

# Activities for Youth

## Does My Name Fit Me?

### Reading: 5 minutes

Have the group read Christina Whitmore's "Renaming Myself" on p. 12.

### Writing and Discussion: 30 minutes

Using Christina's story as an example, have them write for 10 minutes about their full names and how their names connect to their identities. Have them rename themselves if they're dissatisfied with what they were given. Ask everyone who wants to to read what they wrote out loud: Most of them will want to share!

## Internalized Oppression

### Definitions: 10 minutes

Write these two definitions on the board:

*Prejudice* is an attitude or belief about another person or group based on stereotypes instead of on experience or reason.

*Oppression* is a pattern or system of inequality that gives power and privileges to members of one group of people at the expense of another.

Point out that prejudice can be individual, but oppression is when a more powerful group keeps a less powerful group down and keeps the best stuff—jobs, neighborhoods, natural resources—for themselves. Also say that even when the laws change—slavery was abolished, women got the right to vote—people in power still find ways to exclude the less powerful and to communicate that they are not as good. Ask everyone for examples of each term. (Prejudice could be parents telling their child not to date anyone of another race or it could be the youths' own beliefs about certain categories of people being better at things; oppression could be women not earning as much money as men or a company not hiring people of color or gay people.)



### Reading and Discussion: 40 minutes

Have the group read out loud "The Fairest of Them All" by Jessica Flayser, including the sidebar on apartheid, on p. 5.

Draw five concentric circles on the board and label them from the inside out: Internal; Individual; Group; Community; Institution. Define the terms in the oppression circles as follows:

Internalized oppression is when people believe the negative things the oppressor says about them

Individual oppression is between two people

Group oppression is oppression someone feels from a group

Community oppression is experienced within a community

Institutionalized oppression is when society communicates through language, media, education, religion, economics, and laws that a certain group of people is inferior and deserves less.

Ask the group to place examples from Jessica's story in each circle. (**Internal:** Jessica thinks white people are more attractive than black people; **Individual:** There's only one interracial couple in her high school in South Africa, Jessica's mother harps on her son's girlfriend's "flat nose." **Group:** The black kids insult Africans in New York and the white kids insult the black kids in South Africa. **Community:** The teacher blurted out "it's always the black kids." **Institution:** Apartheid itself, plus Jessica's point that the media portrays "beauty" as very thin, young white women.)

Ask them for examples from their own lives of each of the circles, and if they can relate to Jessica's internal oppression at all. Ask if thinking about insecurities they have as internal oppression changes their view. Have them re-read the last four paragraphs (starting from "Black is Beautiful") of Jessica's story. How did she place her feelings about her looks in a context of oppression? Can they do something similar with their own feelings of inferiority? Can they imagine a world where prejudice loses its power?

Adapted from the *Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) Jump-Start Guide*.