Sweet Potato Comfort Pie™

Guide
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Sweet Potato Comfort Pie™

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A circle of nearly 200 people join hands for a blessing at the 2018 MLK Day of Service, an annual celebration of MLK’s legacy of peace, justice, equality and service with story-sharing circles and comfort pie giving.
Sweet Potato Comfort Pie poem

By Pastor Roslyn Harmon
Circle of Healing Ministry, August 2014

From the community of Golden Valley, Minnesota to wherever you reside
may this sweet potato pie soothe and warm your insides.
Take time to laugh, cry and remember those you love,
but never forget your strength that comes from above.
From family to community and community to your heart
unity and peace is where comfort and joy start.
So today be BLESSED remember to eat, pray and love
as you partake in making a difference,
for there is much to be proud of. Enjoy!
Sweet Potato Comfort Pie—a catalyst for caring and building community

The mission of Sweet Potato Comfort Pie is to strengthen existing — and nurture new — relationships through the creation and distribution of sweet potato pies. Sweet Potato Comfort Pies are intentionally prepared with love and a commitment to greater understanding, unity and justice. Sweet Potato Comfort Pies nourish story-sharing; and they offer comfort, gratitude and solidarity during times of struggle.

Ingredients of Sweet Potato Comfort Pie:
- Community
- Celebration
- Conversation
- Comfort
- Connection

The heart of the comfort pie experience (Words from Minnesota participants)
Responding to the call - keeping our eyes on the pies!  By Rose McGee

Ferguson, Missouri

August 9, 2014 … another bloody hot day. There I sat in the comfort of my air-conditioned home watching media coverage of another Black mother’s son lying lifeless on a scorching asphalt street … this time in Ferguson, Missouri. Like others prior, the news of Michael Brown’s death tore at my heart as I thought, that could have been my son. I ached for the unknown mother who would never again hear a response to her call, “Come on inside baby, it’s time to eat!” And so I wept.

Escalating hotter than the weather was the tremendous tension of the protests. As I viewed eyes filled with anger and fear flash across my television screen, I asked myself, what can I do? There came a soft yet clear response (I believe from God): “Go into your kitchen, make some sweet potato pies, pack your car, and deliver them down to Ferguson.” And so I did.

On Friday, August 29, 2014, at the crack of dawn, my son Adam and I hit the road with thirty freshly-baked sweet potato pies in the trunk of my car. My pastor daughter, Roslyn, created a poem to accompany each pie. (See page 4.) Upon arrival, first, I asked permission of each person as I offered them a gift of a pie and soon discovered that each one had something to share about how the pie had come at just the right time. And so I listened.

“Sweet potato pie is the ‘sacred dessert’ of Black people, and it has power. Not only does it give us energy, this pie links us to history, it soothes our spirits and renews us for the much-needed work.”
~ Rose McGee

Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

Our play-on-words “Keep your Eyes on the Pies” acknowledges a major anthem of the Civil Rights Movement, Keep Your Eyes on the Prize. Still relevant today, its powerful lyrics are about transcending oppression and moving forward despite all struggles and obstacles. Based on a traditional Black folk song, Gospel Plow, you can hear an amazing acappella performance of Keep Your Eyes on the Prize by Sweet Honey in the Rock on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtcZAqQUAgI
Golden Valley, Minnesota

The Ferguson stories sparked a deeper sense of urgency for me to do more. Commemorating the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the perfect start. I approached friends, neighbors and leaders for social justice in my community, who all loved the idea of a Sweet Potato Comfort Pie MLK Day of Service. In less than two months’ time, we planned the inaugural event, engaging over 50 inter-generational and culturally-diverse volunteers to help with hosting and baking 86 pies. (The number represented King’s age had he been alive in 2015.)

At the event, people shared personal stories, including experiences with racial discrimination, bullying, and overcoming hardships. Among themselves, participants then decided to whom to offer the pies. The pie recipients that year included fire fighters, hospital and nursing home staff, public school teachers and administrators, elected officials, youth groups, racial justice organizations, individuals, and families.

By then, people were beginning to call the pie project ‘a ministry’ and ‘a movement.’ If by a movement they meant putting something into action, then yes, indeed, Sweet Potato Comfort Pie – a catalyst for caring and creating community has become a movement.

Charleston, South Carolina

It was devastating to hear news that thirteen African Americans were senselessly shot (of which nine were killed) on June 17, 2015 while worshipping. In response, I mobilized the Sweet Potato Comfort Pie team to gather donations and organize a pie baking team. My neighbor Eden Bart and I traveled to Charleston, S.C., delivered - and then served-56 pies at the Mother Emanuel AME Church. There we received heartfelt appreciation from Charleston leaders - and tremendous national media coverage. However, it was the connections we made with the grieving (but not defeated) church members that will nourish us forever.
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Later, in November, and much closer to home, Jamar Clark, an unarmed 24-year-old African American man was fatally shot by Minneapolis police. In the days that followed, several local chefs enthusiastically joined me to bake and deliver sweet potato pies to protesters and community leaders outside the 4th Precinct in North Minneapolis.

As we were offering the pies on that chilly afternoon, many people began assembling for a candlelight vigil with national civil rights leaders and clergy. Some wondered, “What does pie have to do with this?” “Plenty,” we explained. “This is the ‘sacred dessert’ of Black people and it has power. Not only does it give us energy, this pie links us to history, it soothes our spirits and renews us for this much-needed work.”

The experience of serving *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie* during such painful and life-altering times has been tremendously humbling.

What’s next?

As my friend Kate Towle reminds me, “We just have to keep our eyes on the pies!”

“People are beginning to call the pie project ‘a movement.’ If by a movement they mean putting something into action, then yes, indeed, *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie – a catalyst for caring and creating community* is becoming a movement.”

~Rose McGee
Deep roots of sweet potato pie  
By Kate Towle

The sweet potato, or *Ipomoea batatas*, is a delicious and nutritious root vegetable that grows easily in the South because of the warm climate. I have often heard Rose McGee share with audiences how upon first seeing the tubular vegetable, West African captives, who were brought to the United States as slaves, used the word *ayame*. Over time that name was shortened down to the term *yam*. Whole sweet potatoes were roasted outdoors over fire for meals, and eventually pies were created for the plantation owners.

