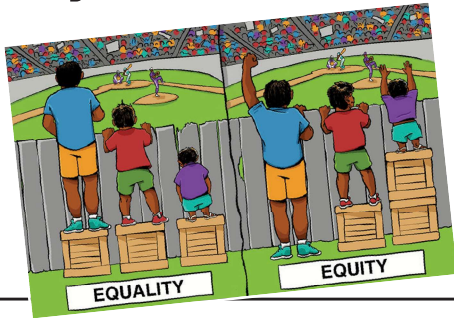


Why we need to step into #the4thbox



You've probably seen this two-panel cartoon before, or a version of it. It may have even appeared in a training or presentation you've attended recently. The team at Center for Story-based Strategy, including the illustrator of this version, want you to know that while distinguishing the concepts of equality and equity is useful, it takes a lot more to start a fruitful conversation. *In fact, when we stay in these two boxes only, we often invite dangerous and counterproductive conversations.*

We offer #the4thBox and its two facilitated learning options to assist in expanding how we explore issues of equity and how we plan to address them.

Dangers of Two Boxes

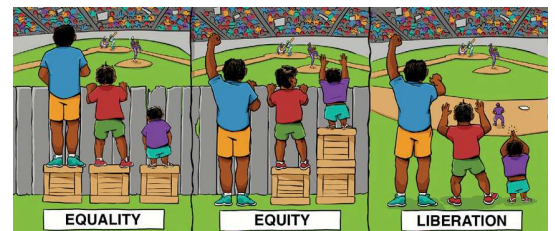
While Equality vs. Equity can feel like a powerful “aha” moment for many, our experience with learners encountering this image is that **it contains rather than unleashes** important conversations. When presented with just these two boxes conversations repeatedly focus on familiar themes:

- Participants with privilege or resources raise concerns about “their boxes” being taken away.
- Given a small contained world, arguments over identity and representation in the figures move to the foreground (Why aren't there any girls in the story and what proof do we have that they aren't there?)
- The either/or logic of 2 boxes erases the idea that we each might experience different boxes at different times/places in our lives.
- A focus on debating equality vs. equity avoids deeper conversations about how did we get here and what else is possible?

Three boxes are closer, and yet...

Versions of the image with a third box, for Liberation, get us a bit further — introducing the idea that narrative assumptions often hide in plain sight. “The conflict in the story isn't the same if the obstacle is removed!” And still, this view is too simple and linear. Does the third box really come after the second? Wasn't the third box really first, before the fence was built?

If we want outcomes of equality, equity and liberation in our lives and work, then we need to empower learners to explore, vision and pursue these goals themselves, and THAT's where #the4thbox comes in.



4th Box Materials

The steps on the following pages can be used in a variety of contexts and with the most basic of materials. *You can download FREE files corresponding to the various options here at the4thbox.org.*

 the4thbox.org

Images for Presentations

Download high-resolution versions of the 2-, 3- and 4-box graphics for including in presentations and workshop materials.



#the4thBox Paper Doll Cut-outs

Download this PDF and print copies for each of your learners. Provided with tape/glue and scissors, the Paper Doll version helps learners dive right into exploring #the4thbox.



Blank paper & drawing supplies

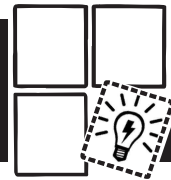
Paired with the images mentioned at left, participants in this conversation need nothing more than a blank page to engage with their imaginations and #the4thbox.



#the4thBox Digital Kit

For technical environments where participants have access to Photoshop or similar software.





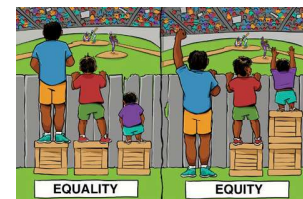
OPTION 1: EXPLORING EQUITY – THERE’S MORE TO THE STORY

People can only go where they’ve been first in their imagination. Introducing #the4thbox opens up a whole new universe of conversations and learning. All you need to get started is a print out, PowerPoint slide, or poster of the 4 boxes below.

