Circles for COVID-19 and Youth Empowerment: A Youth Restorative Practices Guide

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Dear reader,

Thank you for opening "Circles for COVID-19 and Youth Empowerment: A Youth Restorative Practices Guide." We hope you find that this resource supports you and your community in this time of immense turmoil and change.

We are three rising seniors at the Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School in South Hadley, Massachusetts. In the midst of historic public health and political crises, we were given an opportunity to do something for our community, thanks to Collaborative Resolutions Group (formerly The Mediation and Training Collaborative) based in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Created in May and June of 2020—socially-distanced in our respective homes across western Massachusetts—this booklet is a culmination of our efforts. We hope that this resource helps spur youth empowerment in a post-COVID-19 world, no matter how far into the future that may be. We, as a society, are going through a period of momentous pain and trauma. Everyone who has lived through the pandemic will find themselves grieving in one way or another, and in our schools, we have a responsibility to build a community in which some of that grief can be processed.

To students: our generation is going to live with the long-term ramifications of this virus. We have an opportunity to take agency over our lives and our future. We are all student leaders. We hope you join us in this movement.

To our adult allies: thank you for seeing the value and successes of youth activism. Thank you for supporting young people from a place of mutual respect. We have learned a lot from you, and we hope we can return the favor.

We hope this resource offers you inspiration and guidance, but we know that—to poorly paraphrase Leonardo DaVinci—art is never finished; it is merely abandoned. For that reason, we hope that you take the time to give us feedback through the following survey: https://forms.gle/e3P6UVHvPjGtzsoy5!
Your responses will help us continue improving our skills moving forward, and for that, we thank you.

To a better future,
Analua Alencar Moreira
Isabelle Buchanan
Jacob Rosenblum

Part 1:

Before we begin…

Restorative Practices in an Online World

Depending on when you read this, social distancing guidelines for the COVID-19 pandemic may not yet have been lifted, and you might be looking at leading circles remotely. Even if schools have reopened and in-person gatherings are happening again, facilitating circles online is a great skill to master. As you familiarize yourself with this interface, you may come up with skills and techniques that supplement, or even replace, the suggestions stated below, but this is a great way to start off. This passage will give you some tips and tricks about facilitation and leadership in an online world.

1. **Know your platform… and make sure participants know it, too!** If you're leading a circle online, make sure you are familiarized with the nuances of the platform you are using. If you need to share your screen, can you see the faces of the participants? If not, maybe use two devices. Can you mute participants? If not, make sure your participants know how to mute themselves. Do they need to make an account and download the platform (i.e. Zoom) or add an extension (i.e. Google Meets Gridview)? If so, make sure your participants know how to do so and do it in advance. Encourage your participants to join the meeting on a computer (phones oftentime show fewer people on the screen at a time). If the platform you are using offers an option to record meetings, make sure to avoid this in order to protect the privacy of circle participants. Oftentimes, having a trial run of your project with friends or family members can help you become familiarized with the interface and any obstacles you may have to work around. Each platform you use has its own perks and caveats. If you are unsure of which to use, do some research!

2. **Set clear expectations about the online format.** This might seem redundant, but many of your participants may be unfamiliar with circles in an online setting. Not only that, but it is much easier to be disengaged from the material when participants are not in the same physical space together. Encourage participants to turn on their video and keep their microphone muted unless they are talking (this avoids creating feedback loops). Suggest that they close other tabs, apps, windows, and turn off any other electronic devices they may have. This is particularly important in circles, where participants feeling heard is imperative to the project's success. Perhaps you can also recommend that participants get dressed for the circle and attend the meeting from a work or study space rather than an informal space (such as someone's bed). If a participant is in a shared space, encourage them to wear headphones to protect the privacy of others in

the circle. These suggestions will motivate individuals to be attent and active participants.

3. **Have a backup plan.** Wi-Fi is a mercurial creature, so it never hurts to plan for the worst-case scenario. If you know you have internet connectivity problems in advance, (or even if you don't) have a phone with you so that you can call into the meeting. Making sure other individuals aren't having meetings, streaming long videos, or downloading content under the same Wi-Fi can also help improve your connection. Also plan for your participants losing connection. Following up with participants after the meeting with a recap of the circle or a link/file with the resources you used can be a great way to make sure everyone has access to the information regardless of any internet issues along the way.

4. **Establishing norms is even more important online.** With internet connection troubles, buffering, and volume limitations individuals' devices, interjecting into dialogues that may be taking a negative turn is even more difficult. That is why establishing norms about the subject of the project and expected conduct is even more critical. This is particularly important if your circle covers controversial topics. For example, if you are leading a project that touches on the COVID-19 pandemic, it might not hurt to set a norm that states that CDC and WHO guidelines will be regarded as true. That way, participants can believe whatever they want on their own time, but your project will not be overrun by a debate on whether or not to wear masks. This is also important when talking about issues of injustice; it is imperative that the online space created supports every participant, but *especially* those from marginalized communities whose human rights are often trivialized for the sake of a fair debate. It is important to note that though these measures will prevent a dialogue from derailing into unrelated or harmful territory, they are not foolproof. Remember, if any conversation gets out of hand, you have the right as a facilitator to intervene, regardless of the platform being used.

5. **Try to keep a sense of normalcy.** Even though facilitation online can be far from normal, there are ways to keep the sense of familiarity of an in-person gathering in an online setting. Having a clearly communicated structure for how the meeting will go is a great first step. Doing so will also help your participants be more comfortable in this uncharted territory. When you are leading a circle, have each participant bring a talking piece, and have fun trying to figure out creative ways to "pass" your talking piece around the circle. Also note that certain platforms (i.e. Google Meets with Gridview) have a standard layout in which

everyone sees the participants on screen in the same order, whereas other platforms (i.e. Zoom) have unique layouts for each participant. There are also discrepancies in layout between different types of devices (phones, tablets, or computers). Make sure every participant knows the order of the circle. Most platforms have a list of participants in alphabetical order that can be used as a guide. When leading a workshop, there is no particular order as there is when it comes to circles, so you might have to get creative with ways people feel they can freely participate. If your platform has a chat feature, having participants write responses might be helpful and less intimidating for participants who might not feel comfortable with unstructured answering. If you do this, make sure to read the responses in the chat out loud to make sure the information is accessible to everyone. Hand-raising might be a better method of addressing longer answers from participants. If your workshop relies on small group discussions or "pair shares," having separate breakout rooms or meetings is a great way to accomplish this. Most meeting platforms cannot sustain many people talking at once.

6. **Acknowledge that this is unfamiliar territory.** This is a little paradoxical if you take the prior advice into consideration, but it is just as important. The reality of the matter is that facilitating or participating in an online circle is new and unfamiliar to most people. Accept the fact that your project might not come across the way you want it to and that mistakes might be made along the way. This is true for any circle, but it is even more critical to remember when facilitating something online. All the nuances and complications that are intrinsic during in-person conversations are amplified when put on a digitized platform. Accepting these obstacles allows you to set more realistic goals for yourself and identify areas of growth. Remember that your participants are also going to be unfamiliar with this setting. They will understand any issues you may have as we're all dealing with the same new challenges. Try to keep your project as familiar and grounded as possible, but also understand that it's not going to be the same as an in-person gathering. Accepting this will remove any unrealistic expectations about your project and allow you to explore the unique benefits of an online platform that cannot be replicated in person.

History of Restorative Practices

Although the adoption of Restorative Practices into modern education and justice systems has been a positive change, its history and roots in Indigenous cultures are often skimmed over or ignored. It is important to acknowledge where these practices come from.

Restorative Justice vs. Restorative Practices

Restorative justice came about as a way to repair harm when a wrong has occurred. It often involved the wrongdoer engaging with their community and the people they hurt in a healing process. Restorative practices use the same ideas of community interconnectedness but in a more proactive and preventative way. Instead of waiting until after harm has been done, it aims to build a stronger and more connected community so that rifts in the web of relationships are less likely to occur and more manageable when they do.

