

Achieving Health Equity

tools for naming and addressing
racism

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Keynote Speaker

Town Hall on Racism and Structural Violence
Dartmouth Geisel School of Medicine

Via Zoom from Atlanta, Georgia

June 19, 2020

National Campaign Against Racism

Name racism

Ask "How is racism operating here?"

Organize and strategize to act

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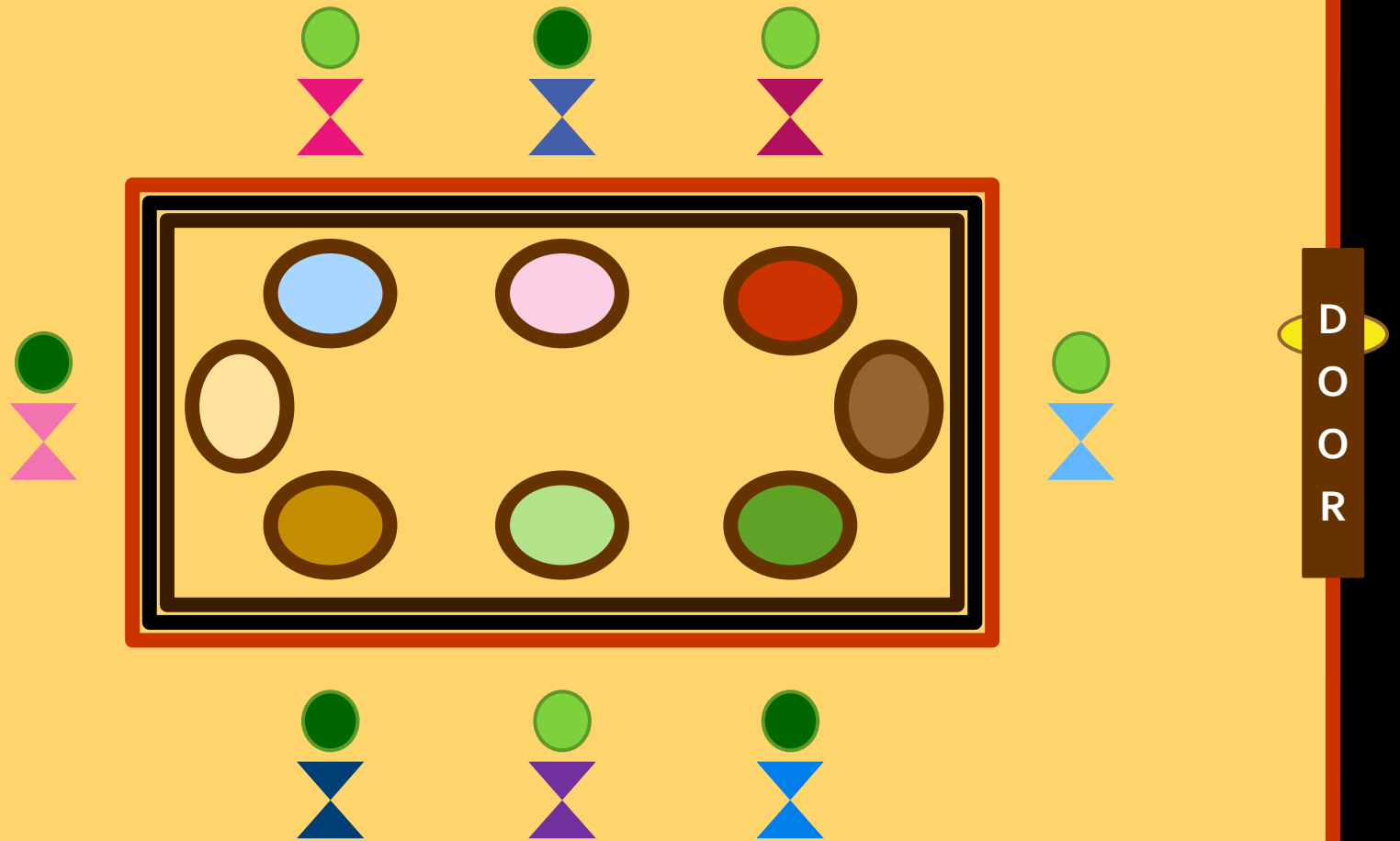
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Dual Reality: A restaurant saga





I looked up and noticed a sign . . .

