

MODULE 4:
Power & Privilege

WE PLANT SEEDS



*A How-to Guide for Effective Jewish
Service-learning Programs*

Brought to you by Repair the World, in partnership
with AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps



MODULE 4

POWER & PRIVILEGE

INTRODUCTION

Most often when we engage in service and volunteer work, we are doing work to address issues that are related in some way to poverty. Because of this and the fact that the poor are disproportionately people of color, those of us who are white or from a more affluent socio-economic background usually are volunteering with individuals and communities who have less economic and/or racial power and privilege than we do. This means that it's imperative that we be thinking about and discussing with participants issues related to race and class, so that they are aware of these dynamics as they engage in their service work. When we choose to ignore these issues or believe that they don't have relevance to the work we're doing, we miss an opportunity for learning, do a disservice to our participants and reinforce the societal issues that we're trying to remedy. This module includes an introduction to some basic definitions related to these topics followed by activities that specifically focus on power and privilege, race and poverty - both generally and through the lens of Jewish text and community.

Important note: It's important not to assume homogeneity of identity within your group. While many of your participants may identify as white and middle to upper class, it's important to be aware that not all of them may - and those who don't aren't always obvious.

This module is divided into the following sections:

- I. Definitions
- II. Power and Privilege
- III. Race
- IV. Poverty

I. DEFINITIONS

It may be helpful to review some or all of the following definitions with participants before engaging in the activities in this module. This will ensure that participants have a common understanding of the language being used.

Power: The capacity to act. The capacity to define reality for oneself and others.

Privilege: A right, favor, advantage, immunity, specially granted to one individual or group, and withheld from another.

Race: A set of categories created by human beings to differentiate between groups and assign differences in worth and value to certain groups over others. There is no scientific or biological basis for racial differentiation.

II. POWER AND PRIVILEGE

This section includes texts and activities that explore how issues of power and privilege impact service work.

MODULE 4

POWER & PRIVILEGE

A. TEXT DISCUSSION: “HELPING HANDS ALSO EXPOSE A NEW YORK DIVIDE”

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to provide participants with the opportunity to think about the how power and privilege play out in volunteering, by reflecting on an example from recent events.

Overview:

This activity is facilitated in two parts - first the group reads the text and then discusses it.

Materials Needed:

- copies of “Helping Hands Also Expose a New York Divide” (Appendix A)

Length of Activity:

25 minutes

Procedure:

A. Article (10 minutes)

This article is included in Appendix A. Hand out a copy of the article to each participant and have them read it individually or take turns reading it out loud.

B. Discussion (15 minutes)

Once the group has read the article, have them discuss the questions included with the text in pairs or in the larger group.

B. PRIVILEGE WALK

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is for participants to have an opportunity to explore the places in their own life where they do or do not experience privilege - and how those have impacted their life so far.

Overview:

This activity is facilitated in three parts - first the facilitator provides framing and instructions, then the group does the privilege walk and finally the group debriefs.

Materials Needed:

- printed list of prompts (Appendix B)
- privilege map handouts (if needed) (Appendix B)
- coins or other small objects (if needed)

Length of Activity:

45 minutes

Note to Facilitator: This activity can be completed by physically walking across

MODULE 4

POWER & PRIVILEGE

the room or using individual map handouts. If completing this as a physical walk, you will need some open space. In the privilege walk map version of this exercise, participants remain seated and their responses aren't visible to the group. These aspects may make it more appropriate for groups that haven't built trust with each other yet or for groups where individuals have limited mobility.