History of Restorative Justice

Restorative justice has a long and complex history and has been implemented all over the world. The history and teachings we are focusing on predominantly relate to the indigenous peoples of the First Nations of Canada and the United States and the Maon of New Zealand. The teachings and Restorative Justice models in these communities have had the greatest impact on the Restorative Justice movement in North America.

Indigenous concepts of justice begin with the presumption that individuals desire to live nicely together within their communities. In Indigenous communities, children are exposed to restorative teachings from a young age. Through example and storytelling, they are taught the value of connectedness and accountability within their community. Justice, in these communities, takes the emphasis away from punitive punishment and focuses instead on showing wrongdoers a better path in life.

In Indigenous teachings, there is a huge emphasis placed on the relationships between everything in the universe, both physical and spiritual. Recognizing interconnections between the earth, humans, and spirituality promotes a peaceful and cooperative society and fosters strong connections. Repairing relationships when they are broken is an important part of maintaining a connected community. However, healing the

relationship is not solely the responsibility of the offender but instead includes an expanded circle of friends, family, and other community members, especially those affected by the harm committed. Restorative justice aims to identify every factor that may have contributed to the offense. The next step is to create an action plan for how the community can proceed on a path of physical and spiritual healing.

In this system, the power to tell others what to do does not come from an occupational position, but rather from a person's relationship to the event and the people involved. A stranger does not have the authority to judge a conflict and make decisions about punishment. Instead, families and communities are the ones involved in mediation and decision-making.

Restorative Justice acknowledges that people's perspectives on what happened will always differ and that there is no way to determine the "truth" of the events that occurred. The primary focus of the process is to address the harm and the causes of what happened.

The notions of justice in Indigenous communities differ fundamentally from those in Western systems. Instead of defining offenders and victims based solely on their actions, restorative teaching aims to look beyond the action itself and identify the origins of the harm, allowing community members to create positive change moving forward.

"Defining Restorative." *International Institute for Restorative Practices*, www.iirp.edu/defining-restorative/history. Accessed 16 July 2020.

Leung, May. "The Origins of Restorative Justice." *Canadian Forum on Civil Justice*, 1999, www.cfcj-fcjc.org/sites/default/files/docs/hosted/17445-restorative_justice.pdf. Accessed 16 July 2020.

Acknowledgment of the Origins of Restorative Practices

Here is a sample acknowledgment of origins you can use when facilitating a circle. You can also write your own!

Acknowledgement of Origins:
Restorative Practices are becoming a popular methodology for community building and conflict resolution in many institutions that are a product of white culture, such as schools and prisons. Traditional disciplinary systems are also borne of whiteness. That is why Restorative Practices, coming from Indigenous roots, are particularly important as they present an anti-racist alternative to flawed structural systems that are pervasive within these institutions. With that being said, when Restorative Practices are used without acknowledging their origins in these spaces, it becomes a form of whitewashing and cultural appropriation. For that reason, we want to acknowledge the Indigenous origins of Restorative Practices and acknowledge how many of the institutions in which it is used come from a history of racism.

Part 2:

Circles

How to Lead a Circle

Circles are a central part of Restorative Practices. They can be used to: foster community building; support mental health initiatives; begin a dialogue that leads into future projects; combat social and political inequality; or enact harm repair.* With a well-trained, trauma-informed facilitator, circles are trauma-sensitive and effective ways of leading a conversation with a group of people. Circles are also a great way to introduce your community to Restorative Practices and foster community buy-in. After all, Restorative Practices are about the community; if they do not understand the process, it will not be successful. In schools, it is especially important for youth to lead circles and take matters of community and school climate into their own hands. For this reason, circles can be especially empowering for youth. Below are some instructions for how to lead a circle.

*Harm repair circles are super important and follow a different process we will not be getting into right now.

1.) **Use a talking piece.** Rooted in Indigenous culture, a talking piece is an item that is passed around the circle and indicates who is talking. Whoever is not holding a talking piece should be silent. It might be nice to use an item of personal significance as a talking piece and explain what it means to you or why you chose it. (For a remote circle, having everyone explain what they chose for their talking piece and why is a great introduction!)