OPEN

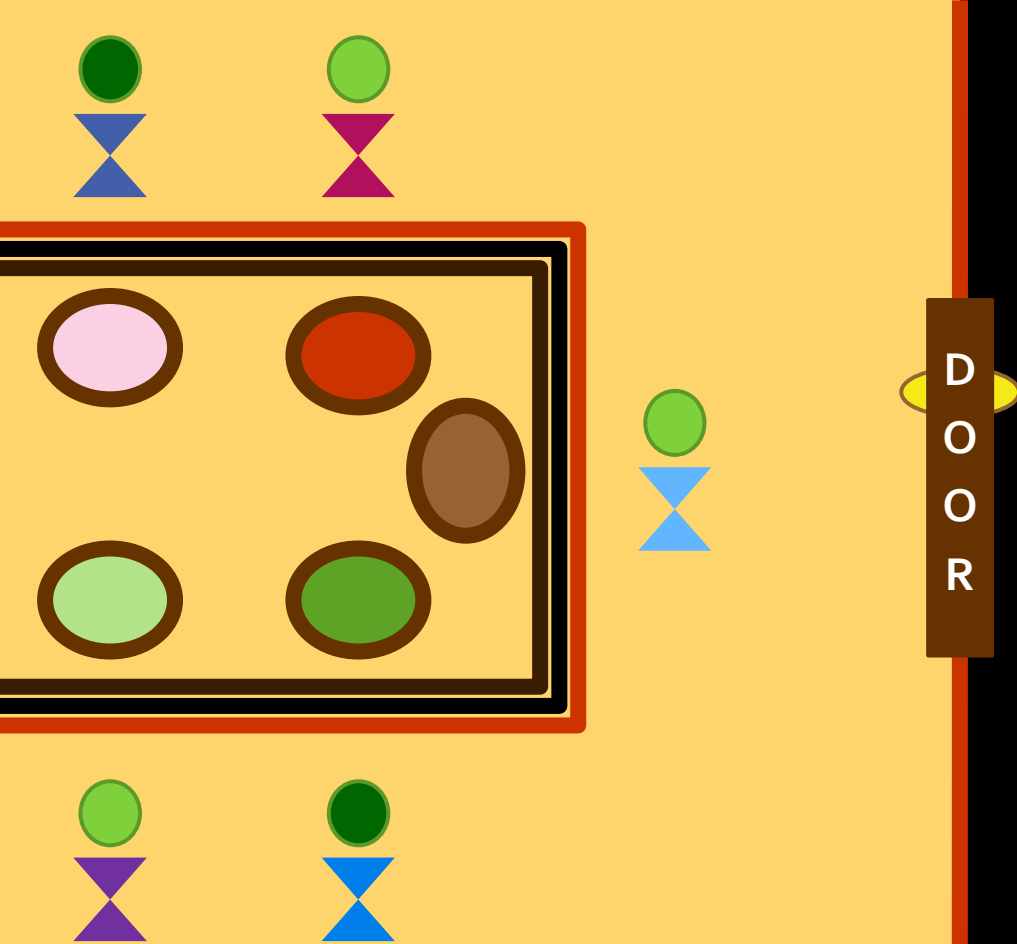




CLOSED

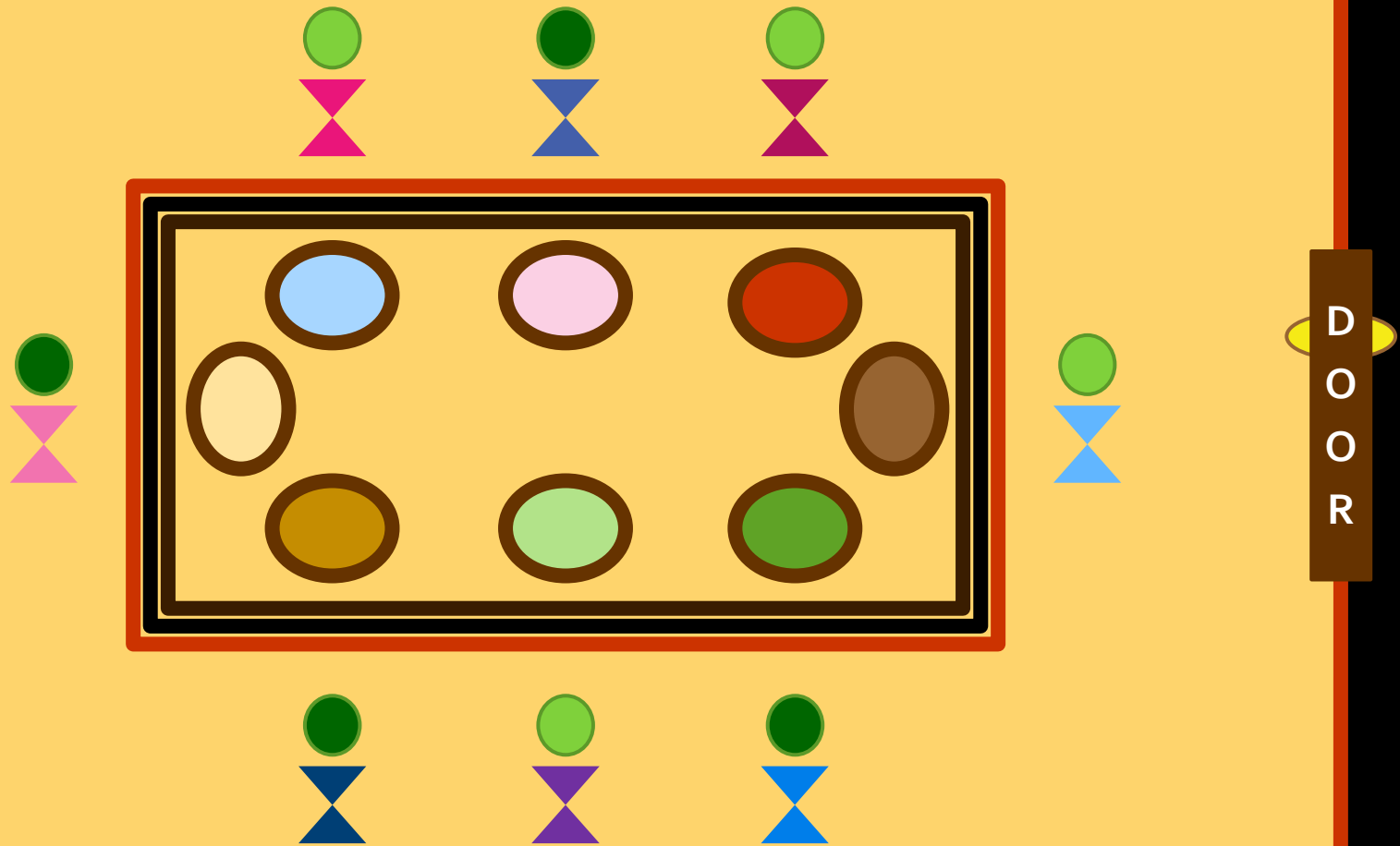


Racism structures “Open/Closed”
signs in our society.



It is difficult
to recognize
a system of inequity
that privileges us.

Those on the outside
are very aware of the
two-sided nature
of the sign.



Is there really a two-sided sign?

Hard to know, when only see “Open”.
A privilege not to HAVE to know.
Once DO know, can choose to act.

What is racism?

A system

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A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value

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A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call “race”), that

- Unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities
- Unfairly advantages other individuals and communities
- Saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources

Levels of Racism

- ❑ Institutionalized
- ❑ Personally-mediated
- ❑ Internalized

Institutionalized racism

- ❑ **Differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society, by “race”**

- ❑ **Examples**
 - Housing, education, employment, income
 - Medical facilities
 - Clean environment
 - Information, resources, voice

- ❑ **Explains the association between social class and “race”**

Personally-mediated racism

- ❑ Differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intents of others, by “race”
- ❑ Differential actions based on those assumptions

- ❑ Prejudice and discrimination
- ❑ Examples
 - Police brutality
 - Physician disrespect
 - Shopkeeper vigilance
 - Waiter indifference
 - Teacher devaluation

Internalized racism

- ❑ **Acceptance by members of the stigmatized “races” of negative messages about our own abilities and intrinsic worth**

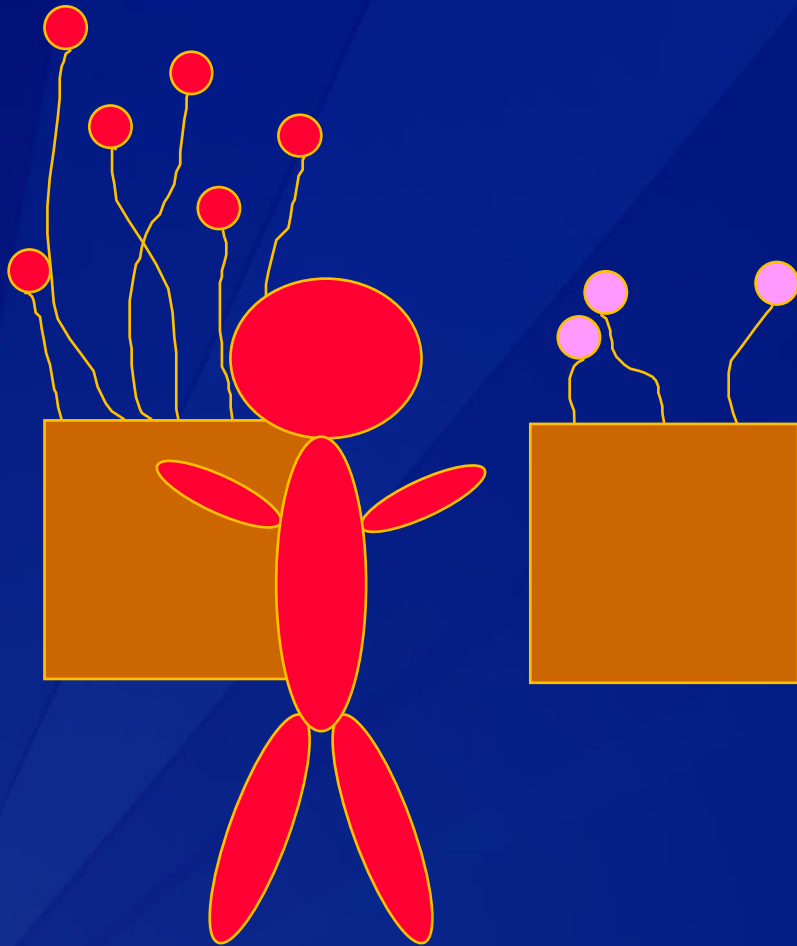
- ❑ **Examples**
 - Self-devaluation
 - “White man’s ice is colder” syndrome
 - Resignation, helplessness, hopelessness

- ❑ **Accepting limitations to our full humanity**

Levels of Racism: A Gardener's Tale

Jones CP. Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale. *Am J Public Health* 2000;90(8):1212-1215.

