

This I Believe Group Exercise

EXAMPLE:

Alaa El-Saad--High School Student, Excerpts from her essay as heard on NPR's Tell Me More (2009)
 America is built on the idea of freedom, and there is no exception for Muslim women. I believe in the freedom of religion and speech....

The hijab is a religious head covering, like a scarf. I am Muslim and keeping my head covered is a sign of maturity and respect toward my religion and to Allah's will. To be honest, I also like to wear it to be different. I don't usually like to do what everyone else is doing. I want to be an individual, not just part of the crowd. But when I first wore it, I was also afraid of the reaction that I'd get at school.

I decided on my own that sixth grade was the time I should start wearing the hijab. I was scared about what the kids would say or even do to me. I thought they might make fun of me, or even be scared of me and pull off my headscarf. Kids at that age usually like to be all the same, and there's little or no acceptance for being different. On the first day of school, I put all those negative thoughts behind my back and walked in with my head held high.... I was wrong about everything I thought the kids would say or even do to me. I actually met a lot of people because of wearing my head covering.

Most of the kids would come and ask me questions—respectfully—about the hijab, and why I wore it....I made a lot of new friends that year, friends that I still have until this very day, five years later. Yes, I'm different, but everyone is different here, in one way or another. This is the beauty of America.

I believe in what America is built on: all different religions, races and beliefs. Different everything.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Step 1.--Take a breath. Breathe in and out.

Reflect on the experiences in your life, the learnings you have achieved, the wisdom you have gained.

Choose a value from the boxes below and reflect on what it means to you.

Accountability	Equality	Marriage
Belonging	Fairness	Patriotism
Beauty	Family	Public Safety
Caring	Happiness	Renewal Resilience
Children	Hard Work	Respect
Citizenship	Hate	Rich
Community	Hope	Thriftiness
Community-Wealth	Immigration	Trust
Cooperation	Imprison	Voting
Culture	Justice	Service
Democracy	Learning	Suffrage
Duty	Liberty	Teaching
	Love	

Step 2.-- Fill in the template.

This I believe, [INSERT A VALUE] is [INSERT SOMETHING ABOUT THE VALUE.]

This I believe, beauty is everywhere.

WRITE A SENTENCE ABOUT THE VALUE

Beauty is in the freckles on the foxglove next to my garage.

WRITE A SECOND SENTENCE ABOUT THE VALUE

Beauty is in the sound of my neighbor, Bella, running through the sprinklers.

SHARE A SHORT MEMORY ABOUT THE VALUE.

On the night that Joe Biden announced that he had chosen Kamala Harris to be his running mate, I called my eight year old niece, Asha Nepal, to celebrate the news. I wanted to share that historical moment with her-- my wonderful girl. In an optimistic tone, she said, "we are almost there Auntie!" Her comment took me aback. While I was happy that a woman of color had been chosen for Vice President, I was also a little resentful. It should have been a woman in the front seat. But Asha's optimism reminded me that we are almost there. I've always wanted the world to move faster. I was drinking water and growing organic fruits and vegetables before it was hip. When I ran for public office in 2007, my motto was "Change is Coming." Later on, people said I lost because I was too aggressive about change. But then, a year later, Barack Obama won on a "change has come to America" strategy. Go figure.

REITERATE THIS I BELIEVE AND ADD ONE FINAL THESIS SENTENCE.

So, this I believe, that beauty is everywhere, especially in the wisdom of the young. In this historical moment, I wish for my girl Asha-- a life full of wonder, a hopeful heart, and a hunger for change until a woman is President.