1 START WITH 2 BOXES

Show the 2 boxes, briefly discuss the difference between equality and equity. “What is the story here between the two boxes?”

- Equality is everyone starting at the same place.
- Equity is everyone getting what they need.



2 NAME ASSUMPTIONS

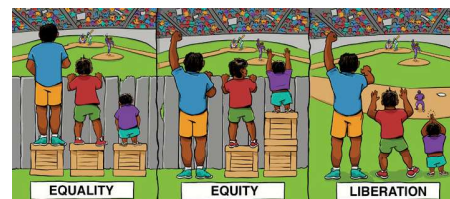
Ask learners “What is something that is present in both the Equality and Equity box and is causing the problem that both stories are trying to address?”

- Folks will have multiple answers. List or hear them all without challenges or response.
- If someone says “the fence!”, focus in on that answer. If no one brings it up, move to the next step and bring it up yourself after a few guesses.

3 BRIEFLY FOCUS ON THE FENCE

Show the 3 boxes & emphasize: “The Fence!, yes, if you remove the fence, the whole situation changes.”

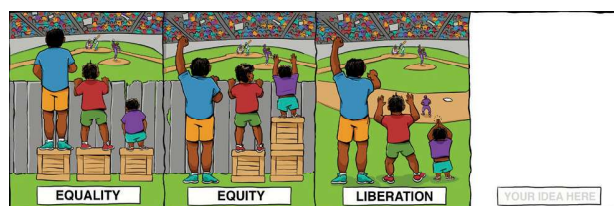
- Don’t linger too long here, just make sure you get a version of this point across:
- “This means the presence of the fence, of the obstacle, was an *underlying assumption* we made in both scenarios. The fence’s constant presence is what we had to believe in order to believe that the conflict was about distribution of boxes. When that assumption changes, the whole conversation changes. In this case, we no longer have to talk about boxes. But there are many more assumptions to unpack and explore.”

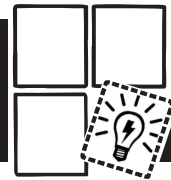


4 “WHAT’S IN THE 4TH BOX?”

Show all 4 boxes. Now, let’s continue the story that’s started here. What could come after Liberation? What would you put in the 4th box? What would you do, in this story, if the obstacle were removed and you were Liberated to pursue your dreams?

- Depending on the learning environment, introduce one or more ways for learners to explore:
 1. Blank paper with drawing implements
 2. #the4thbox paper doll printouts – Print a copy of the PDF for each learner and provide scissors and glue/tape
 3. Have your participants gather in small groups, no more than 4, and have them create a “living statue” of their vision for the 4th box.
- Ask learners to (individually or in small groups) imagine what they would do in the 4thbox, what is the next step in the story, beyond Liberation? We don’t just want Liberation for its own sake. What would we DO with Liberation in the 4thbox?
- Ask learners to NAME that new box with a single word or phrase.
- Encourage folks to get as fantastic or sci-fi (or as mundane!) as they like. There’s no wrong answer for what’s in your 4th box.





5 SHARE-BACK & DISCUSSION

Have individuals or groups share their work back with the whole room.

Encourage discussion about the creative process and choices made in filling out #the4thbox.

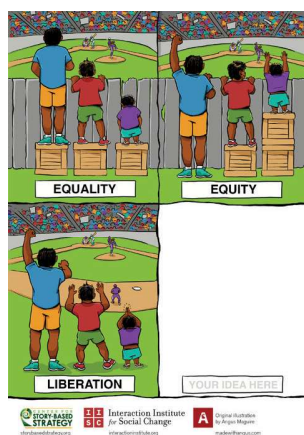
Introduce questions of sequence. Invite learners to explore the assumption that the 4 panels must proceed in a linear sequence from left-to-right.

- Could box 3 come at the beginning? Wasn't it that way before the fence was built?
- Is there another stage in between any of the 4?
- Did your 4th box concept exist before? Is it something that you actually want to return to rather than a new place we've never been?
- Conversations about sequence are ripe for reflecting on history, colonialism, power, and social change.

Adapt and apply.

- How does the story of three people, and access to viewing a game, translate to an issue we are currently learning about or working on right now?
- What is the fence in that story (the underlying assumption)?

OPTION 2: ASSESSING EQUITY – HOW TO CHANGE THE STORY



Personal assessment

1. Which box are you in when you're at home?
2. Which box are you in when you're in the classroom?
3. Which box are you in when you're on campus at large?
4. Which box are you in when you're out in the world?
5. How do your answers inform how you understand your own situation, or what you want to change about it?

Progress assessment

1. Which box was our organization/department/school in when it started?
2. Which box is it in now?
3. Which box are we headed towards?
4. How do your answers inform how you understand your organization, or what you want to change about it?

Planning & Visioning

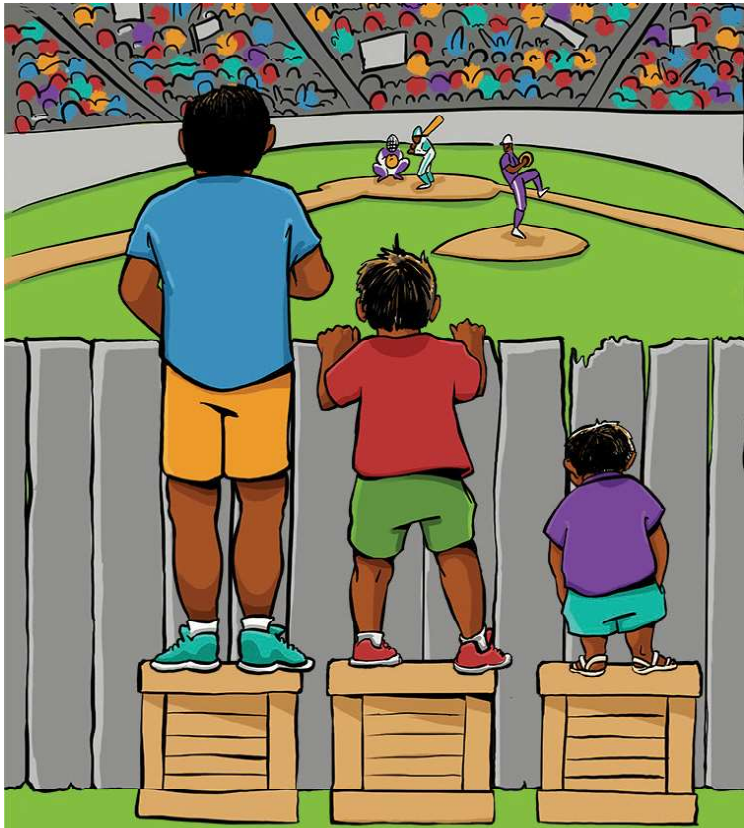
1. Which box are we in now?
2. What would we have to do to get to the 3rd box, or beyond?
3. What assumptions are keeping us from getting to where we want to go?
4. How do your answers indicate changes in your action plans or intent?

