Diversity Activities
First Thoughts

Objectives

- Participants will be able to think critically about and discuss appropriate approaches for challenging stereotypes and prejudice today.

Time

10 minutes

Materials

- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Post it notes or scratch paper
- Pencils or pens
- Box or small trashcan

Instructions

- Write the following First Thoughts categories in large print on the flipchart or whiteboard.

• Black	• Teenager
• White	• Gay
• Latino/Latina	• Lesbian
• Hispanic	• Overweight
• Asian	• Poor
• Old	• Rich
• Disabled	• Smart
• Christian	• Men
• Muslim	• Women
• Jewish	• Short
• Buddhist	• Tall
• Non-religious	• Sick

- Group participants in teams of two. If there are an odd number of people, the facilitator can serve as a partner.
- Give each participant a few post-it notes or scratch paper and a pencil or pen.
- One partner will choose one of entries listed on the poster and speak it out loud to the other team member. Voices can't be too loud, as everyone in the room will be participating.

Continued...

- As soon as the speaker is finished, the other team member will write down on their post-it note the first two or three most candid, uncensored thoughts or ideas that immediately come into their mind about the word their partner chose. They should respond quickly. Spelling is not important. They should not hold back. **They do not share or speak what was written on their paper – it is only for their own awareness. Partners should not try to read or look at what was written.**
- Ask them to take a few seconds to read and look at what they have written, then they should crumple up the paper and throw it in the box or trash can.
- Have the partners switch roles and repeat the exercise.
- If time permits, have each team member speak twice and write twice.

For Discussion

- Was this exercise symbolic of anything?
- Was it easy or hard to come up with your first thoughts? Did you resist writing them down?
- When you were the speaker, why did you choose the word from the list that you chose?
- What are some ways that people can "discard," or get rid of, their stereotypes?
- Were all of your responses negative? Are all stereotypes negative? Are positive stereotypes limiting?