Privilege Walk Activity prepared by Nick Higgins, GSC advisor and Director of Outreach Services at the Brooklyn Public Library

The exercise moderator may arrange the group in a circle or straight line, asking participants to step forward or backward in response to the following statements.

1. If it was assumed from a young age that you would go to college, take one step back.
2. If both of your parents/guardians graduated from high school, take one step back.
3. If neither of your parents/guardians attended college in the US, take one step forward.
4. If your parents have did not grow up in the US, take one step forward.
5. If you had to work to help pay the bills, take one step forward.
6. If you grew up in a house owned by your parents/guardian, take one step back.
7. If you had more than 50 books in your house growing up take one step back.
8. If anyone in your immediate family has been affected by drugs or alcohol, take one step forward.
9. If you grew up in a single parent household, take one step forward.
10. If you had a maid or gardener, take one step back.
11. If you grew up in safe neighborhoods, take one step back.
12. If you can turn on the TV every day and see people of your ethnicity portrayed in a positive light, take one step back.
13. If your only source of transportation was public transportation at one point (trolley, bus), take one step forward.
14. If when growing up you were told that you can be anything you wanted to be, take one step back.
15. If you attended a private school, take one step back.
16. If you have seen violence in your own household, take one step forward.

17. If you speak more than one language, take one step back.

18. If you are a man, take one step back.

19. If you are a woman, take one step forward.

20. If you have been discriminated against because of your ethnicity, sexuality, religion, or age, take one step forward.

21. If you have ever had fear or doubts about college, take one step forward.

Post-activity remarks:

Many of you have stood up to challenges in your lives. Not everyone has the same challenges in life. Some have more. Others have less. And, it’s important to understand that. When you understand the context of a person’s life - where they came from, what they’ve been through - it’s easier to understand that person.

Take a moment and look at where you’re situated in this circle and where others are situated. I would ask you to think about what should be pretty apparent: that the people closer to the center of the circle have been most impacted by inequality, and those further in the back may have more societal decision making power and material resources.

Processing questions for group conversation:

- How has privilege affected you, your family, and your community in terms of opportunity and access?
- How did it feel to go through this process?
- How often does one encounter spaces where access to resources and opportunity is honestly assessed and appropriately acknowledged?
- What would be different if people in communities most impacted by inequality were seen as the center of, or as experts on, their communities?