

**Leading Social Justice in Your School**

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**Session 1: Who Am I and Why Am I Here?**

**Homework assignment #1**

The goal of this exercise is to reflect on understanding how you came to be who you are today. No one just wakes up and commits themselves to the #blacklivesmatter movement or to making sure students with mental health challenges receive proper services. We are products of our upbringing, but when was the last time you truly reflected on this, if at all? We have to be honest that despite our best efforts, our background manifests itself in how we live, how we teach, and most importantly for this work, how we lead.

Think about the areas of your identity where you are most empowered or disempowered. For example, maybe you feel empowered as a white male school leader but you feel disempowered in society as a Jewish male with the rise of anti-Semitic hate crimes. Maybe you feel empowered as a female African American school leader but disempowered when thinking about possible interactions with law enforcement when you leave your building. Analyzing these dichotomies is important to understanding your commitment to social justice. Some things you may want to consider to help process this activity are:

1. What was I taught about my identity growing up from my family that most affected my growth positively or negatively?
2. What messages did I receive about who I was when I left my home every day (in school, from friends, my teachers, etc.)?
3. HowHow did my schooling reinforce a positive or negative identity development for me?
4. What experiences in my life influenced the social justice causes I believe in?
5. What was I taught about the identity of others and how did that affect my identity development?
6. How did my upbringing create stereotypes and biases towards others that I’ve had to work to change (or still need to)?
7. What about my past identity experiences led me to become an educator and eventually a teacher or school leader?

Treat this as a journal exercise and come back to our next session ready to (voluntarily) speak about what this exercise was like for you.