Who is the gardener?



- Power to decide
- Power to act
- Control of resources

■ Dangerous when

- Allied with one group
- Not concerned with equity

“How is racism operating here?”

□ Identify mechanisms

- **Structures:** the *who?, what?, when?, and where?* of decision-making
- **Policies:** the written *how?*
- **Practices and norms:** the unwritten *how?*
- **Values:** the *why?*

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Police killings of unarmed Black men
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- **Values:** View of Black men as inherently threatening

Excess deaths of “Black” people from COVID-19

“How is racism operating here?”

- ❑ **More likely to become infected**
 - More exposed
 - Less protected

- ❑ **Once infected, more likely to die**
 - More burdened by chronic diseases
 - With less access to health care

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- **Values:** Hierarchy of valuation by work role | age | existence of chronic diseases; skepticism about lottery for rationing

Barriers to achieving health equity

❑ **Narrow focus on the individual**

- Self-interest narrowly defined
- Limited sense of interdependence
- Limited sense of collective efficacy
- Systems and structures as invisible or irrelevant

❑ **A-historical stance**

- The present as disconnected from the past
- Current distribution of advantage/disadvantage as happenstance
- Systems and structures as givens and immutable

❑ **Myth of meritocracy**

- “If you work hard you will make it”
- Denial of racism
- Two babies: Equal potential or equal opportunity?

Barriers to achieving health equity

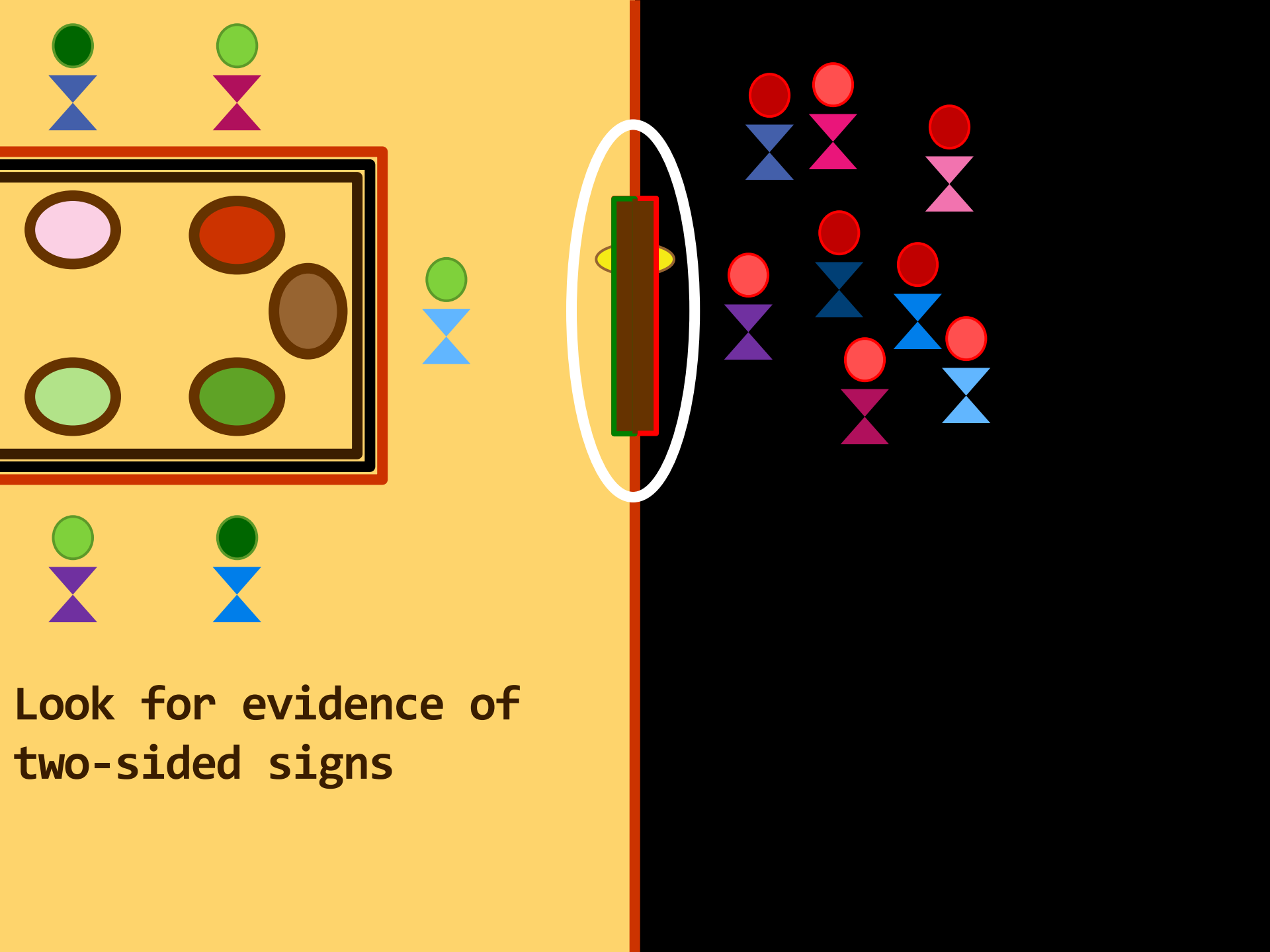
- ❑ **Myth of zero-sum game**
 - “If you gain, I lose”
 - Fosters competition over cooperation
 - Masks the costs of inequity
 - Hinders efforts to grow the pie
- ❑ **Limited future orientation**
 - Disregard for the children
No “*Seven generations*” perspective
No “*How are the children?*” focus
 - Usurious relationship with the planet
- ❑ **Myth of American exceptionalism**
 - Disinterest in learning from others
 - Sense of US entitlement

