**Equity Team Opening Activity: *Where I’m From* (20 - 30 minutes)**

**This activity can be used with an Equity Team or an entire staff.**

**This activity is meant to:**

 **1)** build trust and

 **2)**  help participants to understand that each of us comes from different backgrounds and experiences

 that shape who we are.

**Materials:**

 “Where I’m From” by Lyon

 “Where I’m From” by the facilitator! (You need to share your own first!)

**Directions:**

**1.** Tell participants that they will be engaging in a little exercise that will help us get in the right frame of mind. I probably wouldn’t share too much. Your call.

**2.** Share copies of “Where I’m From” Poem by Lyon. Have everyone read it.

**3.** Give a quick explanation of the poem. Basically, Lyon is sharing things that makes up who he is, things and ideas that have influenced him. Point out a few things about the poem. Here are a few possibilities…

 “Notice how Lyon includes some simple items like clothespins, fudge, and fried corn. And notice how he also includes some memories that obviously have impacted him like “Perk up and Pipe down.”

 “…and notice how he states in the last stanza that he is “from those moments.” Those moments are of his upbringing and his family’s history.”

**4.** Show your own on the screen or on paper. This will give them a model. If you want, you can share a little about it.

**5.** Invite participants to write their own “Where I’m From” poem. Tell them that they can stick to surface ideas, or challenge themselves to dig a bit deeper as who we are is created not just from things, but of events, ideas, and feelings.

**6.** Have table teams share and explain a bit about a few of their lines. If time, ask a few participants to share with the whole group.

**Wrap-up:**

 You can say that this was a simple, little exercise to remember that we all come from different backgrounds and experiences, both good and bad, which have molded us into who we are now and how we see the world. Maybe as empathetic human beings it’s our job to have an awareness that we are all different, and we can develop a better understanding of those differences when we take time to get to know our colleagues. ***Of course, feel free to improvise!***

