



CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

Social Justice Track (Session #2), Specialty Track 2

AUTHOR:	Sarra Alpert
SUMMARY:	In this session, participants will connect the first session's themes (celebrating individual's diverse stories/identities) to learning about those themes in broader context (important historical figures, texts and ideas). - <i>Submitted by Sarra Alpert</i>
TOPICS:	Historic Jewish Figures, Identity, Jewish History, Jewish Text, Jewish Values, Leadership Development, Social Justice, Teen Programs
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will have a clear understanding of how key concepts like race and privilege connect to more personal experiences of difference. Participants will have a deeper range of resources to draw on for camp learning on such topics.
AUDIENCE:	The first two and last two sections of this session are for older campers (13 and up) and for staff. The range of texts and historical examples are marked as which would be for campers aged 13-14, campers aged 15-17 and staff. The section on types of oppression would only work for the oldest campers and is likely best used as staff education (in helping staff prepare to lead the rest of this learning throughout the summer).
LENGTH:	90-120 Minutes (can be broken down into 30-45 activity sets)
APPENDIXES:	Large set of texts related to race, identity and oppression in the Jewish community
MATERIALS:	Handouts for all participants. Flip chart paper. Tape. Enough thin markers for everyone to write on flip chart paper with.
SETTING:	Chairs in a circle. Lots of wall space for the Living Talmud portion.

Session Description:

1) Framing: Storytelling (15 min)

Start with a list of key concepts: identity, race, privilege, fear of difference, human rights.

Get into groups of 3. Give each person two minutes to respond to each of the following questions (each person should share on the first question, and then each person should share on the second one):

- What's a particular memory you have that relates to how you developed an understanding of one of these concepts?
- What's a particular memory you have that relates to how you have experienced one of these concepts in practice?

2) Living Talmud (25 min)

Post large pieces of paper around the room with various texts on race and privilege. Examples are included in the text handouts at the end of this outline.

CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

The texts should be posted in the middle of the papers, so that there's plenty of room for people to write around the text. Give everyone time to read the texts and write their responses to them on the large paper. They can respond both to the texts themselves and to other people's comments/questions.

Potential questions to prompt writing responses:

- What do you agree with?
- What do you find challenging?
- What questions do you want to pose in response?
- How does this relate to your own experiences?
- How does this relate to current or historical moments in racial justice?

After everyone has had time to write, they should go to a text they would like to discuss in more depth. The members of each group should then read the responses on the page and discuss:

- What themes do you see in the responses?
- How does the conversation develop throughout the page?
- What is the value of putting ourselves in conversation with a diverse range of sources and perspectives? How could we do that better in the camp environment in general?

3) Building Context (30 min)

Take some time at this point to discuss some of the important categories of how these oppressions play out in the world at large. For example (definitions adapted from YouthBuildUSA):

- **Ideological:** The idea that one group is somehow better than another and in some measure has the right to control the other group. The dominant group sees itself as more intelligent, more hardworking, stronger, more capable, more noble, more deserving, more advanced, chosen, superior, etc. They see the "other" as stupid, lazy, weak, incompetent, worthless, less deserving, backward, inferior, etc.
- **Institutional:** The above ideas get embedded in the institutions of the society - the laws, police practices, education system, hiring policies, public policies, housing development, media images, political power, etc. When a woman makes two-thirds of what a man makes in the same job, it is institutionalized sexism. When one out of every four African-American young men is currently in jail, on parole or on probation, it is institutionalized racism.
- **Interpersonal:** The above ideas give permission and reinforcement for individual members of the dominant group to personally disrespect or mistreat individuals in the oppressed group. For example, this includes racist jokes, stereotyping, harassment, threats and physical violence. Often, most people in the dominant group are not consciously oppressive. They have internalized the negative messages about other groups, and they may not even recognize the role that these messages play in their own behaviors.

CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

- **Internalized:** The fourth way oppression works is within the groups of people who suffer the most from the mistreatment. Oppressed people internalize the ideology of inferiority, they see it reflected in the institutions, they experience disrespect interpersonally from members of the dominant group, and they eventually come to internalize the negative messages about themselves. If we have been told we are stupid and worthless and have been treated as if we were all our lives, then it is not surprising that we would come to believe it. Thus, people in any target group have to struggle hard to keep from feeling heavy feelings of powerlessness or despair.

