

Introduction to Ethnic Identity Formation for Youth of Color

Video and Discussion Guide

How to Use This Workshop

This video and discussion comprise a one-hour workshop, designed for a group of Unitarian Universalist (UU) youth of color. Participants view an animated video (9:44), then unpack the concepts and explore personal connections to the information it presents. The video describes ways culture influences our ethnic identity formation. It introduces four stages of identity formation that people of color may experience as members of the dominant culture perceive them as belonging to a historically marginalized ethnic group.

This workshop can be used in any setting where youth of color have the opportunity to self-identify and gather, for example, a meeting of DRUUM (Diverse and Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries), a youth group meeting or youth conference that offers identity caucusing, or a weekend training such as the UUA's Multicultural Leadership School for youth and young adults of color.

The ideal facilitator will be an adult of color. If you are not a Person of Color, training as a White Ally can prepare you to lead this workshop. If the group is large, you will want two co-facilitators; one should be a Person of Color.

Facilitators should view the video and walk through the discussion questions themselves, before leading the workshop.

Materials

- Chalice and lighter
- Computer with Internet access and large monitor or digital projector
- Handout 1, Definitions
- Handout 2, Four Stages of Ethnic Identity Formation
- Handout 3, Identity Map and Worksheet, and writing implements
- Handout 4, Responsive Reading
- Optional: Newsprint, markers, and tape

Creating a Safe Environment

Identity work can be empowering. It can also be painful. It is recommended that your minister, a lay minister or chaplain, or another adult experienced in pastoral care be present. You may also arrange for Rev. Dr. Monica L. Cummings, UUA Program Associate for Ministry to Youth and Young Adults of Color, to participate in this workshop in person or via Skype.

If the group has already made a covenant, refer participants to it at the start of the workshop. If any participants have not worked together before, immediately after the Opening guide the group to affirm a simple covenant. Make sure these points are included:

- Confidentiality: What is said in this group stays in this group.
- Speaking from personal experience: Speak for yourself, and allow others space to speak for themselves.
- Affirming everyone's right to their experiences and opinions: When needed, respectfully agree to disagree.

Video

Gather the group where all can see and hear the video. Play the video.

Opening

Light the chalice with these words by Monica Cummings:

*Who am I?
I am the texture and color of my hair
I am the shape and color of my eyes
I am the color of coal, caramel and ivory
I am the child of the Spirit that sustains life
I am loved just as
I am.*

Discussion

Distribute **Handout 1, Definitions**. Lead the group to read and process the definitions. Continue discussion with these questions:

- What is your ethnicity?
- Is your congregation/youth group comfortable talking about members' different experiences related to ethnicity?
- Name some socially constructed categories that have been created to divide groups of people.
- What is the culture of your congregation/youth group?
 - How does the culture of your congregation/youth group empower you and your ethnic identity formation?
 - How does the culture of your congregation/youth group disempower you and your ethnic identity formation?
 - What assumptions do you live with concerning your culture?
 - What assumptions do you live with concerning other cultures?

Distribute **Handout 2, Four Stages of Ethnic Identity Formation**. Lead the group to read the stages, then process with these questions:

- What connections do you see between your life and the Four Stages?
- Give examples of experiences you have had that relate to the Four Stages.

- What assumptions have people made about you based on your appearance—for example, your skin color or hair texture?
- Have you had to choose one ethnic identity over another? How did that feel?
- Have you changed your physical appearance to fit in with your environment (school, faith community, neighborhood, social group)? What was that like?
- Have you changed your appearance to highlight physical differences? What was that like?

Distribute **Handout 3, Identity Map and Worksheet**, and writing implements. Give participants about 10 minutes to complete their Identity Map worksheet.

Then, have participants rank the identity categories on their worksheet in order of each category's importance in their life, with 1 being most important and 9 being least important. Refer them to the Cummings Identity Map Example.

Use whatever method that works for you to organize participants in small groups to share their rankings. Encourage them to share with one another why they ranked the categories as they did.

Bring the large group back together. Ask participants to share highlights of small group discussions. Invite volunteers to share how they experienced the exercise.

Check-out and Closing

Have participants say in one or two sentences how they are feeling. Chaplains/minister need to pay close attention to what participants share, and be ready to follow up, as needed.

Distribute **Handout 4, Responsive Reading**. Re-light the chalice, if needed. Lead the reading. Extinguish the chalice.