

## Privilege Exercise Definitions

**PRIVILEGE:** Privilege operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives advantages, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of target groups. In the United States, privilege is granted to people who have membership in one or more of these social identity groups:

- White people;
  - Able-bodied people;
  - Heterosexuals;
  - Males;
  - Christians;
  - Middle class people;
  - Middle-aged people;
  - English-speaking people
- Privilege is characteristically invisible to people who have it. People in dominant groups often believe that they have earned the privileges that they enjoy or that everyone could have access to these privileges if only they worked to earn them. In fact, privileges are unearned and they are granted to people in the dominant groups whether they want those privileges or not, and regardless of their stated intent.
  - Unlike targets of oppression, people in dominant groups are frequently unaware that they are members of the dominant group due to the privilege of being able to see themselves as persons rather than stereotypes.

**Definitions were abridged from: © Leaven 2003 Doing Our Own Work: A Seminar for Anti-Racist White Women and © Visions, Inc. and the MSU Extension Multicultural Awareness Workshop**

## Small Group Processing Questions

### Instructions:

1. In your small groups process the questions below. You will need two volunteers:
  - a. One group member to serve as the scribe
  - b. Another group member to present your group's responses to the questions below  
(**Note:** If time permits we may be able to have multiple rotations of small groups sharing with the larger group, if this is the case, please feel free to have multiple group members take turns sharing your small group responses with the larger group).

### Processing Questions:

- In your small groups share with each other:
  - What it was like to focus on privilege, rather than on oppression as we often do in diversity activities.
  - Was it a new experience? Comfortable? Enlightening? How did it feel (actual emotional words!)?
  - Why is it important for us to be aware of this aspect of our identities/experience?
  - Why don't we (have to) attend to it on a regular basis?
  - How noticeable, to us and others, are our privileges on a daily basis? Can we and how do we hide (deny, justify, ignore) our privilege on a daily basis?
  - What does it mean for us to have multiple, intersecting identities—where we experience some privileges (around some identities) AND some oppression (around others)?
  - What insight can this give us in connecting with others? Being patient/generous with them and ourselves?
  - What insight can this give us with holding ourselves and others responsible for our actions? Being allies or advocates?
  - What identities (systems of privilege) were not represented here today? If we had them how would that affect your “bling”?
  - We asked you to turn your beads into something wearable. What would it mean for you to wear this noticeably for the rest of the day? What messages could others take from your “bling”?