

## claiming your voice

- purpose**
- To provide youth and adults with an opportunity to think about the power that youth do or do not have in our culture
  - To engage in a conversation about youth and adult power

**time** 45 minutes

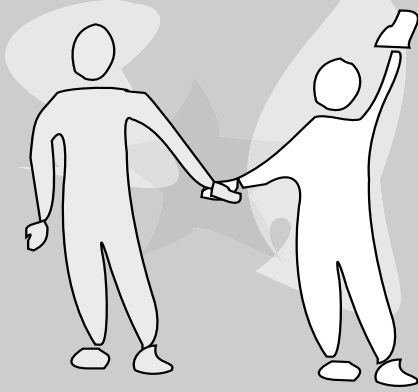
**group size** 20 to 30 participants

- materials**
- Four signs, one each that says: STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE, and STRONGLY DISAGREE
  - Tape or tacks

**prepare ahead** Post the four signs around the room.

### introduction

Tell the group that effective youth–adult partnerships are those in which each person is able to contribute his or her unique talents, skills, and knowledge. Often, an unequal distribution of power makes it difficult for this to happen. Because both youth and adults are used to adults having more power than young people do, an honest exploration of power can be extremely helpful to any group seeking to achieve a more equitable balance of power. This exercise is a structured way for groups to explore their attitudes toward youth and adults and the power dynamics between them.



This exercise creates an opportunity for youth and adults to understand each other's perspectives and have an honest dialogue about power. The structure of the exercise is such that the group begins with a process in which there is no debate or conversation, so that people can honestly indicate their opinions without being challenged. The dialogue takes place in the second part of the exercise.

### **step one**

Explain to the group that you will read a series of statements; after each statement, participants should go to the area of the room designated by the sign that corresponds to their level of agreement with the statement.

### **step two**

Point out the four signs posted around the room: STRONGLY AGREE, AGREE, DISAGREE, and STRONGLY DISAGREE.

### **step three**

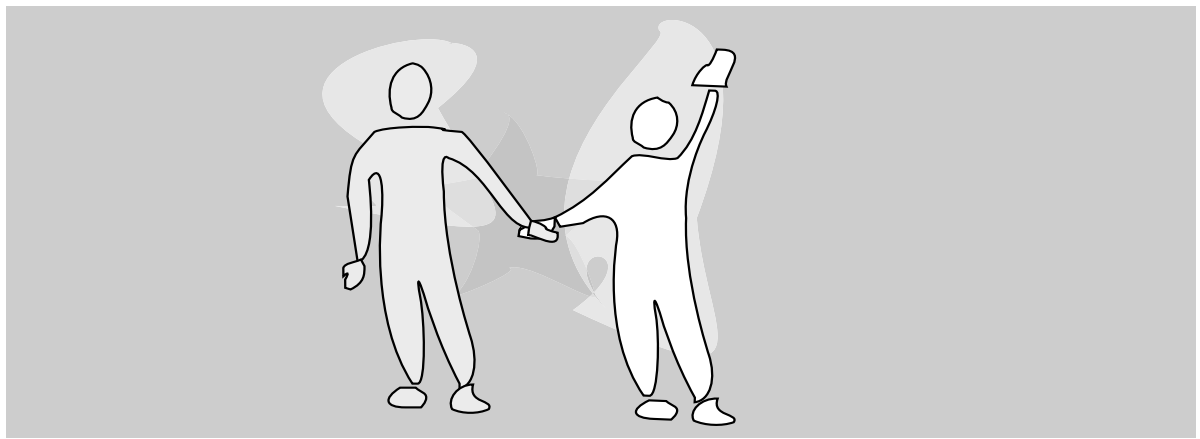
Explain that this part of the exercise will be done in silence; the only speaking will be the statements being read out loud. The participants should not speak while they move from place to place; no conversation, comment, or debate is to take place at this time.

### **step four**

One at a time, read the below series of sample statements about youth power or create your own statements.

**trainer note:** When the first few statements are read, you may have to prompt participants to move to the appropriate sign.

## section two: foundations for youth-adult partnerships



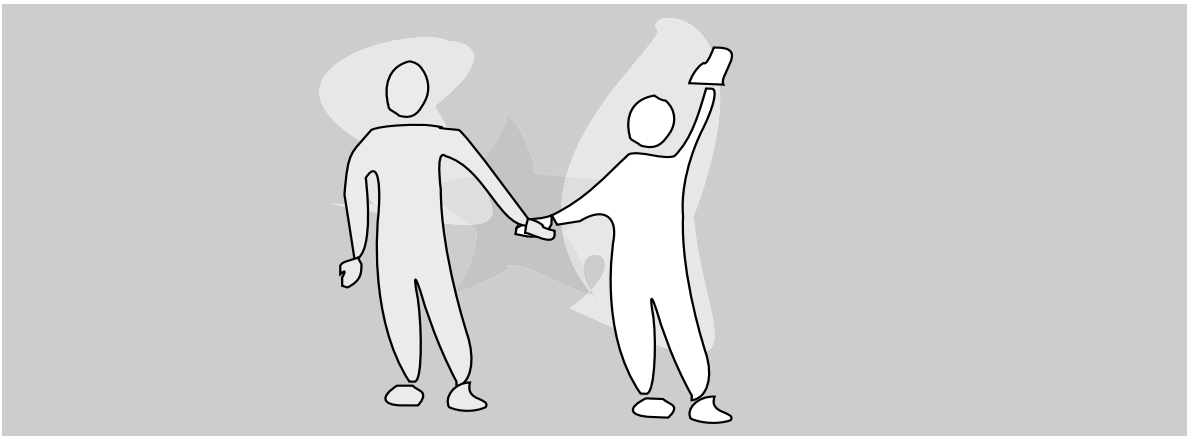
### sample statements

- Youth should be able to evaluate the programs and agencies that serve them.
- Young people don't have enough life experience to make informed choices about their lives.
- Youth should be involved in hiring staff.
- Adults don't listen to the opinions of young people when program planning.
- Every youth agency should have young people on its board of directors.
- Elected officials should involve young people in making every decision that affects youth.
- Young people should sit on the school board.

### step five

**Option One:** After each statement, ask for a few volunteers to share why they chose the sign they are standing under. No one else is to comment, and no discussion is to take place. When the volunteers are finished, read the next statement and have everyone move to the appropriate sign again; repeat your request for a few volunteers after every statement.

**Option Two:** Allow some time after each statement (maximum 3 or 4 minutes) for discussion. This option will require fewer statements read out loud (because more time is spent in discussion), but it requires more active monitoring by the trainer so that participants respond to the comments that are made, not to the participant making the comment. Once the time limit has been reached, go on to the next statement.



## reflection and discussion

Process the activity in the large group using some of the following questions:

- What word or phrase caught your attention?
- What are some of the main ideas you heard?
- As you listened to participants' opinions, what hopes or fears did you have?
- What were you reminded of as you heard people give their opinions?
- Which opinions delighted you?
- Which opinions surprised you?
- What values do we need to build in creating youth-adult partnerships?
- What implications does this exercise bring up for youth-adult partnerships?
- What changes may be required of us?
- What are the immediate next steps you need to take?