

Introduction

How did this project come about?

As a youth worker and product of youth leadership programs, Marina Espinoza became concerned that most leadership programs did not prepare young people to be effective leaders in both mainstream society and within their respective ethnic groups. Instead, most mainstream leadership programs take the best and brightest students of color and mold them to become effective leaders in mainstream society, often disenfranchising them from the very group that they were intended to help lead and organize.

This curriculum module is a response to that disenfranchisement. It is intended to be used within youth leadership programs as a component, inspiring staff to create additional activities and discussions based from those enclosed here.

By engaging youth in an age-appropriate analysis of leadership, culture, mainstream models and bridge-building tools, we position them not only as leaders in their own communities, but as leaders in the process of changing how we think about leadership.

Notes to the facilitator –

Thank you for taking on this curriculum module! We hope it adds a unique perspective to your youth development leadership curriculum and helps the youth in your program understand culture, leadership and interaction in a way that helps them throughout their lives.

This is a curriculum module. By this, we mean that it's meant to be inserted into an existing leadership curriculum of a youth development program. Youth should also have completed basic leadership training, or be far enough into a leadership training program that they understand basic concepts of leadership. They should understand concepts such as "power" and "influence" as they pertain to leadership. They should have experience with decision-making and with working with adults who see leadership potential in young people.

The activities in this module may be added to, if you or the youth in your program develop other ideas that bring out an understanding of cross-cultural bridge-builder leadership. With creativity, you can add activities relevant to service-learning, the arts (media or performance), writing, history, family engagement, or a variety of other areas.

This module does deal with some sensitive and difficult topics. Youth will be coming from different places and experiences regarding culture and leadership. Some may have more leadership experience than others. Some will feel at home in mainstream leadership styles. Others will not. All will have a unique combination of cultural background, family situation, experience, level of privilege, and identity. You may want to think ahead of time how to support and facilitate difficult conversations on topics such as racism, isolation or cultural conflict. How can everyone in the room feel heard? How will culture impact your own facilitation?

Youth express a strong interest in having opportunities to talk about "real" and challenging topics with people their own age. Whether conversations are difficult or amazing or both (likely both), having a safe opportunity to have these conversations is valuable for all youth.