

The Self-Portrait

An Exercise In Appreciating Our Self & Our Groups

(Do Not Read Understanding the Self and Super Self-Portrait Until After having Completed the Self and Super Self Portraits)***

You will need a box of crayons (yes Crayons) for this project. As long as there are enough colors to give variety, just about any brand of crayon will suffice for this project. You will be an artist drawing a picture of your face which represents how you see yourself, not necessarily how you actually look. Your portrait will reflect your heritage and tradition as well as your biological ancestry.

Step 1) Draw a picture of yourself

Your drawing should be done on the blank page provided. Since none of us are truly white, black, yellow, or red, etc... You can experiment with the crayons and get the colors that best fit how you see yourself. Draw yourself as you perceive you to be. This is not an exercise in art. It can be a very simple drawing but you should apply careful thought and give attention to the colors you chose.

Step 2) Describe yourself

When the drawing is finished, write 20 descriptive words about yourself along the margins of the paper: **5** to describe your personality and likes/ dislikes; **5** to describe your ancestral heritage; **5** about what you hope to be in the future; and **5** more about your prejudices and difficulties in interacting with other people.

Step 3) Explain your work to another person

With your drawing complete, and your descriptive words in place, you should now explain what you did and wrote and why. Allow someone you know to ask you questions and respond to them as honestly as possible. If you did this activity with someone else, then let them explain their work to you.

The Super Self-Portrait

An Exercise In

Appreciating Other Groups

(**Do Not Read Understanding the Self and Super Self-Portrait Until After having Completed the Self and Super Self Portraits)

For this activity, you will again need a box of crayons. You will again be an artist drawing a picture. But this time from a significantly different point of view. Think of how you might look if you could be any race, ethnicity, color, creed, or national origin you wanted to be **but not the one you currently are.** (*Do not reduce this exercise to a choice between your present race and some other.*) It is not a question of “would you change your race or anything else.” It is basically an exercise asking you to depict yourself as a member of some race or ethnicity which you have admired during your life.

Step 1) Choose a group

At this point, you should choose to draw yourself as a member of a group other than who you are. Choose a group that you have always admired or romanticized. Imagine how you might appear if you had been born to parents who belong to that group.

Step 2) Draw a picture of yourself

Use the blank page provided. Again, get the colors that best fit how you want yourself to appear. This may be a very simple drawing. It will be enhanced when you give careful thought and attention to the colors and descriptive words.

Step 3) Describe yourself

Write 20 descriptive words about your hypothetical super self along the margins of the paper: **5** about what your personality and likes/ dislikes would be had you been born in the group you chose; **5** about your new ancestral heritage; **5** about what you might be in the future; and **5** more about your strengths and skills in interacting with other people. Again, this is not an exercise in art.

Step 4) Explain your work to another person

With your drawing complete, and your descriptive words in place, you should now explain what you did and wrote and why. Allow others to ask you questions and respond to them as honestly as possible. If you did this activity with someone else, then let them explain their work to you.

Understanding the Self and Super Self-Portrait

******DO NOT READ THIS PAGE UNTIL AFTER YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE SELF AND SUPER SELF PORTRAITS. BY READING THIS PAGE FIRST, YOU MAY BIAS YOUR EXPRESSION AND INTERFERE WITH THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT*******

The Self-Portrait is designed to allow for self-observation, description, and criticism. It allows you to safely and pleasantly approach how you appear, who you are, where you came from, what you would dream to do, and some of your weaknesses in relationships. By sharing it you get to actually verbalize these observations to another person. Many find that the explanation and interactions are the best part of the activity.

The Super Self-Portrait is designed to develop our appreciation of other groups. It allows us to be very personal as we explore in depth the individual we might be if we were an "other." This project draws heavily on our categorical thinking. But it is valuable because it allows us to circumvent a very deeply embedded cultural roadblock to self-discovery. You see, in most cultures, we aren't really allowed to openly discuss our own good qualities. It sounds too much like bragging. But by suggesting to you that you are drawing a hypothetical you, born in another culture, you were allowed to project your positive qualities safely and without shame. Typically the descriptive words chosen for the Super Self-Portrait almost always best describe the person who wrote them.

By doing the Self-Portrait, we discover more clearly how we perceive ourselves to be (strengths and weaknesses). By doing the Super Self-Portrait, we overcome cultural inhibitions to clearly viewing our strengths. At the same time we gain experience in appreciating people from different cultures. Studies on relationships between racial and ethnic group members indicate that we are more attracted to and therefore more likely to get along with those who appear to be similar to us. These assessments allow you to see deep similarities in other groups and they establish appreciation patterns at the same time. You also discover that you are similar in many ways to people who you sometimes view as being different. What did you learn about yourself and others in this exercise?