Barriers to achieving health equity

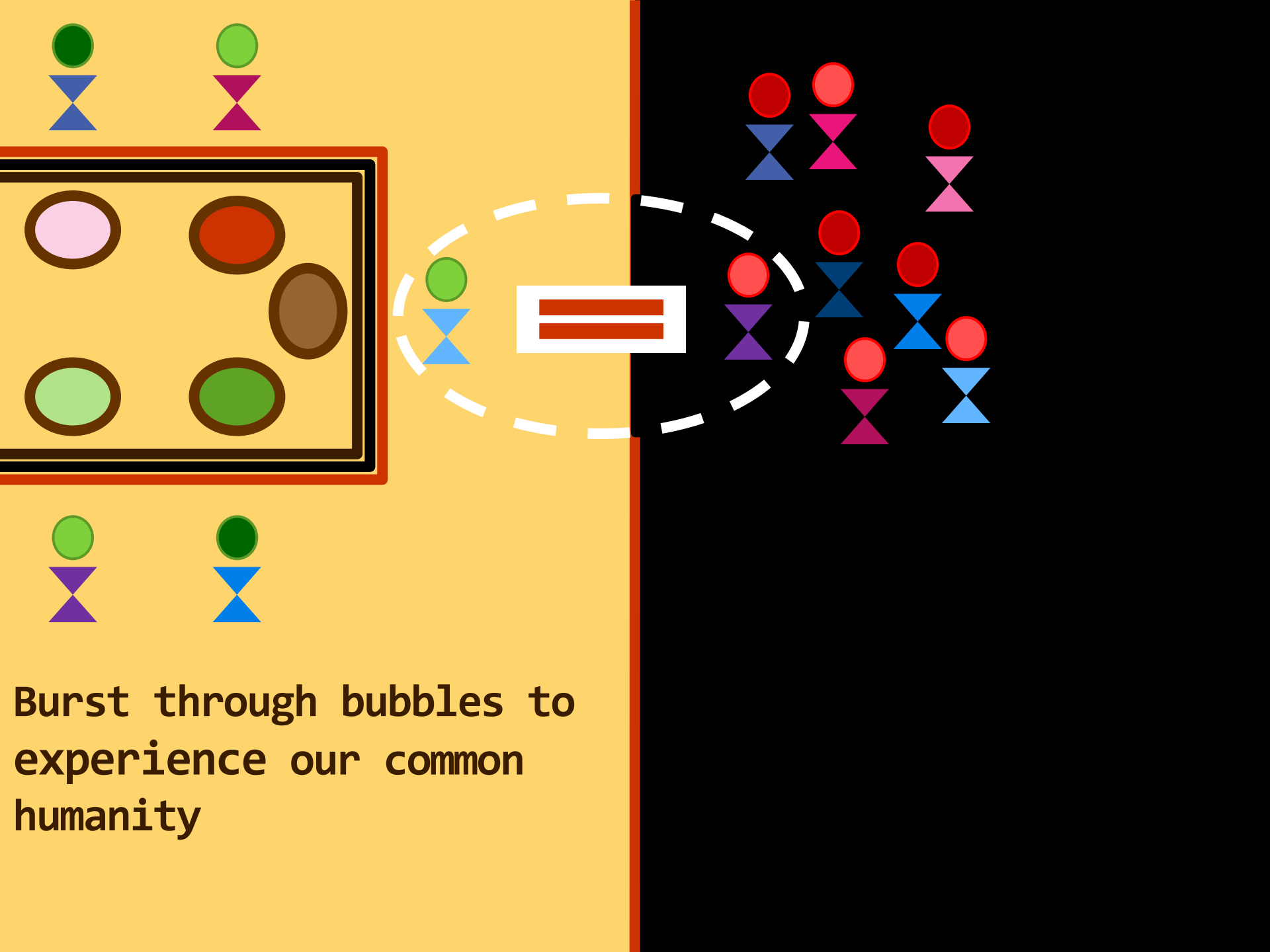
- ❑ **White supremacist ideology**
 - Hierarchy in human valuation
 - “White” as the ideal and the norm
 - Sense of “White” entitlement
 - Dehumanization of people of color
 - Fear at the “browning” of America



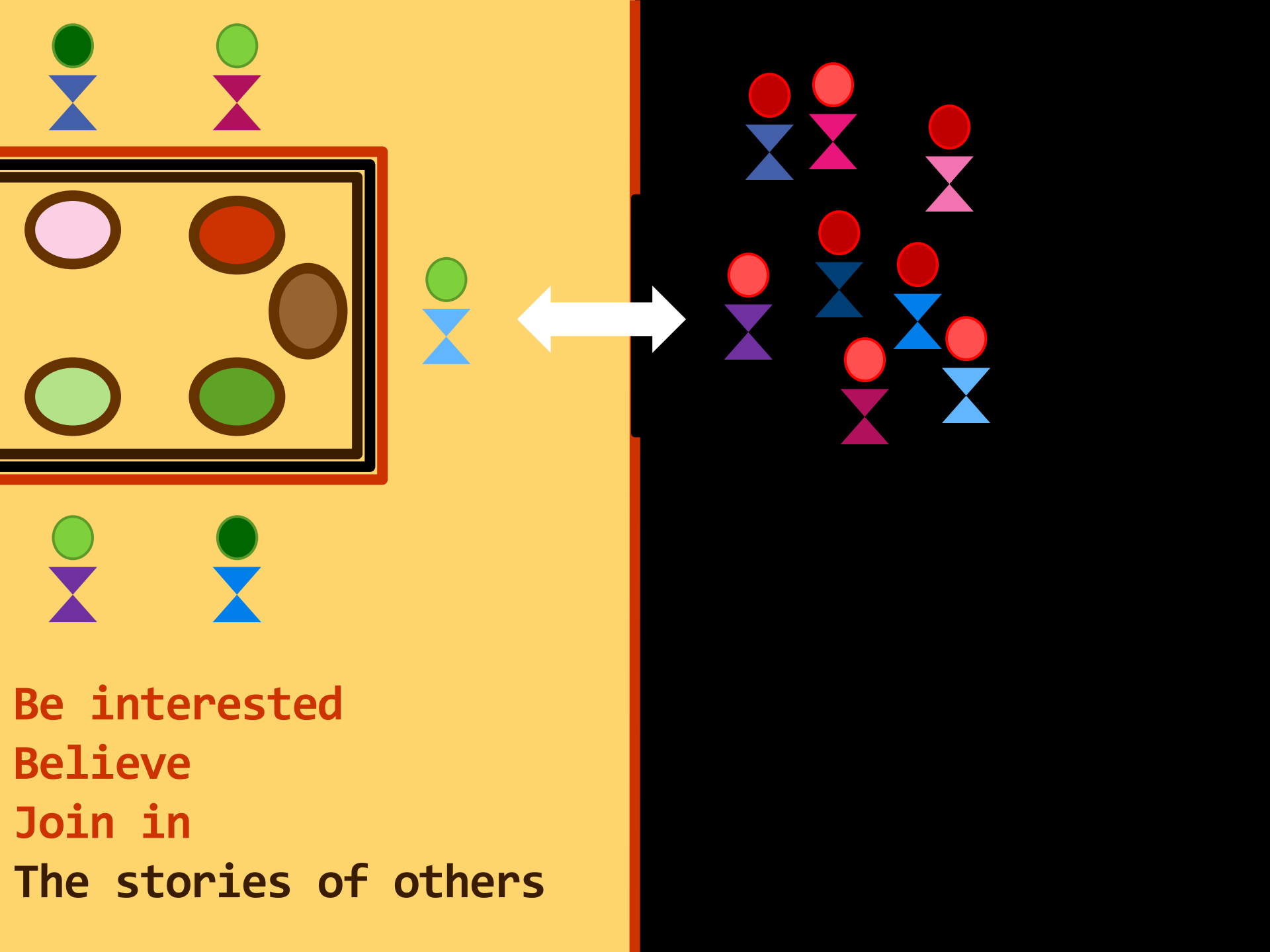
What can we do today?