2.) **Establish norms.** Make sure you and everyone in your circle are on the same page! Here are some norms you might want to use. And remember, circle members might have norms to share as well.

   a.) <u>Say just enough.</u> This is particularly important when it comes to dialogue based circles. Circles could go on for hours, but make sure they meet the time limit! You can be transparent with your participants about this.

   b.) <u>Consider intention, but impact matters more.</u> Sometimes, people might say something hurtful. It is important to acknowledge that they might not have meant it, but the impact the comment has on the person is the most important piece. From there, harm can be repaired.

   c.) <u>Speak from the heart.</u> Circles are all about sincerity. Being open is important.

   d.) <u>Uncomfortable is okay; unsafe is not.</u> Challenge your participants to push the limits of their comfort zone, but *never* force them to share anything or make themselves vulnerable if they do not want to. Passing is always optional!

e.) <u>What happens in the circle stays in the circle.</u> Having confidentiality is imperative in making a circle a safe space. With that being said, make sure to be transparent about any mandated reporting requirements your school may have!

3.) **Pass the talking piece to the left.** Traditionally, the talking piece is passed in a clockwise rotation. The facilitator poses a point for discussion and passes the talking piece to their left. Anyone (including the facilitator) can choose to respond or pass. This is especially important because of trauma-sensitive practices: the fact that participants know the order ahead of time helps to create a sense of routine and can be reassuring.

4.) **Follow the prompts.** A great way to lead a circle is to follow a series of conversation prompts. They can also be reactions to music, video, or written word. They can even be one-word reactions if you're looking for a quick round! Contained in this booklet are sample prompts for circles you could lead. You can also design your own circles!

Circle 1: Experiences With Punitive Justice

The goal of this circle is for participants to share how they have been impacted by punitive justice in the past. This is a good circle for a group of young people who are new to the concept of Restorative Justice and who have gone through a punitive system in previous schools or educational settings.

Acknowledgement of Origins:
Insert an acknowledgment of the roots of Restorative Practices here. You can write your own, or you can use one from the resource page included in this booklet.

Opener:
Punitive Justice focuses on punishing the individual, as opposed to Restorative Justice, which aims to repair relationships and promote positive connections. Punitive Justice is often used as a model in schools. In this circle, we are going to share our experiences with punishment-focused systems.

Norms:
Establish norms: see "How to Lead a Circle" resource.

Prompts:
1.) Go around and say names, pronouns, and one thing you're really proud of.
2.) Share a time that you remember being punished in school when you were younger.
3.) How did this make you feel? Why do you think it made you feel that way?
4.) Do you remember a time when a punishment made you feel frustrated or misunderstood?
5.) How do you think that the situation you mentioned could have been handled differently? Is there another way that might have led to a better outcome or been better for the people involved?

I am now going to read a quote.

> "Restorative Justice came about as a way to repair harm when a wrong has occurred. It often involves the wrongdoer engaging with their community and the people they hurt in a healing process."

6.) Take a moment to reflect on this information.

7.) Thinking back to your punishment experience, can you recall what the healing process was like? For example, did an authority figure make you apologize?

8.) How was this experience for you? Do you feel that your needs were recognized?

9.) How do you think using these concepts of community involvement and healing would have changed your experience?

10.)   To wrap this circle up, I just wanted to share one final quote to leave you all thinking about the concept of Restorative Justice.

"...the cycle of reprisal and counter reprisal that had characterized their national history had to be broken and that the only way to do this was to go beyond retributive justice to Restorative Justice, to move on to forgiveness, because without it there was no future."
- Desmond Tutu

Thank your participants for joining you in this circle.

Circle 2: Youth Activism and Adultism

The goal for this circle is to give a space for young people to acknowledge and address instances of adultism they may face in their day-to-day lives, especially when they assume leadership roles. The circle is less for taking direct action, and more for allowing young people to figure out how this affects their lives.

Acknowledgement of Origins:
Insert an acknowledgment of the roots of Restorative Practices here. You can write your own, or you can use one from the resource page included in this booklet.

