

Where Do I Come From?

Adapted from JVC:SW with Si Hendry, SJ. 1997

Focus:

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 think about your social world.

Opening Prayer:

*May God grant us visions of truth,
Graces to persevere,
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 goods
Given to us by our loving God.
In Jesus' name, Amen.*

-Janet Schaffran, CDP and Pat Kozak, CSJ

Process:

- Take some time to answer, to the best of your knowledge, the questions that follow.
- Afterward, come back to the group and be prepared to discuss your social background, the injustices you and your family have faced, and possibly, those to which you have contributed.

Questions:

- **Settling.** If your family immigrated to the US, when did they arrive? From where? What was going on then, or what prompted the move to the US? If your family is Native American, what was their experience of immigration?
- **Housing.** Where did your family first live in the US? What was their housing like (boarding house, apartment, someone else's home, their own home, etc.)? What neighborhood did they first live in and what was it like? Has your family stayed in one place or have there been significant moves?
- **Home Ownership.** When did your family first own their 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
 - Food Stamps
 - G.I. Bill
 - Fannie Mae
 - Meals for Seniors
 - Veterans Benefits
 - College Scholarships
 - Head Start
 - G.A. (General Assistance)
 - Medi-Cal/Medicaid
 - Depression era subsidized work programs
 - C.E.T.A. (Comprehensive Employment Training Act)
 - Social Security (retirement, disability, Medicare, survivors' benefits)
 - A.F.D.C. (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), now called T.A.N.F.
 - S.S.I. (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 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 the 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” (General Assistance or A.F.D.C.)? Would you ever be? If not, why not? What are your assumptions about people who do receive categories of government assistance that are generally not regarded in the same way as other forms of government aid (i.e. Social Security, state disability, worker’s compensation, Medi-Care, public schools and universities)?
- **Politics.** What kind of political , civic (beautification committee, Rotary, 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/are involved in wars? Which wars? In what capacity (father doing Army clean-up in Germany after WWII; mother 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 Prayer:

*Holy God,
Whose presence is known
In the structures we build
And also in their collapse;
Establish us in 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

Facilitator Questions for group discussion:

- Did any of the questions, in particular, strike you as significant indicators of your own social history? Why?
- Did your own answers to any of the questions surprise you? Which ones? Why?
- Did any of the questions make you uncomfortable? Which ones? Why?
- What assumptions about your family were affirmed or disproved?
- What impact has this exercise had on your sense of your social location?