Procedure:

1. Instructions (5 minutes)

Explain to the group that this activity allows us to more viscerally gauge our own experiences of privilege. Include the following points as framing:

- We're about to do an activity to help us each explore the ways we are and are not privileged around race and class.
- Differences in power and privilege are part of a larger societal system - none of these prompts concern things within people's personal control.
- This activity is meant to:
 - » Help us understand the way these systems of privilege around race and class function,
 - » Develop our awareness of our own privilege in comparison to others, and
 - » Help us think about how we can use the privileges we have to create change, rather than to make us feel guilty about our privilege or judged about our lack of privilege
- **[If using the privilege walk map:]** Moving up is not good and moving down is not bad - while we acknowledge that certain judgments are sometimes attached to some of these prompts and responses, we encourage participants to attempt to suspend these judgments during the activity and, in reflecting on the activity, to ask themselves from where those judgments may come.
- **[If doing privilege walk standing up:]** Moving forward is not good and moving backward is not bad - while we acknowledge that certain judgments are sometimes attached to some of these prompts and responses, we encourage participants to attempt to suspend these judgments during the activity and, in reflecting on the activity, to ask themselves from where those judgments may come.
- That being said, talking about privilege and personal experiences may bring up strong emotions and this is a normal response

2. Privilege Walk (20 minutes)

Ask participants to line up shoulder to shoulder facing the same direction in a straight line, without speaking - or if using the map to place their marker on the starting spot. Instruct them to listen carefully to the statements you will read them, and do the movement required if the statement applies to them. If the statement does not apply to them or they do not want to respond, they can remain where they are. Use the Privilege Walk prompts in the Appendix B for statements (you are of course welcome to pick and choose and/or add your own/adapt).

If needed, reiterate that this may feel uncomfortable. Emphasize to them that all of the statements that will be read concern things beyond their personal control

MODULE 4

POWER & PRIVILEGE

- so while they may raise feelings of shame, embarrassment, defensiveness, etc, they are in fact not things that any of us choose. Encourage them to both notice when they feel uncomfortable, and to participate despite (and because of) their discomfort. At the same time, affirm that the nature of their participation is ultimately their own decision.

3. Discussion (20 minutes)

After you read the last statement, ask participants to remain where they are and to note where they are standing in relation to where others in the group are standing. The following questions can be used for a debrief discussion, either in pairs or as a larger group:

- What did you notice about yourself during the activity?
- Did the activity bring up any emotions for you? In what way?
- Which questions did you feel most uncomfortable responding to? Why?
- Which statements did you find most meaningful or eye opening? Why?
- How has privilege affected you, your family and your community, in terms of opportunity and access?
- What can you do with this information in the future?

III. RACE

The activities in this section focus specifically on helping participants to more deeply explore issues of race and how it relates to service.

A. ONE WHITE MAN'S EXPERIENCE OF WHITENESS

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to provide a prompt that will provoke participants to think about whiteness and the choices about engaging or not engaging that white privilege allows.

Overview:

This activity is facilitated in three parts - first the facilitator frames the video, then the group watches the video, then discusses and debriefs the video.

Materials Needed:

- an internet-capable device to play the video "[The Definition of Privilege](#)."¹

Length of Activity:

25 minutes

Procedure:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Explain to participants that you are going to watch a video that is a spoken word piece about a young, white man's own experience of coming to understand his 'place' on a power/privilege map, and in relation to "otherness" over the course of his teens and young adulthood.

¹ speakeasynyc. "Adam Faulkner's The Definition of Privilege." Online video clip. Youtube. Youtube, 16 Feb. 2012. Web. 05 Feb. 2016.

MODULE 4

POWER & PRIVILEGE

2. Video (5 minutes)

Watch the 4 ½ minute video with the group using [this link](#).

3. Debrief (15 minutes)

Once the group has viewed the video, use the following questions to debrief:

- Does anyone have any initial reactions they want to share?
- Why do you think the speaker felt the need to distance himself from “whatever it was that kept [him] off the pavement”?
- What are your reactions to the teacher’s statement that, “not having to think about something sounds like an amazing privilege”?
- What is the “option of silence” that white people have in situations such as the one that the speaker experienced when he was 9 years old? Have you experienced situations where you had the option of silence? How did that feel?
- What does this video have to teach us about how we engage in service and volunteering?

Notes:

- *This activity is best used with a group where all members identify as white.*
- *This video uses some swear words and mentions activities that may not be appropriate for certain audiences.*

B. TWO LESSONS ON PRIVILEGE

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to provide a visual explanation of how privilege works - and then to further complicate that by exploring how systemic racism interacts with privilege.

