

# I AM FROM POEMS

## [30 MINS- 1 HOUR]

### OVERVIEW

This exercise was originally created by the Appalachian poet George Ella Lyon and is good to do when you are getting a day-long or half-day meeting started because it includes quiet reflection, memory, moving around, and creative writing. It is generally really powerful even if it takes people a minute to get into it. It's often good to follow this exercise with more 'heady' or challenging content.

### GOALS

- To offer participants a chance to reflect, creatively engage, and share parts of themselves they might not get a chance to share otherwise
- To connect participants to their own legacy and memory, as well as to those of others
- To engage and center the other senses beyond the analytical brain

### TIME NEEDED

30 mins - 1 hour

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Flip charts, tape, markers, writing utensils and paper for people if they don't have their own, nice music to play

### DRAWING FROM THE MEMORY WELL

Before the session begins, write up each of these prompts on a sheet of big paper and place around the room:

- **Favorite foods growing up**
- **Family members' names**
- **Items found inside your childhood home** (for example, incense, sewing kit, anger)
- **Items found outside your childhood home** (for example, red clay, dogwoods, scooter)
- **Optional: Memories of your terrain or landscape** (for example, cicadas, trailers, McMansions)

### NAMING OUR ORIGINS

- Home is your house, apartment, where you stayed. To begin, everyone will do two things. First, everyone will write silently on each paper. Then, everyone will do a gallery walk and read what others have written.
- Next, everyone will have some time to write a poem using the refrain of **'I AM FROM'** This poem can be inspired by or using what was written on the papers or anything else that comes to mind.
- Poems are then shared in either small groups or the full group, and participants give each other love! If time permits, people can reflect on the process and share their noticings.
- For another variation, create a group poem together. Then read it collectively, with each person reading one line at a time until the poem is finished.