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# INTRODUCTION

## Acknowledgments

This guide is the result of the work and inspiration of many people. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Natela Jordan, Education Coordinator at the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center, who has been the driving force behind this curriculum. Throughout its development, she recognized the value of each story and gave each a considerable amount of thought and care. Without her tireless efforts, dedication, and coordination, this guide would not be possible. We are also very thankful to Kristi Rudelius-Palmer, Co-Director of the Human Rights Center, for her inspiration, support, and guidance throughout the process.

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## About the Partners

### The Itasca Project

The Itasca Project is a group of community leaders including forty-plus CEOs, the Governor, the Mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and the President of the University who have come together to *provide leadership* for long-term regional development and competitiveness of the metropolitan area; *accelerate* efforts that are underway to address critical issues from a regional perspective; and *encourage* organizations to work together and better leverage their resources.

Over the last 3 years Itasca Project participants have made significant strides in understanding the nature, magnitude and long term economic implications of the socio-economic disparities of the metro Twin Cities community. Using the compelling data compiled by the Brookings Institution and the power of committed and united business, community and civic leadership, project participants have started a meaningful community dialogue around *Mind the Gap* and have begun to spark community action. Resolving the issues of the *Mind the Gap* findings also requires broad public awareness. *Close the Gap*, a new documentary series from Twin Cities Public Television's (tpt) Minnesota Channel, in partnership with The Itasca Project, will visit those Minnesotans living the widening gaps and facing the daunting struggles because of the color of their skin, their income, and where they live. This chronic crisis is often invisible in our increasingly stratified society. But from future workforce to sustain-

able core cities, the fate of our region is linked to those who live in the shadows of our comfort and prosperity.

### **Twin Cities Public Television (*tpt*)**

The mission of Twin Cities Public Television is to harness the power of television and other media for the public good. *tpt* uses television to inform, engage, enlighten, and delight our viewers, to the benefit of all.

*Internal Values* are:

- Be an irrefragable steward of the public trust
- Seek diversity and excellence in people, ideas, and services
- Build and nourish relationships in the community
- Drive results
- Think creatively
- Help each other succeed as colleagues

These values speak to the need for integrity in all *tpt* does, for embracing diversity internally and externally, for their emphasis on relationships in the community to make it a more valuable and more visible community asset, and for a dedication to efficiency and measurable outcomes that is tempered by the commitment to helping each other succeed in advancing *tpt*'s mission on a daily basis.

### **University of Minnesota Human Rights Center**

The mission of the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center is to work locally, nationally, and internationally to provide training, educational materials, and assistance to professionals, students, and volunteers working to promote and protect human rights. The Center was founded in December 1988 on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our principal focus is to maximize the effectiveness of human rights advocates and educators by providing them with the tools they need to be successful in their civic engagement work.

The main programs carried out by the Center include the Human Rights Library [www.humanrightslibrary.org](http://www.humanrightslibrary.org), *This is My Home: A Minnesota Human Rights Education Experience* [www.thisismyhome.org](http://www.thisismyhome.org), the Upper Midwest Human Rights Fellowship Program [www.humanrights-fellowship.org](http://www.humanrights-fellowship.org), and the Human Rights Resource Center [www.hrusa.org](http://www.hrusa.org). The Human Rights Center also carries out a variety of events and special research and educational projects. Through these endeavors, the Center has forged strong partnerships with a variety of other entities in the Upper Midwest human rights community, including other University of Minnesota Departments and Centers, prominent non-governmental and community-based organizations, governmental agencies, Human Rights Commissioners, educators, and schools. The Center collaborates with community partners to coordinate conferences, training sessions, lectures, presentations, panel discussions, film screenings, and performances to promote civic engagement on human rights issues.

### **Wilder Research and Twin Cities Compass**

Twin Cities Compass is a new, non-partisan initiative developed to measure the 7-county Twin Cities region's well-being and inspire people from all sectors - government, business,

nonprofit and concerned individuals - to get involved in coordinated efforts to address needs. Led by Wilder Research, in partnership with Itasca Project, and supported by a consortium of foundations, Twin Cities Compass tracks topics that impact our quality of life, including civic engagement, early childhood, economy and workforce, education, health, housing, public safety and transportation. Believing that the strength of the region is dependent on all who live here, Twin Cities Compass also highlights disparities across all topics and includes trend data by race, place, age, gender and income whenever possible. In addition, it includes information on how individuals and organizations can help end disparities. Learn more at <http://www.tccompass.org>.

Wilder Research (<http://www.wilderresearch.org>) is one of the nation's largest nonprofit research and evaluation groups dedicated to practical research to improve the community's understanding of major social issues. It is part of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation in Saint Paul.

## **What is the Educator Guide on Race, Class, and Place Disparities in the Twin Cities?**

The Teacher Guide on Race, Class, and Place Disparities in the Twin Cities is manual designed for 8-12 teachers and community organizers working with youth. It is an accompaniment to the 5 documentary series created by the Twin Cities Public television, based on the *Mind the Gap* research findings on race, class, and place disparities. The research was commissioned by the Itasca project, a group of CEO-led business leaders from the Twin Cities region.