Overview:

This activity is facilitated in three parts - first participants view a video, then they review a critique of the video and then they discuss both as a group.

Materials Needed:

- an internet-capable device to play [“Students Learn a Powerful Lesson About Privilege”](#) video² and view the critique, [“How to Really Understand White Privilege.”](#)³
- printed copies of the critique of the video (if needed)

Length of Activity:

30-40 minutes

Procedure:

1. Video (5 minutes)

Explain to participants that they’re going to watch a quick video that describes an activity that is sometimes done by educators to demonstrate how privilege works. You can find the video here.

² Melchior, Brandon. “Students Learn a Powerful Lesson About Privilege.” Online video clip. Buzzfeed. Buzzfeed, 09 Dec. 2014. Web. 05 Feb. 2016.

³ Yang, Jeff. “How to Really Understand White Privilege.” Quartz. Quartz, 27 Nov. 2014. Web. 05 Feb. 2016.

MODULE 4

POWER & PRIVILEGE

2. Critique of Video (5-10 minutes)

Now share with students the critique that another author wrote in response to the video. You can share the critique either as a printed document or online from this website.

3. Discussion (20-25 minutes)

- Once both pieces have been reviewed, lead the group in a discussion of the two using the following questions:
- What do you think about these two exercises?
- Which pieces of each exercise resonate with you and which pieces do not?
- What's too simple about the first exercise? Does the second get at privilege better? Is it still too simple?
- What additional factors would you add to the exercise so that it better represents privilege? (e.g., Do the seats have spikes because...)
- What can we learn from these two pieces of media about the role of privilege in service and volunteering?

C. TEXT DISCUSSION: CONTEMPORARY RACISM IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to explore how racism plays out on an interpersonal level within the American Jewish community today.

Overview:

This activity is facilitated in two parts - first the group reads the text and then discusses it.

Materials Needed:

copies of "Nation Divided" (Appendix C)

Length of Activity:

25 minutes

Procedure:

1. Article (10 minutes)

The text of this article is included in Appendix C. Hand out a copy of the article to each participant and have them read it individually or take turns reading it out loud.

2. Discussion (15 minutes)

Once the group has read the article, have them discuss the questions included with the text in pairs or in the larger group.

IV. POVERTY

This section provides activities to help participants better understand the dynamics of poverty in the United States.

A. DEFINITIONS OF POVERTY

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to explore the different types of poverty that exist, as well as some recent data on poverty in the United States.

Overview:

This activity is facilitated in two parts - first the facilitator frames the discussion, the group brainstorms different kinds of poverty, and learns some facts related to poverty. Then, they discuss the implications of what they've learned.

Materials Needed:

- chart paper
- markers for chart paper
- Local income and poverty data, optional (see Appendix D for guidance locating this data)

Length of Activity:

40 minutes

Procedure:

1. Kinds of Poverty (25 minutes)

Explain to the group that we're going to explore some technical definitions of poverty and ideas related to poverty.

Ask participants to brainstorm what different kinds of poverty exist. Write these on chart paper. Try to group them into these seven categories:

- Economic
- Physical
- Spiritual
- Mental
- Political
- Cultural
- Communal/Societal

Participants may come up with more than these seven and that is okay. Add them to the list. Note that there is not universal agreement about the seven categories; the overarching point is that poverty is diverse.

Share with the group that the 2014 US poverty line was \$23,850⁴ for a family of four, and 14.8% of the United States population (46.7 million people) lived below the poverty line as of 2014.⁵ If using, share local poverty data at this time. Share

4 "2014 Poverty Guidelines." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 01 Dec. 2014. Web. 05 Feb. 2016.

5 "Poverty - 2014 Highlights." United States Census Bureau. United States Census Bureau, n.d. Web. 05 Feb. 2016.

6 "Calculating the Poverty Line." Teaching Tolerance. Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d. Web. 05 Feb. 2016.

