FOUR ROLES OF SOCIAL CHANGE: IDENTIFYING YOUR ROLE AS A CHANGE AGENT

purpose

Participants will reflect on their identity as social change agents and discuss ways that students involved in community service, activism, organizing, and advocacy can enhance one another's work.

outcomes

1. **SELF-AWARENESS**
    a. **Identify and reflect on** their social position, motivations, and values and those of the communities to which they are connected.
    b. **Identify** and **reflect on** how their social position within dimensions such as education level, race, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status influences how they are perceived.
    c. **Identify, reflect on, and articulate** the intersectionality of their identities and the dimensions of privilege and oppression that come with them.
    d. **Communicate** their self-identity in support of building authentic relationships with others.
    e. **Align** actions with values and **implement** strategies for ongoing self-reflection.
2. **INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY**
    a. **Analyze** a situation through their own perspective and that of others
    b. Promptly and appropriately **address conflicts** and misunderstandings and frame these moments as opportunities for growth

additional possible outcomes

UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL ISSUES IN CONTEXT
a. **Identify** how social issues are manifested on an individual level, organizational/community level, and institutional level;
b. **Identify and articulate** varying perspectives on the causes of social issues

materials

Newsprint, markers, tape, signs, social change quotes, pens, evaluations

agenda

1. **Introduction**
2. **Icebreaker**
3. **Strong Circle: Context Setting & Norms**
4. **Defining Social Change**
5. **Descriptions and Examples of Roles**
6. **Participants Identify with Role Groups**
7. **Benefits & Challenges of Your Role Small Group**
8. **Group Reports to the Large Group**
9. **Working Together Small Group**
10. **Working Together Large Group Reporting**
11. **Large Group Process**
12. **Strong Circle: Closing & Reflection**

Strong Circle: Context Setting & Norms (5 min)

Participants will be gathered in a tight circle in the center of the room.

Facilitators will introduce the session highlighting the following goals of the session:

- To introduce participants to the concept of social change
- To help participants understand that there are multiple ways to work toward social change
- To encourage participants to reflect on their own authentic role as well as the strengths and limitations of that role
- To help participants understand the need for all roles to exist to bring about social change
- To have participants explore how these roles play out in their own experiences in community organizations

Facilitators will ask students to brainstorm "norms" that will serve as guides for their discussions, making sure students touch on the following:

- Safe space
- Step up, step back (no one speaks twice until everyone speaks once)
- Active listening
- Open-mindedness
- Challenge ideas, not people

Defining Social Change (10 min)

Facilitators will have students brainstorm thoughts, ideas, images of social change. Then provide students with quotes regarding social change and open up discussion around the following questions:

- Which quotation stands out to you the most & why?
- What is your personal definition of social change?

Transition statement: "How one defines social change and views their own strengths/skills determines the avenues they take to bring about social change. We're going to take some time now to look at four roles of social change agents that have been identified through research. These are by no means mutually exclusive, but they provide a framework from which to explore how social change plays out on a day-to-day basis."

Descriptions and Examples of Roles (5 min)

Facilitators explain the four roles that tend to appear in community and social justice work, asking students to provide historical examples of people who have taken on these roles. They may also provide examples from local community members, if they know any.

- ***Helper*** is a person that is inclined to work directly with people and often provides some sort of support services or programming.
    - o Example: Mother Teresa, direct service social workers, health workers
- ***Organizer*** is a person who tends to mobilize people to push for change. An organizer often works behind the scenes to support mobilization efforts.
    - o Example: Barack Obama pre-presidency, MLK
- ***Advocate*** is a person who represents people who have a need. The advocate tends to use his or her voice to represent those who may have a need or face injustices.
    - o Example: Bill Clinton post-presidency, Angelina Jolie, Bono, MLK
- ***Rebel*** is a person that mobilizes to take direct action and say no to injustices. Rebels put pressure on decision makers to create change.
    - o Example: MLK, Malcolm X, "Peace Mom" Cindy Sheehan

Participants Identify with Role Groups (5 min)

Ask participants to reflect on which one of the four roles they authentically identify with the most. Your authentic role is not necessarily the one that you typically end up assuming or the one that you would prefer to be, but the role that you assume naturally.

Ask them to go to a corner of the room and caucus with others in that role, discussing how individuals in the group fit in to that role. If participants discover they do not belong in this particular role, have them switch groups after they have finished sharing stories.

Benefits & challenges of your role small group (10 min)
-   Give each group newsprint and a marker.
-   In their identity group, have participants discuss benefits (strengths) and challenges (weaknesses) of your role.
-   Groups will be reporting back to the large group, so have them identify a recorder and reporter.

Group reports to the large group (10 min)
Does anyone have an example/experience of how these benefits or challenges play out in the work that you do or in the community in general? How might these challenges present obstacles to social change?

Transition statement: "We're going to think about ways to address some of these challenges/obstacles by thinking about how these groups can work together."

Working Together Small Group (10 min)
Each group comes up with an example on how they can work with other roles (i.e. As a helper, we can work with organizers by…). Then have them identify an issue area or an example of how these roles have worked together toward change in history, in the community, or in their personal experience.

> **Example**: Educational Equality
> > *Rebels*: Picketers
> > *Advocates*: PCCY, Phila Ed Fund – raise awareness
> > *Helpers*: Teachers, tutors, etc.
> > *Organizer*: Parent in PTA

Working Together Large Group Reporting (10 min)
Each group will report back on what they've come up with together.

Large Group Process (10 min)
If not touched on in previous activities:
-   What role are you fulfilling in your community work?
-   How do you see the other roles playing out in your organization?
-   How do these roles play into the service you are doing now?

How can you use the information we talked about today in your community work and/or to bring about social change?

Having done this exercise, have your thoughts about social change from the beginning of this workshop changed at all?

Strong Circle: Closing & Reflection (15 min)

Closing

- There are many different ways to work for a better society and improve the world.
- Think about your role when selecting community or social justice work
- Working outside of your role can lead to burn out
- No role is without its strengths or limitations, but all roles are necessary to bring about major social change.
- No one policy, act of service, or protest will change society. Those of us concerned about building a better society need to work together and build coalitions.

- In one word, describe how you're feeling after today's workshop.
- Can some of you explain why you chose the word you did?

This workshop is a modified version of a training created by George Lakey and Bill Moyer, and later adapted by Training for Change. We encourage you to visit Training for Change's website for additional resources: *https://www.trainingforchange.org/.*