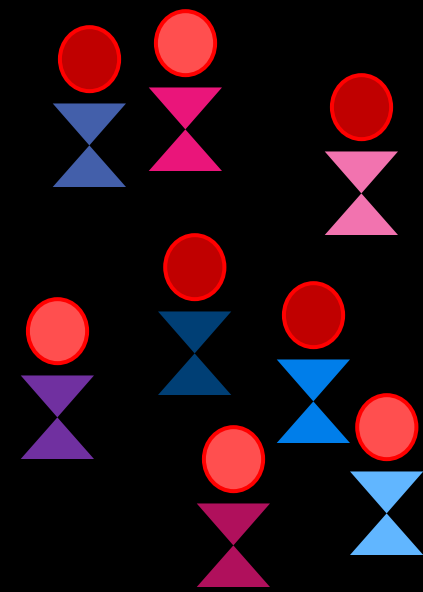
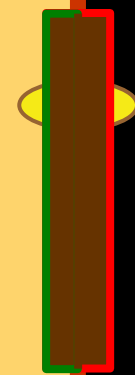
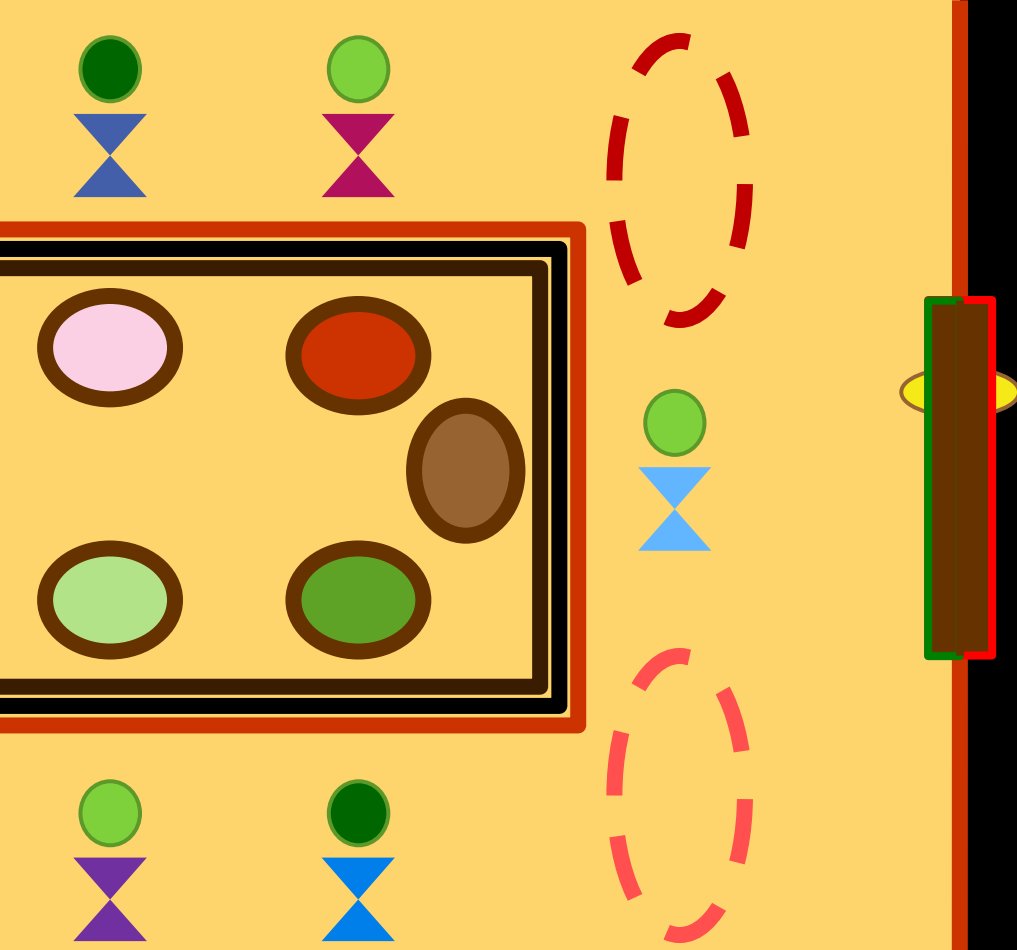
Look for evidence of two-sided signs



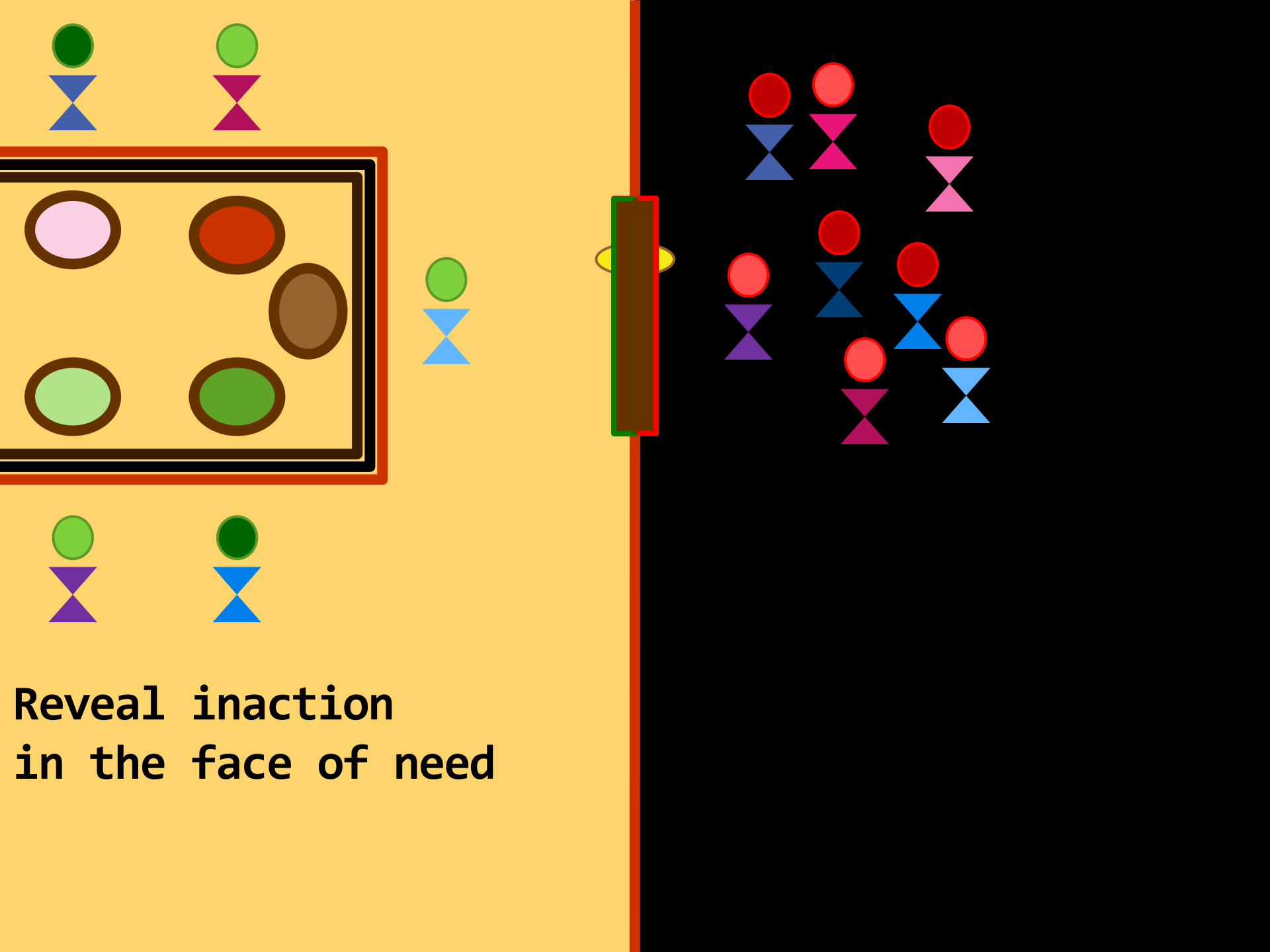
Burst through bubbles to
experience our common
humanity