After emancipation, when African American cooks gained more access to their own equipment and refined ingredients, they continued the tradition of baking with sweet potatoes – especially the pie. As decades passed, it became common knowledge among many: *a good sweet potato pie is hard to resist.* “And that’s how sweet potato pie grew to become the ‘sacred dessert’ of Black culture,” proclaims Rose McGee.

Educator and civil rights leader Mary McLeod Bethune (born to parents who had been slaves) was known for her creativity and resourcefulness. In the early 1900s, she sold sweet potato pies from her bicycle to help raise funds for a school for Black girls. Today, Bethune-Cookman University continues her legacy in Daytona, Florida. Rose considers Mary McLeod Bethune as one of her “sheroes.” When Rose first visited the college campus in 1982, she recounts having “felt” a special bond to this powerful woman. Rose never guessed the connection would be sweet potato pie.

In 2006, Rose McGee traveled to Tuskegee University to learn first-hand a bit more about botanist, chemist, scientist, and inventor Dr. George Washington Carver’s work with the sweet potato. Several professors met with her and shared stories of the iconic Dr. Carver’s brilliance. Not only did he find hundreds of uses for the sweet potato - he proved its many health benefits. During the 1930s, Dr. Carver published his original sweet potato pie recipe.

Having been raised by her grandmothers, Rose has long known the power of pie. When she began selling her pies at the Minneapolis Farmers Market in 2003, she was surprised at how popular they became. As she thought more about the sweet potato’s deep, fibrous roots and the many generations of struggles of African American people, she decided to name her business *Deep Roots Gourmet Desserts.*

As an educator by training, Rose McGee’s instincts to teach history and culture ignite, whether she’s selling pies at a farmer’s market or demonstrating how to make pies at the Minnesota History Center. Therefore, this *Guide* offers a few sample Learning Activities for young people and adults to carry forward the ideals of *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie* – to build just and caring communities for everyone.
The *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie* recipe

This is Rose McGee’s own award-winning recipe for sweet potato pie. Rose shares this “sacred dessert” of Black culture with the belief that giving, receiving and enjoying this *comfort pie* helps to build just and caring community for all.

### Traditional Sweet Potato Pie

By Rose McGee, Owner, Deep Roots Gourmet Desserts™

**Ingredients** *(makes two 9” pies):*

- 4 medium to large sweet potatoes, cooked (Boil until soft with skin on. Peel off skin before making filling.)
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 stick of butter (melt)
- 1 cup milk (whole, evaporated, or condensed)
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1 tablespoon nutmeg
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon lemon extract
- 2 unbaked pie shells

**Directions**

Preheat oven to 400° F.

Use a hand or stand mixer. In a large mixing bowl:

1. Blend cooked sweet potatoes with the two sugars.
2. Blend in eggs.
3. Blend in melted butter.
5. Add milk. Mix well.
6. Add lemon last (it balances out the ingredients). Mix well.
7. Pour batter into pie shells.
8. Reduce heat to 350° F and bake 60 minutes or until well-set.
9. Remove from oven. Allow to cool and firm up at least 1 hour before eating.
10. Do not wrap for packaging until pie is completely cooled down – about 2 hours.
Sharing Sweet Potato Comfort Pies

Two ways to share—or “gift” the pies:
There are two ways that we share comfort pies: (a) At community events where participants themselves decide where, or to whom, to offer the pies, or; (b) In response to community hardship or crisis. In both scenarios, the pies are offered for healing, comfort, gratitude and solidarity. It is an honor to recognize service and accomplishments that often go un-noticed and to celebrate those who work toward a just and peaceful world.

a) Hosting an Event: Sweet Potato Comfort Pie gatherings are intentional gatherings around an important occasion or community issue. Participants join in circle, to share pie and share stories that build awareness, empathy, and connection. (Thoughtful and relevant story prompts are invaluable.) As part of the story circle experience, participants decide among themselves who to “gift” with the Sweet Potato Comfort Pies baked earlier by community members. The book, Story Circle Stories, by Rose McGee and Ann Fosco, features prompts and guidelines for facilitating such gatherings.

b) Responding to Community Hardship:
• Beforehand, always check in with the community. Find key stakeholders to request permission to bring in the pies and to be informed of sensitive issues.

• When presenting Sweet Potato Comfort Pie to individuals, groups or organizations, always approach first by asking permission to give a pie. Rose McGee’s suggested Script for Offering a Sweet Potato Comfort Pie follows.

The “call and response”
“First, there is the call, or awareness of, a person or community that could use a good Sweet Potato Comfort Pie.

Then, there’s the issue of how we need to respond - with the deepest respect and humility.…

I guess we’re bringing a whole new meaning to the expression ‘humble pie’.”

~Rose McGee

(Left to right) Mary Scott, President of the Senior’s Association at Mother Emanuel AME Church, accepts a Sweet Potato Comfort Pie from Rose McGee and Eden Bart. Charleston, South Carolina, August, 2015.
Script for offering a *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie*

This is a sample script we have used in our **MLK Day of Service** pie gifting. Please adapt it for your own pie giving.

“I would be honored if you allowed me to present you with this gift…a *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie*. I am offering this pie to you because …

(Give your reason here.)

Below are some examples from our pie offerings:

- “to express my solidarity with your organization’s work to empower young people”;
- “to provide comfort and support as you’re struggling to keep your home”;
- “in gratitude for everything this school does to meet the needs of all students”;
- “to thank you for serving our community…” e.g. for teachers, emergency services providers, elected officials, care givers, etc.

Then, tell the story of your *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie* initiative.

(Example: “On Saturday, January 16, 2016, community volunteers baked 87 sweet potato pies in celebration of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s Day of Service. The number 87 represents the age Dr. King would have been this year. In honor of his legacy of serving for equality, the 87 pies are being presented to individuals and groups throughout the community. You are one of those 87.”)

“As a symbol of caring and building community, this delicious pie was created using the award-winning recipe of Rose McGee of Golden Valley, Minnesota. She is also the visionary behind *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie* – drawn from her own childhood experiences of baking and delivering pies with her great-grandmother and grandmother to comfort neighbors and friends.”

“This *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie*’s ingredients are listed on the box. The pie was baked in a certified kitchen. **Insert your details here.** (Example: “Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley.”)

“With your permission, I would like to read this poem that accompanies each pie. It was written by Pastor Roslyn Harmon of Golden Valley, Minnesota. Thank you. Please enjoy your pie!”
**Story circles - how we share and listen**

**Convening in circle** is an ancient approach to solving real challenges as people listen to each other’s authentic stories face-to-face…everyone is on the same level.


