations and Events

Speaking English

- If you have a **green** card you grew up speaking English as your first language—take two steps forward.
- If you have a **blue** card you grew up speaking English as a second language, but eventually learned English well—take one step forward.
- If you have a **red** card you never really learned English until you were an adult—stay where you are.

Access to Transportation

- If you have a **green** card, your family owned two or more cars simultaneously and could go where you wanted, when you wanted —take two steps forward.
- If you have a **blue** card your family owned a car when you were growing up—take one step forward.
- If you have a **red** card your family didn't own a car and you were dependent on public transportation or rides from others—stay where you are.

Personal Safety

- If you have a **green** card you never had to worry about safety growing up—take a step forward.
- If you have a **blue** card you sometimes had to worry about your safety growing up—take one step back.
- If you have a **red** card you lived in a conflict zone—take three steps back.

Medical Care

- If you have a **green** or **blue** card you had access to a doctor or hospital, and could afford needed medication when you were growing up—take a step forward.
- If you have a **red** card you didn't have these things—take one step back.

Access to School

- If you have a **green** or **blue** card you were able to go to school every day as a child and had a decent education growing up—take a step forward.
- If you have a **red** card, you were not able to go to school on a regular basis—take one step back.

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Situations and Events

Higher Education

- If you have a **green** card you were also able to go to university—take two steps forward.
- If you have a **blue** card, you went to technical school or community college—take one step forward.
- If you have a **red** card, you did not have any further education after graduating from high school—take one step back.

Access to Technology

- If you have a **green** or **blue** card you always had access to a computer and the internet when you needed it—take one step forward.
- If you have a **red** card you didn't have this access—stay where you are.

Voting

- Every fifth person with a **red** card you or your family members have been denied the opportunity to vote despite being of voting age—take a step back.

Food Security

- If you have a **green** or **blue** card you always knew where your next meal would come from—take one step forward.
- If you have a **red** card you sometimes had to skip meals because your family didn't have enough money—take one step back.

Migration

- Every fourth person with a **red** card, your family migrated as a result of poverty or conflict—take two steps back.

Leisure Activities

- If you have a **green** or **blue** card you went on vacation growing up—meaning that you went somewhere new and enjoyed or learned about another place or culture—take one step forward.
- If you have a **red** card, your family could not afford to go on vacations. Stay where you are.

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Situations and Events

Having a Bank Account

- If you have a **green** card you had a bank account, savings account, or some other financial savings created for you as a child—take two steps forward.
- If you have a **blue** card your family saved some money for you in a college fund—take one step forward.
- If you have a **red** card your family did not have a checking account or paid cash for large and small purchases—take one step back.

Financial Security

- If you have a **green** card, your family never had to worry about money—take three steps forward
- If you have a **blue** card, your family's financial situation was stable, but you couldn't do certain activities because you could not afford them—take one step forward
- If you have a **red** card your family lived pay-cheque to pay-cheque, and were constantly worried about paying monthly bills—stay where you are.

Healthy Environment

- If you have a **green** or **blue** card, your family lived in a safe and clean neighbourhood, away from industrial pollution — take one step forward.
- If you have a **red** card, your family lived in a lower-income neighbourhood, bordering an industrial area where the pollution caused sickness in your community —take one step back.

Note: More situations can be found in this document and adapted to local context: *Take a Step Activity: Illustrating Disadvantages and Factors Leading to Poverty*, Copyright © 2011, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. <http://www.povertyusa.org/assets/education/Take-a-Step.pdf>