

# Crossing the Line (Racial Diversity & Campus Climate Module)

Time: 25-60 minutes

## Goals

- Participants will have an opportunity to share information about themselves with one another.
- Groups will be able to establish a baseline for the discussion of difficult topics.

## Facilitation Instructions (time depends on depth of conclusion)

- Preparation: put a line of tape down the center of your room, making sure that all your students could fit back to back on the line.
- This exercise is to be done in COMPLETE SILENCE. Participants should silently choose a side to be on and go. Make sure they choose a side.
- Read each of the following statements. Allow students to move and establish eye contact, then go to the next statement. (Periodically ask the students to “look who’s with you, and look who is not”).

## Instructions to Read Aloud

This next activity is going to be different from those you might have done before. It is going to help identify the similarities and differences we have amongst each other. We want to acknowledge and address those differences but also bring to the surface other differences that we may not have recognized. This process might prove difficult at first, or a bit awkward. Today, we want to break down stereotypes and make it easier to know one another as full human beings.

This activity is simple. One of us will read a statement. If the statement is something that you agree with, take a step across the line. We will then reset and read the next statement.

We do have a few ground rules for the activity. The first involves LISTENING. Let’s have silence throughout the exercise – no talking, snickering, giggling, etc. Silence will allow all of us to participate fully. Silence will also enable us to experience our personal thoughts and feelings more deeply.

The second guideline is RESPECT. It is imperative that we respect the dignity of each person who is here. Everything that is shared should remain confidential. Nothing that is offered should leave this room. However, if – having gone through the activity – you truly need to talk to a particular individual about something he or she has shared, be sure you ask that person’s permissions and do have that conversation privately.

Each statement will require you to make the decision of crossing or not crossing the line. Each of the statements may have some “gray areas.” Define the terms we state as YOU understand them. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers. NO PRESSURE. No one here is under any pressure to respond in any particular way to any of the questions. If you have any doubts about sharing some part of yourself, you should feel perfectly comfortable with your decision not to step forward. Be aware, though, that to learn and grow, we must sometimes challenge ourselves to take risks. You are encouraged to participate fully during each question, but you should only share what is comfortable.

What that being said, cross the line if you understand the guidelines and agree to participate. Okay. Here we go...

CROSS THE LINE IF...

1. You are female.
2. You prefer the city.
3. You are from Tennessee.
4. You know what you want to major in.
5. You enjoy sports.
  
6. You are an only child.
7. Your parents are divorced.
8. You consider yourself a religious person.
9. You self-identify as a Republican.
10. You self-identify as a Democrat.
11. You feel as if you have no political voice.
  
12. You prefer Coke to Pepsi.
13. You prefer vanilla to chocolate.
14. You have been in love.
15. You consider yourself to be from a middle-class family.
  
16. You are excited about attending Vanderbilt.
17. You are nervous about attending Vanderbilt.
18. A school other than Vanderbilt was your first choice in colleges to attend.
  
19. You have had surgery.
20. You have lived in another state.
21. You would like to control your weight better.
22. You would like to lose 10 or more pounds.
23. You have a hero or role model in your life.
  
24. You have shoplifted something from a store.
25. You get an average of eight hours of sleep each night.
26. You have smoked cigarettes.
  
27. You have at least one parent that graduated from college.
28. You have at least one parent that did not complete high school.
29. You were valedictorian of your high school.
30. You were a captain of a sports team in high school.
  