MODULE 4

POWER & PRIVILEGE

with the group that the poverty line is set by the government and many services are provided based on it. It is calculated “based on food costs — the government identifies how much it should cost to feed a family of four for one year and then multiplies that number by three. The formula has been used for decades. What it fails to capture is this: In today’s America, food expenses represent just one-fifth of the average household budget, not a third. Other costs — housing, healthcare, childcare and transportation — typically eat up larger portions of a family’s budget.”⁶

Ask participants what they think of the concept of a poverty line and how it is currently calculated.

2. Discussion (15 minutes)

Conclude by using the following questions to facilitate a discussion with the group:

- Do they think it matters who sets the poverty rate?
- Why are poverty rates only financial? How do you feel about that?
- The US poverty line is relatively high, compared to other countries (where it might be a dollar or two per day). To what extent does that matter to those living in poverty?
- What indicators of poverty can we see? What indicators of poverty can’t we see?
- What about the category of people living just above the poverty line? How different might their lives be, and how can this be addressed?
- Which of the categories of poverty do the people we most often consider “the poor” fall into? Are there categories of poverty in which “the poor” might have greater “wealth” than those we consider “wealthy”?
- Are there kinds of poverty that those who have financial wealth might or do experience? How does understanding that complexify the way that we think of and interact with those we consider “the poor”?

B. TEXT STUDY: POVERTY AND LUCK

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to explore what Jewish text has to say about poverty, especially as it relates to “merit” and “luck.”

Overview:

This activity is facilitated in two parts - first the group reads the text and then discusses it.

Materials Needed:

copies of “Text Study on Poverty and Luck” (Appendix E)

Length of Activity:

25 minutes

Procedure:

A. Texts (10 minutes)

The texts for this activity are included in Appendix E. Hand out a copy of the texts to

MODULE 4

POWER & PRIVILEGE

each participant and have them read individually, in pairs or take turns reading it out loud.

B. Discussion (15 minutes)

Once the group has read the texts, have them discuss the questions included with the texts in pairs or in the larger group.

CLOSING

This module provides a variety of avenues through which to discuss issues of power, privilege, race and poverty with participants, which is a critical piece of service and volunteering since most of our service activities are responding in some way to these issues. The next two modules will explore food justice and educational equity - both issues in which race, power, privilege and poverty play key roles.

MODULE 4

APPENDIX A TEXT DISCUSSION

POWER & PRIVILEGE

“HELPING HANDS ALSO EXPOSE A NEW YORK DIVIDE”⁷

“After more than a week of self-sufficiency, George Ossy, an immigrant from Africa living amid the chaos of the Rockaways, with his 10-year-old daughter in tow, walked into the relief center down the street, one of several set up by the volunteers who had descended on the storm-battered peninsula in Queens.

Moments later, a white woman leaned down to address his daughter. “Have you eaten in two days?” she asked.

Mr. Ossy surged with outrage. Power was out, yes, and nights were cold for sure, but Mr. Ossy, a taxi driver proud of the long days he works to earn money for his family, was insulted by the suggestion that his daughter was not well cared for.

“I said: ‘What do you think? You think we live in the bush?’ ” He felt condescended to by the volunteers — many of whom hail from upscale neighborhoods in Manhattan and Brooklyn. He turned and left.

Hurricane Sandy, the cliché of the moment goes, created a city of haves and have-nots; those New Yorkers with power and heat and the many other assurances of modern life, and those without. But the storm simply made plain the dividing lines in a city long fractured by class, race, ethnicity, geography and culture. And in reminding of these divides it stirred a measure of hope they could be bridged.

The counterculture activists of the Occupy Wall Street movement found themselves tearing up sodden drywall in Rockaway houses owned by police officers, whom this time last year they despised only slightly less than the 1 percent. Upper East Side professionals headed into clapboard neighborhoods of Staten Island and got their hands dirty cleaning out basements. And white gentrifiers who may not have thought much about the brick public housing complexes scattered around trendy neighborhoods like Red Hook, Brooklyn, suddenly found themselves inside them, trudging up pitch black stairwells to inquire about the well-being of the mostly poor Black and Hispanic residents.

But even within the honeyed glow of unity that has come to follow tragedies here, these disparities can be difficult to ignore, occasionally provoking moments of friction and misunderstanding.

