



 **UUSC**

ART AND HUMAN RIGHTS

A Human Rights Activity about Creativity and Self-Expression



ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Within a human rights framework, this activity is designed to help children and youth of all ages understand that humans need more than just the basics (e.g. food and shelter) to live the full life everyone deserves. Inspired by UUSC's grassroots partners who incorporate art and music into their human rights work, this activity helps participants reflect on the ability of the arts to help all of us – especially those facing difficult situations – express themselves, experience fun and joy, and feel a sense of community.

Through the act of creating art by following instructions (Activity 1), the participants will experience the satisfaction of learning a new skill and participating in a group endeavor. Next, through choosing their own materials and deciding what to create themselves (Activity 2), the participants will experience the agency, leadership, and fulfillment that comes from expressing themselves in whatever way they choose.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FRAMING

Today's activity is about human rights, which are the basic freedoms and protections every person is born with that cannot be taken away. Some examples are the right to be safe from violence, the right to education, the right to be paid and treated fairly at work, and the right to a fair trial if you break the law – you are “innocent until proven guilty.” Another right people have is to stay in another country if they are not safe in their own. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is an organization that works to protect human rights through teaming up with groups of people defending these kinds of rights in their own communities. UUSC calls these groups “partners.”



One of UUSC's partners is a group called Activate Labs, which supports people who have had to leave their home countries to find safety in another. A woman named Monica Curca started Activate Labs because she had to leave her home in Romania for that reason, and she knew how lonely and hard that experience could be. Monica also knew that people need more than just food, water, and shelter in that situation, because the journey is difficult and those leaving their homes also have to leave behind many of their belongings and friends. That is why Monica brings art and music supplies for people on this journey to help them express how they are feeling, be a part of a community, and have a fun and positive experience to help them keep going.

When Monica and her team from Activate Labs prepare a space for arts and music, they put out lots of supplies and equipment so the people can choose how they would like to express themselves. People paint pictures, decorate masks, make signs about human rights, and sing songs. Sometimes Activate Labs helps people do a project together, like plant a garden or paint pictures on a part of the fence that separates the United States from Mexico. Here are pictures of some of the different art activities Activate Labs has led recently. Whether participants with Activate Labs design their own art project or work on a group activity together, they get the opportunity to meet some of the important needs they have aside from the basics of food and shelter, such as having fun and sharing how they feel.

Today, we are going to do two kinds of art projects in the style of Activate Labs: one where we do a project together, and another where we each choose how we would like to express ourselves. Then, we are going to talk about the differences between the two activities and the multiple kinds of advantages that arts and music bring into our lives.



ACTIVITY I

Recommended activity time: 10 minutes.

To help participants understand the benefits of creating a specific type of art or music together (e.g. learning a new skill and bonding as a group), this activity can be any short art or music activity where participants follow instructions as a group to create something together or as individuals. Here are two example activities:

Example 1 - Make a chalice out of construction paper.

- Give three different colors of construction paper to each participant and have glue and safety scissors available to use. Lead participants through the steps of constructing a chalice out of construction paper by cutting the shapes out of the paper and gluing them together. This can be done by cutting out a rectangular “stand” for the chalice, a boat-shaped “bowl” for the chalice, an oval shaped “flame,” and then connecting these parts together to create a flaming chalice.

Example 2 - Learn a dance (or a song).

- With enough space for participants to move safely, teach them a simple dance. This could be choreography designed by the instructor or a popular dance such as the Electric Slide. Consider accessibility when considering which activity to use or modify. Learning hand signs to go with a song is an alternative option as is learning a new song.

ACTIVITY II

Recommended activity time: 15 minutes.

To help participants understand the benefits of free-form creative expression (e.g. autonomy, doing something they love), this activity is intended to be a time where everyone chooses what they want to create, using materials they select. We recommend making any art and music supplies you have on hand available, with the exception of more messy or time-consuming materials.

- Place all available art materials on a large table or in a central location on the floor.
- Invite participants to make something using the available art supplies or to create something like a story, a poem, a dance, or a song. Participants may choose to create something they think is beautiful, something that tells a story, something that is important to them, or something that expresses how they are feeling right now. They can work alone or as part of a team. Explain that there will be an opportunity to share about what they created, but that they are not required to show it to the group unless they wish.
- Take pictures during the creative process and after, with the permission of the artist(s), and send them to Carly at ccronon@uusc.org . We will share some of them on UUSC social media or on the UUSC website!
- After 15 minutes, ask the participants to stop creating and come together as a group. Remind participants that if they wish to continue working on their project, they are welcome to take them home to do so.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