Opener:
Thank you for coming to this circle. Today, we are going to take a look at our relationships with adults through the lens of ageism. Ageism refers to discrimination against and oppression of young people and the elderly in a way that privileges adults. Specifically, we will be looking at ageism towards young people, which is called adultism.

Norms:
Establish norms: see "How to Lead a Circle" resource.

Prompts:
1.) Let's start by saying our names, pronouns, and ages.
2.) What are some ways our societies and institutions categorize people by age? How do we place limits on people's ability to do something based on their age? These do not necessarily have to be bad things.

If not mentioned, some things you can add are:
- *grade levels*
- *movie ratings*
- *drinking and smoking ages*
- *age of consent*
- *driving age*
- *voting age*
- *guardians setting age requirements for their children to do certain things*
- *religious age-based celebrations and rites of passage (ie: baptisms and bar/bat mitzvahs)*
- *birthdays*

Clearly, for better or for worse, our society revolves around the concept of age as a marker for maturity and capacity to do certain things. Some of these limitations make sense. For example, drinking or smoking as a teenager can affect your brain development during a critical period of growth. Some things can be more controversial. For example, many people think that the voting age should be younger because young people are capable of making decisions about their government.

3.) What is an assumption that someone made about you based on your age that wasn't true? How has an adult treated you based on your age that didn't reflect who you are? How did it make you feel?

You can also offer general assumptions adults make about young people or ways they treat youth, such as:
- *assuming they are addicted to their phones*
- *assuming they are irresponsible with their social media/public image*
- *assuming young people can't or don't have political views, or assuming they don't matter*
- *dismissing concerns (ie: "You'll understand when you're older.")*
- *being surprised at youth displays of maturity (ie: "You're so responsible for your age!")*

4.) What is one thing you wish adults understood about your perspective?
5.) What are some ways that adultism intersects with other identities/forms of discrimination?
You can add:
- *young girls who look older/develop earlier being sexualized*
- *young people of color being treated as adults*
- *assumptions about age made about people with disabilities*

As young people, we are often the victims of adultism, but we also might be perpetuating adultism to younger people.
Here, you can add specific examples of horizontal adultism, such as:
- *reinforcing grade hierarchies*
- *making fun of people based on their age*
- *excluding people based on their age*
- *undermining a person's intelligence or maturity based on their age*

6.) What is an assumption you make about young people that might be seen as adultist behavior?

7.) What is one thing you want to do or change moving forward? (This could be how you treat other young people or respond to adultist behavior coming from someone else.)

Thank your participants for joining you in this circle.

Circle 3: Youth Activism and Adultism: How to be an Ally

This <u>youth-led</u> circle is intended to help <u>adults</u> support the youth in their communities without downplaying their abilities and skills and offer advice without patronizing or overshadowing young people. This is a circle designed to include <u>adults and youth</u> who want to share their feelings and experiences.

Acknowledgement of Origins:
Insert an acknowledgment of the roots of Restorative Practices here. You can write your own, or you can use one from the resource page included in this booklet.

Opener:
Thank you for joining this circle. Today, we will be discussing how adults can be allies to youth in their activism. Thank you to the adults in the space for seeking to better understand what youth allyship means, and a special thanks to the youth who are volunteering to share their experiences with the circle.

Norms:
Establish norms: see "How to Lead a Circle" resource.

Prompts:
1.) Let's start by saying our names, pronouns, and ages.
2.) For adults, what is one thing you wish young people understood about being an adult? For young people, what is one thing you wish adults remembered or knew about being a young person?
3.) What constitutes an adult? Who would you consider an adult?

In the United States, persons over the age of 18 are considered legal adults. When a person turns 18, they are allowed to vote, gamble, work in certain fields, and, in some cases, purchase and possess addictive substances that younger people cannot. Even though people are legally adults at 18, young people of different ages can face adultism.

4.) How do your experiences of what being an adult means differ from the legal definition? How do you personally define being an adult? (Was there a moment in your life that you felt you had reached adulthood? If not yet, is there a moment you think will define your adulthood?)