More privileged New Yorkers, some of whom are more familiar with poverty from their travels to the third world than from exploration within their hometown, unearth deep guilt among the piles of donated clothes as they come face to face with misery that existed so close to home even before the storm.

Those coming to them for relief worry that their helpers are taking some voyeuristic interest in their plight, treating it as an exotic weekend outing, “like we’re in a zoo,” said one resident of a Rockaway project — echoing a complaint often heard in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina — as volunteers snapped iPhone photos of her as she waited in line for donated food and clothing.

And while the good being done is undeniable, the gap-bridging atmosphere has a

7 Maslin Nir, Sarah, and Nate Schweber. "Helping Hands Also Expose a New York Divide." New York Times [New York] 16 November 2012, A1. Web.

MODULE 4

APPENDIX A TEXT DISCUSSION

POWER & PRIVILEGE

melancholy undertone for some on all sides who are sure the moment is fleeting...”

Discussion Questions:

- In what ways were the volunteers reinforcing the existing differences in power and privilege between them and the people who they were serving who had been more severely impacted by the storm?
- Why do you think that volunteers might have taken pictures of the woman towards the end of the article? How would you feel if you were in their shoes? How would you feel if you were in her shoes?
- What are some strategies that volunteers could have used in order to avoid reinforcing the existing power differences between them and those that they were serving?

The full version of this article can be found at:

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/17/nyregion/after-hurricane-sandy-helping-hands-also-expose-a-new-york-divide.html?_r=0.

MODULE 4

APPENDIX B SAMPLE PROMPTS FOR PRIVILEGE WALK

POWER & PRIVILEGE

Note: When doing this as a walking exercise, replace “up” and “down” with “step forward” and “step back.” When doing it using a paper map, use the prompts below. You may need to adjust the tense of the prompts, based on the age of the participants

- If you went to private school, move up one space
- If you are/were the first person in your family to attend college, move down one space
- If your neighborhood is considered “undesirable”, move down one space
- If people of your racial group face violence on a daily basis based on their race, move down one space
- If you feel like there are people who look like you on television, move up one space
- If people of your race are regularly represented positively in mainstream media, move up one space
- If you have had close family members in prison, move down one space
- If you have experienced not knowing how you will afford your next meal, move down one space
- If there were more than 50 books in your house growing up, move up one space
- If you ate free or reduced lunch as a child at school, move down one space
- If your ancestors came to the US by force, move down one space
- If your parents or guardians attended college, move up one space
- If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, move down one space
- If you were embarrassed about your clothes or house while growing up, move down one space
- If you are generally able to avoid places that are dangerous, move up one space
- If you were raised in an area with crime, drug activity, or regular violence, move down one space
- If you have tried to change your speech or mannerisms to gain credibility or avoid being judged, move down one space
- If you are relatively sure you can enter a store without being followed, move up one space
- If you are reasonably sure you would be hired for a job based on your ability and qualifications, move up one space
- If your parents worked nights and weekends to support your family, move down one space
- If your family automatically expected you to attend college, move up one space
- If you can buy new clothes or go out to dinner when you want to, move up one space
- If you went to galleries, museums, and plays with your family, move up one space
- If you attended private school or summer camp, move up one space
- If you were raised in a single-parent household, move down one space
- If you studied the culture of your ancestors in elementary school, move up one space
- If you have ever had to rely primarily on public transportation, move down one space
- If you ever went on a family vacation, move up one space
- If you have ever had a maid, gardener, or cleaning service, move up one space
- If students in your high school looked mostly like you, move up one space

