

# STEREOTYPES

Say you're driving down the highway and a silver sedan cuts you off. The driver makes eye contact in their rear-view mirror and signals an apology. In your mind, as that scene unfolded, did you assume the other driver was a woman? Why did you think that?

Many people's thoughts are guided by stereotypes which are beliefs about the characteristics, behaviors, and attributes of a group and its members. These beliefs are learned through interaction with our family, peers, and from the mass media.

Whether stereotypes are positive (e.g., Asians are smart) or negative (e.g., women are bad drivers), they are an exaggeration used to draw conclusions about entire groups of people. Any experiences that disconfirm them are disregarded, while those that support them are retained and serve to strengthen the belief.



"I have more respect for the bigot who stands up there, shows their face, says I'm a bigot, than the person who walks by. I have less respect for that person. Because at least — right or wrong, whether I agree or not, with what they're saying, or how despicable it is — they've had the guts to put their face on that. And so much of the bigotry and prejudice and fear of immigrants is hidden. We don't want to admit it. So as long as it stays hidden it's never dealt with. So people need to say, I am afraid of those people. I'm afraid of them. Well, why? Because it's the unknown. Go up and say hi. They're no longer gonna be unknown to you." — Suzanne

## CALL TO ACTION

"[We should] realize that the world is a bigger place than we're used to. Step outside of your daily routine, and do something that you might not have thought before. Like volunteer at a LGBT community center. Or, you know, visit museums. Like the Museum of Tolerance. Or participate in Black History Month. And try to do something or try to teach your kids something that maybe you didn't know. So, just stepping outside of your daily routine and doing something that is new to you, is very grounding, it just helps you grow as a person, and I think we need to do that more often." — Juzlia

**CONSIDER THIS** *Consider the following questions. Challenge yourself to think of answers from multiple perspectives, & to understand what might bias your response. Discuss these topics with someone else in your class.*

**Often stereotypes are used to guide the questions that we ask. What stereotypes guide questions asked of In|Dignity participants? How might questions asked in a different manner change the conversation?**

**The dictionary definition of terrorism is "causing extreme fear as a means of coercion," but the FBI defines terrorism as "violence with a goal of political or social change." How do you define "terrorist"? How do stereotypes guide our use of this term?**

**As you walk through the exhibition and learn about the experiences of others, think about which of your current beliefs may be rooted in stereotypes. Why is applying a stereotypes detrimental, even if the stereotype has a kernel of truth?**

**What stereotypes have you heard about people based on their hair, clothing, jewelry, tattoos, or other features?**