**Story circles** can be used by anyone: communities, schools, teachers, parents, businesses, non-profits, government agencies, law enforcement – anyone! Without barriers, people of any ethnicity, age, economic status, gender, nationality, or religion can connect in circle.

“A Story Circle…”
- begins with a check-in
- proceeds with a prompt
- summarized with reflections
- concludes with a check-out

**Where to begin?**

- For check-in, start with a common theme that anyone can identify with: “Tell us what you like or do not like about your name.”
  - Stories are now in the making.
  - From these stories, relationships are being established.

- With the next prompt go a bit deeper: “Speak of a time when you experienced some sort of discrimination.”

- For *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie*, the next prompt would be: “Who would you like to gift a pie to and tell us why?”

- For check-out, ask each participant to respond with one word for each: “After today, I feel____, and I will___.”

““It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those.”
~Audre Lorde

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Basic guidelines for holding circles

- Physical meeting space is safe and welcoming.
- Seating arrangement is set up in a circle.
- A facilitator who understands the circle process is key for holding an effective gathering.
- A talking piece (i.e. a stick, a feather, a stone, etc.) is held by each person speaking and symbolizes the value of that person’s voice and presence.
- After the first person speaks, conversation moves to the left which is symbolic of the heart’s location – and that what’s being spoken is authentic.
- Do not interrupt the person speaking.
- It is okay to “pause” if emotional moment occurs. It is okay to say “Pass” if not ready to speak.
- What goes on in circle – stays in circle.

**Skilled facilitation** sets the tone. An effective story circle is intentionally framed in equity, balance, respect, and safeness. This means establishing trust early on, holding that bond by not violating what may (at times) become highly sensitive and vulnerable moments for some of the participants.

**Reflective process** is critical. Reflection time needs to be part of the story circle agenda. Participants need to re-cap what just happened. This can be led with a prompt or by using a creative harvesting approach (i.e., poems, drawings, dramatic interpretation, etc.).

It is also extremely important to schedule a follow-up story circle session that focuses on reflections. In Golden Valley, Minnesota, three weeks after the MLK event, *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie* participants reconvened to hear stories from people after the MLK Day of Service pie distribution. Those who gave the pies, as well as those who received, shared powerful stories of transformation.
Reflections - the power of pie giving, receiving, creating

Andrea Bejarao-Robinson
(Pie to Dr. Carlton Jenkins)

“I saw something great when I first met Dr. Carlton Jenkins in his interview for Superintendent of Robbinsdale Public Schools. Clearly, he was a person who would fight for equality throughout the programs in the District. Teaching both special education students and gifted and talented students, I wanted to be assured that everyone would be well-served. I was, and remain, very impressed with him. When I gave him the pie, I could see he was moved, and then he shared his story with me. Our connection has grown since. As a Colombian-born, American-bred woman, I’m proud to call Dr. Jenkins a friend. “The gift of a Sweet Potato Comfort Pie shaped my DNA - it was about love and the potential of the community.”
~Dr. Carlton Jenkins

Linda Lucero
(Pie from Freesia Towle)

“We live in a world that has universal adversity. The Creator has many gifts to send through other people. The Creator sends angels out with gifts. This is how I received my gift one day. My angel came to me delivering a pie. It wasn't just any pie! Oh, no! It was a special Rose McGee Comfort Pie. My angel's name is Freesia Towle. Her Native-given name is White Owl Woman. Adversity is one of the tools Creator uses to strengthen us. Rose McGee's Sweet Potato Comfort Pies come to us sent by angels so we are never alone in our adversity. Sometimes the Spirit sends us the gift of a Sweet Potato Comfort Pie.”

Linda Lucero is a Traditional Healer and 7th-Generation Circle Keeper born and raised in White Earth Nation.

Cleveland Darnell Miller
(Pie from Rose McGee)

“One morning as I was getting ready for work, I was hit with the devastating news that I needed to submit $300 to my landlord that I didn’t have. Meanwhile, my friend Kate invited me to a Sweet Potato Comfort Pie planning session. We were asked to go around the circle to share our own story about what brought us there. I
shared how I knew that I represented youth who are being racially profiled and being denied access to a host of opportunities. Overwhelmed, I burst into tears. The people in the room were amazingly open and kind. Everyone cried with me. They cared about me and my story. Then, Rose McGee came over with the sweet potato pie that she was planning to give to a dignitary in the room, saying, ‘I’ve decided that you’re the one who needs this pie.’ And I really did. For those who say sweet potato pie can’t change people’s lives, they need to hear my story.”

Cleveland Darnell Miller contributed to the curriculum samples in this Guide.

Sara Osman (Pie to Youth Undoing Institutional Racism)

“During the Sweet Potato Comfort Pie event, I was truly skeptical as to the power that pie really had to bring people together. I’ve never been a sentimental person, nor do I think I will ever be. But I decided that there was no group more deserving than the amazing young people I work with, so I shared the pie with them. It helped me really understand the entire purpose of the pie sharing in a way that I wasn’t able to during the event. Sharing the pie was less about the pie and more about the people I was sharing the space with. There was a certain shift in the mood following the passage I read after offering them the pie. It became a more emotionally-connected room. I was much more aware and in tune with the people in the room and how absolutely excited they were to eat some pie. It wasn’t until much later that I reflected on what exactly the pie sharing experience had helped me realize. The pie itself did not have as much meaning as the gesture of giving the pie did. It took me a while, but I now understand how important it is to reach out and what better way than to build community through pie.

Sara Osman attended the University of Minnesota with majors in International Law and African Studies.

Leslie Redmond (Pie from Rose McGee)

Leslie received her pie at the Black Lives Matter-led encampment at the 4th Precinct, an around-the-clock demonstration for justice after Minneapolis police fatally shot Jamar Clark. When local chefs (organized by Rose McGee) arrived to give pies, Leslie was outraged when she saw a woman hand a pie over the fence to a white police officer. Looking closer, she recognized that woman—it was Rose McGee! Only a few days earlier, on November 15th—the very night that Jamar Clark was killed—Rose had presented her with the William E. McGee Scholarship Award from the Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers, named after Rose’s late husband. When Leslie saw Rose, she questioned, Why pies? Why here? The two women talked. Leslie told Rose that the night before, police at the 4th Precinct had pointed guns, sprayed mace and tear gas, and shot rubber bullets at her and other protesters. The women continued to talk. Leslie shared how she had received the McGee Award for her passion and leadership for justice (exactly what brought her to the front of the Jamar Clark justice work). Rose instilled in Leslie her belief that Billy (her late husband) lives.
through inspirational young leaders like her. The women found common ground about the need to understand the sources of pain and inequality - and the need to demand justice and heal with love. *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie* created space for these two women to share more deeply and to come together for joint work.

