Introduction:

I start by telling participants that the goal of this activity is to:

- think critically about the ways systemic power operates and positions us in relation to others
- make visible how differently we experience life than other people in the class, much less the world
- highlight what we don’t see because of our social location and relative privilege/oppression
- shake up our assumptions about who is different and what is difference

I learn a lot each time I run this – as I’m sure you will – and constantly adapt/change the statements as well as the discussion questions.

Set-up:

You will need enough space to create an invisible line/continuum with one side representing ‘YES’ to any given statement below and the other side representing ‘NO’. Tell participants that they can position themselves anywhere between ‘YES’ and ‘NO’ or locate themselves at either extreme. I find that students take some time after each statement is read to think about where to position themselves. Give them the time to do this. Some may also decide to change their position as the discussion of each point develops.

During the activity:

Begin by making one of the statements below. Ask participants to find a place on the line of privilege that represents their response to the statement. Once participants find a place on the line, ask if anyone wants to share their thoughts in response to the statement. I find that there are always lots of volunteers and lots of important insights and points of discussion. Also, ask the group: What power dynamics are operating here?

1. I can go into a university and find professors of my race and gender teaching many of the courses.
2. I can criticize different levels of government and talk about how much I disagree with government policies without being told to go back where I came from if I don’t like it here.
3. I can bring my significant other to family gatherings without receiving judgment about their identity.
4. People in positions of power often look like me.
5. I can turn on the television or open the paper and see people of my religion widely and fairly represented.
6. I feel mobile and safe getting from place to place after dark.
7. When I am taught Canadian history, I am told that my people made Canada what it is.
8. When I tell people I am Canadian, they believe me, no further questions.
9. I can bring my significant other to family gatherings without receiving judgment about their identity.
10. I am not judged mainly on my physical appearance.
11. I have never been unfairly judged because of the place or neighbourhood in which I live.
12. I can go shopping and be pretty sure that I will not be followed or harassed because of the colour of my skin.
13. The police are here to serve and protect me.
14. I am from a patriarchal family.
15. I am free to express my sexuality.
16. I live and study on native land.

**Small group discussion:**

- What actions can people with privilege take to challenge their privilege and systemic power relations?
- What other ways does privilege operate in our lives?
- Are our differences the problem? What is?
- What do we share in common?
- How can we build solidarity across differences?
- How can education contribute to reinforcing and/or challenging privilege/difference?

**Suggestions for further reading:**


**Also check out: Privilege Diary Activity/Assignment**