31. You know someone personally who has tested positive for HIV.
32. You knew someone who died from HIV/AIDS.
  
33. You support pro-choice.
34. You support gun control.
35. You support the death penalty.
  
36. You have done something embarrassing as a result of alcohol or drug use.
37. You have been in a gay bar.
  
38. You understand Apartheid.

39. You support Apartheid.
40. You think marijuana should be legalized.
41. You think the drinking age should be lowered to 18.
42. You have been arrested for a DUI.
43. You have driven a car while under the influence of alcohol.
44. You know someone who has been sexually assaulted.
45. You know someone who has felt pressured to have sex.
46. You know someone who has pressured someone to have sex.
47. You know someone who died in a car accident.
48. You know someone who died of cancer.
49. You have felt alone, unwelcomed, afraid.
50. You knew someone who has attempted to die by suicide.
51. You knew someone who died by suicide.
52. You have cried.
53. You have cried at least once this year for someone or something other than yourself.
54. You are comfortable with homosexuality.
55. You believe that gay/lesbian couples should be allowed to marry.
56. You believe gay/lesbian couples should be allowed to adopt children.
57. You or someone you know is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.
58. You have participated in a racial, sexual, or cultural joke.
59. You don't like these jokes, but do nothing to stop them.
60. You have been the victim of racism.
61. Your parents or grandparents might still have prejudicial thoughts.
62. You would be involved in an interracial relationship, given the right person.
63. You have been involved in an interracial relationship.
64. You have read Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech.
65. You have been completely honest during this activity.
66. You did not cross the line in a previous statement when you should have.
67. You are willing to understand, support, and celebrate diversity.

After the activity is over, give the students a second to process, then have them take a seat to discuss the following.

1. How did you feel when you got to choose your answer (i.e. position on drinking age or preference) as opposed to when you had no say in the answer (i.e. being from a divorced family or where you were from)?
  - a. Which statements were you proud to take the side you did?
  - b. Which statements were uncomfortable for you to stand on the side you did?
2. Which statements were challenging to pick a side for?
  - a. Apartheid is the term given to the system of segregation in South Africa, where non-whites are systematically separated from whites. At one point in time, different tribes of South African people wanted self-governance rather than being held to the laws of the political system. The

South African government created a system where self-governance was allowed, but abused the system to discriminate against non-whites. (Alternate definition: An official policy of racial segregation formerly practiced in the Republic of South Africa, involving political, legal, and economic discrimination against non-whites).

3. Were there times when you just went with the flow instead of going with how you really felt? If you're comfortable sharing, which statements were they?
4. How did you feel when there were lots of people on your side of the line? How about when there were very few people on your side of the line?
5. What questions do you have or want to offer to the group?
6. What do you think the purpose of this activity was?

### **Conclusion**

Submit to pressure from others and you move down to their level. Speak up for your own belief and you invite them up to your level. If you move with the crowd, you'll get no further than the crowd. Simply swimming with the tide leaves you nowhere. When 40 million people believe in a dumb idea, it's still a dumb idea. So, if you believe in something that is good, honest, and bright...stand up for it. Maybe you'll challenge others to take a closer look at the issue.

"[People] may be said to resemble not the bricks of which a house is built, but the pieces of a picture puzzle, each differing in shape, but matching the rest, and thus bringing out the picture." (Felix Adler)

Ask students to read the following poem and complete the attached personal reflection. Encourage them to find a place in the room to have some personal space and avoid distraction during this reflection.

## The Cold Within

By James Patrick Kinney

Six humans trapped by happenstance  
In black and bitter cold  
Each one possessed a stick of wood  
Or so their story's told.

Their dying fire in need of logs,  
The first woman held hers back  
For on the faces around the fire  
She noticed one was black.

The next man looking cross the way  
Saw not one of his church,  
And couldn't bring himself to give  
The first his stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes  
And gave his coat a hitch.  
Why should his log be put to use  
To warm the idle rich?

The rich man just sat back and thought  
Of all the wealth he had in store  
And how to keep what he had earned  
From the lazy, shiftless poor.