Discuss these terms. What questions do people have about them? What examples do you see in the world around you of how these manifest?

In small groups, brainstorm ideas for how people could (or already are) fight/fighting these types of oppression. Choose one idea that you want to present back to the large group.

Come back together to share back each group's idea.

4) What's Jewish About Fighting Oppression? (20 min)

Spend some time learning about several current and historical examples of Jewish involvement in anti-oppression work. Identify key Jewish values that the participants see reflected in this work. See handout for the examples to highlight.

5) Closing text:

Return to the first session's Mishna Sanhedrin text but this time looking at its full context:

"How are witnesses inspired with awe in capital cases?" the Mishna begins. "They are brought in and admonished as follows: In case you may want to offer testimony that is only conjecture or hearsay or secondhand evidence, even from a person you consider trustworthy; or in the event you do not know that we shall test you by cross-examination and inquiry, then know that capital cases are not like monetary cases. In monetary cases, a person can make monetary restitution and be forgiven, but in capital cases both the blood of the person put to death and the blood of their [potential] descendants are on the witness's head until the end of time. For thus we find in the case of Cain, who killed his brother, that it is written: 'The bloods of your brother cry unto Me' (Genesis 4:10) — that is, his blood and the blood of his potential descendants.... Therefore was the first person, Adam, created alone, to teach us that whoever destroys a single life, the Bible considers it as if they destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a single life, the Bible considers it as if they saved an entire world. Furthermore, only one person, Adam, was created for the sake of peace among people, so that no one should say to their fellow, 'My ancestor was greater than yours.... Also, Adam [was created singly] to show the greatness of the Holy One, Blessed be God, for if a person strikes many coins from one mold, they all resemble one another, but the Ruler of Rulers, the Holy One, Blessed be God, made each person in the image of the first, and yet not one of them resembles their fellow. Therefore every single person is obligated to say, 'The world was created for my sake'" (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5).



CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

End by reflecting on what this text shows us about the ways in which Jewish law and history have long been connected to ideas that keep our systems held to a high standard of justice, and how a text like this one actively connects individual value with creating systemic ways to uphold that value (i.e. institutional change through interpersonal grounding). While this isn't necessarily always the case (i.e. Jews owning slaves), we do see the ideas showing up consistently across our development as a people (and eventually changing some of those more unjust systems as well).

If time, end by having participants call out ideas that would change current aspects of Jewish communal life where we're not working as hard for justice as we could be.



CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

APPENDIXES:

Potential texts for Living Talmud exercise on racial justice

Texts that could work for staff or campers:

Talmud, Shabbat 54b:

Whoever is able to protest against the wrongdoing of his housemates and does not, is implicated in the wrongdoing of his housemates. Whoever is able to protest against the wrongdoings of those who live in his city and does not, is implicated in the wrongdoing of his city. Whoever is able to protest against the wrongdoings of the entire world and does not, is implicated in the wrongdoings of the entire world.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, from a report back from the Selma march with Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr in 1965:

For many of us the march from Selma to Montgomery was about protest and prayer. Legs are not lips and walking is not kneeling. And yet our legs uttered songs. Even without words, our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, telegram to President John F Kennedy, 1963:

Please demand of religious leaders personal involvement not just solemn declaration. We forfeit the right to worship God as long as we continue to humiliate Negroes. Church and Synagogue have failed. They must repent. Ask of religious leaders to call for national repentance and personal sacrifice. Let religious leaders donate one month's salary toward fund for Negro housing and education. I propose that you Mr. President declare state of moral emergency. A Marshall plan for aid to Negroes is becoming a necessity. The hour calls for moral grandeur and spiritual audacity.

Erika Davis (writer and activist, @BlackGayJewish), from "Talking Honestly About Jews and Racism", The Forward, 2012:

Answer these questions honestly: If I walk into your shul for Friday night services would you sit next to me or would you allow one person to occupy an entire pew? If I walked into your shul right about the time you were picking up your child would you presume I was a nanny? If you sat across from me on the subway and noticed the Magen David around my neck, would you smile at me? Or wonder why I was wearing it? If I were shopping for challah in your shop on Friday afternoon, would you wish me a good Shabbos?

I pose these questions not just because they are my experiences, but to encourage us to take a look inward and remember our history as Jews. I'm sure many of us have heard an anti-Semitic remark that shook us to the core, but for the most part secular Jews can walk around not attracting much attention. But not long ago to be a Jew was a bad thing, something to be loathed, something to try to hide.

