Privilege: Paradigm or Prophylactic?

February 12, 2015
Checking in:

- How are you doing?
- Where are you coming from?
- What are you bringing into this space?
- Where do you want to go?
Privilege is ...

- one word often used in equity work
  - what are others?
- about positionality and power
  - what are your politics of location?
- about self-awareness and seeing systemically
Equity Lexicon:
* Social Justice * Oppression *
* Disadvantaged * Microaggressions *
* Implicit Bias * -isms * -phobias *
Passing Notes:
What foods or dishes do you remember eating growing up from your ethnic, racial, class and/or regional background?
"All Orientals Look the Same"
by Valerie Soe (1986)
Journal prompt: What did you see, hear, think, feel?
"A Question of Color"
by Kathe Sandler (1993)
Journal prompt: What did you see, hear, think, feel?
Forms of Oppression

- Interpersonal
- Institutional
- Internalized
- Systemic
What were your early messages about dominance and inferiority? Who were you taught to feel superior to or better than? Who were you taught to feel inferior to or lesser than?
MEANS Activity

National S.E.E.D. Project
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Consider a birdcage.
If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires.
If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere.
Furthermore, even if, one day at a time, you myopically inspected each wire, you still could not see why a bird would have trouble going past the wires to get anywhere.
There is no physical property of any one wire, *nothing* that the closest scrutiny could discover, that will reveal how a bird could be inhibited or harmed by it except in the most accidental way.
It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere; and then you will see it in a moment.
It will require no great subtlety of mental powers.
It is perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon.
It is now possible to grasp one of the reasons why oppression can be hard to see and recognize: one can study the elements of an oppressive structure with great care and some good will without seeing the structure as a whole, and hence without seeing or being able to understand that one is looking at a cage and that there are people there who are caged, whose motion and mobility are restricted, whose lives are shaped and reduced.
Gender Boxes Prompt 1:
In what ways has your family, peers, media, class, culture and/or religion affected your gender box?
Gender Boxes Prompt 2:

How would it feel to dismantle your gender box?
If the constructed gender walls disappeared, how would this leave you feeling and how would your life change?
Why might you not want to dismantle the box?
Privilege Questions

- What’s my position?
- Where is the power?
- What do I know about what I know?
- What? So what? Now what?
"Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up"
by Debra Chasnoff (2009)