Facilitation Tips

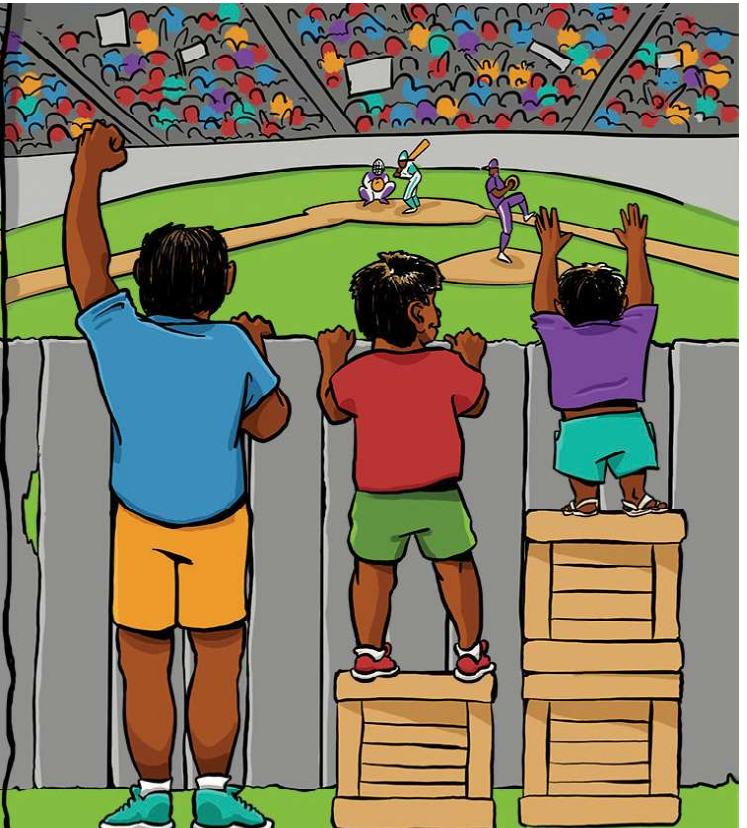
- At some point, someone will raise concerns about representation in the images. Maybe about ableism or essentialism, in the portrayal of height. Or about gender, and lack of representation. Rather than letting these become a focus of *critique*, try to encourage folks to explore questions like:
 - What assumptions are being made about gender (or other identity) in this conversation?
 - In what ways DO you see yourself in these images?
 - Use the 4th box to surface these issues
- Sometimes participants complain that equity means “their boxes” are being “taken away”. If this comes up, challenge underlying assumptions by asking:
 - How do you know the boxes were taken, not given?
 - How do you know that box is “theirs”?
 - What's the bar for “deserving” resources or access?
- Encourage imagination and divergent thinking. The conversation isn't about right answers. It's about supporting folks in applying expertise gained from their own lived experience, to themselves, their community and their work.
- In the U.S., these conversations often gravitate towards “liberation-from”. If folks are stuck, encourage “liberation-to” thinking. Not just “yay no more fence”, but “what do you do once there is no fence?”

Acknowledgments

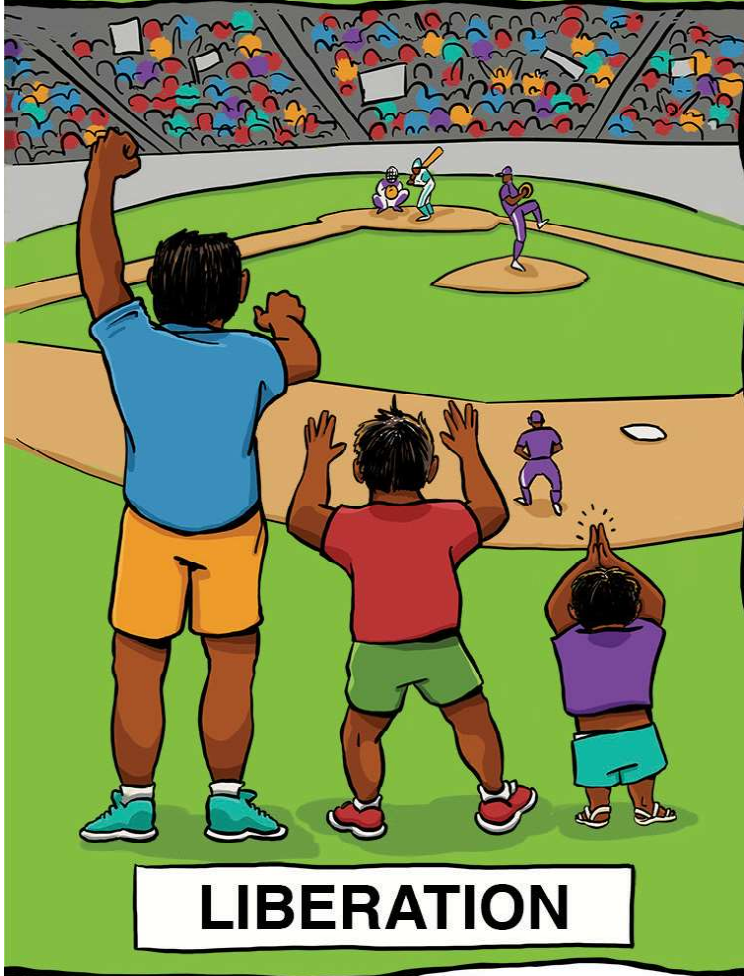
- The earliest version of the 2-box concept we can find was created by Craig Froehle.
- The 2-4 box versions used in this document were initially a co-production of *Interaction Institute for Social Change* and *Center for Story-based Strategy* in collaboration with the artist, Angus Maguire.
- This tool, the learnings and positions taken herein are the sole responsibility of *Center for Story-based Strategy*.



