

PEER PANEL ON CLASSISM

PREPARATION AND PROCEDURE FOR THE PANEL

This powerful activity requires advance preparation, either with members of the class who identify with a range of class statuses and are willing to discuss their experiences openly with their peers, or with other peers whom the facilitator can invite to join the class as panelists to talk about their different class statuses and experiences.

If it is possible to have a full range of social class statuses from among the group participants, their willingness to serve as peer panelists provides a valuable learning activity. If the group is homogeneous, then peer panelists are invited from outside. It is important not only to have diversity and representation of the range of class identities, but as much as possible to mix those with diversity and representation of racial, ethnic, national, migrant, first language, gender, sexuality, religion, ability/disability backgrounds. The purpose of this mixture is to interrupt any stereotypes or assumptions that link class with race, ethnicity, or migrant status, for example.

The facilitator should meet with the panelists and review the desired questions in advance. Questions to the panelists may include the following:

- How would you describe your class background, as you experienced it growing up?
- When did you first become aware of class? What made you aware of class?
- What were you especially aware of in your class background, as a child? As an adolescent? As a young adult?
- How did your racial, ethnic, national, language, gender, sexual (whatever identities are relevant) identity affect your sense of your class identity?
- What were the advantages and strengths you gained from your class background?
- What were the disadvantages and challenges you experienced in your class background?
- Describe some of the critical incidents that shaped your awareness of your class background?
- What stereotypes have you heard about your class? What do you want other people to understand about your class?

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK WORKSHEET FOR CLASSISM PANEL

Your name: _____

Your instructor's name: _____

Welcome to the class and classism panel. This panel consists of..... We trust that you will be engaged and respectful as the panelists share information and experiences about themselves, their families, and their class backgrounds and multiple identities. We hope you enjoy it! There will be an opportunity to ask the panelists questions at the end of the presentation, so please be thinking of questions you want to ask.

Please read this sheet of questions before the panel begins and give it back to your instructor as you leave the room after class.

Use the following five questions to take notes during the panel.

(1) What themes do you notice as the various panelists share their experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives? Are there any themes (i.e., topics) that surface from more than one of the panelists? If so, what are they?

(2) Are there any things shared by the panelists today that are particularly surprising, illuminating, helpful, confusing, intriguing, uncomfortable, etc. for you? If so, what are they?

(3) What aspects or theme(s) shared and discussed today do you want to learn more about? Specifically, what is something you want your instructors to address or focus on during the panel debrief in class tomorrow? (Please note: as instructors, we cannot necessarily incorporate all the points you bring up here, yet it is very helpful information for us as we plan for the next class.)

(4) What do you notice about multiple social identities and how they may intersect/connect with socioeconomic class? What is an example of multiple social identities connecting with class addressed in the panel?

(5) What is the one thing you are “taking away with you” from the panel today? In other words, what is something you learned, or that has you thinking and reflecting?