

## **Guiding Questions & Activities for Reflection During an ABI**

### **1. Review of Day**

#### **Goals:**

**Community development**

**Initial reflection on experience**

**Personal awareness**

*Let me have too deep a sense of humor ever to be proud.  
Let me know my absurdity before I act absurdly.  
Let me realize that when I am humble I am most  
human,  
most truthful,  
and most worthy of your serious  
consideration.*

*Daniel A. Lord, SJ*

\*Depending on the comfort of the group, people could lay down or sit comfortably with their eyes closed for the first section. Music could be playing. This exercise could be repeated throughout the week or could be shortened to begin each reflection session.\*

Report on your day through writing, conversation, or quiet reflection. Do not judge your responses; simply identify them.

Narrate your day in a who? what? when? where? why? how? format.

What did you hear? see? smell? taste? feel? today?

How does your body feel after today's experiences?

Each group member can share with the group one or two aspects of the day that they have just narrated.

What has had the most powerful or profound impact for you.

Was this something you anticipated or something unexpected?

Does this spark your imagination in any way?

## **2. Being Present to the Experience**

### **Goals:**

**Community development**

**Exploration of simple living**

**Vocational reflection**

**Initial Social Analysis**

*Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on another's dream. More serious still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival.*

*Author Unknown*

\*Gather the group for reflection. These questions can be discussed in small groups or as a whole group. Or individuals could respond to the questions artistically and then share them with the group.\*

What obstacles (personal, structural, cultural) might stand in the way of my/our being fully present to the people I/we have met or will meet during this experience?

Sometimes, being open to a new experience means letting go of something. What might I/we need to let go of in order to be truly present to this experience?

What might I/we need to welcome into our lives in order to be present to this experience?

What gifts do I/we have that we are called to share with others, especially those in need? How might these best be shared in our current context?

Are there ways that we can help each other to be most fully present to one another and to our host community during this immersion?

### 3. The Experience of Community

#### Goals:

#### Values identification

#### Exploration of structures

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.  
Margaret Mead*

\*In discussion, writing or quiet reflection, consider these questions. In identifying values and operating systems, try to remain judgment free; we are not evaluating them, we are simply identifying them. Using or referring back to the "familiar object" activity could be helpful.\*

How has the local community here welcomed and responded to our Loyola group?  
What values can you identify in our experience here? How have you identified these values?

What struggles and what joys are related to the challenge of living out those values here? How do social, cultural and economic realities reflect, shape, challenge, or reject those values? *(For example, if you identify community as a value but people live far apart, how does that shape the way they live the value?)*

What values do we as a group bring with us? How this experience might be different if you were here alone, or with a different group of people not associated with Loyola?

How might we welcome this community if some of its members were visiting Loyola?  
What would that say about our values and operating systems?

Think of the various communities that you have been part in your life. What stands out to you? How have they shaped who you are? What values did they hold, and how were they lived out?

#### 4. Identifying Personal Values

##### Goals:

##### Values identification

##### Theological reflection

*Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart  
and try to love the questions themselves ...  
Don't search for the answers,  
which could not be given to you now,  
because you would not be able to live them.  
And the point is, to live everything.  
Live the questions now.  
Perhaps then, someday far in the future,  
you will gradually, without even noticing it,  
live your way into the answer.*

*Rainer Maria Rilke*

\*Often, immersion experiences raise difficult questions for us that are not easily or quickly answered. These questions allow us to sit with those questions not so much in search but more in respect of the mystery present in them all.\*

Are there any question or idea raised by our experience that is tickling your mind or heart this week? Take a minute to them.

Identifying those questions helps us to identify the things we care about, the things we value. What do those questions or ideas tell you about what you value? How do these values shape your life?

These questions can also help us to identify the worldview from which we understand our experiences. What do your questions tell you about the way you perceive the world. What structures and experiences have influenced this for you?

Sit quietly with those unanswered questions and allow yourself to open your heart and mind to living into the answer.

What in your faith and values can help you to explore these questions and ideas?

## 5. Reflection on Justice/Values

### Goals:

Theological reflection

Structural analysis

Vocational reflection

*A think and shapeless tree trunk would never believe that it could become a statue, admired as a miracle of sculpture, and would never submit itself to the chisel of the sculptor, who sees by her genius what she can make of it. We ask for the grace to be shaped by our loving Creator.*  
St. Ignatius Loyola

\*Depending on the group, this exercise can begin as an individual, small group or whole group discussion. Often, it is easier to identify values and issues through stories rather than naming them directly. Encourage group members to share stories that illustrate justice/value/faith issues if they would like.\*

What justice/values issues have you encountered this week? Has the experience challenged or supported those issues?

