

## **Resources for Youthworkers on Racism;**

**<https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/>**

**[www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)**

**<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/facing-ferguson-news-literacy-digital-age/preparing-students-difficult>**

# Identity Charts

## Rationale

Identity charts are a graphic tool that can help students consider the many factors that shape who we are as individuals and as communities. Use identity charts to deepen students' understanding of themselves, groups, nations, and historical and literary figures. Sharing their own identity charts with peers can help students build relationships and break down stereotypes. In this way, identity charts can be used as an effective classroom community-building tool.

## Procedure

### 1. **Brainstorm or Create Personal Identity Charts**

Before creating identity charts, you might have the class brainstorm categories we each consider when thinking about the question, “Who am I?”—categories such as our role in a family (e.g., daughter, sister, mother), our hobbies and interests (e.g., guitar player, football fan), our background (e.g., religion, race, nationality, hometown, place of birth), and our physical characteristics. It is often helpful to show students a completed identity chart before they create one of their own (see example section below).

Alternatively, you could begin this activity by having students create identity charts for themselves. After they share their charts, students can create a list of the categories they have used to describe themselves and then apply this same list of categories as a guide when creating identity charts for other people or groups.

### 2. **Create Identity Charts for an Individual, Group, or Nation**

First, ask students to write the name of the character, figure, group, or nation in the center of a piece of paper. Then students can look through text(s) for evidence that helps them answer the question, “Who is this person/group?” Encourage students to include quotations from the text(s) on their identity charts, as well as their own interpretations of the character or figure based on their reading. Students can complete identity charts individually or in small groups. Alternatively, students could contribute ideas to a class version of an identity chart that you keep on the classroom wall.

### 3. **Use Identity Charts to Track New Learning**

Reviewing and revising identity charts throughout a unit is one way to help students keep track of their learning.

## Variations

1. **Concept Charts:** You can also use identity charts to help students explore the meaning of concepts such as justice, responsibility, or “universe of responsibility.”
2. **Prioritizing Factors on Identity Charts:** After students create an identity chart, you can ask them to select the five items they think are most significant in shaping this person or group’s identity. As students compare their lists, this often deepens their understanding of the person being studied.
3. **Identity and Context:** Individual and group identities are comprised of multiple factors, some having more significance in particular contexts. To help students appreciate this concept, you might ask them to think about the five factors that are most significant to shaping their identity in one context, such as school, and then in another context, such as home or with friends.
4. **Hand Identity Charts:** This variation of an identity chart helps to illustrate the similarities and differences between the way we define ourselves and the way that others define us. First, have students draw the outline of their hand (or simply a box) on a large piece of paper. Inside the hand, have students write labels and descriptions they use to describe themselves. Outside of their outline, have students write labels and descriptions that reflect how they think others view them. In some cases, how the outside world sees us is the same as how we see ourselves, and in some cases, it is not. Therefore, words inside the outline and outside the outline may or may not overlap. You can also use hand identity charts to represent historical or literary characters. Students can write a journal entry reflecting on the ideas represented on their hand identity charts. Prompts you might use to structure students’ writing include:
  1. Notice the words inside and outside of your hand outline. Which ones are the same? Which ones are different?
  2. Explain why some words might be the same, while others might be different.

## Example





Theological Reflection with Teenagers in the Wake of Charlottesville  
By: Dietrich Kirk and Dr. Andrew Zirschky

In the wake of Charlottesville and all that has occurred since, we join many Americans who find themselves disoriented and speechless, including other youth workers who are left wondering how to lead teenagers to process what has—and is—happening. We adamantly claim that white supremacy and racism have no place in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And we also believe that the theological reflection method we share in this article can help youth leaders in some contexts into a discussion of racism and bigotry.

