

Courageous Conversations

Talking with Students About Race, Gender, & Identity



Freewrite

"I love America more than any other country in this world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually."

- James A. Baldwin
- Think about art you've interacted with (at UMMA or elsewhere). How does it challenge your cultural perceptions in the United States?
- What has art called you to critique in American culture?

Norms

- Assume good intentions
- Make space, take space
- Brave space: say the thing
- See conflict as a learning opportunity

Introductions

Optionally, share any or all of the following:

- **Name**
- **One word** to describe how you are feeling going into this conversation
- **A norm** to add (if you have one!)

826 National Stand

We start putting our stand into action by respecting our students' identities, and taking the time to reflect on our own identities, and the perceptions, biases, assumptions, and ideas that we hold.



WE STAND *for our students.*

*for our students' right to express their opinions—**FREELY,**
CREATIVELY, and **SAFELY**—and to provide them the space to do that,
free of judgment and full of support.*

**826
National
Stand**



*for our students' right to **TELL** their stories, **SHARE** their experiences, and **SEEK** out information and answers.*

*for connecting our students to caring adults—volunteers eager to **LISTEN** as students search for answers and **DISCOVER** themselves.*

**826
National
Stand**

THROUGH OUR WORK *and our actions, we must continuously*
SUPPORT *the development of our students' voices and stories, and*
*also **CELEBRATE** those voices and stories.*



WE STAND *for building **DIVERSE** and **INCLUSIVE** environments for*
our students, our volunteers, and our staff.

Framing the Conversation

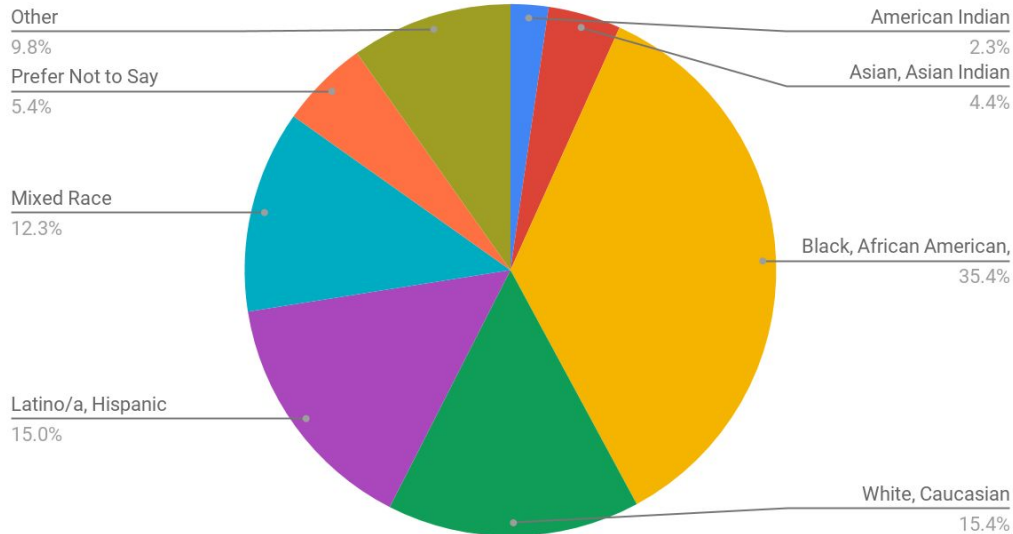
How do we **make space** for conversations about identity with our students?

How can we help students **authentically engage** with identity as they process current events?

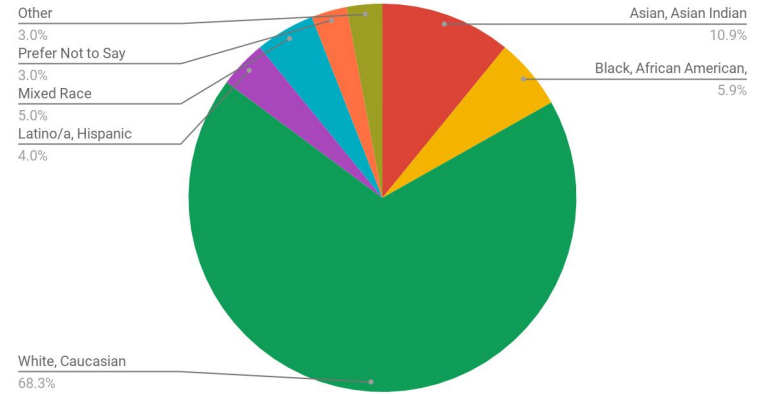
How can we be **reflective** about our own identities and what we ourselves are bringing into interactions with students?