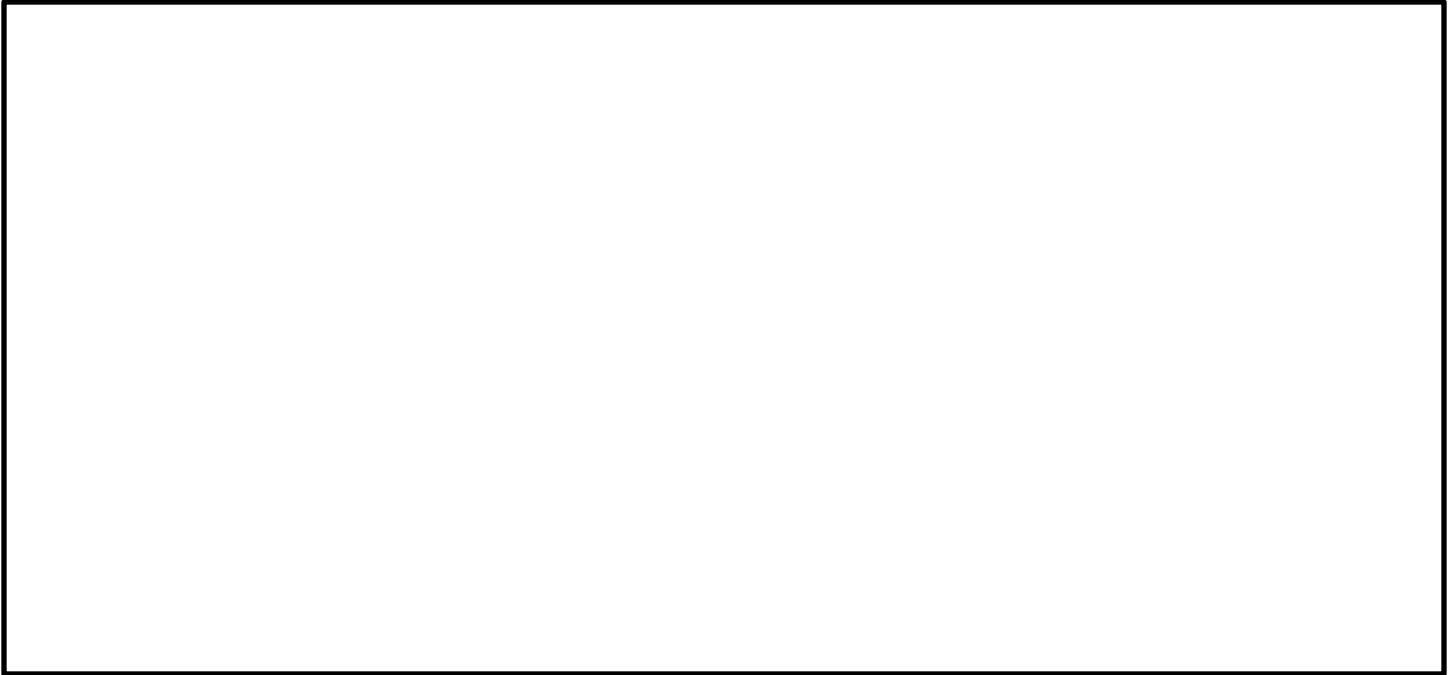
The Black man's face bespoke revenge  
As the fire passed from his sight  
For all he saw in his stick of wood  
Was a chance to spite the White.

And the last man of this forlorn group  
Did naught except for gain  
Giving only to those who gave  
Was how he played his game.

The logs held tight in death's still hands  
Was proof of human sin.  
They didn't die from the cold without,  
They died from the cold within...

## Personal Reflection<sup>1</sup>

Think of a time when you felt different. Write the emotions you felt during and after that experience, using the box below to represent those feelings in any way you see fit.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the student to write their personal reflections on how they felt during and after a specific experience.

Think of a time when you witnessed an action of bigotry, hatred, bias, discrimination, or stereotyping of another person. How did you feel as a bystander?

How do you believe the target of that action felt?

How will you take what you have learned from this activity and incorporate it into everyday life?

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the *Camp Eagle Camp Staff Guide* created and produced by the University of Southern Indiana in 2012.