MODULE 4

APPENDIX B SAMPLE PROMPTS FOR PRIVILEGE WALK

POWER & PRIVILEGE

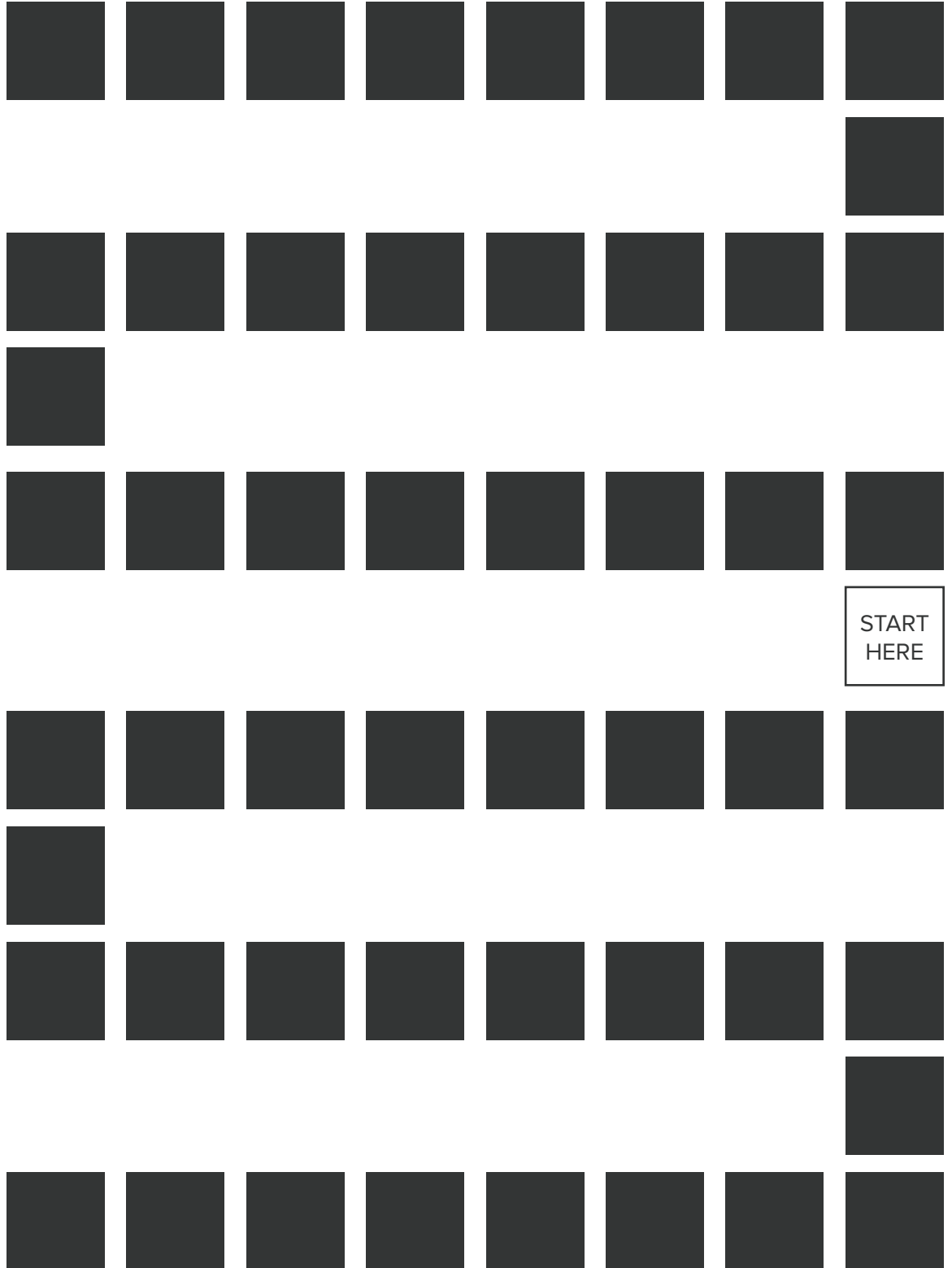
- If most of your teachers did not look like you, move down one space
- If you can make mistakes and not have people attribute your behavior to flaws of your racial group, move up one space
- If you can achieve or excel without being called a credit to your race, move up one space
- If you never think twice about calling the police when trouble occurs, move up one space
- If your ancestors came to the US by choice, move up one space
- If you have never felt that members of your racial or ethnic community were feared or unwanted members of American society, move up one space
- If one of your parents was unemployed or laid off, not by choice, move down one space
- If you did not have to have a job to contribute to family finances, move up one space
- If you have ever inherited money or property, move up one space
- If your family ever had to move because they could not afford to pay the rent or mortgage, move down one space
- If your family owned the house that you grew up in or land of any kind, move up one space
- If you were raised in a two-parent household, move up one space
- If you lived in an area where you could play safely and unsupervised as a child, move up one space
- If you were ever uncomfortable about a joke someone made related to your race, class or ethnicity, but felt unsafe to confront the situation, move down one space
- If you were told growing up that you could be anything you wanted to be, move up one space

