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Social Justice Track #3, Specialty Track 3

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SUMMARY:	In this session, participants will build on their insights and programming from the first two sessions to consider how the camp environment builds on larger societal and Jewish-communal issues with some people having greater access (or privilege) than oth - <i>Submitted by Sarra Alpert</i>
TOPICS:	Community Building, Identity, Jewish Values, Leadership Development, Social Justice, Teen Programs, Writing
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will build on their insights and programming from the first two sessions to consider how the camp environment builds on larger societal and Jewish-communal issues with some people having greater access (or privilege) than others, and how that can be addressed. Participants will also have time to work on their ideas for connecting current events and organizations (like the Movement for Black Lives) to their camp learning.
AUDIENCE:	The activities in this session are designed for older campers. The "accessibility scavenger hunt" could work for campers 13 and older. The program connecting that activity to concepts of privilege should be reserved for staff or oldest campers (15 and older), and ideally should happen in the context of ongoing learning (especially if it's with campers).
LENGTH:	90-120 Minutes
APPENDIXES:	See my note on Track Session #2
MATERIALS:	Flip chart paper, markers, pens, paper.
SETTING:	Chairs in a circle. Enough room to split up into small groups.

Session Description:

1) Virtual Accessibility/Inclusiveness "Scavenger Hunt" (15 min):

As a full group, brainstorm a list of factors one could look for in a community like your camp to see how genuinely accessible, welcoming and anti-oppressive it is in its construction, structures, leadership, common vocabulary, etc. Be sure to consider a range of areas of difference: race, ethnicity, family makeup, class background, ability, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

Split into small groups and go on a virtual scavenger hunt, mentally going through their own camps (and camps they've visited, like Capital Camps) to note examples where those camps are doing especially well at building an accessible and inclusive space or not doing well at it. Keep in mind what it would take for someone to feel that they see themselves (and the various aspects of their identity) addressed and represented, in addition to the more evident elements of making actual activities and spaces directly accessible. Also keep in mind to try and think about what's not there as well as what is.

Note: If doing this activity with more time, this would be great as an actual scavenger hunt where teams move around the camp environment looking for items to add to their lists.

2) Connecting to Privilege (25 min):

Start with a definition of privilege. Then briefly discuss how the first exercise connects to



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privilege -- anytime someone has greater access to more spaces/people/resources (either because they physically have more access or because they're better set up to feel comfortable in/with those spaces/people/resources), they are experiencing the benefits of privilege.

Ask everyone to get scrap paper and a pen. We'll be going through the lists the small groups developed in the first exercise as well as an additional list (the privilege checklist in the appendix). For each item, consider whether this item is one that plays out negatively for you (for example, if one item is about a lack of wheelchair-accessible spaces at camp and you're an able-bodied person, then that item does not impact you negatively in a direct way). For each item that does impact you negatively, make a check mark.

Start by having the groups read their lists out loud (they should skip any items that have been read by previous groups). Then read the list of prompts on the handout (skipping any that were addressed by the group lists). Keep track of how many prompts have been read in total.

At the end, ask people to count up their check marks and figure out in what percentage of the examples read they experience privilege (for example, if I have 25 check marks and there were 100 prompts, then I experience privilege in 75% of those situations).

Discuss: What are your reactions to this exercise? Which statements were most surprising for you to consider? How do these prompts help to deepen your understanding of privilege? What are some of the ways that someone benefits from having access to more spaces/people/resources?

Journal for a few minutes on the following question: What are you doing personally to use your own privileges towards building a more just world? What are you doing personally to try and dismantle some of what you see around you that isn't as accessible or inclusive as it could be?

3) Reviewing resources (20 min):

We'll spend some time looking at some of the strongest connection points to bring the learning we've been doing into clear connection with current events (including articles, organizations connecting the Jewish community to anti-oppression work, and possible speakers to reach out to). As part of this, review some best practices for how to make sure that any projects you do are grounded in deep and meaningful learning (and, when applicable, effective service projects), including the list in the appendix of "8 Pitfalls to Avoid When Being an Ally to Jews of Color". Discuss how that list can apply to social justice work more broadly as well.

4) Bringing it back to camp (30 min):

We'll split into groups to best flesh out some of the ideas you're considering bringing back to your camp this summer and will come back together to share the ideas with the whole group.

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APPENDIXES:

Prompts for Privilege “Walk”:

- Were your ancestors forced to come to the USA, not by choice?
- Were you ever called names because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender, religion or sexual orientation?
- Were you raised in an area where there was regular police presence?
- Have you ever tried to change your appearance, mannerisms, or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed?
- Have you ever had to skip a meal or gone hungry because there was not enough money to buy food?
- Were one of your parents unemployed or laid off, not by choice?
- Did your family ever have to move because they could not afford the rent?
- Were you ever discouraged from academic pursuits or jobs because of race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation?
- Did one of your parents not complete high school?
- Did you ever see members of your race, ethnic group, gender, or sexual orientation portrayed on television in degrading roles?
- Have you ever had trouble getting ahead because of a lack of connections?
- Were you ever denied employment because of your race, ethnicity, gender, ability or sexual orientation?
- Were you ever paid less or treated less fairly because of your race, ethnicity, gender, ability or sexual orientation?
- Were you ever stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation?
- Were you ever afraid of violence because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation?
- Have you ever felt uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, ethnicity, gender, religion, ability or sexual orientation?
- Have you ever experienced violence related to your race, ethnicity, gender, religion, ability or sexual orientation?
- Did your parents NOT grow up in the United States?
- Can you walk into your temple and feel that others do not see you as an outsider?
- Can you walk into temple with your family and not worry that they will be treated unkindly because of the color of their skin?
- Do you not often hear music at your temple that reflects the tunes, prayers, and cultural roots of your specific Jewish heritage?
- Do people at your synagogue attempt to assign you to a ethnicity or identity to which you do not belong (e.g., assuming all Jews of African descent are Igbo or Ethiopian, assuming all Jews of color have converted)?