Through the promise of America, many Jews were able to start anew simply by changing their last name. In the US Jews became "white," and with that whiteness came privilege. But as Jews don't we also have the responsibility to remember what life was like before this era of unprecedented privilege? We're taught to never forget about our experience as outsiders, and yet, we have.



CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

Trisha Arlin (writer and rabbinic student, @trishaarlin), A Prayer for Compassion, 2014:

Baruch Atah Adonai
Brucha At Shechinah
Blessed One-ness, Blessed Connection,
Kadosh Baruch Hu:
We pray for all who are in pain
And all who cause pain.
We pray for those of us
Who are so angry
That we have lost compassion for the suffering
Of anyone who is not a member of our group.
And we pray for those of us
Who cannot see the suffering
behind the loss of that compassion.
We pray for the strength
To resist the urge to inhumanity
That we feel in times of fear and mourning.
We pray for the courage
To resist the calls to inhumanity
That others may make upon us in times of crisis.
Baruch Atah Adonai
Brucha At Shechinah
Blessed One-ness, Blessed Connection,
Kadosh Baruch Hu:
May we find relief from our hurts and fears.
And may we not, in our pain,
Lose our empathy
For the hurts and fears of others.
We pray for all who are in pain
And all who cause pain.
Amen

Excerpts from a Rosh Hashanah sermon by Rabbi Ellen Lippmann and Ernst Mohamed, rabbi and congregant of Kolot Chayeinu in Brooklyn, 2012:

Ellen: The hard truths I have learned are: that even as a Jew I am a white person, like it or not; that Kolot is not as all-warm-welcoming as I thought or hoped; that people of color may have a different experience of Kolot than do white people; that we white people inevitably act from the place of privilege that we have inherited. We are not bigots here at Kolot, but we have been living unexamined lives. Our race task force is designed to help us all examine. Its members also hope to help Kolot become an anti-racist congregation, which might start by looking at how we do what we do, or as someone phrased it, who gets invited to the meeting before the meeting? Who is on the board? Whose priorities are put forward?

For me, it has been a wonder to sit and plan with the Race Task Force. As one member says, "As we are facing this, we are doing it together and slowly, looking at each other, finding it not as scary as we feared to say hard things. We are in it together, not leaving anyone behind, making space to disagree, but not with rancor."

Ernst: It is easy to get defensive and many here may want to say, "I am not a racist!!! There are real racists out there!" There are. But we have to start here. It is so easy

CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

to blame others. It is much harder to look within, to bend our knees and dig for truth, as we encounter all 70 human faces and more.

Levaunna Gray (student at Hillcrest High School), part of a series called "Speak Out: Black Lives Matter" by YCTeen, 2014, writing about a protest in memory of Eric Garner:

Even before I got to the protest site, I could sense that something was going on. There was a helicopter in the air, its beam pointed down at the protesters. The streets were lined with police officers and I heard a faint chant. As I drew closer, I could feel my adrenaline pumping.

Hundreds of people were chanting. To me, it wasn't that white or black people were protesting; it was more like humans had come together to try to ignite change. Seeing this touched my heart, and at times I felt like crying. It found something inside me. People of all ethnic backgrounds were chanting loudly, "Black lives matter!"; "I can't breathe!"; and "Hands up, don't shoot!" and holding placards that said the same things. At the heart of the protest, it was like being in a tin of sardines. It was also frightening to think that there were dozens of police officers nearby, just waiting for violence to erupt.

It was 36 degrees out, but I was warmed by the hope for humanity I felt at the protest. I was more comfortable being in the middle of the crowd, because I felt the police wouldn't single me out and shoot me for being a black teen.

Amani Hayes-Messinger (college student and writer), from "An open letter to everyone who thinks having a black family member exempts them from racism," Blavity.com, 2015:

I would not stop singing until others joined me in song.

On Shabbat Shira, I stood in front of my university Hillel, giving a talk that was a version of this letter ["An Open Letter to my white, Jewish Family from a biracial, black Jew"]. On this Shabbat we tell the story of the Israelites escaping from slavery in Egypt. As they cross the sea, in the Parasha of B'Shalach, the Israelites sing a song of redemption. They sing and they make noise with timbrels and with drums and with voice. They do all of this despite yet being far from the Promised Land.