The first documentary, *Making the Case*, highlights the Itasca efforts in the region and introduces the findings of the Mind the Gap research.

The other 3 documentaries, *Race*, *Class*, and *Place* focus on the three disparities in the Twin Cities by telling the stories of Minnesotans on the negative end of these disparities. The series concludes with *Making the Change*, an inspiring collection of successful practices developed by individuals, local businesses, government services, and faith-based organizations.

## **How to Use This Guide**

The purpose of this guide is to be the conduit for the documentary series into Minnesota classrooms, community gatherings, and youth events. We hope that this guide will encourage educators and students to learn about race, class, and place disparities and take action to bridge the gap.

This guide provides interactive exercises that help to better understand these disparities and their causes, and work to overcome them in our classrooms and communities. It can be used by teachers in the classroom, as well as activists and educators in informal settings.

The guide follows the structure of the series and provides 1) Discussion Questions, 2) Classroom Activities, 3) Tips for Facilitators, and 4) Ideas for Action.

Part I, *Making the Case*, provides background information about the Itasca project and the

Brookings Institution's research. It engages students in learning about race, class and place disparities by discussing and comparing these disparities.

Parts II, III, and IV – *Race, Class, and Place* Disparities comprise a collection of interactive student-centered classroom activities based on the idea that students learn best when they are actively engaged in the process, and can relate to what they are learning by making connections to their classrooms and communities. Each activity in Parts II, III, and VI includes the following headings to help plan a meaningful lesson:

- **Overview** of the Part (Race, Class, and Place) summarizes major points about this section, and provides a brief overview of stories covered in this part.
- **Story** describes an episode in the documentary to help the educator decide which story to choose.
- **Key Terms** define vocabulary that students should learn to better understand the lesson. What students already know will vary from classroom to classroom, and among individual students. It is important to define and discuss these terms prior to watching the documentaries, so that all students can contribute to and benefit from the discussion. Do not limit key terms to provided definitions. Add others based on your students' needs. You may refer to the Annex 3- Glossary provided with this guide, or use additional sources.
- **True or False & Agree or Disagree** surveys are both designed as attention getters. They will allow the teacher to assess students' knowledge and perceptions about a particular issue to identify the direction of discussion after viewing. It is important for students to know that they are not expected to know the answers. This is not a test, and students can do these surveys anonymously.

The **True and False** surveys provide 5-10 questions related to data regarding disparities in the Twin Cities. It is designed to point out what the students already know or what their perceptions are about disparities. The questions are often based on the Brookings' Institution *Mind the Gap* research released in 2005. It is important for the teacher to explain how statistics work and ways in which they translate into in real life applications. Statistics and data change frequently, thus it is also important to engage students in looking for the most up-to-date information.

The **Agree or Disagree** surveys are designed to gain insight into students' perceptions and experiences. Unlike, the **True or False** surveys, these surveys do not have right or wrong answers. They are a barometer of the classroom's attitudes and feelings about important societal issues.

- The **Before Viewing** section contains questions for discussion prior to seeing the documentaries. This section, along with the **Key Terms**, are designed to prepare the students for viewing, as well as assist the teacher in establishing what the students already know, and to help the educator plan the post-viewing activities.
- The **After Viewing** section contains questions for discussion after viewing. These are based on the story and elaborate on the concepts and ideas discussed in the documentary. You can use these questions or create your own based on your students' needs. Please note that the last two questions are almost always: *What can you do?* and *Who should*

*be involved?* It is important to engage students in thinking beyond the classroom, even if they believe there is not much they can do at this point in their lives. The approach of this guide is that by involving students in discussions about multi-sector solutions to societal issues, and encouraging their participation in their classroom and community, we will prepare and inspire the next generation of civically engaged leaders in all spheres of society.

- The **Suggested Activities** section contains one or more activities focusing on the issue raised in the documentary. The activities have been developed for individuals working with young people and adults in classroom and out of school activities on issues of disparities and discrimination. The activities are designed with minimal instructions to allow educators to modify and add as they see fit. Although, many activities can be used individually, we recommend that you develop a plan or a curriculum unit where you can explore the Key Terms, use an introductory survey (True or False, or Agree or Disagree), and discuss questions and then complete an activity. This material will provide greater impact when students are going through it gradually, and are able to take time for reflection and debriefing.
- **Going Further** provides additional activities for students to learn about disparities through a human rights framework, explore additional data or research, raise awareness, develop a Community Action Plan and take action. You can also use the 20 Methods for Student Engagement from Annex 2 for additional ideas and resources.

Part V, *Making the Change*, provides a short description of stories, discussion questions and activities, and ideas for action. The goal of this section is to get students inspired by local “success” stories, in which individuals have taken action. This section challenges students to think about ways they can contribute to positive change in their classrooms and communities.

## Tips for Facilitators: Before Taking this Guide to the Class

When using this guide, we invite you to step away from your traditional role as a teacher and assume a less traditional role of a facilitator. As a facilitator, you will employ teaching techniques that promote a collaborative relationship in the classroom and relate to students’ knowledge and experience. More importantly, you will put your students in the center of the education process and empower them to take ownership of their own learning. Together you will embark on a learning journey, where the process of working together, examining assumptions, and discussing experiences will be as important as the results. For more information on the role of a facilitator, see Annex 2- What is Facilitator?

Facilitating discussions and activities about disparities and issues such as immigration, racism, and discrimination in the classroom is not an easy task. These issues are often politically and emotionally charged, and can lead to disagreements and confrontations.

Addressing difficult issues in an open and engaging manner is a key to respectful dialogues. Creating an environment where such dialogues are an integral part of learning is an important goal for a facilitator. Ideas below will assist you in creating and sustaining a learning environment where students feel comfortable and motivated to learn.

### 1. Ground Rules: RESPECT

Ideally, the ground rules should be created the first time a group or class meets. These

ground rules are most effective when students actively participate in their development and enforcement. An example of ground rules is the RESPECT acronym:

**R**esponsibility - The ability to take charge of one's life, fulfill one's obligations, be accountable for one's actions, and not let people down.

**E**mpathy - The ability to listen deeply to another person's story or experience and connect to the person's feelings and story.

**S**elf-Discipline/Share Air - The act of ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to participate in a group task or a project, and that no one dominates the discussion.

**P**articipation - The act of sharing, joining, or working with others to make decisions, complete a task, or initiate a project.

**E**nthusiasm - The feeling of great excitement which inspires great zeal and fervor.

**C**ooperation - The important skill that helps us work successfully in groups and interact harmoniously with others.

**T**rust - The ability to let others know your feelings, emotions and reactions, and have the confidence in them to be supportive and encouraging.

The RESPECT classroom guidelines can be discussed and established in the beginning of the school year as the ground rules for positive interaction throughout the year.

See *Annex 2 -RESPECT poster* or download it online at

<http://www.hrusa.org/thisismyhome/project/resources.shtml#posters>

## 2. Know Your Group's Comfort Level

When choosing an activity from this guide, always think about your classroom and its comfort level. Some of the activities in this guide are meant to push students out of their comfort zones and have them engage with each other in discussions and classroom activities. However, such discussions can only be meaningful and productive if the students are ready and if there is the right atmosphere. Such discussions can do more harm than good if the students have no experience in discussing differences in a respectful manner. Consider developing the **Ground Rules** (see above) for your classroom, and always keep in mind your group's comfort level when choosing the activities.

You may also want to introduce the "Ouch Rule," when students can quickly express their emotions if they feel offended or hurt by something someone in the group said in the discussion. As a facilitator, you can then ask the student who said "Ouch" to share their feelings with the group if they choose to do so. The "Ouch Rule" will help the students to learn skills necessary for a respectful dialogue.

## 3. Start From What Students Already Know

Whether or not students have given some serious thought to causes and effects of disparities and violations of human rights, many of them do already have some knowledge and personal experiences to discuss these issues. It is very important to focus on what students already know as a foundation for these discussions, so that they can better relate to the new material.

#### **4. Avoid Simple Answers to Complex Questions**

Learning about disparities raises a whole array of social, economical, cultural, and political issues about individuals, governments, businesses, etc. and often involves complicated answers about why certain rights were violated and certain disparities took place. Be cautious about oversimplifications, especially reducing the responsibility for violations to one or two causes. Encourage students to analyze different aspects that contribute to their experiences. Workable strategies for improving conditions can only evolve from thorough examination of the problem.

#### **5. Encourage Participation**

Ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to speak and participate is a must. Be mindful of who is participating and who is not and make every effort to encourage participation. Taking turns answering a question or finishing a statement can help to make this happen. However, be aware that some students can feel sensitive or too exposed about particular issues, and do not push them to participate if they choose not to.

Encourage different gender, racial, and cultural perspectives, but be careful to not make a representative of a particular group speak on behalf of the whole group.

#### **6. Summarize**

It is important to end your session with a summary or an open ended question that will provide food for thought until you meet again. It can be disappointing and harmful to end on a contentious point or an argument in progress, so allow time for a proper closing. For example, you might ask "What comments that you have heard today will you especially remember as meaningful?" or "Try to think of a word or phrase that sums up your feelings at the end of today's session." You might also just ask people to share one thing that they are still wondering about, finishing the sentence "I still wonder... ." Then go around the circle of participants so that everyone who wishes has a chance to respond. Once such closure is established as a ritual, participants anticipate it, and it marks a clear ending to the session. In this way, the facilitator does not need to have the last word!

#### **7. Focus on the Positive**

It can be quite frustrating for students to learn about disparities and human rights violations without a possibility of actually changing anything. Therefore, when discussing violations, be sure to both discuss positive developments (if there are any) and potential action or actions that students can take to improve the situation.