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- Do you have trouble finding greeting cards, books or other printed materials with images of Jews who look like you and your family?
- Are you singled out to speak about and as a representative of an “exotic” Jewish subgroup?
- Have you ever had your rabbi question that you are Jewish?
- Do you worry about being seen or treated as a member of the janitorial staff at a synagogue or when attending a Jewish event?
- Are you unable to find a Jewish day school, yeshiva, or historically Jewish college with Jewish students and professors who share your racial or ethnic background?
- Have you ever been asked to leave a shul or a class or have been barred from entering a shul or a class due to your skin color?
- Do you find that meals of “traditional” Jewish foods don’t include foods that come from your Jewish cultural heritage?
- Do you have Jewish customs that aren’t familiar to many Jews?
- Have you ever felt marginalized within the Jewish community?
- If yes to the above, have you also not had supportive spaces within which to bring that concern?
- Have people ever said to you, “But you don’t look Jewish,” either seriously or as though it was funny?

Questions for discussion:

- Which of the experiences represented in this list are ones you’ve thought about or talked about before? Which ones aren’t?
- What would it take to start changing some of the norms that lead to these experiences?
- How would you want someone to help you to feel more welcome in situations where you feel like an outsider?



8 Pitfalls To Avoid When Being an Ally to Jews of Color

Jared Jackson, The Forward, August 31, 2015

When it comes to Jews of color, allies are definitely needed. But if you want to be an effective ally, there are important things to consider before, during and after the process. If not properly considered, some of

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these things will lead to major pitfalls. So what exactly are the pitfalls, and how can you avoid them? Here's a short list I've come up with over my years of training allies.

1. "It's all about me!"

We have to be careful as to which space is actually ours for the taking. If you're a white male ally at a women of color protest, it's not the time to express how you're not being heard. The women of color beside you haven't been heard. If their struggles were being validated and properly redressed, there would be no need for a protest.

2. "Hey, oppressed people, let me teach you about how you're oppressed."

This one happens to me so many times in a week. I'm just having a conversation with a self-identified white ally, and all of a sudden the person says: "You have no idea what black people in this country go through. I mean, racism is very real in the everyday lives of so many people!" They continue to talk about the experiences of "others" as though they're experts. Which brings me to #3....

3. "I'm the expert."

There are a lot of "allies" out there who will go and speak at conferences, synagogues, you name it, having only a handful of relevant experiences from which to speak. Granted, there are definitely allies who know a great deal. But for the most part, when you do this for the media or the general public, you've just alienated yourself from a cause by becoming the spokesperson through privilege. You may not realize it, but the reason you're being called on (and probably paid) to do this is — care to guess? The perpetuation of bias? Ding, ding, ding!

That's right: It's much easier for the group on top to hear from someone who has knowledge on a surface level and is part of said group, than it is to hear from someone who can have the deeper conversation and is from the oppressed group. In taking the "expert" role, you could be limiting the ability of all parties to build a sustainable framework that leads to understanding. I'm not saying that there shouldn't be a space for white people to talk about race — that's extremely important. But if you end up in this role, make sure to directly connect the group with the actual experts. That would really make you an effective ally.

4. "I'm giving you a voice."

When you host a speaker, donate to a cause or bring attention to the issues of another and say, "I gave them a voice," you actually haven't. In fact, you're perpetuating the white savior complex, which is fraught with unchecked biases. This is a very, very common trope among white allies in particular.

Remember, no one is ever given a "voice." In reality, there hasn't been a proper framework built so that those on the perpetuating side can actually hear the real experiences of people affected by their covert and overt biases. If the framework isn't built, reconciliation can't begin.

5. "I posted on Facebook — look at my amazing activism!"

It takes much more than posting on social media to be an activist. You must interact with real people, in person, so that you get to understand the nuance of some situations. If you're not getting up and talking to people within your group of privilege about the issues, are you really stepping up in a way



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that's needed? I understand that some of the best ally work is done behind closed doors. But behind those doors, there are real people having real conversations.

6. "You're my Google, right?"

There are tons of readily available books, blogs, lectures and op-eds written by people on the receiving end of bias. And yet, we people of color often find ourselves being asked about resources. It's not always the time or place to ask those questions, especially if you have yet to form a relationship. Before turning to us, ask yourself: Have I made an effort to seek out resources myself? Have I gone to the library? Have I Googled?

7. "I can be a great ally by myself."

Simply put: No, you can't. Just like no leaders have ever done anything great without help, thinking this will lead you to pitfalls 1–6. Also, you'll need to set up a support system for those moments when you need to vent or to process the hard times and experiences that are intense and new to you.

8. "I'm going to be a great ally. All. The. Time."

If you're going to become an ally, you have to make uprooting your personal bias a life-long journey. Being a great ally means that you hold yourself accountable for your part in bias. Everybody has a part, and we all need to own that. If you don't, you run the major risk of being the perpetrator of bias toward the group you're claiming, at that point, to help.

We all fall down sometimes. I catch myself saying certain things that go against my personal intent and beliefs. In those moments I'm thankful that I have a number of personal tools to use. I can hold myself accountable for my actions, issue honest apologies and forgive myself. It took me awhile to develop these skills, which need consistent check-ins. As you're going through this process, be patient with yourself. And remember that even though you may fall, it's not the end. We still need you!

Jared Jackson is a diversity consultant, entrepreneur, and the founder and executive director of Jews in ALL Hues.