Race and Ethnicity Demographics at 826michigan

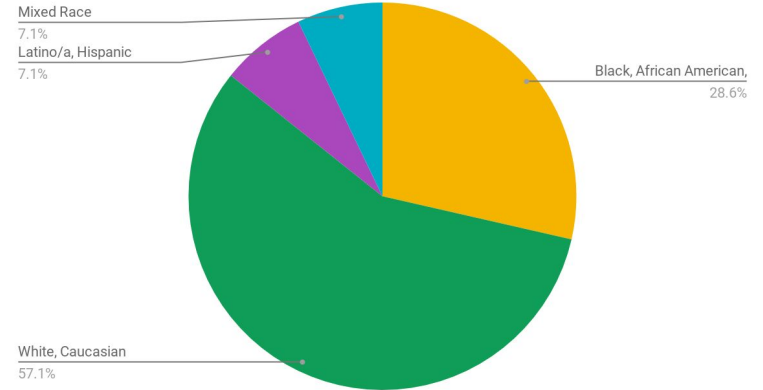
Student Race/Ethnicity Demographics



Volunteer Race/Ethnicity Demographics



Staff Race/Ethnicity Demographics



Intersectionality

- What is it?
- How does it relate to our work?

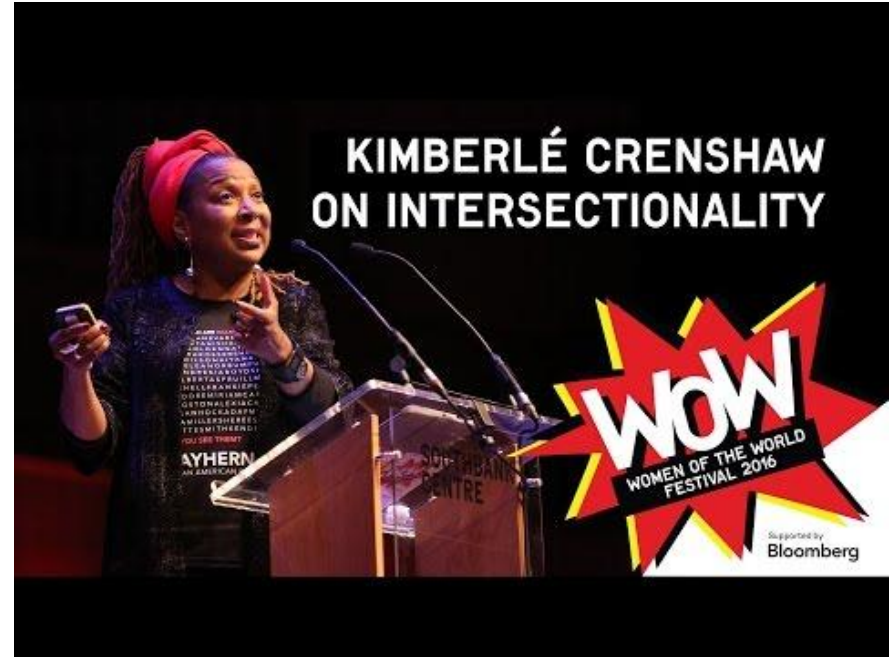
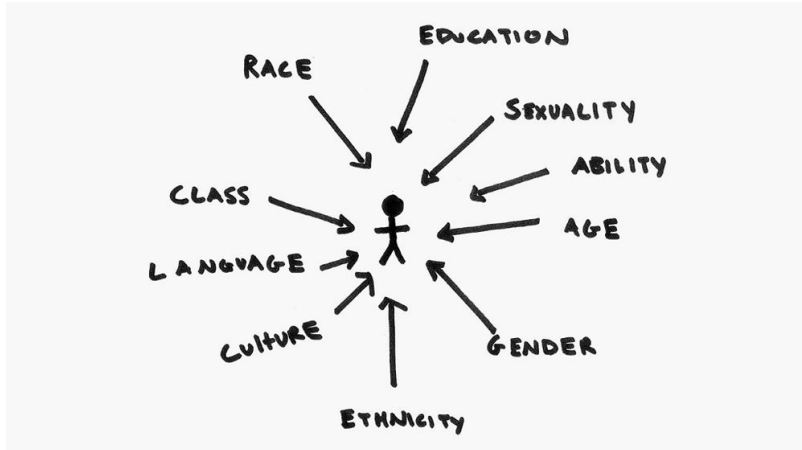
