

Civilized People: Knife Collection Drive

This works best in a place that has a reputation for gun violence and is also facing gentrification. If it is a place where people have held a gun collection drive in the past, where people turned in their guns to decrease neighborhood violence, that is even better.

You will need:

- A table
- A few dinner knives and forks
- A container large enough to hold a lot of knives and forks
- A sign encouraging people to give up their forks and knives (for example a no smoking style sign with a diagonal line drawn through a circle, where the cigarette is replaced with a fork and knife).
- Copies of recipes that can be eaten without forks or knives (We used recipes that could be eaten with injera, fufu, chopsticks, and fingers.)
- A way for people who stop at your table to bind the recipes into books
- Blank index cards
- Pens

Prep:

Look up Confucius' influence on the popularity of chopsticks. Write an intro page to your cookbook that explains how long people have been using chopsticks for, as well as why Confucius encouraged using them instead of knives and forks.

Performance:

Invite your neighbors who are being gentrified to join in the effort to keep the neighborhood civilized. Ask them to help reduce violence in the neighborhood by helping you to teach your new neighbors to turn in their knives and forks in exchange for the civilized non-violent eating methods used by most of the world. Invite everyone who passes your table to turn in their knives and forks in exchange for a cookbook of non-violent recipes. If people do not have forks and knives with them, invite them to give you a recipe for a food that can be eaten without forks or knives in exchange for a cookbook instead. Encourage people who take the books to actually cook the recipes and invite people over to taste them. Point out how they can use the cookbook intro page to start a conversation with their dinner guests about how the definition of civilized varies from culture to culture. Encourage them to discuss with their guests whether or not it is civilized to ask other people to change just because they do things differently from you.