



Handout

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## Four Corners Activity

For High School students and older

*\*This activity should only be done in a classroom environment where a brave space has been established, and educators are prepared to make space for and respond to feelings that might come up.\**

**45-90 minutes**

**Objective:** To begin thinking about the impact of racism in the U.S. and about how racism manifests in your own thoughts and life.

**Materials:**

- Four signs hung up in four corners of the room which read “Strongly Agree” “Agree” “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree”
- Screen and internet access to show the video: “A Conversation about Growing up Black” at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/07/opinion/a-conversation-about-growing-up-black.html?module=Promotron&region=Body&action=click&pgtype=article> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSAw51caEeg> (alternate link)
- OR Screen and internet access to show the video: “Being 12” <https://www.wnyc.org/series/being-12> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6xSyRJqle8>

**Procedures:**

1. Begin this activity by asking the participants to define race and ethnicity. Answer any questions that might arise from reviewing the definitions and reinforce that race is a social construct, created to put people in boxes which is a natural human inclination.

Race Definition: A social construct devised to categorize people that connects social and political ideas to certain human features such as skin tone, hair texture, eye shape, etc.

Ethnicity Definition: A group of people sharing a common and distinctive culture including religion, language, food, art, etc.

2. Explain to the participants that there will be strong opinions and feelings throughout the activity. Participants should speak using “I” statements and have good will towards each other.
3. Explain to the participants that you will be reading statements aloud and they must decide whether they *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree* or *strongly disagree* with that statement.
4. They should answer honestly and if at any time throughout the discussions they want to move, they should.

5. Read one statement at a time. Repeat each statement at least twice.
6. Give the participants time to move to the corner that best represents their opinion.
7. After each statement is read and participants have moved to the corner that best suits their opinion, ask the participants to explain why they are standing where they are standing. Facilitate a respectful conversation. If needed, remind participants of “I” statements and good will.
8. Read the next statement and repeat procedures five and six.
9. Have participants return to their seats once you have completed all the statements you had time for.
10. Show the 5 minute video “A Conversation about Growing up Black” at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/07/opinion/a-conversation-about-growing-up-black.html?module=Promotron&region=Body&action=click&pgtype=article> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSAw51caEeg> (alternate link)  
OR show the 4 minute video: “Being 12” <https://www.wnyc.org/series/being-12> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6xSyRJqle8> (alternate link)
11. When you have completed the statements and the video debrief with the discussion questions below.

#### **Statements:**

1. Racism is systemic in our country.
2. I feel free in our society.
3. The way people perceive you is not up to you.
4. Students in your classes consider students with marginalized identities as representatives of that identity/group.
5. Educators in your school have warned students that their appearance (sweat bands, hair length, clothing, etc.) makes them appear to belong to gangs or other negatively-viewed groups.
6. Parents should wait until kids are in middle school to talk to their kids about the nature of racism in America.  
*The following questions specifically relate to the state of policing in our country. Take into consideration your time limit. Moving into this territory can be more time consuming.*
7. You have been stopped by police more than once for something you haven’t done.
8. The police protect everyone equally.
9. I have been treated differently by police due to my race, color, ancestry, or national origin

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What are some experiences we heard in the video from young people?
2. Did the video corroborate or contradict any thoughts you were having about race? Which thoughts and why?
3. Was there any statement in the video or in the four corners activity that made you think about race in a different way?
4. How might your own identity impact your opinions on the statements?
5. What is the impact on you of hearing young people talk about their perspective of race?
6. Are there students in your schools who may feel the same way as these students in the video? Who are they?
7. How did this activity make you feel?