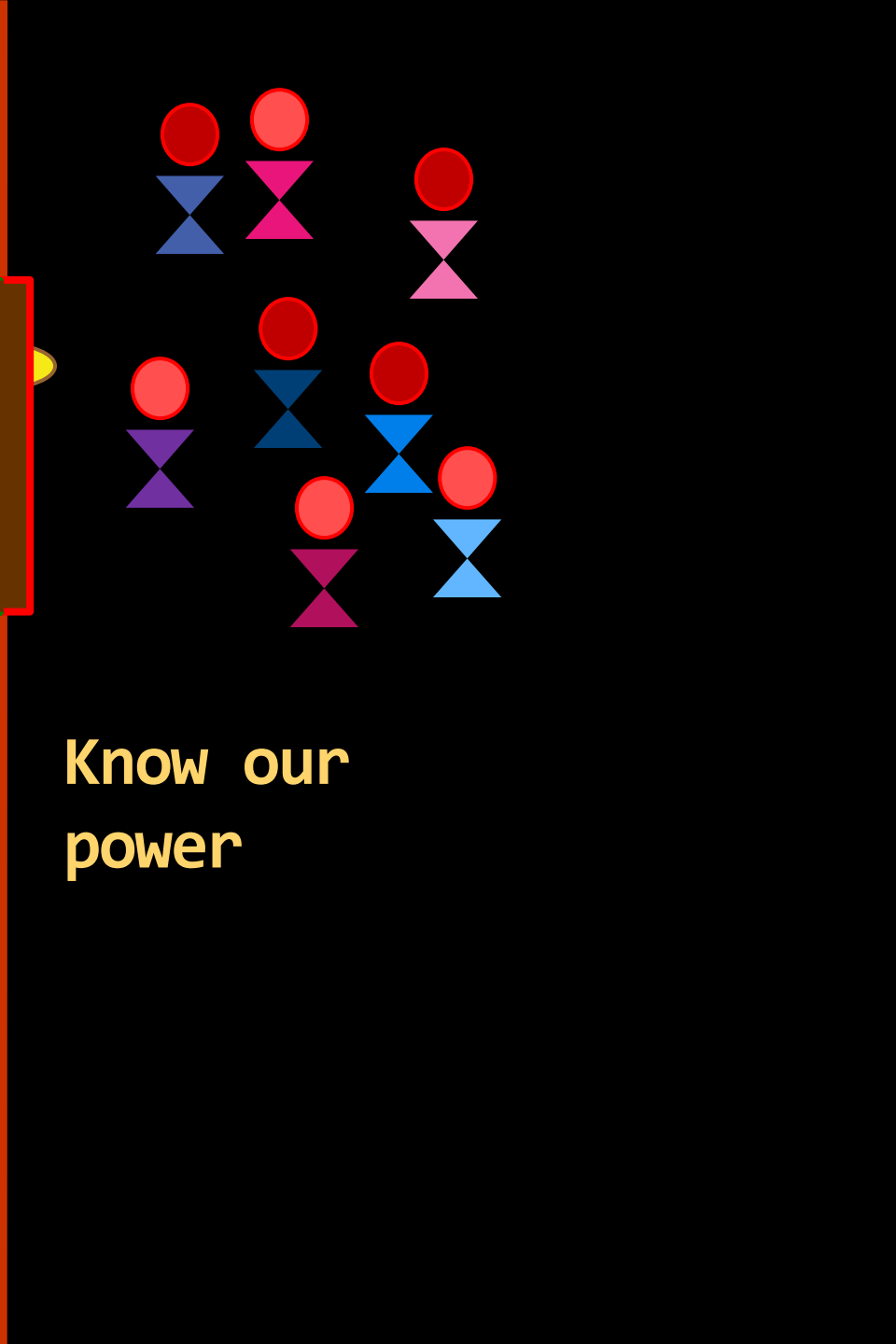
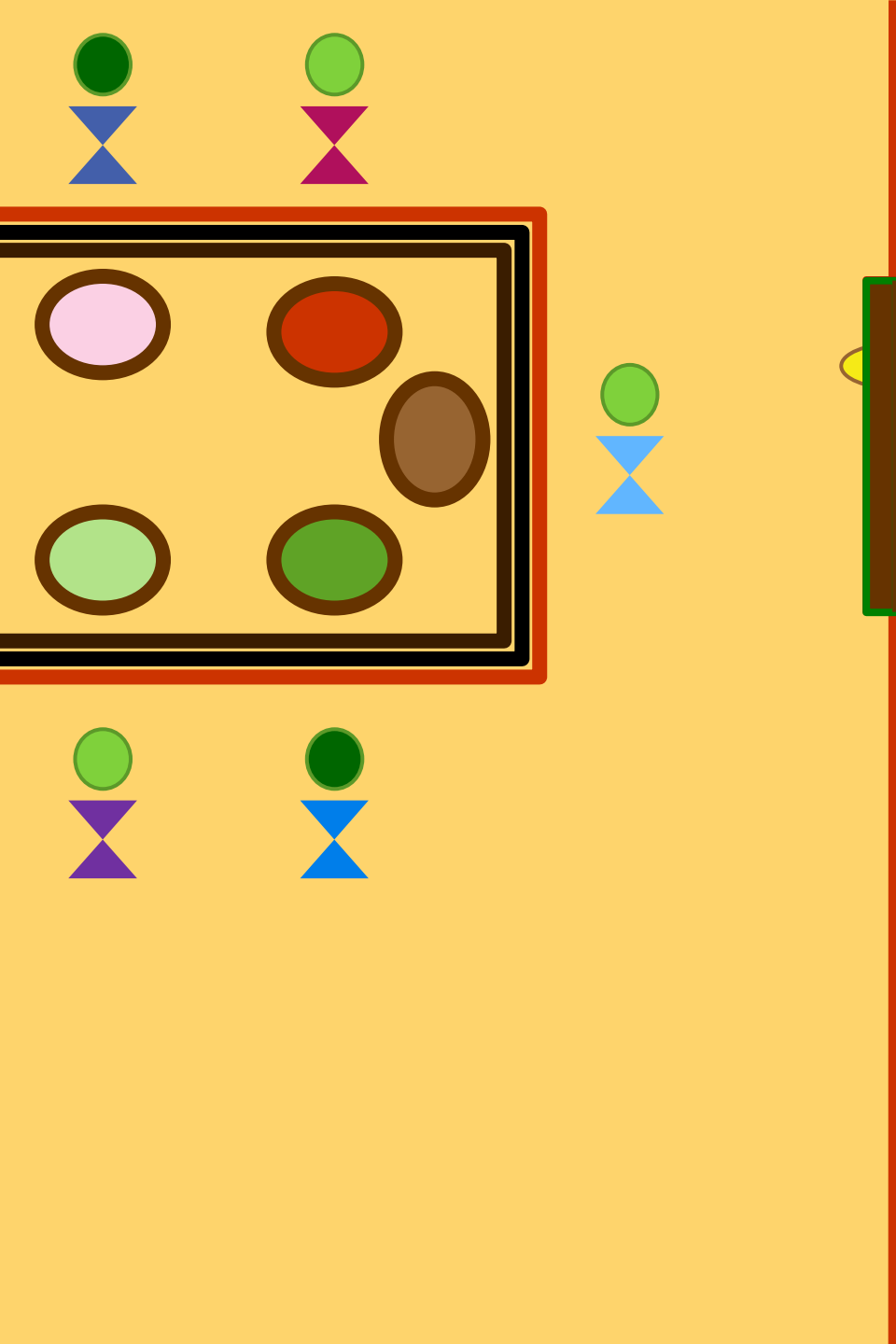
Be interested
Believe
Join in
The stories of others



