

# True Leaders in Equity

## 4-H Photography Equity Challenge Quick Guide

*"I saw that the camera could be a weapon against poverty, against racism, against all sorts of social wrongs. I knew at that point I had to have a camera."*

—Gordon Parks

*"People say don't stare. Through the photos, not only do I stare, but I allow viewers to stare at the subject, to see things that they cannot see with a casual glance."*

—Dawoud Bey

### What's the Challenge?

Be a global citizen by using your camera to capture what inspires you and/or challenges others to work for equity.

### Why does it matter?

Many of the top issues facing society today, both in the U.S., and worldwide (i.e., health care, food security, economy, education, health care, crime, poverty), can be traced back to issues of equity. Youth are a huge part of driving change in the world. In fact, historically, youth have played a pivotal role in many issues (cue Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam Protests, Indigenous Water Rights...). Having a mindset of being responsible for people, places, and things around the world and believing that your actions impact others, is being a global citizen. You can be a global citizen too, and we need you to be! Photography is a powerful way to give voice to the pain, struggles, joy, and triumphs of the world. What do you see that needs to change? What sparks of hope are out there? Show us what you see through photography, and maybe you'll inspire others to think differently or take action.

### Background

Equality is when each individual of a society or a group receives the same resource or treatment regardless of what may be needed to achieve a desired outcome. Equity is when an individual or group receives the unique resources and opportunities needed to reduce or eliminate the barriers. The goal with equity is to make things more fair for everyone. Most people want things to be fair. But many people disagree about what fair looks like. What does equity look like to you? What you think matters. You can use photography to explore for yourself what it means to you and what it means to others. Photography is a powerful form of both exploration and expression.

## How do I do it?

1. **Find your inspiration.** Images through photography can be powerful and will tell a different story to each person who sees them, including the photographer! What story do you want to look for or capture? A good way to find your inspiration is to look at other pictures related to equity. These could be images for which the photographer intended equity to be a focus, or they could be pictures that speak to you of equity, regardless of the circumstances in which they were taken. Following are some examples.
  - High Museum of Art's "[Photos From the Civil Rights Movement](#)" collection
  - [Equity in Art: Photographing Home](#), featuring photographer Pipo Nguyen-duy
  - [Developing Stories: Native Photographers in the Field](#), presented by National Museum of the American Indian
  - [Southbound: Photographs of and about the New South](#), curated by Mark Sloan (Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art), and Mark Long (College of Charleston, SC)
2. **Take pictures.** Once you have an idea of what your inspiration is for this project, go out and start taking pictures. Before you do, be sure to follow basic photography ethics.<sup>1</sup>
  - Ask before taking someone's picture. Taking a picture without someone's permission is an invasion of privacy. You do not need someone's permission if they just happen to walk into the shot.
  - Try to avoid "staging" a picture, if possible. You want to capture images that are as authentic as possible. If you are taking a picture of a person, explain that you are doing a project for 4-H and that you would like to photograph them being themselves. Allow them to dictate what that might look like.
  - Do not take a picture of someone doing something that they could get in trouble for or that would reveal embarrassing facts about the person.
  - Do not portray the person in a false light through images that distort the truth or create a false impression about the person.
3. **Choose your favorites.** Once you've taken some pictures, come back and look at them! If they're digital, be sure to look at them on a large screen if possible, so you can see them properly. Consider: Which ones inspire you the most? Make you think? Show you something unexpected? Fit the [photography rubric](#) best? If you don't like any of them, it's OK to go back to step 2 and try again!
4. **Prepare to share.** Photography can be just for you, but we want you to share it so that others can learn from your experience. And the process of sharing it is an important part of your own learning! Following are some suggestions of the many ways you could choose to share your work.
  - Print out your photographs and mount them on black paper or picture framing. Black will help the viewer focus on the photograph without distracting from the

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<sup>1</sup> List of ethics guidelines are from *Lead Your Life, Tell Your Story: A Curriculum to Guide Youth Personal Leadership*. St. Paul, MN: University of Minnesota. ©2023 by J.P. Russo & J.A. Skuza.

effect of the work. If you're preparing it for a county or state fair, they may have specific ways they want you to prepare it.

- Prepare a digital presentation of your photographs such as through PowerPoint. Avoid the use of too many fancy slide transitions which can cause uncomfortable reactions for some people and may detract from the effect of your work. Let the photography speak for itself.
- You may want to consider changing your photograph through photo manipulation programs such as Photoshop, or if you are using 35mm film rather than digital photography, you may want to experiment with developing techniques to give your photographs an artistic flair. Be sure to ask for support from people who can help you learn these processes.

5. **Reflect on and capture your learning.** It's both helpful for others and vital for you as a learner to think about what you got out of the experience. If you take your performance to a 4-H judging experience like the county fair, the judge will want to know what you learned from the experience. Write a short paragraph about what you learned. Not sure what to write? Start by answering the following questions.

- Why did you choose to photograph these particular subjects?
- What did your subject(s) say to you about equity?
- What decisions did you make about how you took the picture(s)? For instance, were lighting, framing, or subject particular considerations for you?
- Overall, what did you learn from doing this project?
- What do you hope others get out of looking at your photography?
- What would you do differently next time?

6. **Share your work!** Sharing your work with others is another important part of the learning process because it helps you process, express, and validate what you learned. Following are some ideas for how you can share your work.

- Enter your photography into a local contest, such as a county or state fair.
- Visit with a local professional photographer to get feedback.
- Use your photography to spark dialog with friends or family members about equity and what it means to them.
- Create a billboard or your photography to post on your lawn or other community space (be sure to get permission) and invite others walking by to write one word that comes to mind when they think about equity.

## What's next?

What else do you want to know about photography? About equity? Here are some ideas for how you could take the learning further.

- Try another equity challenge project ([Writing](#), [STEM](#), [Performing Arts](#)).
- Use the [Writing](#) challenge to add text to your photograph.
- Explore your topic from another angle, perhaps by trying to answer other questions the project brought up for you.

- Try exploring equity through another photography project, this time picking a different subject.
- Notice the quotes at the beginning of this challenge guide. Find your own quotes on photography that speak to you of equity.