Leslie Redmond is a law student at St. Thomas University in Saint Paul, MN. She shared her story at the 2016 MLK Day of Service and contributed to curriculum samples in this *Guide*.

**Joe Ramlet**  
(Hopkins High School  
2018 MLK Essay Winner)

At the 4th Annual Sweet Potato Comfort Pie MLK event, the City of Golden Valley sponsored its first literary contest inviting students to write how to make lives matter in the spirit of MLK’s dream. The contest was won by Joe Ramlet, a 10th grader from Hopkins High School, who read his essay to over nearly 200 guests that day. “We are all human,” Joe read, “but we are not all humane. If we were to participate in positive, constructive discourse, we would achieve the first step of understanding each other. We will see that, fundamentally, we are all humans made of the same things, and that we are different because of our experiences. Sharing our experiences will create the foothold for the understanding that will spark progress.” As Joe read, two other young men were listening closely. One was Hamz Jamari, a senior at Como High School in St. Paul, and Juan Sarenpa, a sophomore at Venture Academy, a Minneapolis charter school. Hamz and Juan are both leaders in YES!, the Youth Equity Solutions team, a youth development effort from Saint Mary University’s Missing Voices Project. When it came time to talk about lives that matter in the community and deserve to be recognized with a pie, Hamz and Juan decided unanimously that they would like to gift one of the pies at their table to Joe Ramlet—inspired by Joe’s call to not just be human, but to be humane. The boys made their case, and the table agreed that the pies should go to Joe.

**Martin Spies**  
(Baking Team)

In 2000, Martin Spies was born on MLK Day and was even named after Dr. King. No surprise that he felt right at home in the kitchen with Rose McGee and the other pie volunteers. It all came together for him when he attended the event the next day, “It was ground-breaking!” Martin said. “During the table discussions, we were asked to discuss a time we had felt injustice. Like a down coat allows you to face the cold, I feel as though these pies give us warmth. They allow us to face the discomfort. Receiving the *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie* must be wonderful, but there’s also a healing aspect of baking the pies in an environment of cooperation and respect.”

~Martin Spies

Martin Spies is a pie volunteer and attended Cooper High School in Robbinsdale, MN, where he was a member of the honor society.
More Pie Recipients

Hector Mastascostillo, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran, was deployed 13 times in an 18-year military career that took him to almost 60 countries. Hector was recipient of the very first Sweet Potato Comfort Pie in August 2014. He and his wife Trista (and sons) reside in Lakeville, Minnesota.

Minnesota Congressman Keith Ellison speaking at the 2016 Sweet Potato Comfort Pie MLK Day of Service in Golden Valley, MN. Representative Ellison was the first African American elected from Minnesota to the U.S. House and the first Muslim elected to Federal office.

WE WIN Institute is a community-based organization dedicated to the academic and social success of all children - fostering a "can do" attitude and a positive belief in themselves, their communities, and their world. Jameica Norman, Reba Kissell, Rakia Norman, Selena Lerma, Titi Bediako and Tyona Spencer helped in every aspect of pie baking.

Voices for Racial Justice works with communities to build racial equity into conversations about education, economic opportunity, health, safe neighborhoods, affordable housing, public transportation, criminal justice, and more…to lead the way toward more inclusive and equitable Minnesota.

YouthCARE (Youth for Cultural Appreciation & Racial Equality) inspires the community and intercultural leadership of city youth, ages 7-18. From left to right: Dr. Willie Dean, Executive Director, Kate Towle, Isiah Jones, Ariel Gittens, Nardos Tesfalidet and Kou Xiong.

The 810 Project Founder, Tim Daniels (left) is presented a pie from Farrell Terry (right) of Eagan, Minnesota who appreciates Tim’s vision of the “810 Project” in North Minneapolis. Tim, with his own time and resources is building a safe space for people to come in off the streets for prayer and healing.

The East Side Freedom Library brings people together across cultures through the arts and stories, offering unique historical collections, films, performances, and forums for current events. Located on Saint Paul’s Eastside, it was a long-time vision for founders Beth Cleary and Peter Rachleff.
Practical suggestions for making and serving pies

Becoming Green by Dr. Rose Chu

To sustain a community for generations to come, we MUST be good stewards of our environment. Sweet Potato Comfort Pie is not just an event, but a community engagement process that involves many touch points along the way to becoming “green.” This means being mindful of how this initiative is impacting the environment from purchasing raw materials to serving the pies.

What is the beginning of “greening” Sweet Potato Comfort Pie? The following says it best!

Event greening

“…is the process of incorporating socially and environmentally responsible decision-making into the planning, organization and implementation of, and participation in, an event.

It involves including sustainable development principles and practices in all levels of event organization, and aims to ensure that an event is hosted responsibly.

It represents the total package of interventions at an event, and needs to be done in an integrated manner.

Event greening should start at the inception of the project, and should involve all the key role players, such as clients, organizers, venues, sub-contractors and suppliers.”

Retrieved from:

Resources with some sobering facts:

A. Know what’s possible in your event location:

The amount of waste we can reduce is contingent on recycling programs available at your county or city. Please check your resources in advance.

Twin Cities:
http://www.rethinkrecycling.com, a one stop resource with links to the following counties: Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington.

South Dakota:
http://denr.sd.gov/des/wm/recycle/recyclemainpage.aspx
http://www.sdstate.edu/sustainability/.

North Dakota:

(In researching your local information and checking out resources from other counties or states, it becomes an opportunity to do some needs assessment and advocate for necessary changes to enhance programs and services.)
B. Choosing an industrial-grade kitchen:

1. Check in advance that there are sufficient tools available to prepare the number of pies needed for your event.
   - Large metal baking pans to hold pies.
   - An industrial-strength mixer.
   - Measuring cups.
   - Small pots to heat butter.
   - Large pots to boil sweet potatoes.
   - Large containers to hold peeled sweet potatoes.
   - Utensils that are washable and reusable.
   - An oven that can bake multiple pies at one time.

2. Plan out the space to have waste bins available or brought in for different recycling needs in the kitchen. (Check city/county/state resources for available bins and proper signage.)

3. If additional tools must be purchased, make sure they are washable and reusable OR biodegradable (instead of disposable ones).

C. Buying ingredients and materials:

1. Study the recipe, and scale up accordingly to get a more accurate measure of materials/ingredients needed.

2. Research if ingredients can be purchased in bulk to reduce packaging.

3. Research how ingredients are packaged in terms of individual sizes (e.g. butter sticks), to calculate number of units needed. (Make a chart – see sample attached).

4. Check out “green” options of how materials are packaged. (i.e., eggs in organically recyclable paper carton or in Styrofoam carton).

5. Bring your own boxes and bags when shopping.

6. Organize your shopping list to reduce travel.

D. Preparing the pies:

1. Use large pot to boil the sweet potatoes.

2. Be careful handling hot water.

3. Time and monitor how long it takes to cook the potatoes.

4. Thaw sticks of butter in advance before softening in a small pot.

5. Have labeled bins for organic recycling (if available):
   - Butter wrappings (if paper)
   - Sweet potato peels
   - Egg shells
   - Cardboard egg cartons
   - Milk cans
   - Food waste from snacks, pie testing, spills etc.

6. Figure out maximum pies to put in an oven; do not idle oven too long.

7. Have labeled bins for “regular” recycling:
   - Glass bottles (rinsed)
   - Plastic bottles (rinsed)
   - Milk cans (soaked and rinsed)
   - Soda cans (emptied)
   - Aluminum foil (wiped clean if possible)

8. Have ready a set of washable/reusable aprons.

9. Consider options for gloves used in food handling.
   a. Use disposable food handling gloves that are biodegradable (check amazon.com) OR
c. Consider quality gloves that are NOT single-use.

10. When serving snacks and drinks for volunteers and staff, be mindful of what and how they are served, and how waste is recycled as much as possible.

11. Consider how to handle leftover materials.
   o What can be given away, what can be recycled, what can be organically recycled.
   o How to package any leftovers.
   o Have reusable bags, boxes, recyclable plastic bags, and containers available.

E. Packaging the pies:
   1. Use recyclable paper boxes.
   2. Use paper inserts.
   3. Consider a “green” reminder insert:
      o What can be recycled: the box, the aluminum pie-pan (rinsed), paper inserts.
      o What can be organically recycled if available: food waste, decorative tissue paper, paper inserts and box if soiled with food stains.
      o How to serve the pie: avoid using disposable plastic ware.

F. Serving pies in a community event:
   1. Have a well-labeled recycling area for bottles, cans, etc.
   2. Have a well-labeled organic recycling area for food waste, napkins etc.
   3. Have a volunteer stationed at recycling center to direct “traffic.”
   4. Provide a few minutes in program to talk about being green.
   5. Alternatively, if time permits, design an icebreaker or opener activity (e.g. quiz, bingo game, matching game) to highlight why go green and how.

6. Consider options for serving the pies:
   a. Find a venue that has all the supplies for an event available on-site.
   b. Work with a local event rental business to provide all serving needs at the event: tableware, table cloth, etc.
      http://www.midwaypartyrental.com/corporate
      http://apresparty.iarbiz.com/
   c. Use biodegradable paper plates, cups and flatware.
      http://partyvalue.com/Go-Green/
      http://www.litineco.com/index.php
      http://greenpaperproducts.com

7. Substitute chart papers for plastic tablecloth.

8. Consider a venue that is accessible with public transportation.

G. Other considerations:
   1. Gluten-free option: Order gluten-free pie shells from local business (or check with co-ops), make shell with gluten-free recipe, OR serve without crust but with other gluten-free cookies. http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/recipe/gluten-free-piecrust
Sample chart to estimate ingredients to purchase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Original # of pies</th>
<th>Desired # of pies</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sticks of butter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4 sticks per pound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cups of packed brown sugar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cups of granulated sugar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>A large bag of sugar is 5 lbs. which yields about 10 to 12 cups. Need 3 bags.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of medium to large sweet potatoes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Wholesale, sweet potatoes are sold in 40-lb boxes. Need 2 boxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of eggs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>A large tray has 18 to 24 eggs (1.5 to 2 dozen). Need 2 trays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cups of milk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16 cups to a gallon of milk. Need 1 gallon and 1 quart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sweet Potato Comfort Pies must be prepared in a licensed or certified-approved kitchen. Health regulations regarding food are highly sensitive and vary from city to city. It is key to understand your community’s guidelines. Generally, churches and certain community centers have certified-approved kitchens. Since the pies are not being sold, there should not be an issue with having city licenses or permits.

Before ANYONE enters the kitchen, it is critical for ALL persons to receive an orientation that includes safety, equipment usage and how to handle food. A kitchen lead should be identified to oversee this aspect of the process. Prior to the day of baking, all people involved in the making and baking of the pies should receive the following communication:

(a) **Proper Attire** – Being in the kitchen is not the time or place for opened-toe shoes, shorts, sleeveless tops, or exposed stomachs. Avoid jewelry such as dangling earrings or finger rings (except wedding). Hair (including long beards) must be covered with hairnets or proper caps. Aprons and rubber gloves are to be worn at all times. Remove aprons and rubber gloves when leaving the kitchen area (i.e., trip to restroom). Dispose of used gloves. Upon kitchen re-entry, replace apron and new rubber gloves. If the weather is wet (snow, rain, etc.), bring an extra pair of shoes to wear in the kitchen. Dry shoes lower the risk of slippery floors that can lead to falls.
(b) **Hygiene** – Shower or bathe before arriving to work in the kitchen. Wear clean cloths, no perfumes or colognes nor fragranced hand lotions. People with colds/flu and other contagious viruses are not to work with making or packaging the pies. Best to stay home that day, get well, and help another time.

(c) **Sanitation** – Handwashing is key! Hands are to be washed with warm soap and water EVERY TIME one enters the kitchen. Yes, this does mean a lot of handwashing! A sink is located inside the kitchen for handwashing. The dishwater is not the place nor is the dish towel the item for drying hands.

(d) **Safety** – Kitchen equipment is not to be handled by everyone. The kitchen lead must determine who handles what prior to volunteers entering the kitchen. Professional mixers are very expensive while fire and heat from stoves and ovens can be dangerous if approached incorrectly.