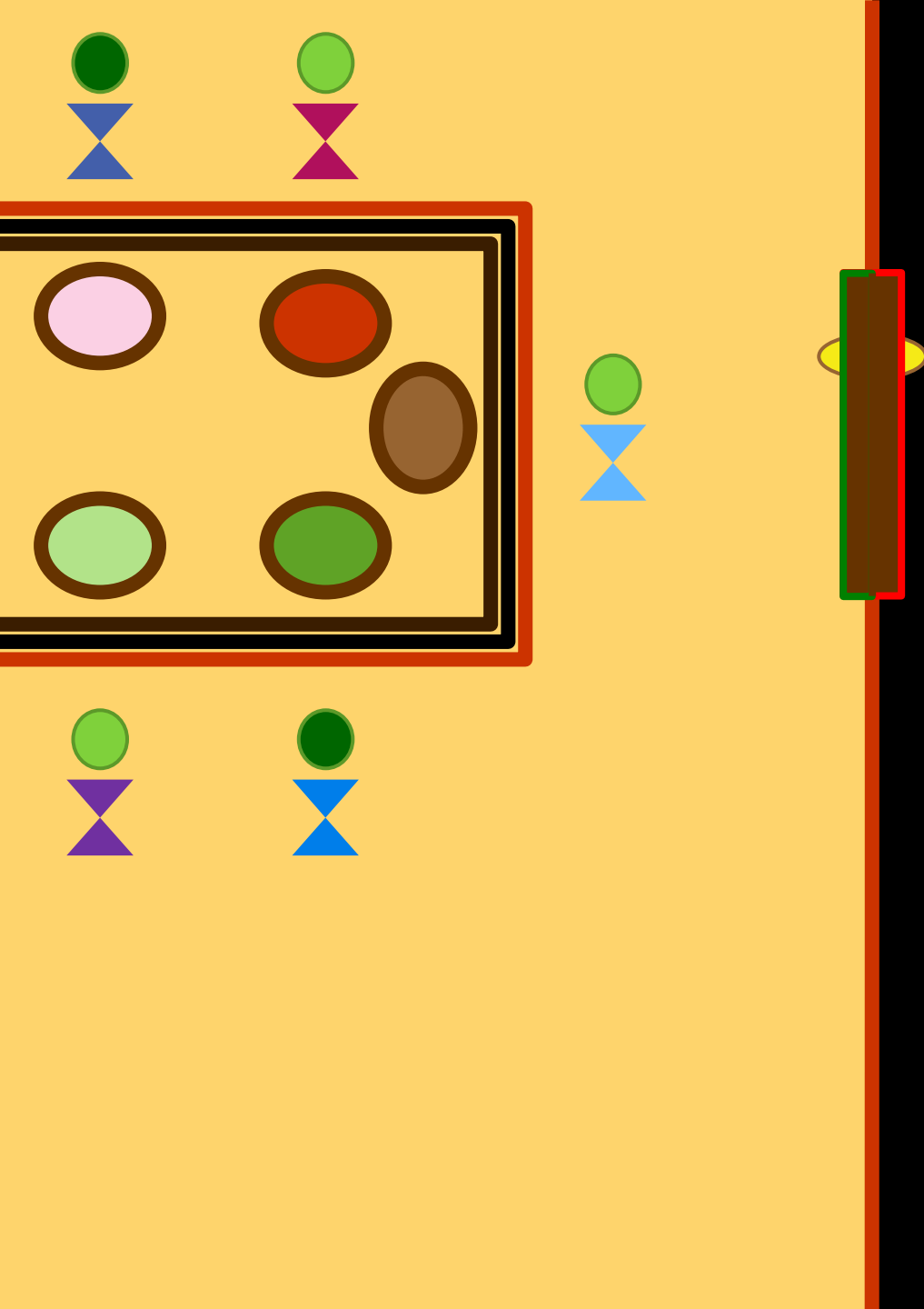
See “the absence of”