How do you sustain a commitment to justice/your values, especially in light of challenges?

What is the good that you are trying to accomplish?

If you associate with a faith tradition, how does that tradition speak to justice and values in your life?

How do your faith tradition and/or personal values interact with systems and structures that are unjust? How does it shape or inform your response?

You are a student preparing for a future career, a future way of life – Do you feel called to shape your life in a particular way, to live a certain life, or to be a certain kind of person? Has this experience supported or challenged the vision you hold for yourself?

## 6. Looking Back to Loyola, Looking Forward to Justice

### Goals:

Theological reflection

Values assessment

Vocational reflection

Structural analysis

Beginning stages of action-planning

*I will be truthful.  
I will suffer no injustice.  
I will be free from fear.  
I will not use force.  
I will be of good will to all men.*

*Gandhi*

\*Ask the group to reflect individually on these questions, either in quiet reflection or through journaling. Then share the responses with the larger group. You may choose to select only some questions in order to go into more depth.\*

Being immersed in the reality of this new place allows us to look back to our Loyola experience and to the Chicago area with new perspective. What do you identify as significant factors that shape the way we see and act within the world?

How do you participate in the larger systems that influence the presence of justice in our society? Is your participation supportive of justice? What gifts do you have to offer to the fight for justice, and how can I best share them?

What have you learned here, or what are you struggling with, that may lead you to act differently when you return to Loyola? How does the experience here speak to my daily life as a student, worker, child, sibling, believer, advocate...? How does the experience speak to the person I am trying to become?

What is the biggest impact of our service immersion... on our host community, on us, on the greater journey toward justice?

## **All Through the Night**

All through the night  
into the morning hours  
cold beads of rain  
ice the tree's dark branches.

The trees are strong; they do not bend  
and this becomes their downfall.  
When you do not bend, you break.  
The icy day becomes my classroom.

Near the ice sculptured trees  
frozen little bushes, vines and cedars,  
are bowed low in adoration  
bent, but not broken.

The frozen trees, sad and beautiful,  
moan and sway with the weight of reality.  
Lovely ice sculptured arms  
yield to the bitter truth of the moment  
as the silence is harshly broken.

In its wake, a deafening silence  
rises up from deep inside  
where my tears are frozen  
like the beads of rain  
that fell through the night.

How do we name what happens  
without condemning it?  
This is nature's way;  
there were no developers present.

Was the rain unkind to freeze?  
Did it have a choice?  
Do we have a choice  
to bend or break  
to destroy or build?

Sometimes I fear reality.

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## **My Name is Not "Those People"**

Julia Dinsmore

My name is not "Those People."  
I am a loving woman, a mother in pain,  
giving birth to the future, where my babies  
have the same chance to thrive as anyone.

My name is not "Inadequate."  
I did not make my husband leave - he  
chose to, and chooses not to pay child  
support.  
Truth is though, there isn't a job base for all  
fathers to support their families.  
While society turns its head, my children pay  
the price.

My name is not "Problem and Case to Be  
Managed." I am a capable human being  
and citizen, not a client.  
The social service system can never replace  
the compassion and concern of loving  
Grandparents, Aunts,  
Uncles, Fathers, Cousins, Community - all the  
bonded people who need to be but are not  
present to bring children forward to their  
potential.

My name is not "Lazy, Dependent Welfare  
Mother."  
If the unwaged work of parenting,  
homemaking and community building was  
factored into the Gross National Product,  
my work would have untold value.  
And I wonder why my middle-class sisters  
whose husbands support them to raise their  
children are glorified - and they don't get  
called lazy and dependent.

My name is not "Ignorant, Dumb or  
Uneducated." I live with an income of \$621  
with \$169 in food stamps. Rent is \$585.  
That leaves \$36 a month to live on.  
I am such a genius at surviving that I could  
balance the state budget in an hour.

Never mind that there is a lack of living -  
wage jobs.  
Never mind that it is impossible to be the  
sole emotional, social and economic  
support to a family.  
Never mind that parents are losing their  
children to the gangs, drugs, stealing,  
prostitution, social workers, kidnapping, the  
streets, the predator.  
Forget about putting money into schools –  
just build more prisons.

My name is not "Lay Down and Die Quietly."  
My love is powerful and my urge to keep my  
children alive will never stop. All children  
need homes  
and people who love them. They need  
safety and  
the chance to be the people they were  
born to be.

The wind will stop before I let my children  
become a statistic.  
Before you give in to the urge to blame me,  
the blame that lets us go blind and  
unknowing into the isolation that  
disconnects us, take another look.  
Don't go away.  
For I am not the problem, but the solution.  
And...My name is not "Those People."