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**Opening Practices for Building Community**

What’s In a Name

I’m gonna tell a real story. I’m gonna start with my name.

Kendrick Lamar

Frame

This simple practice is a good way for a group to introduce themselves to each other. Imagine folks gathering for the first time, or even a community with a longer history stepping away from the usual pleasantries to reflect out loud about the story their name has to tell.

Instructions

* Gather the community in a circle. Make sure everyone is included. No one should be positioned outside of the circle. No second rows; no backs turned away each other.
* Once everyone is seated begin with a moment of silence (20 seconds)
* Introduce the exercise with your own variation on the following

*We’re going to begin by sharing our name/how we would like to be identifies and something about it. Why was your name given to you, or why you chose it; for yourself? What does it mean to you personally or within your family history. You can answer these exact questions or something else you’d like to know about your name.  We’ll  begin with \_\_\_\_\_\_ and go in a circle to the left.*

* When the person has finished speaking allow 10-15 seconds to pass before the next person is invited to share the story of their name. Continue until all have shared. Close the activity with appreciation.

**Sharing Community Artifacts**

Framing

Each of us comes from a community or communities that formed us and that we form, that we are accountable to and that we help shape—where our roots are planted. Objects and artifacts – stones, photographs, jewelry, books etc. This practice facilitates our capacity -- say something about you and your community, where your roots are planted. As we bring them to the center one by one, sharing our story of the community they represent, we will continue to collectively build out community as a cohort.

Instructions

* Gather folks in a circle around a low table simply decorated with a cloth and perhaps a plant or flowers.
* We will take up to **three minutes** per person to share about our item, to tell the story of the community it represents, and then allow **30 seconds of appreciative silence** and reflection before the next person has their turn.
* Set a timer on your phone for the three-minute intervals for sharing and the 30 seconds for silence, so Lisa can focus on facilitation.
* Each person shares an item they brought that says something about their community.
* When they are done sharing, invite them to place the object on the center table.
* When all have shared, thank the group for the sharing, for the community-building in this place.
* Depending on the flow of the gathering you can either leave the community artifact table in the center of the space for the duration of the session, or to some special place in another location, but where the community can continue to appreciate the items and the stories they hold. Give folks the option of removing their objects from the table immediately following the exercise if they choose.

*Preparation:* ask cohort members in advance to bring an item.

*Materials/supplies:* low table in center to hold items, tablecloths to cover.

**Individual Memoir to Community Poem**

Frame

This practice is based on the famous Six-word memoir project, which was originally conceived as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Instruction

Six-Word Memoir:

* Each person is invited to write a six-word memoir. Distribute paper, pens.
* Provide 5 minutes to reflect and write.
* Share around the circle what was written with brief (one-minute) explication.
* From individual memoir to community poem:
* Individuals tear their memoirs so one word per piece.
* Collectively compose a community poem using the pieces.
* Name the poem which becomes the name for our community
* (Photograph the completed poem and text/email to cohort so they can see it for remainder of the week)

* *Preparation*
* *Materials: Paper, markers, glue stick*

<https://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/about/#story-of-six-words>

For additional resources on the first steps toward building spaces of vulnerability and sharing together see [The Circle Way](https://www.thecircleway.net/)

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