EQUALITY

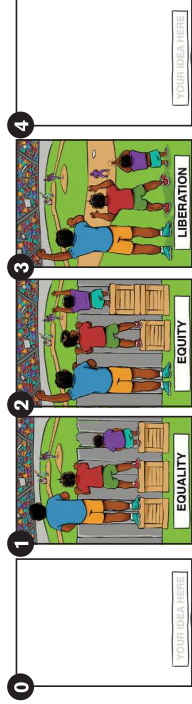


EQUITY



LIBERATION

YOUR IDEA HERE



Assessment beyond Equity

You've probably seen a version of this cartoon before, most likely with just two or three boxes. Distinguishing the concepts of *equality* and *equity* is a useful starting point for many folks. And adding *liberation* in the third panel can shift the conversation from resource distribution, to noticing that obstacles themselves are important underlying assumptions to address. But these three panels imply a larger story, one you can use to assess your project, issue or story.

Instructions

1. Expand the cartoon's story by drawing, and naming, the scene that precedes "Equality" and the scene that comes after "Liberation".
2. Turn the page over and answer the worksheet questions.

0

YOUR IDEA HERE

4

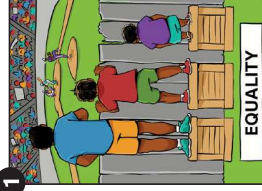
What comes before Equality?

What would you put in the 0 box?

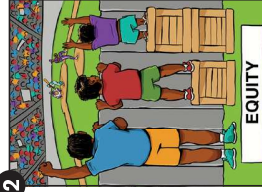
What scene or conditions precedes the

idea of Equality in this story? And what will you call it?

1



2



3



What could come after Liberation?

What would you put in the 4th box?

What would you do, in this story, if the obstacle were removed and you were

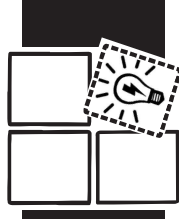
Liberated to pursue your dreams?

And what will you call it?

YOUR IDEA HERE

Instructions

#the4thBox is useful in assessing a variety of projects, issues and stories. Use one of the three sets of prompts below to explore, alone or in a group, your situation.



Personal assessment

1. Which box are you in when you're at home?
2. Which box are you in when you're immediately outside your home? (i.e. classroom, work, park, the gym, etc.)
3. Which box are you in when you're participating in your broader community? (i.e. campus life, community orgs, activism, neighborhood groups, religious community, etc.)
4. Which box are you in when you're out in the world?

Progress assessment

1. Which box was our organization/department/school in when it started?
2. Which box is it in now?
3. Which box are we headed towards?
4. How do your answers inform how you understand your organization, or what you want to change about it?

Planning & Visioning

1. Which box are we in now?
2. What would we have to do to get to the 3rd box, or beyond?
3. What assumptions are keeping us from getting to where we want to go?
4. How do our answers indicate changes in our action plans or intent?

5. How do your answers inform how you understand your own situation, or what you want to change about it?