



SESSION I

Where Did I Come From?

RATIONALE/GOAL:

Part of social analysis—indeed part of looking clearly at any situation—requires that we know our own perspective and history. This session is designed to allow you to gather background and stories about your social world.

OPENING PRAYER:

May God grant us visions of truth,

Graces to preserve,

And integrity in purpose and action

As we pursue living as good and faithful stewards.

May people be free from oppression

And may the new world order be focused on the sharing of the goods

Given to us by our loving God.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

- Jane Schaffran, CDP, & Pat Kozak, CSJ

PROCESS:

This session will take some preparation time. As a community, decide your target date for this session. In the interim, each person in the community can consult with whomever and whatever materials may be helpful in discovering the answers to the following questions. On the evening of this session, you can share to the degree that you are comfortable what information/stories have been uncovered in the course of your inquiries. Then discuss:

- ♦ What surprised you
- ♦ What you enjoyed hearing
- ♦ What made you uncomfortable
- ♦ What assumptions about your family were affirmed or disproved
- ♦ What impact this exercise has had on your sense of your social location

EXERCISE:

Explore the following questions:

Setting: If your family immigrated to the US, when did your forebears come to the US? From where? What was going on then, or what prompted them to immigrate to the US? If your family is Native American, what was their experience of immigration?

Housing: Where did your family first live when they were brought to the United States? What was their housing like (boarding house, apartment, live in someone else's home, live in own home, etc.)? What neighborhood did they first live in and what was it like? What was the progression of housing and neighborhoods? Have any loan programs been of use to your family? Which ones? Has your family stayed in one place or have there been significant moves? Moves into what kind of residences and what neighborhoods?

Home ownership: If/when did your family first own their own home? What are your family's expectations about home ownership, neighborhoods, and living conditions?

Federal aid: Did any of these programs play a part in your family history? Migrant Education? GI Bill? Food Stamps? Meals on Wheels? Fannie Mae? Veterans Benefits? College Scholarships? Head Start? Public Assistance? Medicare? Medicaid?

- Depression-era subsidized work programs
- CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act)
- Social Security (retirement, disability, Medicare, survivors' benefits)
- AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children, now called TANF)
- SSI (Supplemental Security Income)
- Tax deductions for home mortgages
- School Meal Programs
- Tax sheltered annuities

Auto ownership: When did your family first have a car? What kind of car was it? Has your family had more than one car? When? What kinds? What expectations about cars and transportation are there in your family?

Employment: What jobs have members of your family had through the generations? Has your family had any involvement in unions? What expectations does your family have about jobs, types of work, and work environment?

Social Service: Have you ever been a client of a social service agency? If no, why not? In what ways do you feel different from people who have or would seek help at a social service agency?

Welfare: Have you ever been on "welfare" (Public Assistance or AFDC)? Would you ever be? If not, why not? What are your assumptions about people who receive these categories of government assistance which are generally not regarded in the same way as other forms of government aid (i.e. Social Security, state disability, worker's compensation, Medicare, public schools and universities)?

Politics: What kind of political, civic (beautification committee, Rotary Club, political parties, etc.) or religious involvement has there been in your family? Has your family's participation in the political process gone beyond voting?

War: What has been your family's war experience? What members of your family were involved in wars? Which wars? In what capacity (grandfather doing Army clean-up in Germany after WWII; Grandmother working in factory during WWII; serving in Vietnam, etc.)?

Education: Have people in your family gone to college? If so, who was the first and when? What colleges were attended and what was studied? Were any loan programs or scholarships helpful to your family (GI Bill, fellowships, etc.)? Which ones? What expectations does your family have about education?

Time: What have been topics of dinner conversation for your family through the generations? What kind of

recreation has your family enjoyed? How has the proportion of time spent working, playing, and being politically, socially, or religiously involved shifted over the generations?

Investment: Does your family own stock? In what? How does the company affect the lives of people in poor communities?

CLOSING: *Holy God,
 whose presence is known
 in the structures we build
 and also in their collapse;
 establish in us a community of hope,
 not to contain your mystery,
 but to be led beyond security
 into your sacred space,
 through Jesus Christ, Amen.*

--Janet Morley, All Desires Known

