

Active Citizenship Today Field Guide

Second Edition

A Joint Project of Constitutional Rights Foundation
and Close Up Foundation

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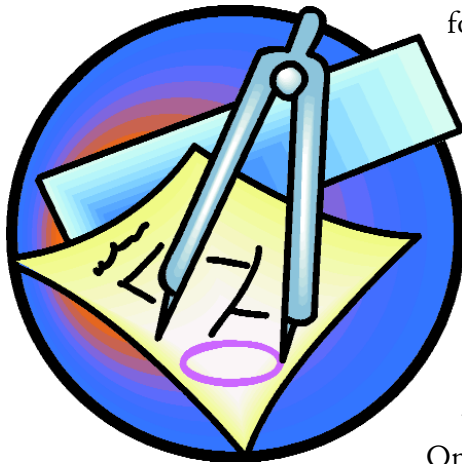
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Drawing Your Community

For your first step, find out how you feel and think about your community.

The word “community” comes from the Latin word *communitas*, which means fellowship. Today, community has many meanings. You’ve probably heard of the business community, the law-enforcement community, and the Asian community. There are even “virtual communities,” people linked to each other via the Internet. You belong to your school community. You might even belong to a special group of people who share your interests.

This can be a community. Dictionaries list about 15 different meanings for “community.”



We’re talking here about community in a physical sense—the community where you live. But if you talk to people about the community they live in, they still give different answers. Even neighbors might disagree on what their community is.

One might feel it means the immediate neighborhood. Another might think it includes several neighborhoods. A third might believe it means the whole city. It depends on their experience.



Determination to make a difference in the world has become the blood in my veins. It’s what keeps me going.

—Molara Obe, young activist with School Girls Unite

How Would You Describe Your Community?

In a group, do the following:

Make a list. List the things that make up your community. Focus especially on problems in the community *and* resources—people, places, and things that can help address problems.



Gather materials for drawing.

Get some markers and a large sheet of paper—about three feet by four feet.

Start drawing. Draw your version of your community on the paper. You don't have to be able to draw well. Use symbols and words. Include everything on your list and other things you see, hear, and feel about your community.

Describe your drawing. When you are done, prepare to present your drawing to the rest of the class and describe what it is about.

Add new things. Hang your drawings on a classroom wall. Look for new community items to add to your drawings. If you take your drawings off the wall, save them in your log. You may want to use them later.



If you don't like the way the world is, you change it. You have an obligation to change it. You just do it one step at a time.

—Marian Wright Edelman (1939–), president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund