

Privilege Walk Activity

Participants stand in a straight line in the middle of an empty room. Tell participants that some statements might be of a sensitive nature for some individuals, and that they do not have to respond to any statement that is uncomfortable. Read the statements below.

If your ancestors came to the United States by force, take one step back.

If there were more than 50 books in your house growing up, take one step forward.

If you ever felt unsafe because of your sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you believe that you were *denied employment* because of your race, gender, or ethnicity, take 1 step back.

If you believe that you were *paid less* because of your race, gender, or ethnicity, take one step back.

If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, take one step back.

If you have ever felt uncomfortable about a joke directed at your gender, take one step back.

If you can show affection for your romantic partner in public without fear of ridicule or violence, please take one step forward.

If you were embarrassed about your clothes or house while growing up, take one step back.

If your parents or guardians attended college, take one step forward.

If you were raised in an area with crime and drug activity, take one step back.

If you have tried to change your speech or mannerisms to gain credibility, take one step back.

If you are able to move through the world without fear of sexual assault, take one step forward.

If you can legally marry the person you love, take one step forward.

If you were sexually active with several people and it would improve your social reputation in other people's eyes, take 1 step forward.

If you are reasonably sure that you will not be denied access to jobs or political resources because of your gender, take one step forward.

If you are able to be drive carelessly without someone attributing it to your gender, take one step forward.

If you are relatively sure you can enter a store without being followed, take one step forward.

If you are reasonably sure you would be hired based on *your ability and qualifications*, take one step forward.

If your family automatically expected you to attend college, take one step forward.

If you have ever traveled outside the United States, take one step forward.

If your parents worked nights and weekends to support your family, take one step backward.

If you can buy new clothes or go out to dinner when you want to, take one step forward.

If you get time off for your religious holidays, take one step forward.

If you have a foreign accent, take one step backward.

If you can walk alone at any time of day or night in Saratoga without thinking about safety, take one step forward.

If you went to galleries, museums, and plays with your family, take one step forward.

If you attended private school or summer camp, take one step forward.

If you were raised in a single-parent household, take one step backward.

If you studied the culture of your ancestors in elementary school, take one step forward.

If members of your gender are portrayed on TV in degrading roles, take one step backward.

If you have been a victim of sexual harassment, take one step backward.

If you have been a victim of violence because of your race, gender, class, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you ever went on a family vacation, take one step forward.

If you have ever had a maid, gardener, or cleaning service, take one step forward.

If you can walk past a construction site without being looked up and down or catcalled at, take one step forward.

This exercise is about privilege. Every statement addresses some small privilege that is based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation. The small statements in this exercise have added up to divide people into different locations in this room. Similarly, small privileges in society place individuals in different places in society.

Interestingly, privilege tends to be invisible to those who are privileged. That is, when we receive privilege based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or any other factor, we tend to not recognize the boosts in position that accumulate over time from those privileges.

The point of this exercise is not to make any of us embarrassed about the privileges we have received, but to make all of us aware of how privilege based on gender, race, etc function. Whether we are highly privileged, moderately privileged or lack privilege, it is possible to behave in ways that level the playing field for everyone.