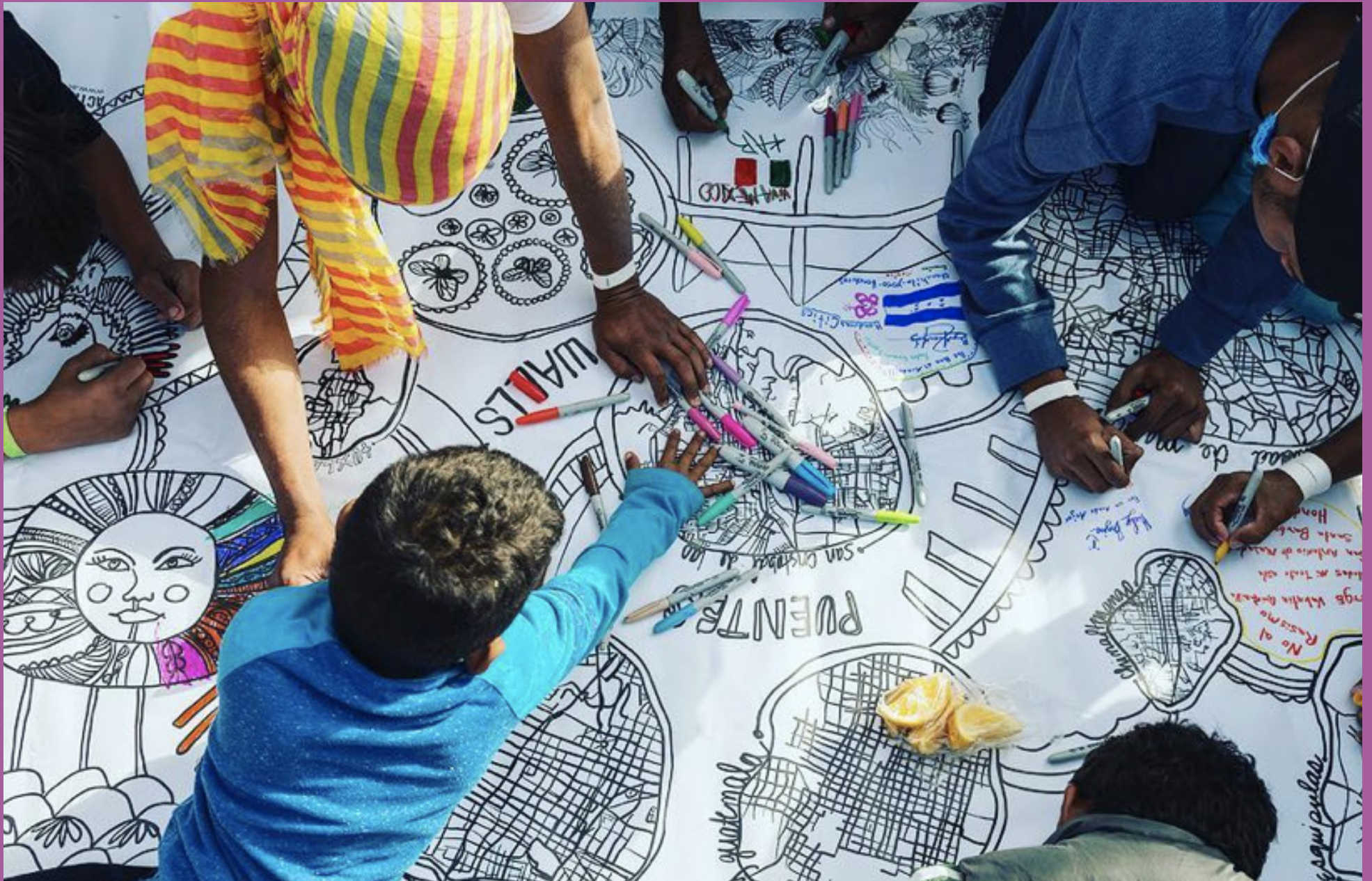
Suggested discussion time: 15 minutes.

- What was it like doing the first activity together? What did you like about it? Not like about it?
- What did it feel like to be able to decide to make anything you wanted?
- What was it like to make something by yourself?
- What was it like to make something with friends?
- What sort of things do you do in your life that make you happy?
- What do you think it would be like if you couldn't do those things anymore?
- Do you think that people need more than food, water, and a place to sleep to be happy?
- What else do they need? Why?



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Activate Labs leads an activity for people to create art on the border wall separating Tijuana and San Diego, helping support beauty and resiliency in the face of division.



Activate Labs leads an activity for migrants and refugees to color, draw, write, and share messages of hope that others migrating will see later.



Activate Labs leads a mask-making activity in Mexico City, focused on helping people share the things they are struggling with during the migration process.



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Activate Labs leads an activity for migrants and refugees to color, draw, write, and share messages of hope that others migrating will see later.



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Activate Labs trains and provides equipment for people to learn how to make their own videos, helping them share their stories about the experience of migrating.