



**Group Quilt Activity, adapted from [Partners for Youth Empowerment](#) for Densho’s [“Examining Racism and Discrimination Through Oral History”](#) curriculum (currently under development)**

This activity helps students to examine what inspires their own commitment to action. It engages their creative imagination and helps them to see the strength of individuals coming together to work towards a better world.

**Materials:** crayons, colored pencils, or oil pastels, evenly cut squares of construction paper (at least one per student), strong tape, teacher illustration, some “filler” images in case there are not an even number of students

1. Prior to the lesson, identify a personal story that you can share with students and prepare a visual representation (on a square piece of paper) of what motivates you to have empathy or take action to combat racism and discrimination.
2. Begin the activity by showing the Aki Kurose “Empowerment through Peace” clip. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhZ4yNVQ55A&t=34s>
3. Ask students: What do you think motivated Aki to work for peace? What kinds of actions did she take because of her passion for peace?
4. Tell students that Aki’s desire for peace and her own life experiences inspired her to take action to stand up against racism and discrimination. Ask students to think about what motivates them to have empathy or take action to combat real world struggles including racism and discrimination. It could be a personal experience, a family member and their experience, a story they’ve heard, or even just a feeling that makes them feel motivated to feel empathy and take action. Share an example from your own life.
5. Challenge students to consider a response without words, to visualize their answer and draw a symbol, person, image, or even just a color that represents what motivates them to have empathy or take action to combat real world struggles including racism and discrimination.
6. Share your illustration, what it represents, and why you chose to represent it the way you did. Repeat the question: *What motivates you to have empathy or take action to combat racism, discrimination, or other wrongs in the world?* Distribute art materials, then give students 5-10 minutes to make their own “quilt square.”

7. After students are finished making their quilt square, pair them to share their images, talk about what inspired them, and what actions they are inspired to take. Give each student one full minute to share while the other person listens.
8. Ask students to thank their partner for listening, then join with another pair and spend a few minutes sharing their drawings with this larger group, as well as any questions or ideas that come up.
9. Form the “quilt” by having each group join their squares together facedown in a line on the ground, then tape them together. Have students join their strip of drawings together with other strips. The result will be a large “quilt.” (Depending on how many students you have in the class you might need to change group size -- the end result should bring all the individual illustrations together in roughly a square quilt.)
10. Gather the class around the quilt and either lead an open discussion about what came up for students during the activity and when they look at the quilt *and/or* have every student say one word that describes how they feel when they think about their drawing or look at the quilt.
11. Explain to students that this activity is meant to be an antidote to the overwhelmingness we feel when we hear constant news headlines about terrible things happening in the world. Let them know that this quilt represents their sources of strength and commitment, that it will help us remember not to get complacent and to keep showing up even though it’s challenging.
12. Hang the quilt in your classroom to remind students of the power of collective action. You can occasionally return to discussion of the quilt.

Example of a finished quilt:



