

PROGRAM ON A PAGE (or two)

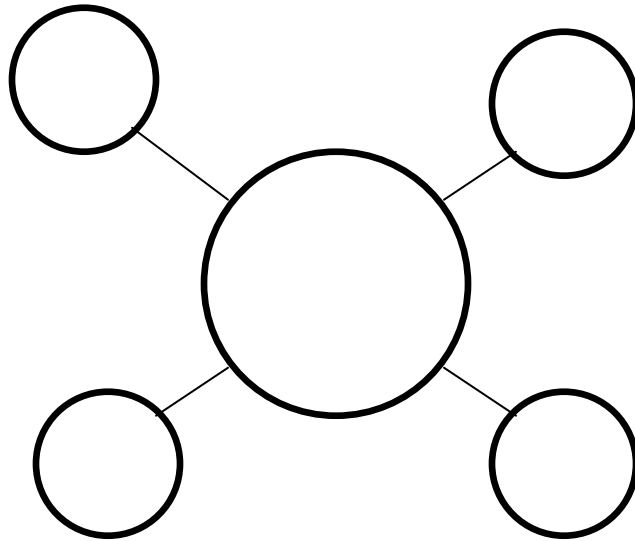
DIVERSITY

Rationale: Most AAUW members would not identify themselves as being prejudiced about minority populations. We pride ourselves in being open and equitable to those who are different from us. Thus, in order to confront prejudices and bigotry, we need to know ourselves. This program activity will get your branch started in the right direction.

Circles of My Multicultural Self

Purpose: The Circles activity engages participants in a process of identifying what they consider to be the most important dimensions of their own identity. Stereotypes are examined as participants share stories about when they were proud to be part of a particular group and when it was especially hurtful to be associated with a particular group.

Preparation: Distribute copies of the Circles handout.



The activity highlights the multiple dimensions of our identities. It addresses the importance of individuals self-defining their identities and challenging stereotypes.

Place your name in the center circle of the above structure. Write an important aspect of your identity in each of the satellite circles – an identifier or descriptor that you feel is important in defining you. This can include anything: Asian American, female, mother, athlete, educator, Taoist, scientist, or any descriptor with which you identify.

Ask participants to pair up with somebody they do not know very well. Follow these steps:

1. Share two stories with each other. One should be about when they felt especially proud to be associated with one of the identifiers they selected.

2. Next share a story about a time it was particularly painful to be associated with one of the identity dimensions they chose.
3. Third, participants will share a stereotype they have heard about one dimension of their identity that fails to describe them accurately. The following sentence will help participants to do this part of the activity. “I am/an _____but I am NOT a/an _____. For example, I am a Christian, but I am NOT a radical right wing Republican.” Allow 8 to 10 minutes for the participants to complete all three steps above.
4. Probe the group for reactions to each other’s stories. Ask whether anyone heard a story she or he would like to share with the group. Make sure the person who originally told the story has granted permission to share it with the group.
5. The last step will involve individuals standing up and reading their stereotype statement. This part of the activity can be anxiety producing for the participants. Allow for silent moments. If you are willing to share your own experiences, participants are more likely to feel open to share their own. This part of the activity can be extremely powerful if you introduce it energetically. It may take a few moments to start the flow of sharing.
6. Several questions can be used to process this activity.
 - How do the dimensions of your identity that you chose as important differ from the dimensions other people use to make judgments about you?
 - Did anybody hear somebody challenge a stereotype that you once bought into? If so, what?
 - How did it feel to be able to stand up and challenge your stereotype?
 - (There is usually some laughter when somebody shares common stereotypes such as “I may be Arab, but I am not a terrorist or “I may be a teacher, but I do have a social life.”) I heard several moments of laughter. What was that all about?
 - Where do stereotypes come from?
 - How can we eliminate them?

Facilitator Notes: The key to this activity is the process of examining one’s own identity and the stereotypes associated with that identity, then having one’s own stereotypes challenged through others’ stories and stereotype challenges. Encourage participants to think about the stereotypes they apply to people and to make a conscious effort to think more deeply about them, eventually eliminating them.

‘I note the obvious differences between each and every type, but we are more alike my friends, than we are unlike.’ **Maya Angelou**