(e) **Recycling, Composting** – See above. If your location does not compost or recycle, ask volunteers to take the material home. (And offer them a friendly suggestion that they start a recycling program.)
Practical suggestions for making and serving pies

Caring for the pies - packaging and retention

Although each community determines how to package pies in a way that expresses their own style, our Sweet Potato Comfort Pie recommendations are below:

(a) **Wrap it**: Wrap each pie with recyclable cellophane. Wrapping occurs after pie has cooled – about two hours. Wrapping too soon, while the pie is still hot or warm, will cause the pie to sweat and then become sour and spoiled. BE PATIENT and let it cool! With food safety concerns, a wrapped pie lessens the possibility of contamination.

(b) **Box it**: The wrapped pie is then placed into a recyclable box. Once inside the box, a copy of The Sweet Potato Comfort Pie Poem, written by Roslyn Harmon, is placed with the pie. However, your community may decide to create your own enclosure.

(c) **Label it**: The box lid label should clearly display the pie’s ingredients and notes the name of the certified kitchen location where the pie was baked.

(d) **Keep it fresh**: After the sweet potato pie is baked, it may be kept in normal room temperature for up to two days; up to one week in refrigerator; and frozen for an extended period. Include this information on the label and share it when a pie is given.
Curricular samples - engaging learning activities

Designed to complement *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie*, the following Learning Activities are SAMPLES of how to engage students and adults in reflection and dialogue around race, culture, identity, identity-based bullying and inequality. The work of creating just and caring communities is a lifelong journey, so these activities intentionally address building awareness, values and skills, spanning a range of developmental levels. Most importantly, they put sharing stories, listening, and learning with others at their center.

Of course, these activities would be greatly enriched with a slice of delicious sweet potato pie and learning about the *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie*. Perhaps they will inspire your group’s own calling to a *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie* service project. Welcome to the movement.

Community leaders, who are actively doing this work in their professional, academic, and service-oriented lives, developed these activities:

**Cleveland Miller**, Design Team Teacher, Kitty Anderson Youth Science Center, Science Museum of Minnesota

**Lyn Mitchell**, Bullying Prevention Specialist and Anti-Bias Educator

**Leslie Redmond**, J.D. Candidate and Black Law Student Association President, University of St. Thomas School of Law

**Kate Towle**, Educator and Youth Advocate, Editor, *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie Guide*
ACTIVITY:

Pieces of my multicultural self

Topics: Identity, Stereotypes, Identity-based bullying, Standing-up
Ages: Grades 5-up (Easily adaptable for adults and younger children)
For: Schools, youth groups, community organizations
How: Pairs, large group
Time: 40-55 minutes

Purpose: the goal of this activity is building awareness, empathy and skills for a culture where all people feel valued for who they are - and where bullying, discrimination and inequality become rare. Participants will: 1) identify and share dimensions of their own identities and hear others’ stories; 2) learn about the hurtful and harmful impact of bias, identity-based bullying, exclusion, and discrimination; and 3) develop the skill and will to recognize and take stands against bias, exclusion and injustice.

Preparation:
- Arrange the room for sharing in pairs, and for one large circle for closing.
- Establish or review guidelines for discussions.
- Remind students that their “identity pie” sheet is for their reflection - private, unless they choose to share it. Also, they choose which stories and which stereotype statements they share.

Materials:

Instructions:
Introduce identity:
Time: 10 minutes.

- Acknowledge that it is sad that we rarely get a chance to discuss identity (the things that make us who we are- the important parts of ourselves).

You make a difference!

Young people need opportunities for open and honest dialogue around identity; human diversity; bias; discrimination and group-based inequality. Allow students to ask questions, share their ideas and experiences. Use teachable moments. Books and story-sharing are great conversation-starters.

Intervene every time bias-based bullying occurs. The best bullying prevention focuses on everyone working together to create a climate that is caring, welcoming and inclusive.

Reflect regularly about your students’ needs: What’s going on in their lives and communities? What knowledge, skills and supports will help them? What is needed in your broader school or organization? How will you help make change?

- Together, brainstorm a list: “Parts (or dimensions) of people’s identity”

Ask: “What are some of the important parts, or categories, of people’s identities?”

Be sure to create a broad list of aspects of identity, including: race, culture, gender, gender expression, language, religion, socio-economic status, disability, weight, language, family composition, sexual orientation, nationality, immigration experience, etc.
Key concepts of identity

• Every person’s identity is complex, multi-faceted and dynamic. Our identities powerfully impact our lives, including our sense of self; connections to others; knowledge and values; culture and traditions; life experiences; and status, opportunity and access to resources.

• Identity is socially-constructed. The “categories” societies use to organize and define human difference - and their meanings- are manmade, not natural. Individuals develop their social identities through interactions with family, peers, organizations, institutions -and the media- about these social categories (such as race, ethnicity, culture, gender, class, sexual orientation, and disability). How different groups are represented is controlled by those in political power to their advantage.

• “Othering” is the process of classifying individuals or groups as “not one of us” and deeming “us” superior and “them” less worthy of dignity, respect and full inclusion. Othering underlies bias-bullying, discrimination and unconscious bias. Othering sanctions systems of group-based inequality and marginalization.

• We urgently need to create caring, inclusive and just communities where everyone experiences belonging, support and feels welcome, heard and valued for who they are. Everyone can play a role.

Pie Worksheet: *Pieces of me*

Time: 10-15 minutes

Distribute the Pie Worksheet.
Ask participants to pair with somebody they do not know very well.

Explain the three parts of the activity:
1) Fill in the Pie Worksheet;
2) Share stories; and
3) Complete the Stereotype Statement.

Allow 10-15 minutes (total) for everyone to complete all three parts. Help with pacing. When two minutes remain, remind them to move to filling in their stereotype statement.

1) **Individuals fill in their Pie Worksheet: *Pieces of me***

   (You can read the worksheet instructions aloud, use the “Parts of Identity” list the group just created, or give your own examples.)

   a) Write their names in the center.

   b) Choose six aspects of their identity, then write one in each of the pie slices.

2) **Pair and share for stories:** In pairs, have them share two stories:

   a) First, **a story about when they felt especially good** about one of the identity pieces they listed (e.g., a proud moment or a sense of belonging and acceptance).

   b) Next, **share a story about a painful or difficult time** with one of their identity pieces (e.g., A put-down? A stereotype? Feeling excluded?).

