

# PRIVILEGE WALK ACTIVITY

## BACKGROUND ON THE DIVERSITY EDUCATION TASK FORCE:

This activity was adapted for Lake Land College by the Diversity Education Task Force. The purpose of Diversity Education Task Force (DETF) is to educate, advocate, and celebrate diversity including making recommendations to the college administration to create a more inclusive campus environment. The DETF works to fulfill this purpose in many ways; such as, offering period staff training on diversity-related issues; offering diversity-focused student events, including the nationally-recognized celebration months; and implementing new campus diversity initiatives, such as the Safe Zone training for faculty and staff who wish to be identified as an ally to the LGBT community.

## PURPOSE OF THE ACTIVITY:

This workshop has been designed to provide college students with an opportunity to understand the intricacies of privilege and to explore the ways that we enjoy privileges based on being members of social identity groups in the United States. Please note that this exercise is not meant to make anyone feel guilty or ashamed of her or his privilege or lack of privilege related to any social identity categories. Rather, the exercise seeks to highlight the fact that everyone has SOME privilege, even as some people have more privilege than others. By illuminating our various privileges as individuals, we can recognize ways that we can use our privileges individually and collectively to work for social justice. The purpose is not to blame anyone for having more power or privilege or for receiving more help in achieving goals, but to have an opportunity to identify both obstacles and benefits experienced in our life.

***\*NOTE: This is a very “high risk” activity that requires trust building and safety for participants; introducing this activity too early in the training or before building trust risks creating resentment and hurt that can inhibit further sharing and openness.***

## SUPPLIES AND SPACE NEEDED:

- List of statements related to privilege or obstacles
- Slide with instructions for the privilege walk
- Space large enough for participants to form a straight line with an arm’s length between them and the person on their left; there should be space in front of the line to move forward 10 steps or behind to be able to move back 10 steps.

## DIRECTIONS FOR THE ACTIVITY:

**1) Have participants form a straight line across the room about an arm’s length apart, leaving space in front and behind.**

**2) Read the Purpose from above, to help provide context for the exercise.**

**3) State the following:** Listen to the following statements, and follow the instructions given. For example, when I read “If you have blue eyes, take one step forward,” only people with blue eyes will move and everyone else will stand still. Each step should be an average length step. This activity should be done in silence and if anyone feels uncomfortable stepping forward and backward on any statement I read, then please stay where you are, but remember the statement read. This is an introspective exercise and it’s important for you to understand how privilege affects your life, but it is not designed to make you share things which you don’t wish to share.

**4) Read the statements one at a time allowing time for participants to take a step.**

**4) When all the statements have been read process the activity using the following questions:**

- a. Start the question, answer session by going around the room, and have each student share one word that capture how they are feeling right now. If they do not want to share, have them say, “pass”.
- b. Would anyone like to share more about their feelings?
- c. How did it feel to be one of the students on the “back” side of the line?
- d. How did it feel to be one of the students on the “front” side of the line?
- e. Did anyone think they had experienced an average amount of privilege, but it turned out to be more or less than they thought?
- f. If anyone was alone on one side, how did that feel?
- g. Was anyone always on one side of the line? If yes, how did that feel?
- h. Were there certain sentences that were more impactful than others?

## PRIVILEGE WALK STATEMENTS

- If English is your first language take one step forward.
- If either of your parents graduated from college take one step forward.
- If you have been divorced or impacted by divorce take one step backward.
- If there have been times in your life when you skipped a meal because there was no food in the house take one step backward.
- If you have visible or invisible disabilities take one step backward.
- If you were encouraged to attend college by your parents and family members take one step forward.
- If you grew up in an urban setting take one step backward.
- If your family had health insurance take one step forward.
- If your work and school holidays coincide with religious holidays that you celebrate take one step forward.
- If you studied the culture or the history of your ancestors in elementary school take one step forward.
- If you have been bullied or made fun of based on something you cannot change (ie. your gender, ethnicity, age or sexual orientation) take one step backward.
- If you have ever felt passed over for an employment position based on your gender, ethnicity, age or sexual orientation take one step backward.
- If you were ever offered a job because of your association with a friend of family member take one step forward.
- If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because they felt you were suspicious, take one step backward.
- If you or your family ever inherited money or property take one step forward.
- If you came from a supportive family environment take one step forward.
- If one of your parents was ever laid off or unemployed not by choice take one step backward.
- If you are a citizen of the United States take one step forward.

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- If you were ever uncomfortable about a joke or statement you overheard related to your race, ethnicity, gender, appearance, or sexual orientation but felt unsafe to confront the situation take one step backward.
- If your ancestors were forced to come to the United States not by choice take one step backward.
- If you took out loans for your education take one step backward.
- If there were more than 50 books in your house growing up take one step forward.
- If you have ever felt unsafe walking alone at night take one step backward.
- If you are a white male take one step forward.

## Evaluation

**Students:** Please rate the following questions

1. I learned more about myself in relation to the issue of privilege and race.

|                |       |            |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | No Opinion | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 5              | 4     | 3          | 2        | 1                 |

2. The Privilege Walk Workshop challenged me.

|                |       |            |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | No Opinion | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 5              | 4     | 3          | 2        | 1                 |

3. The Privilege Walk Workshop provided me with some insight about the different privileges people had growing up.

|                |       |            |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | No Opinion | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 5              | 4     | 3          | 2        | 1                 |

4. I was comfortable sharing my opinion and experiences about privilege.

|                |       |            |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | No Opinion | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 5              | 4     | 3          | 2        | 1                 |

5. The Privilege Walk Workshop helped me to realize the effects of privilege.

|                |       |            |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | No Opinion | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 5              | 4     | 3          | 2        | 1                 |

6. I am not ashamed about the privileges I had or did not have growing up.

|                |       |            |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | No Opinion | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 5              | 4     | 3          | 2        | 1                 |

7. I am more likely to appreciate the different types of privileges granted to me because of my experience in this exercise.

|                |       |            |          |                   |
|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | No Opinion | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| 5              | 4     | 3          | 2        | 1                 |

8. Any Additional Comments:

Sources:

N.A. Module 5: Privilege Walk Activity.

[http://www.albany.edu/ssw/efc/pdf/Module%205\\_1\\_Privilege%20Walk%20Activity.pdf](http://www.albany.edu/ssw/efc/pdf/Module%205_1_Privilege%20Walk%20Activity.pdf)

Young, Tira J. *The Privilege Walk Workshop: Learning More about Privilege in Today's Society.*

[www.collegesuccess1.com](http://www.collegesuccess1.com)