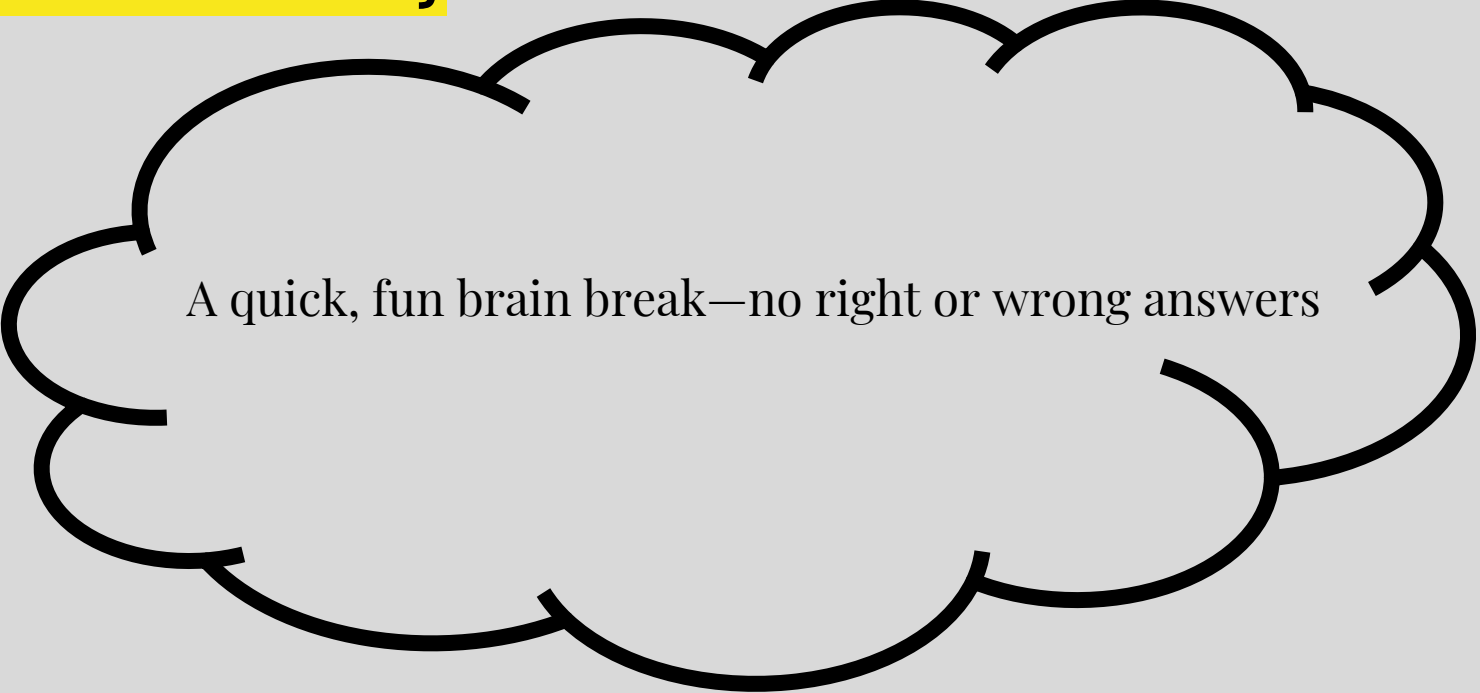


image from International Women's Development Agency

Association Activity



A quick, fun brain break—no right or wrong answers

[This video](#) won't insert into the slides, but let's take a quick excursion over to NYT to watch it after we wrap up the activity and compare answers.

What are Implicit Biases?

- Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an **unconscious manner**
- Encompass both favorable and unfavorable **assessments**
- Activated **involuntarily** and without an individual's awareness or intentional control
- Implicit biases are **not accessible** through introspection
- Cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people **based on characteristics** such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance
- Develop over the **course of a lifetime** beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages
- Early life **experiences**, our **culture**, and the **media** and **news programming** are often-cited origins of implicit associations

More on Implicit Bias

- Implicit biases are **pervasive**. EVERYONE has them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.
- Implicit and explicit biases are **related but distinct** mental constructs. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold **do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs** or even reflect stances we would endorse.
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own in-group**.
- Implicit biases are **malleable**. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually **unlearned**.

Warm Up

- What conversations about identity* have come up for you/do you anticipate might arise as you work with students?
- What current events do you suspect might draw strong reactions from your students?
- How might your own identities have an impact on your interactions with students?

*may include, but is not limited to, race, class, ethnicity, gender identity/expression, age, ability/disability, religion, or sexual orientation

Scenario 1

Students talk to you about their imagined stories for the characters who might populate a painting. One student says there are Muslim people there, and that they are terrorists hiding in the rocks, trying to kill people.

Strategies for Respectful Relationships

Student-Driven Solutions

Have a conversation with students about what is going on for them and their ideas for creative solutions or alternatives

Consider Unseen Identities

*There may be factors influencing your or a student's behavior that are not obvious. How might your identity affect your perception?
What is being triggered for you?*

LARA Method

Listen, Affirm, Respond, Add

Foster Reflection and Community

Have a conversation with students think about the impact of both of your actions on the community

Mutual Accountability

Demonstrate that you have high expectations for students and that you want their feedback and to meet their expectations as well.

Allow for Choice

The more choices students have, the more ownership they feel

Respectful

Engaging

Collaborative

Encouraging

Courageous

Scenario 1

Students talk to you about their imagined stories for the characters who might populate a painting. One student says there are Muslim people there, and that they are terrorists hiding in the rocks, trying to kill people.

Best Practices

DO hold the student accountable; let's turn this into a learning moment

Pause. Reflect with the student. “There are parts of this character that could be hurtful or seem to be making fun of people with _____ identity.”

Have a conversation about generalizations and complexity of people and characters. Consider:

- genre, audience, purpose
- model texts
- character motivations & desires
- writing from experience and thoughtful research

DO use age-appropriate language; Avoid complicated words and phrases (oppression, institutional racism, etc.)

Follow up with a museum or 826 staff member

Scenario 2

Outside the museum, the students are full of energy and enthusiasm and ideas. When they start on the tour, they begin to get quiet, and stop responding to your questions. A student is taking in everything around them in the museum, and notices to you that there are mostly paintings of white people in one room.

Don't try to
shape students'
narratives

Best Practices

- **DO be a good listener**
- **DO strive to ask open-ended questions**
- **DO validate students' feelings**

Sample Questions

- It seems like you had a lot of ideas about the art at first. How are you feeling now?
 - I noticed that too, and was wondering the same thing. Why do you think that is the case?
 - It's interesting that there are a lot of white people represented around this area, but that's not the case for the whole museum—why do you think that is? What else do you notice about the art in this room?
-

Scenarios 3

A student of yours seems visibly upset when you walk by a sculpture made of guns. When you ask her what's wrong, she says events around the country are making her feel stressed and anxious. In the past few weeks she seen swastikas and confederate flags in her community.

Best Practices

Scenario 3 White Nationalism

DO NOT be the student's therapist.

DO listen with compassion.

DO ask students
what they know
and **what they want to know.*****

DO help the student consider **actionable steps**, especially those involving writing

Do help the student make **connections across cases**

**Help! I'm caught in a
difficult conversation and I
don't know what to do!**

Help! I'm stuck!

Helpful conversation starters

- I don't know how to respond to that.
- Tell me why you feel/think that way.
- Let's learn more about _____ together.

Take-Aways

Here are ours; what are yours?

- Engage in conversation when possible. You don't need to be an expert!
 - Leave space for learning moments for yourself and the student.
 - Seek support when you need it.
 - You might make a mistake; consider it an opportunity for growth and learning. This is the same thing we tell our students.
-

**Thank you for courageously
participating!**