However, we must state from the outset that we come at this from a particular vantage point: We're white youth workers working in predominantly white contexts, where discussions of racism are all too rare (something that must change). We reacted to the events of Charlottesville in outrage and shock. However, in conversation with our African American brothers and sisters in Christ, we have become increasingly aware that their response to Charlottesville is not one of shock. Charlottesville feels like confirmation and reinforcement of what they have always known and experienced. One youth minister shared that his youth are not asking how the events of Charlottesville could happen. "That is a white context question," he told us. His African-American youth are saying, "Why don't they like us?" or "I told you so," and "Stay woke." He went on to say, "My youth are in a place of experience rather than shock. The outcry of 'let my people go' continues to be our common language."

While many minority youth were not surprised by Charlottesville, the theological reflection method that we've formulated in this article begins in a place of shock. It's likely not going to be

helpful for primarily minority youth ministries, rather it's intended to be used in places where race and racism are not explored and discussed nearly enough — primarily white congregations. Usually we'd argue that these contexts don't need any more youth ministry resourcing, but when it comes to the subject of racism, that's not the case. We've been woefully silent with our young people for too long.

Travis Garner, pastor of The Village in Nashville (a predominantly white congregation) wrote what we believe to be an inspired post in the aftermath of Charlottesville titled, "I'm not being Political, I'm being Theological." Garner says, "When I became a follower of Jesus, I pledged to follow a leader whose love and grace transcend the borders of nationality, race, gender, ethnicity, and any other human category. When I became a follower of Jesus, I gave up my 'freedom of speech,' and I made a vow instead to speak life, truth, grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness, even when it's difficult, even when it doesn't serve my own interests." If you're serving in a predominantly white context, you might be tempted to brush past Charlottesville or other recent events; why undertake such a tough topic when it can be ignored? Precisely because of what Garner points out. Our calling is to speak life and truth even when it's difficult—and not just speak it, but lead young people into reflection, thinking and action.

Our first step as youth workers is to proclaim truth. It is appropriate for us as Christian youth workers to unequivocally state to those involved in our ministries that racism and bigotry are sins in any and all forms. We cannot shrink back from making such statements of truth.

Nevertheless, proclamation is not enough. We need to go further and engage young people in dialogue, helping them to see with the eyes of Christ, think with the mind of Christ, and act with their lives in accordance with Christ. In predominately white contexts, simply speaking out or naming the horror does little to help youth unpack their own disorienting moments and the dismay, anger, and confusion they may be experiencing. We need to go further and walk with teenagers through their reactions so that they may understand and articulate how their theology and Christian beliefs should guide their thoughts and actions.

What we call the Practical Theological Reflection Method (PTRM) can help us. The PTRM involves posing a series of questions in five steps that lead a group through the four moments of practical theology. (For more on practical theology, go here: <http://cymt.org/practical-theology-as-the-foundation-of-youth-ministry/>.) Skilled leaders will not ask every question but will hone in on dialoguing with teenagers around the questions that are most pertinent to the matter at hand. Frankly, deciding which questions to ask (and which to avoid) takes practice. But ultimately asking the right questions is less important than avoiding another pitfall: The tendency to provide all the answers. Your role as a facilitator in theological reflection is not to provide all the answers, but to prod youth to think and reflect for themselves. In doing this they will grow in their understanding of the matter at hand, but also in their ability to articulate their beliefs, use theological language, and respond by living differently.

Be aware, the PTRM can be messy along the way because you're asking teenagers to engage in thinking, reflecting, and listening to others amidst a disorienting dilemma. In light of Charlottesville, the conversation will most certainly be messy in predominately white congregations where we have ignored this topic for too long. The mess is worth it because engaging in theological reflection can be incredibly formative for teenagers.

### **STEP 1: TELLING THE STORY**

**1) Give time for each participant to write down their story and experience of learning about the events in Charlottesville:** What was the conversation, incident or person that you encountered that was meaningful, shocking, and sobering that you can't get out of your mind? You might consider showing a news clip to help youth re-immense themselves into the feelings and emotions of the events. (Huffington Post [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/charlottesville-scenes-on-the-ground\\_us\\_5991f373e4b08a247276833a](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/charlottesville-scenes-on-the-ground_us_5991f373e4b08a247276833a))

2) Have someone(s) in the group share their story of the events they witnessed.

