

**Habonim Dror Camp Tavor
Camp Philanthropy, Summer 2013**

**Privilege and Inequality
Activity by Sophia Spooner**

Goals: For chanichim to understand the concept of inherited privilege
For chanichim to understand the different ways one can respond to privilege
For chanichim to examine privilege in the Jewish organizational world

Preparation:

- Printed out copies of the definitions
- a small whiteboard and markers for each discussion group
- talked with the farm specialist about using the farm at camp

Trigger: Play “you’re out” (5 minutes)

Method: (15 minutes) Take chanichim to the camp farm. Split them up into five groups. Give each group a sheet with their role on it, and colored headbands to wear to identify the different groups

- Group 1. Weed a row with hands tied
- Group 2. Weed a row with hands free
- Group 3. Have no work to do, sit in the shade and complain about being outside with the bugs
- Group 4. Have no work to do, but hand out small amounts of water. Keep most of the water for your self
- Group 5. Have no work to do, go to the most disadvantaged weeders and ask to help them

Groups should be close enough together that they can understand each others’ role and how they play out in the scenario.

After they weed for a while, split kids into sicha groups of 7-10. Hand out term definitions. To check for understanding, have kids write down key elements of each word on a whiteboard (25 minutes)

Privilege:

Privilege is any right, immunity, or benefit enjoyed only by a person or group beyond the advantages of most...we think of privilege as an unearned advantage that a dominant group has over marginalized groups. A key aspect of privilege is that, due to its unearned nature, those who have privilege often do not realize they have it.

-Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois

After they understand the definition, ask

- What kind of privileges did each group in the activity have?
- How did they respond to that privilege?

Ally

“what it means to be an ally varies greatly from person to person. For some, it means building a relationship of love and trust with another; for others, it means intentionally putting one’s self in harm’s way so that another person remains safe...They chose to align themselves publicly and privately with members of target groups and respond to their needs. They are also clear that they are doing this work for themselves, not to “take care of the other”.

- From “how to be an Ally with if you are a person with Privilege” by Frances E. Kendall.

Bring the kids all together tell them “Regardless of our family backgrounds, as people who have experience with the organized Jewish community, we have access to certain privileges”

What do you think the Jewish community takes responsibility for?

What do you think the Jewish community does not take responsibility for?

Read "Not Only for Ourselves" from *The Forward* in sicha groups of 7-8 (**30 minutes**)

Questions:

1. What are the two problems the author identifies with this program? (The fact that the people served are being used to “build identity” – i.e. dehumanizing, and the fact that the programs did not alleviate the roots of the issue)
2. If you were to run a service-learning program, how would you "humanize" the people you are working with? What responsibilities do you have towards them?
3. Can giving money be tzedaka in the social justice sense? Can you give money in a way that is humanizing?

Summary: (all together) Tell them about the JTFN grant and explain the logistics. Before telling the kids where we are going for Tikkun Olam or the options for giving, have them brainstorm answers to these questions on a whiteboard

1. How do you want to relate to your organizations?
2. How should you act/treat people served and the organization leaders while you make your visits?
2. What do you want out of this experience as individuals?
3. How should these organizations be relating to the community at large?

Wrap Up:

Explain where we are going for our Tikkun Olam projects and that the kids will be going to Ministry with Community in Kalmazoo to volunteer and take a tour.

The Jewish Daily Forward **“Not Only for Ourselves”**

<http://forward.com/articles/120018/not-only-for-ourselves/>

Editorial

Published December 01, 2009, issue of December 04, 2009. The story was heart-warming, but instructive in an unexpected way. Jewish families gathered on a Sunday in a warehouse to pack boxes of pasta, canned vegetables and other food supplies and deliver them to needy residents in their region. Parents brought their children to reinforce the message of helping others. A brief dvar Torah was offered, to reinforce another message, that this was not just charity, it was tzedekah, a Jewish expression of communal commitment.

One problem: Deep into the story, as it was written in a community newspaper, we learned that when a certain family tried to deliver their boxes to residents of a federation-owned housing project, almost no one was at home to receive them.

The fact that the mission was not accomplished, that the needy were not served, was an afterthought in this classic presentation of a Jewish service activity.

Obviously, it is difficult to criticize these well-intentioned behaviors. All of us who have ever dragged our children to food warehouses and soup kitchens, park clean-ups and nursing home visits, try to model a kind of citizenship that is essential to maintaining American civic life. More and more, service activities are also regarded as a powerful tool to shore up Jewish identity and values, especially for a generation accustomed to bar mitzvah projects, high school service programs and the kavod they receive for trying to do good in the world.

But elevating Jewish identity to a goal of such efforts undermines their very purpose. “Service programs that exist and are being created will be successful if, first and foremost, they are about service to others and not about strengthening ourselves,” said Ruth Messinger, who as president of American Jewish World Service is considered a doyenne of well-run service programs. She said this in a recent talk at the opening of the Berman Jewish Policy Archive at New York University, and her important remarks deserve a greater audience.

“Service to others,” she reminded, “is built into Jewish tradition, but it has always been focused on the needs of the beneficiaries, not the volunteers.”

The misguided tendency to conflate the two aims is not only a problem in the Jewish world. For years, the broader national service community has sought to balance the welcome desire of Americans to serve with the most efficient, thoughtful and respectful way of channeling those energies so that they are not wasted, or worse. Because it must be acknowledged that service, if done poorly, can result in more harm than good. It can denigrate or ignore the real needs of the served, and leave the server demoralized and cynical. This is already happening in places where “service learning” is organized cheaply and haphazardly, leaving students to conclude they are wasting their time while polishing their resumes.

Messinger’s remonstrations contained a second, equally important point, that acts of service must be linked to learning about and working to change the conditions that brought about the need in the first place. She calls it social justice. Others may call it active citizenship. Whatever the nomenclature, the point is direct: It’s not enough to serve food in the soup kitchen. We must confront the root causes of hunger and work toward addressing the greater need.

This is not a partisan observation. The volunteer in a deprived public school may be of great help in the classroom, but just as importantly, she

is likely witnessing, first-hand, the breakdown in public education in America. Her solution may be to advocate for more government funding, or it may be to push for school vouchers. The essential act here is understanding that even though individual children are aided by her volunteer efforts, the system will not improve unless the underlying conditions are addressed by government and society.

“Service has to be about making change in communities, not about making changes in me,” noted David Rosenn, executive director of Avodah, another well-regarded service program. “The last thing we want the Jewish community to do is use communities in distress as a vehicle to build identity.”

CLARIFICATION: Last week’s editorial, “Not Only for Ourselves,” left the wrong impression about an agency that delivers food supplies to hungry and needy people in its region. Although, as reported, many families were not home to receive the food contributions on a certain day, the agency ensures that the provisions are, in fact, delivered shortly afterward. The Forward apologizes.