We, in America, are yet far from the Promised Land. We cannot stay silent and allow continued injustice. There is a wide gap between what "freedom" looks like today and ultimate redemption.

While black people in America might no longer be slaves; as illuminated by countless recent instances of fatal and nonfatal police brutality, black and brown folks continue to be policed by a system implemented as an extension of slavery and white supremacy. We have a long trek ahead of us before we view even the horizon of redemption...

This is why I ask that you remind yourself that there is work to be done if we are not to let America wash their hands of Black lives. If we as Jews choose to be responsible, to not wash our hands of people. Black Lives Matter is a Jewish issue because of our Jewish values (that demand we always recall what it was like to be oppressed and not allow the oppression of others), and because there are Jews who are black. Regardless of our racial identities, as Jews, black Jews and black people are our brothers and sisters too.

These conversations are vital. Black people in America are facing a system built to silence, imprison, brutalize and kill us every single day. Now is the time to vocalize. To raise our voices, together...

We have MUCH noise to make. We must rise up together in songs of redemption (in hopes of a time where prayer can be safe and sacred), singing: "Black Lives Matter. They will not wash their hands of us."



CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

Texts for staff (could potentially work for oldest campers depending on their previous level of exposure to these ideas and conversation):

Aboriginal/indigenous activist group, Queensland Australia, 1970s:

If you've come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr, from "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," 1963:

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

Darnell L. Moore (writer and educator, @Moore_Darnell), from "Post-Whiteness," 2012:

In most cases, blackness is the "color" that we are beckoned to transcend in this post-racial era which is why it is a fallacy to name it such. We are more embedded in the socially constructed categories of race than ever before. Don't believe me? Ask the Tea Party or check the US Census Bureau's statistics on the median incomes of whites in comparison to black and brown folk in our country. Take a look at the number of non-whites who make up our prison and death row populations. Ask the livid "Hunger Game" fans who vented on Twitter because the film's director cast a young African-American actress, Amandla Sternberg, rather than a White actress to play the role of Rue. Or consider the psychic traces of race/racism, the ways in which racism shaped our settler-colonial state and its laws, and the ways we embody and live out race-thought every day.

Black Lives Matter National Network, "This is Not a Moment, But a Movement":

#BlackLivesMatter was created in 2012 after Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman, was acquitted for his crime, and dead 17-year old Trayvon was posthumously placed on trial for his own murder. Rooted in the experiences of Black people in this country who actively resist our de-humanization, #BlackLivesMatter is a call to action and a response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates our society. Black Lives Matter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes.

It goes beyond the narrow nationalism that can be prevalent within Black communities, which merely call on Black people to love Black, live Black and buy Black,

CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

keeping straight cis Black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer and trans and disabled folk take up roles in the background or not at all. Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement.

When we say Black Lives Matter, we are broadening the conversation around state violence to include all of the ways in which Black people are intentionally left powerless at the hands of the state. We are talking about the ways in which Black lives are deprived of our basic human rights and dignity. How Black poverty and genocide is state violence. How 2.8 million Black people are locked in cages in this country is state violence. How Black women bearing the burden of a relentless assault on our children and our families is state violence. How Black queer and trans folks bear a unique burden from a hetero-patriarchal society that disposes of us like garbage and simultaneously fetishizes us and profits off of us, and that is state violence. How 500,000 Black people in the US are undocumented immigrants and relegated to the shadows. How Black girls are used as negotiating chips during times of conflict and war. How Black folks living with disabilities and different abilities bear the burden of state sponsored Darwinian experiments that attempt to squeeze us into boxes of normality defined by white supremacy, and that is state violence.

#BlackLivesMatter is working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. We affirm our contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression. We have put our sweat equity and love for Black people into creating a political project—taking the hashtag off of social media and into the streets. The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation.

Stosh Cotler (CEO, Bend the Arc), from “Why Jews should care about what happened in Ferguson,” Washington Post, 2014:

Simply put, there is an undeniable connection between the deep, unhealed scars of slavery and the fact that no one called an ambulance as Michael Brown lay dying in the street. It is the blasphemous and offensive philosophy that says some wounds matter more than others, and some wounds are best left ignored.

Many Americans, especially those of us in the Jewish community, are descended from immigrants who came to these shores generations after the Civil War. That does not absolve us of our responsibility to wrestle with this horrible history. In fact, as Jews—many of whom are white—we are bound to face these issues head on.

