



# Brittany Campagna

## Is This the “Hood”?

Video (6:33): Brittany Campagna, founder of Inner City Innovations, Nashville, Tenn.

Brittany Campagna is founder and CEO of Inner City Innovations, an organization that seeks to bring sustainable food, health, and other services to low-income communities. She continually challenges people in and outside of neighborhoods to understand how the word *hood* is used and interpreted, advising the church and the media to avoid confusing urban blight with “blackness.”

## Is This the “Hood”?

### Preparation

Select a room or location to offer the study. Every session needs a room that has the capability to access the video via Internet and to project the video for groups of various sizes. Check to be sure equipment is working properly. *This video can be found at [www.gcorr.org/series/vc3](http://www.gcorr.org/series/vc3).*

**Preview the video.** Be sure to take notes about what is new for you, what captures your keenest interest, and what one thing you want to be sure to emphasize in the teaching process. Next, read through the lesson plan, making notes of what you need to prepare in advance or persons you may recruit to assist in leading the session.

### Gather the following materials:

- Bible for reading the Scripture: Ezekiel 34:25-31
- Listening and Looking Guide (one for each person or project on a screen)
- Pens and pencils
- Blank (self-stick) sheets of newsprint (be sure to have additional sheets to prevent markers from bleeding through onto walls)

- Small index cards in three different colors, enough for participants
- Basket for collecting the index cards
- Pens and pencils
- Markers, colored pencils, and crayons
- Scissors
- Blue painter's tape

**Also prepare:**

- Write these vocabulary words on newsprint for posting on the wall: *redlining*; *food desert*; and *place utility*.
- Research the above words/phrases which are used in the video; also research the phrase “racial profiling” and be prepared to introduce it in the discussion during the “Name the Pain” section.
- Write your definitions of the phrases on index cards (for ease, use a specific color for a particular phrase – i.e., write the word and definition of *place utility* on a blue card).
- Post or hang newsprint on the classroom wall.

## THE STUDY SESSION

### Get Started [20 minutes]

Welcome everyone to the session; take care of housekeeping matters. Read statement of purpose (or recruit a volunteer to do so): “The General Commission on Religion and Race presents *Vital Conversations* to help start the dialogue on subjects that may sometimes be difficult to approach. We are all part of the beloved community, and we welcome perspectives that bring enlightenment and understanding.”

Tell the group that in this session we are going to talk about our perceptions of the word neighborhood. Distribute the Listening and Looking Guide and ask the group to answer the first two questions:

- Describe your neighborhood (name three good things and three challenging things).
- What is meant when you hear someone say or use the word *hood*, as in “I’m from the ‘hood’” or “They live in the ‘hood’”? How do you define *hood*?

Next, hand out three index cards to each participant (three different colors). Direct the group’s attention to the three words/phrases on the newsprint and ask them to write the words listed on the newsprint on their index cards (one word or phrase per card). Ask them to write a definition for each word/phrase. Pass around the basket and ask them to place the cards in the basket.

Quickly, sort through the cards putting them in piles by color. Recruit a volunteer to write the definitions of the words on the labeled newsprint sheets. Read the cards one at a time – acknowledge everyone’s response even if it duplicates what has already been written. Point out that these words are part of the vocabulary linked to the video being used in the session.

Recruit a volunteer to read the Scripture: Ezekiel 34:25-31. Next have a time for prayer. Invite someone to lead the group in prayer; if no one volunteers, open with a prayer of your choice. Read and post a covenant that you have created (or the group has created) and highlight the key components: confidentiality; everyone’s voice matters; disagree with care/do not attack anyone. Invite the group to add thoughts and ideas to the covenant (especially if there are new persons).

### **Show the Video [15 minutes]**

Invite the group to watch the video by sharing this introduction: Brittany Campagna is founder and CEO of Inner City Innovations, an organization that seeks to bring sustainable food, health, and other services to low-income communities. She is exploring how we (church folk, media, clergy, community members) use and understand the phrase “the hood.” She offers advice to avoid conflating urban blight with “blackness.” Refer the group back to the Listening and Looking Guide but explain that they are not to try to answer the questions as they watch – simply review the guide as a way of focusing their attention. They may wish to jot down a phrase or a key point but try to remain focused on what is being said. If there is time, you may show the video again and encourage more extensive written reflection.

### **Use the Listening and Looking Guide [10 minutes]**

Individually, complete the remaining statements or answer the questions on the guide. Encourage participants to take their time to recall and reflect upon Brittany Campagna’s experiences and concerns, being sure to find connections with their own lives.

### **Name the Pain [15 minutes]**

Read aloud this statement by Brittany Campagna: “While urban decay gathers public attention, the public pays no attention to the real barriers people face living in a rotting community – and are mistaken for blackness.” Ask participants to share where they have seen this happening and talk about what can be done – and where this needs to be done (church, media, communities, etc.). Be prepared to deeply listen and deeply hear someone’s story of frustration, anger, and pain.

Next, read this statement from the video: “Ramifications of previous racial segregation are presently equated with black bodies, black businesses; crime, poverty, and declining neighborhoods are all publicized as something resulting from the presence of black folks.” Recap those ramifications that Brittany Campagna outlined for us. Third, add one more phrase to the conversation: “racial profiling.” Ask the group about their understanding of this term and call forth any personal experiences they have had or have known about.

Finally, invite people to name those things shared by Brittany Campagna that cause their hearts to ache. Invite members to share something one by one. After each person has spoken, say the phrase “Lord, in your mercy” and ask the group to respond by saying, “Bring us justice.”

### **Reflect and Share [5-10 minutes]**

Have members review the information recorded on the guide sheet. Add additional thoughts, complete their vision, their commitment, and their social media share. Invite anyone who wishes to share their commitment to do so after a time of individual reflection.

### **Closing Meditation [10 minutes]**

Have someone reread aloud Ezekiel 34:25-31. Read this closing prayer (or share one of your own choosing): Some of us live in places where we have access to all that we need to be comfortable and safe. Others live in “deserts,” places of lack and dryness, a place that is home for a challenge to experience the abundance that You promised all believers. We repent for calling names and assigning blame to persons whose lives are ripped apart by the inequity of jobs, health care, and education. We repent for our own sins and seek restoration for communities everywhere. Strengthen our hearts and our hands for doing Your work. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

## Listening and Looking Guide: Brittany Campagna

Name three positive things and three negative things about your current neighborhood:

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What is meant when you hear someone say or use the word *hood*, as in “I’m from the hood” or “They live in the ‘hood’”? What comes to mind; how do you define *hood*?

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As you watched the video, what images stood out? What pictures came to your mind?

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Have you or a loved one ever been “stuck” by changes in economic fortunes (loss of a job; relocation of health and education services, etc.)?

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Where and how have you seen poverty linked to the racial identity of one or two groups of people?

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Where did you hear inequality clearly named as a factor in establishing economic stability for people living in cities?

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Cultivate a new vision for the word *hood*:

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Make a commitment: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tweet This/Post on your social media: \_\_\_\_\_

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