3) What would you say are the core elements of the Charlottesville event?

### **STEP 2: WHY THAT MOMENT**

Start this step by focusing on the core element or moment that students have identified as the significant moment in the story. It's very likely that something about that particular moment or aspect of the story either challenged or confirmed their (and their peers') beliefs, opinions, or assumptions. The purpose of this step is to draw that out. Here are some questions we might use to explore that:

1) What, if anything, surprised you? What beliefs about our world, or opinions about people, made you surprised?

2) What emotions did that moment make you feel? Why do you think you felt that way?

3) What beliefs did you have about white supremacists, the KKK, Neo-Nazis, Black Lives Matter leaders, and the counter-protestors in the story before Charlottesville? How about after?

4) What's wrong,/right, fair/unfair, destructive/healing about the lives of people in the story?

You're ready to move on from this step when students are able to articulate what about the story surprised, challenged or disoriented them.

### STEP 3: WHAT CULTURE SAYS

What might the “average Joe” on the street (or your friends or people you know) say about:

- 1) . . . the people involved?
- 2) . . . the situation that happened?
- 3) . . . the reason “this part of the world” is the way it is?
- 4) . . . the reason that “these people” are the way they are?
- 5) . . . what should be done about situations & people like this?
- 6) . . . about you and your actions as they relate to the story?

You’re ready to move on from this step when students start to recognize how their experiences compare and contrast to what our culture expects — and what they might have expected before their wow moment.

### STEP 4: God’s View

For each of these questions, state WHY you believe this might be God’s perspective. . .

- Look to scripture for truth of how God would view the people and their actions from the events in Charlottesville. Here are a few possibilities:
  - Matthew 5:9 – Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God
  - Matthew 22:34-40 - Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”
  - Galations 3: 26-29 <sup>26</sup>So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male

and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

- *“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”* Revelation 7:9-10
  - I Corinthians 13:1-7
  - Ephesians 4:2-3
  - Colossians 3:12-17
  - I John 4:16-21
  - *“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”* Revelation 7:9-10
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- You might read together Travis Garner's "I'm not being Political, I'm being Theological" to help students articulate their own understanding of God's view.
  - What do you think might be God's view of the people involved?
  - What in the situation might make God angry?
  - What in the situation might make God smile?
  - What in the situation might make God sad or sorrowful?
  - On what/whom might God have judgment from these events?
  - On what/whom might God show compassion?
  - What do you believe Christ would have done or said if he were there?
  - How was God's love experienced (or not) by the people?
  - What truth might God want to speak into this story?
  - How was God at work?

You're ready to move on from this step when students start to recognize how God's view on the situation compares and contrasts with that of the culture — and your students before events of Charlottesville.

## STEP 5: ALIGNING WITH GOD

Now that students have a better understanding of how God might view the events in Charlottesville, take time to consider how the group should revise and rethink its actions in the future:

- If we were present, where in the story might there have been an opportunity to offer ourselves as expressions of God's grace, love, judgment, compassion, or mercy?
- How might God want you to live or act differently in light of Charlottesville?
- In what ways do you have a new perspective on the people & events in Charlottesville?
- How were you changed by this reflection?
- How might we act as agents of God's Kingdom in future situations like this one?
- What can we do as a group to respond and live so that we are aligned with God and bring about God's Kingdom?

*Our prayers go out to all those who have experienced loss in these tragic moments. May we cross the racial divide in this country and see the image of God in each other. May God's Kingdom come on Earth as it is in heaven.*

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The Center for Youth Ministry Training is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that exists to equip youth ministers and churches to develop theologically informed and practically effective youth ministries.

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