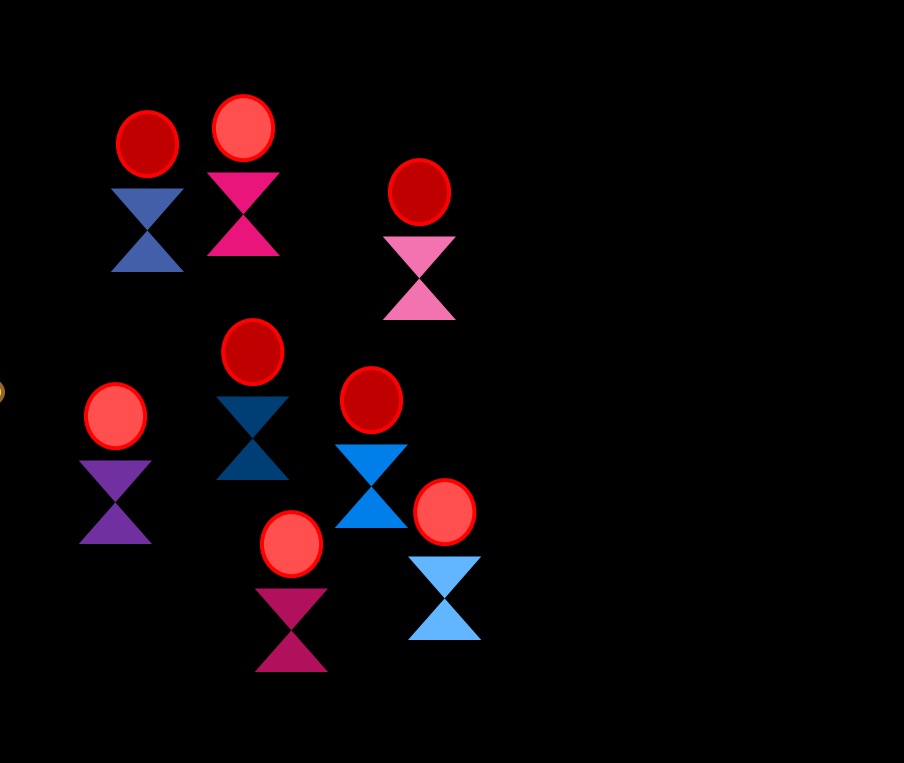
Reveal inaction
in the face of need

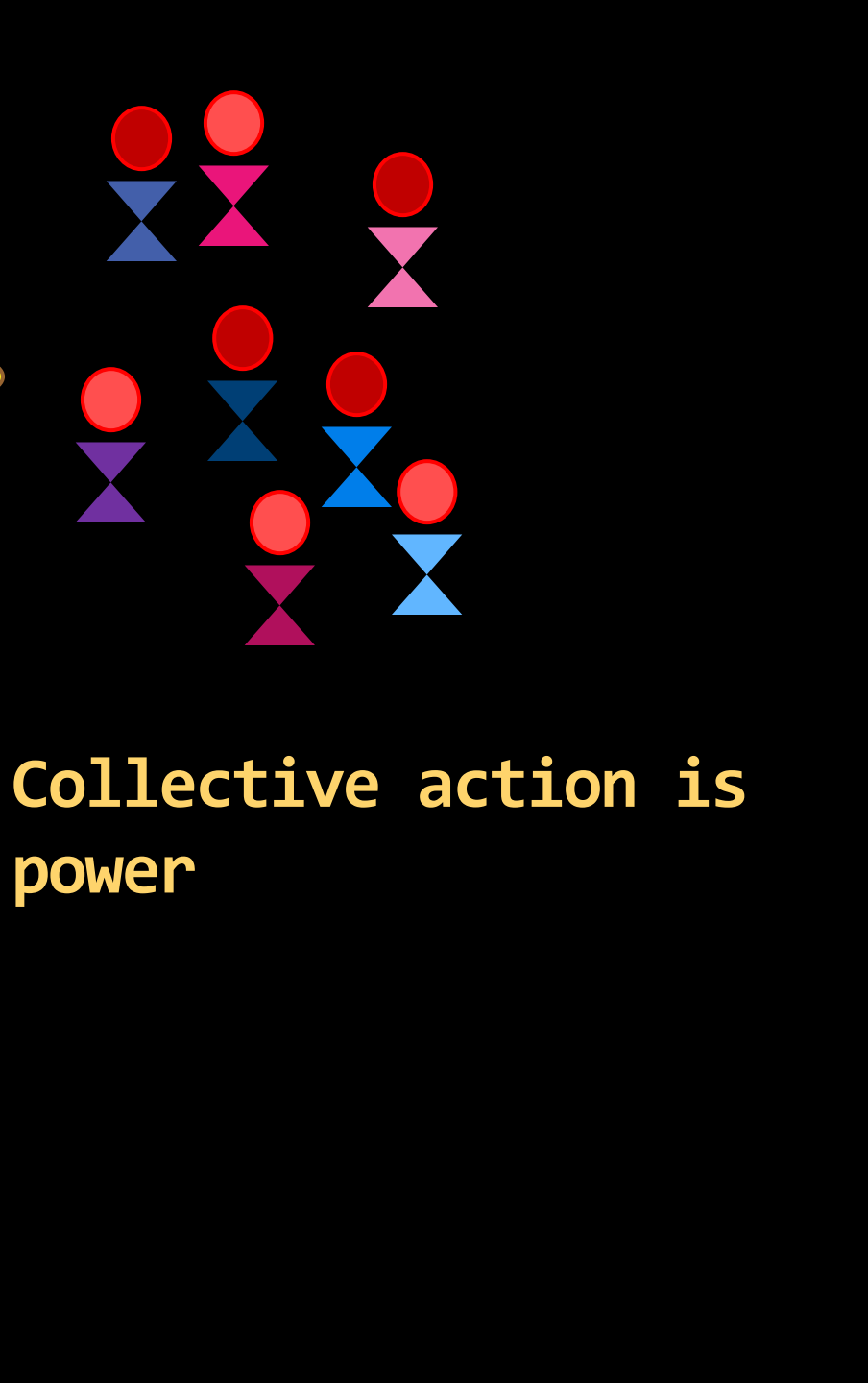
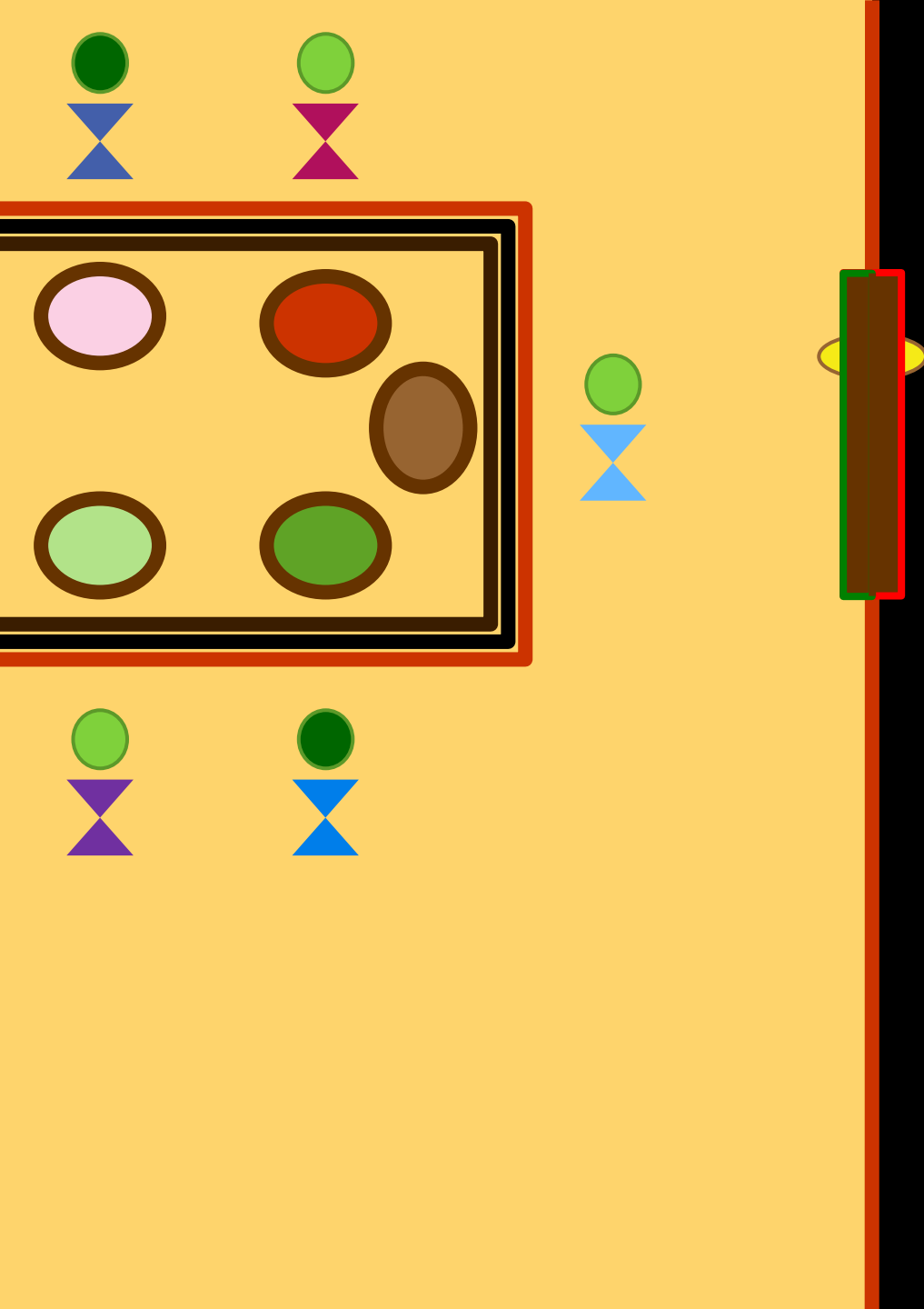


Know our
power



Action is power





Collective action is power

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