As night falls on August 26, Jews across America will enter the month of Elul, a period of profound reflection and repentance leading up to the High Holidays. On Yom Kippur we ask for forgiveness from God, but for the next month we will ask for forgiveness from each other. That the Jewish calendar has a month dedicated to this type of searching is recognition that meaningful understanding, repentance and transformative justice require hard work and effort. That the cycle repeats every year means we are never done learning from our past...

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who marched with Dr. King in Selma, reminds us that, “Morally speaking, there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings... In a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible.”

Every spiritual community has their own particular traditions and practices that help give shape and structure to daily life. But we all build these practices around common values that give us direction and meaning. Among the crowds in Ferguson are reverends and pastors who are helping to transform their community’s outrage into a constructive and



CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

steadfast conviction that things must change. As Jews, entering this month of repentance and reflection, we must ask ourselves: What am I doing to heal the wounds of racism our country still bears? What am I doing to create the world we want? All of us must ask of ourselves what we can do, specifically, intentionally and immediately, to break the cycle that led us to Ferguson in the first place.

Amani Hayes-Messinger (college student and writer), "An open letter to my white, Jewish family from a biracial, black Jew," Blavity.com, 2015:

In the wake of the two recent verdicts not to indict, I have turned to writing and conversation in an aim to grieve, cope, understand and make use of my anger. One of the most important messages I am receiving, and am in complete support of, is that we must make noise. We must make noise and not stop until everyone is saddened and disgusted into action by the current state of our justice system, until America is in agreement that Black Lives Matter. I am here to make noise with all of you, to share my thoughts, to encourage you to make noise with me, so that I can feel I have the support of my family.

The deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner are not isolated cases. This is an issue of race.

I urge you to have these conversations at your dinner tables, with each other, with your colleagues and in communities that you feel connected to. I urge you to have these conversations with your children. I understand that these topics are scary and that there is more to grapple with than any of us are capable of. I am scared. My brother is scared. Other young black and brown people I know are scared. Not one of us has the privilege to choose to avoid these conversations. It is imperative that your children know what is going on. That you are able to voice and have discussions centered around the ingrained and systemic racism that has allowed for these recent murders to occur, and for the killers to go untried. It is important that you are able to bring experienced voices into the conversations that you choose to have, to not discount the voices of those for whom this hits closest to home, the voices of black people, when navigating these dialogues.

To not put these conversations on the table, to not make them your primary concern, is to perpetuate the problem. If you do not voice what is happening, and the historical roots that have enabled the continued occurrence of these acts, how will others know to ask? How will your children, friends, colleagues — who are not asking these questions — know that there are questions they need to be asking and conversations they need to be engaging in. It is each of our responsibilities to make sure these conversations are not tabled until there is justice.

I am not accusing anyone of staying silent, of not doing their part, of perpetuating the institutionalized racism of our justice system and our country. My goal here is simply to share my belief that this noise is vital. That until we all raise our voices, until we all care equally about black lives, black people will continue to be murdered in this country with no regard to their humanity.

If you have not been having these conversations, I hope that this makes you consider things in a new light, and that you take this as an opportunity to start. If you have been, continue, and not just in the spaces where you feel comfortable doing so. None of these realities are simple, and as such, none of these conversations are simple. Lean into the discomfort. Educate yourselves. Make noise by asking what you can do and asking others what they can do.

I have stepped well outside my comfort zone with this email. We are all nervous, we are all scared, we all have the ability to lean into, embrace and work through that discomfort.

Sincerely,

Amani



CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

Ilana Kaufman (JCRC San Francisco Bay Area's Public Affairs and Civic Engagement Director), from "What It's Like To Be a Black, Gay, Professional Jew," *The Forward*, 2015:

We ended our introduction tour with a stop in front of a nationally regarded attorney who worked at the forefront of LGBT (there was no Q or I when he began) rights movement. He greeted me with the requisite pleasantries, and then introduced me to his husband, who was clearly confused by everything about this moment of introduction. His husband looked at me. Scanned me up and down. And then furrowed his brow in an I-am-examining-a-specimen kind of way. The famous attorney's husband, a queer rights pioneer, then proceeded to reach for and touch my curls. After several painfully awkward moments he said, "Nice to meet you. I like your hair. It's very interesting." And then he asked if I had a husband, and went on to wonder aloud when I became Jewish...