5.) For adults: what is one thing you enjoyed about being a young person? For young people: What is one thing you are looking forward to about being an adult?
6.) For adults: what is something that frustrated you about how you were treated by other adults as a young person? For young people: what is one thing that frustrates you about how you are treated by adults?
7.) For adults: what is one thing that you intend to do to be supportive to young people in your daily life, moving forward from this circle? For young people: what is one thing you would like for adults to do to support you in your daily lives, moving forward from this circle?

Thank your participants for joining you in this circle.

Circle 4: Local Youth Activism And COVID-19

The intent behind this circle is to encourage young people to get involved in their local communities and governments to enact political and social change in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledgement of Origins:
Insert an acknowledgment of the roots of Restorative Practices here. You can write your own, or you can use one from the resource page included in this booklet.

Opener:
Thank you for joining this circle. Today, we are going to discuss how our local communities are hurting from the recent pandemic and look at ways we can help better our communities as young people and take agency over our lives and futures.

Norms:
Establish norms: see "How to Lead a Circle" resource.

Prompts:
1.) Let's start by saying our names, pronouns, grades, and what we're hoping to get out of this circle.
2.) What is one way you feel your community has been harmed directly or indirectly as a result of the coronavirus pandemic?
3.) What are some ways you can enact change on a local level that might better your community?
   If these are not said, some ways you can suggest are:
   - *volunteering or fundraising for food pantries and survival shelters or other organizations that directly support COVID-19 relief in your communities.*
   - *voting in local elections*
   - *educating yourself and others about local elections (even if you can't vote)*
   - *driving people to the polls on election day*
   - *organizing online (or in person, if safe) community events about a particular social issue (like this)*
   - *writing an article or letter for your local or school newspaper*
   - *sewing or crafting personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks to donate*
   - *supporting local ballot measures that would help facilitate recovery from the pandemic by writing or delivering in-person testimonies*

- *following local and state public health guidelines around COVID-19 safety*
- *connect with community leaders and ask them what support they feel is lacking, then help them!*

At this point, you can also take a deeper dive into or hand out resources with information on any number of these topics.

4.) As young people, what is one obstacle you face in enacting social change based on your age?

5.) Based on your response to the previous question or anyone else's, how do you think we can empower ourselves and other young people to enact social change?

6.) To end this circle, I want us all to make a commitment, big or small, on how we can be agents of change in our community. Whether it be volunteering at a local food shelter, driving people to voting stations on election days, or organizing a public event, what can YOU do to support the people around you? Remember that being a community leader can also mean supporting existing projects of other community leaders.

7.) *If you have time, you can give participants an opportunity to share their commitments.*

Thank your participants for joining you in this circle.

OR, for a recurring event with this group of people:

8.) What is one of the methods of social action we discussed that you would be interested in doing?

9.) Based on people's answers, take the time to split up into groups and begin designing a project. If you so desire, you can work alone, but it might be easier with the support of your peers. Remember that being a community leader can also mean supporting existing projects of other community leaders.

In this scenario, you can choose, as a facilitator, how to best support your peers. You might want to join in a group as well. Remember to remind your peers that this does not have to be something huge. A group of people can organize to volunteer at a local organization on a set day of the week for a month, for example.

Thank your participants for joining you in this circle.

Circle 5: Personal Impacts of the Coronavirus

The goal of this circle is to begin the healing process as we emerge from an era of social isolation. For many—particularly those who suffer from conditions like anxiety or depression—the lack of human connection can be extremely difficult. Recognizing, understanding, and discussing ways to overcome these obstacles is important as we can apply these skills to other challenges in the future.

Acknowledgement of Origins:
Insert an acknowledgment of the roots of Restorative Practices here. You can write your own, or you can use one from the resource page included in this booklet.

Note for the facilitator:
Remember to make clear that this circle is a safe space and that what students say will not leave the room. In discussing confidentiality, ensure to also acknowledge applicable mandated reporting rules.

Norms:
Establish norms: see "How to Lead a Circle" resource.