   (Consider providing relevant examples to prompt their story sharing. Be very sensitive to not expose or “out” any young people.)

3) **Create a stereotype statement:** Ask participants to reflect for a moment about a stereotype about one aspect of their identity that they have heard (or experienced), but that DOES NOT describe who they are accurately. Have them complete the sentence at the bottom of their handout by filling in the blanks:

   “I am ____________, but that does NOT mean __________.”

   (Example: “I am a boy, but that does NOT mean I can’t like to cook.”)
Sharing stereotype statements
Time: 10-15 minutes

1) **Sharing out:** Ask whether anyone has a story that she or he would like to share with the larger group. (Make sure the person who originally told the story has given permission to share it.)

2) **Individuals stand up and read their stereotype statements.** This part of the activity can be extremely powerful if you introduce it energetically.

(You can simply go around the room or have people randomly take turns standing up to read their statements. Make sure that participants are respectful and listening actively for this step, as individuals are making themselves vulnerable by participating.)

Start by reading your own statement. It may take a few moments to start the flow of sharing, so allow for silent moments.

3) **Reflect:** Several questions can be used to process this activity. (Adapt for your age group.)
   
   - Did anyone hear someone challenge a stereotype that you once bought into? If so, what?
   - How did it feel to be able to stand up and challenge a stereotype that others might have about you?
   - I heard several moments of laughter. What was that about? (There is usually some laughter when somebody shares common stereotype such as "I may be a Muslim, but that doesn’t mean I am a terrorist" or when someone first breaks the ice about issues like weight or LGBTQ biases.)

   - Where do stereotypes come from? What role do stereotypes play in our society’s inequality, when some groups of people have more opportunity than others?
   - How do the dimensions of your identity that you chose as most important differ from the traits other people might use to make judgments about you?
   - What did we learn about what makes people feel proud of their identities, that they belong?
   - What did we learn about people’s painful experiences around their identity?
   - How could ending identity-based discrimination benefit, enrich everyone?

   Allowing for silences is crucial, especially when participants are sharing their stereotype statements. People may be hesitant to share initially, but once the ball starts rolling, the activity carries a lot of energy.

Closing:
Time: 10-15 minutes

Form large circle, have each person briefly summarize their experience.

Suggested prompts: “*Fill in one word to complete this sentence:*”

   “After today, I feel_____.”

   “Today, I learned_____.”

   “One thing I can do to help stop identity-based bullying is_____.”

(This activity was adapted from “Circles of My Multicultural Self,” an EdChange Project by Paul Gorski.
http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/circlesofself.html)
Pieces of me

INDIVIDUALLY:

1. Put your name in the center of your pie.

2. Choose six important parts of who you are, things that make you, YOU. Write one in each slice of the pie.

   (Take a moment to think about some of the main aspects of your identity or who you are. Consider your race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, family, culture, heritage, traditions, experiences, your personal likes/dislikes, talents, interests, abilities and challenges, etc. For example, one person’s pie slices included: Asian American, mother, athlete, teacher, Buddhist, and born in Vietnam.)

WITH A PARTNER:

1. Share a story about a time **when you felt especially good** about one of the identity pieces on your pie.

2. Share a story about a **time that was painful or difficult for you** around one of the identity pieces on your pie.

3. **Create a stereotype statement.** Look at the identity pieces on your pie. Identify a stereotype you have heard about a piece of your identity that is not accurate and **DOES NOT FIT** who you are. Fill in the following sentence:

   “I am a______________, but that does NOT mean______________.”

   (Example: “I am a boy, but that does NOT mean I can’t like to cook.”)
ACTIVITY:

The deep roots in community - baking unity into community

Topics: Identity, Strengths, Community and Bridge-Building
Ages: Grades: 3rd through High School
For: Classrooms
Time: 50 minutes

Purpose: Students examine who they are, identify uniqueness and strengths, and hear about classmates’ identities. Participants consider the strengths within their small groups. They experience being part of a strong community - or whole pie - because their individual strengths, (including their identities) have been added to the mix. A timeline of African American Civil Rights is introduced, so students can explore broader questions about the history of struggling for freedom. They learn how we gradually advance civil rights when our community is strong and unified, while also observing the evolving struggle that continues today. Each of us can, and should, play a role in creating a deep-roots community that values everyone - and values unity.

Preparation: Divide into groups of eight. Pass out “pie pieces.”

Materials: From circles made of paper, fabric or wood, cut “pie pieces” into eighths. Pens/pencils.
Copies of Handout: The Civil Rights timeline: the journey to unity (p.33)

Instructions:

Introduction
Time: 10 minutes

To introduce the activity, the teacher or facilitator can introduce the concepts that:

1) Each of us has an identity or history.
2) We bring our identity to our family and groups or “communities”: to our classroom; our school; and even our country. We are important parts of a whole, like a slice is part of the whole pie, and like an individual tile is part of a larger mosaic.
3) Just as people make mistakes, so do countries. Our country has made mistakes by not protecting every citizen’s right and freedom to be who they are. This has led to the unfair treatment of whole groups of people in our laws - and in denied opportunities for whole groups to access basic human rights, such as health care, quality schools, and housing. (Share the Civil Rights timeline for examples.)
4) Both societies and nations need to bring people together in a way that’s fair and allows each of us to be who we are. How can we be better together and grow our deep community roots, by honoring everyone’s strengths and seeing them for who they are?
Identity: we bring unique strengths to the whole
Time: 30 Minutes

Students can work together in groups of eight to represent eight slices of pie. Each student can be given a piece of pie (made of paper, fabric or wood).

**Individual sharing:** Each student can take a turn answering the following questions: (15 minutes)

1) What makes you different from others in the class?
2) What is something that you are proud of about who you are?

**Small group observations about strengths:**
Once everyone has contributed, students can share together what strengths are present in their groups. (5 minutes)

**Sharing Out:** Each group can share out what it learned about how their group was strengthened by who is in the group. (10 minutes)

Discuss the Civil Rights timeline
10 minutes
Pass out Timeline Handout.

Have the group talk about:

- What makes a community?
- Do you have friends who are really different than you? If so, what allows you to be friends?
- How can we learn from our timeline to make our country better?

**Extension/Enrichment Activity:**

Ask students to research other struggles for rights and liberation, e.g. for gender equity, LGBTQ rights, immigrant rights, people with disabilities, etc. Discuss. Compare and contrast.
The Civil Rights timeline: the journey to unity

✓ 1619: The Civil Rights movement began on Native land known as the Powhatan Indian Village when “20 and odd” African slaves were sold by colonists in Jamestown, VA.