Jews like me — black Jews, Jewish women of color, brown and black Jewish leaders — are so unrecognizable that the most he could do to connect with me was to objectify, marvel and violate (yes — touching my hair is a violation). And one of the greatest ironies is that his presumptuous disposition coupled with my identity qualities resulted in his inability to detect the very "traditional" Jew right in front of him.

I'm about as mainstream as we come. My family lights Sabbath candles and belongs to a synagogue. My daughter goes to religious school and Jewish summer camp. I even grow etrogs in my backyard. My community is mostly Jewish — and many, many are black like me.

I'm still grossed out by that man who touched my hair. I also upcycle those feelings into action. I am a Jewish community leader. I am an activist. Ambassador. Diplomat. Agitator. Navigator. Translator. And while entirely unrecognizable to those trapped in some historic expression and assumption of Jewish identity, black, gay, Jewish me is exactly who should start coming to mind when you imagine our Jewish community.

So, to that man who touched my hair: I understand that you might never claim me as part of your Tribe. Still, I want you to know that the multiracial, intersectional Jewish future includes you, too. When we meet again, I'm going speak truth to power about that evening in the Castro when you got to be free at my expense. But I am also going to help you find your way into and navigate the Jewish world you find so unrecognizable. I choose to reach out to you — because I would hate for you to feel pushed away from the Jewish community, the way you made me feel that night high above the Castro's rainbow flags of freedom.



CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

Working Definitions: Layers of Oppression

(adapted from YouthBuildUSA)

Ideological Oppression: The idea that one group is somehow better than another and in some measure has the right to control the other group. The dominant group sees itself as more intelligent, more hardworking, stronger, more capable, more noble, more deserving, more advanced, chosen, superior, etc. They see the “other” as stupid, lazy, weak, incompetent, worthless, less deserving, backward, inferior, etc.

Institutional Oppression: The above ideas get embedded in the institutions of the society - the laws, police practices, education system, hiring policies, public policies, housing development, media images, political power, etc. When a woman makes two-thirds of what a man makes in the same job, it is institutionalized sexism. When one out of every four African-American young men is currently in jail, on parole or on probation, it is institutionalized racism.

Interpersonal Oppression: The above ideas give permission and reinforcement for individual members of the dominant group to personally disrespect or mistreat individuals in the oppressed group. For example, this includes racist jokes, stereotyping, harassment, threats and physical violence. Often, most people in the dominant group are not consciously oppressive. They have internalized the negative messages about other groups, and they may not even recognize the role that these messages play in their own behaviors.

Internalized Oppression: The fourth way oppression works is within the groups of people who suffer the most from the mistreatment. Oppressed people internalize the ideology of inferiority, they see it reflected in the institutions, they experience disrespect interpersonally from members of the dominant group, and they eventually come to internalize the negative messages about themselves. If we have been told we are stupid and worthless and have been treated as if we were all our lives, then it is not surprising that we would come to believe it. Thus, people in any target group have to struggle hard to keep from feeling heavy feelings of powerlessness or despair.

CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

Talmud Bavli, Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5:

How are witnesses inspired with awe in capital cases?

They are brought in and admonished as follows: In case you may want to offer testimony that is only conjecture or hearsay or secondhand evidence, even from a person you consider trustworthy; or in the event you do not know that we will test you by cross-examination and inquiry, then know that capital cases are not like monetary cases. In monetary cases, one can make monetary restitution and be forgiven, but in capital cases both the blood of the one put to death and the blood of their [potential] descendants are on the witness's head until the end of time.

For thus we find in the case of Cain, who killed his brother, that it is written: 'The bloods of your brother cry unto Me' (Genesis 4:10) — that is, his blood and the blood of his potential descendants....

Therefore was the first person, Adam, created alone, to teach us that whoever destroys a single life, the Bible considers it as if they destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a single life, the Bible considers it as if they saved an entire world. Furthermore, only one person, Adam, was created for the sake of peace among humans, so that no one should say to their fellow, 'My ancestor was greater than yours.... Also, humans [were created singly] to show the greatness of the Holy One, Blessed be God, for if a person strikes many coins from one mold, they all resemble one another, but the Ruler of Rulers, the Holy One, Blessed be God, made each human in the image of the first ones, and yet not one of them resembles their fellow. Therefore every single person is obligated to say, "The world was created for my sake."