Prompts:
1.) Let's start by saying our names, pronouns, and ages.
2.) Can you remember the first time you learned about COVID-19?
3.) What were your initial reactions?
4.) As we moved into quarantine, how did you think the situation would evolve?
   a.) If the participants are students: how did your peers, teachers, and guardians react and how did this impact what you felt?
5.) As you moved into a socially distanced routine, what kinds of things did you struggle with?
6.) Were you able to find solutions? If so, what were they?
7.) Were you able to find independent activities that you enjoy doing?
8.) What have you learned about yourself during these past few months?
9.) Looking back on your experience, what kind of support would have been helpful to you during the quarantine period?
10.) Finally, I want everyone to take a moment and think about what we have talked about during this circle. Consider how you can use the information you just learned to support your peers and yourself. Feel free to share.
   Thank your participants for joining you in this circle.

Circle 6: Privilege, Oppression, and the Coronavirus

In this circle, participants will explore the social implications of a global pandemic such as the coronavirus. They will examine how oppression and privilege based on social identity have been exacerbated during an era of quarantining and social distancing. Participants will also have an opportunity to share personal experiences of the implications of the coronavirus on social dynamics in the United States.

Acknowledgement of Origins:
Insert an acknowledgment of the roots of Restorative Practices here. You can write your own, or you can use one from the resource page included in this booklet.

Note for the Facilitator:
In this circle, it is going to be important to acknowledge that people may be discussing identity groups to which they do not personally belong. Assuming best intentions and being conscious of how words may impact others will be really important practices. Remember that intent does not equal impact, but acknowledge the validity of any feelings that may come up.

Norms:
Establish norms: see "How to Lead a Circle" resource.

Prompts:
   1.) Let's start by saying our names, pronouns, and ages.
   2.) What changes have you observed in oppression in the United States with the pandemic? What aspects have been exacerbated? What aspects have been reduced?
   3.) What changes have you observed in terms of privilege in the United States?
Now, I will read a quote.

> "Pre-existing social vulnerabilities only get worse following a disaster, and this is such a perfect example of that."
>   - Nicole A. Errett, University of Washington

In this quote, Nicole is referring to financial hardships exacerbated by the coronavirus. According to the New York Times, low-income families are more likely to contract and to spread the virus.

4.) How have you experienced or witnessed the impacts of coronavirus on income?

5.) What kinds of lifestyle changes have you experienced or witnessed families making to account for a loss in income?

6.) What effect do you think the pandemic has had on people's ability to equally participate in the democratic process?

7.) Who has been participating in in-person voting?

8.) Who has not been able to participate in in-person voting?

9.) What kind of long-term implications might this have?

10.)   Think about some of the aspects of privilege and oppression that have been impacted by the coronavirus and brainstorm one way that you could make a positive impact. *Take a moment to allow participants to think.*

11.)   Please write down your thoughts and feel free to share them with the group. *Pass out paper and writing utensils.*

Thank your participants for joining you in this circle.

How to Create Your Own Circle:

Making your own circle is just a matter of knowing how to lead a circle (see the "How to Lead a Circle" resource) and creating your own circle prompt sheets. This is a guide you can use to create your own circles about topics you are passionate about! Your circle can be about social issues, school climate, or even restorative practices; the choice is yours!

Name of Circle Here

Write the goal for the circle here. This can help clarify where the facilitator should lead the conversation.

Acknowledgement of Origins:
Insert an acknowledgment of the roots of Restorative Practices here. You can write your own, or you can use one from the resource page included in this booklet.

Opener:
Here is the facilitator's opening statement. They should say something along these lines before initiating the circle. This piece is optional.

Norms:
Establish norms: see "How to Lead a Circle" resource.

Prompts:
Next are the prompts. Give time for each student to respond. Passing is always an option.
    1.) Introductions.
    2.) Add a prompt here.

"At any point, you can insert a quote or some other type of writing or video to present to the circle. The
n, the prompt can be in response to the media."

    3.) Add a prompt here.
    4.) Add a prompt here.

At any point, you can also add notes for the facilitator. Maybe there are some extra prompts for a circle with fewer people or prompts that you can remove if you are short on time. Add these notes at your discretion.

     5.) Add as many prompts as you would like. Keep in mind timing though.
     6.) Closing prompt. Try to get a sense of finality in the circle this time around.

Thank your participants for joining you in this circle.