✓ 1739: The largest slave uprising in the British Colonies (that of South Carolina) prior to the American Revolution occurred with 44 blacks killed and 42-47 whites, known as Stono’s Rebellion.

✓ April 9, 1865: Documents of surrender were signed at the Appomattox Court House, ending the Civil War.

✓ 1868: The 14th Amendment extends citizenship to all people born or naturalized in the U.S.

✓ 1870: The 15th Amendment guarantees the right to vote for all (male) citizens.

✓ 1880s-1890s: Many South (and some Northern) states pass Jim Crow laws, enforcing the segregation of the races and restricting freedoms for African Americans.

✓ Charles Hamilton Houston (September 3, 1895-April 22, 1950) (“The Man Who Killed Jim Crow”) led the process of dismantling the Jim Crow laws and used the inequality of the "separate but equal" doctrine (from the Supreme Court's Plessy v. Ferguson decision) to set up the Brown decision.¹

✓ 1954: In Brown vs. the Board of Education, won by civil rights attorney Thurgood Marshall, the Supreme Court rules unanimously against school segregation. Marshall later became the 1st Black Supreme Court Justice.

✓ 1957: The Arkansas National Guard blocks nine African America students from attending Central High School in Little Rock; President Dwight D. Eisenhower sends in federal troops to ensure compliance.


✓ 2003: Harvard’s Civil Rights Project finds that schools were more segregated in 2000 than in 1970 when busing for desegregation began; a federal district court case (Lynn vs. Comfort) affirms the value of racial diversity and race-conscious student assignments in K-12 education.

✓ February 26, 2012: Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African American is shot, stirring national outrage for African American rights in America, leading to Black Lives Matter.

ACTIVITY:

Exploring the difference between assimilation and integration

Ages: For older teens, adults
For: Small group discussion
Time: 1 hour 20 minutes

Essential Questions:

- What is assimilation?
- What is integration?
- Who has been allowed to assimilate in the United States?
- Who has been allowed to integrate in the United States?
- Who are some of the groups of people who have neither been able to assimilate nor integrate in U.S.A?

Purpose: Identifying the historical context of assimilation and integration. Understanding and reflecting on hardship and privilege. Acknowledging historical oppression and how it impacts groups of people today.

Key Concepts: Assimilation is detrimental to the “whole person” and to our society. Integration allows the society to evolve and allows for innovation.

Participants will learn:

- The importance of integration. Assimilation is damaging and hinders growth.
- We all play a role in whether -and how- people are integrated or assimilated into American culture.
- No one person can do everything to change the world, but each of us can do something to change the world.

Materials: Sticky notes. Four labeled sheets for brainstorming: (“Assimilation,” “Integration,” “Differences between Assimilation and Integration,” and “Ally.”)

Paper and pens for moderator

Instructions:

Introduction
Time: 20 minutes

1. **Introduce self, identities:** Begin with introductions. Allow participants two to three minutes to introduce themselves. During the introduction, have each participant state their names, along with characteristics about themselves and/or aspects of their identities that are important to them.

   (DO NOT give any further instructions on what identity includes, which will inform how the participants see themselves.)

2. **Reflect:** After everyone has introduced themselves, ask everyone to take two minutes to share their reflection on the identities they presented.
Who am I? Who are You?
Time: 30 minutes

1. **Share**: Ask participants why they believe it is important to list their race, citizenship, job occupation, sex, gender identity, languages they speak, level of education, or their community of origin. If they do not believe any of those categories are important, ask them to describe why.

2. **Share a story**: Have participants share a time that someone asked them:
   - What are you? What’s your racial or ethnic background?
   - Where are you from? What country are you from?
   - Do you speak English? Can you speak English?
   - What is your level of education?
   - Where is your family from? What country are your parents from?

Ask them to explain *how often* this happens and *how they feel* when it occurs. If someone has not experienced any of the questions, ask them to speak about a time when someone asked them an invasive or biased question or made a biased statement about them.

Who are WE?
30 minutes

1. **Short responses**: On sticky notes, have each person jot down short answer to these questions:
   - What are words you associate with, or what are characteristics of, “Assimilation”? and “Integration”?
   - What do you think are main differences between assimilation and integration?
   - What is one thing you can do to be an ally to people who are becoming U.S. residents? Or to others who might feel culturally-marginalized?

2. **Observe, reflect**: Place all the sticky notes on brainstorming sheets on the wall.
   - Invite a few people to share their observations and reflections.
   - Share the definitions to compare and contrast responses.

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**Definitions** (a work in progress):

**Assimilation**:
“American culture” and U.S. institutions over-represent and over-advantage a dominant group: white, middle-class, Protestant people of northern European descent. To access opportunity and avoid discrimination, people from other cultures experience pressure to “fit-in” and to adopt the dominant culture. The histories, heritages, current experiences and cultural expressions of many groups are marginalized, excluded, made invisible and/or suppressed. With assimilation, “unity” emphasizes conformity and homogenization with dominant culture as its norm.

**Integration**:
An integrated society *actively* values its diversity and everyone’s right to fair treatment at every level – from its people’s daily interactions to its systems’ practices, policies and laws. Equal voice and equal opportunity for people across all cultures is vital for innovation and progress; we - in all our diversity - are better together. With integration, “diversity in unity” is embraced; dynamic tensions are expected while we strive for equity and work toward a shared vision of a positive future.
3. **Discuss in cultural affinity groups:**
   Have the participants self-select cultural affinity groups with people who share cultural meaning, a shared identity and customs (examples: race, national origin, ethnicity or religion). If appropriate to your group, you might point out that these affinity groups are part of your group’s “whole” - just as slices are part of the whole pie.

   - Ask each group define its common identity(ies) (such as African American, U.S.-born, Latino/a, or Muslim), then
   - Discuss group members’ experience with assimilation and integration.

   **Prompts:**
   
   “Have you ever experienced...?” or “Have you ever thought about...?”

4. **Reflect:** Have the circle reflect on this prompt:

   “If integration was more commonly practiced, how would that make our society more equitable?”

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**Closing reflection**

10 minutes

Ask each participant to share:

“One thing I learned today...”

“One word that describes my experience today...”
Resources


Sweet Potato Comfort Pie
a catalyst for caring and building community