MODULE 4

APPENDIX B SAMPLE PROMPTS FOR PRIVILEGE WALK

POWER & PRIVILEGE

PRIVILEGE WALK MAP



MODULE 4

APPENDIX C NATION DIVIDED: COPING WITH RACISM IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

POWER & PRIVILEGE

HAUSMAN, ALIZA. "NATION DIVIDED: COPING WITH RACISM IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY." *NEWS AND OPINION*. INTERFAITHFAMILY, N.D. WEB. 7 JAN. 2016.

BY ALIZA HAUSMAN

"So where you from?" they ask.

"New York," I say.

"No, really. Where you from?"

"New York!" But I know they're not really asking which state I hail from. I've been under the inquisition enough times to know. Plus, it helps that some people's curiosity has gotten the best of them and led to questions like:

"Where are your parents from? Where are your grandparents from?" and even "No, where were they from before that?" Excuse me, but what kinds of questions are these from people I've just met?

And yet, I've always gotten these kinds of questions. Questions that I attribute to features that don't always peg me as Hispanic but more often biracial (half black/half white). These same features don't strike many people around the Shabbos (Sabbath) table as "Jewish" in the Eastern European sense. Looking "exotic" tends to make people very curious. Still, it strikes me as funny to call myself a Jew of color. Especially when my nicknames growing up were "Snow White" and "Vampire." But there aren't many Dominican Jews who can trace their lineage back to the island before the Dominican Republic took in European Jewish refugees during World War II. I've only met a few Dominican Jews who weren't white. So, I guess you could say I am a little exotic.

Sometimes, I wish I wasn't a Jew of color. I just want to blend! But the results of blending have been, at times, unsettling. When people don't know I'm a Jew of color, I become a "racial spy." Jews and non-Jews alike sling hurtful comments in front of me, believing that I must be not one of "them." That it's okay to be racist because there aren't any non-whites at the table. Or no one Jewish around. But during the "joke" about the Mexican housekeeper, I protest, "Hello? I'm offended!" And somewhere, later, I'll have to pipe up to defend the Jews.

And sometimes, that's just the kick in the pants these people need, to be reminded that a "joke" that's not okay in every circle might not be okay in ANY circle.

In one incident at the Shabbos table when we were discussing current events, a woman said disdainfully, "Why do *they* have to sing the national anthem in Spanish? Our national language is English. Everyone should speak English! One language unites us." She nodded, looking around for agreement.

Then I, bilingual Spanish-speaking person that I am, had to respond: "As if those guys on the news didn't speak English? I mean, they translated the national anthem *from* English. Maybe, you should stop speaking Hebrew, being all Jewish, because it isn't very American after all? Or maybe culture and language doesn't have to DIVIDE us."

MODULE 4

APPENDIX C NATION DIVIDED: COPING WITH RACISM IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

POWER & PRIVILEGE

Why am I always the one whose job it is to be offended and the one always there to defend? It makes me angry.

It's tiresome to be the "racial representative," representative for people of color everywhere. But I realize when someone asks, "So, seriously, why do Hispanic women dress like that?" that they really believe I have some magic crystal ball connection that helps me understand all people of color. Long after realizing anger has gotten me nowhere, I've tried to change gears, tried to take a second to assume the best in people. They're not *trying* to be racist. Sometimes, I say, "How should I know?" But more often than not, I find myself representin': "People from different cultures have different dress codes" and "So, you think we should all start wearing burkhas (the enveloping outer garment worn by women in some Islamic traditions for the purpose of cloaking the entire body)?" People try to understand different cultures through the lens of their own and too often decide that anything different is "weird."

Judaism doesn't want to make people feel "weird" so it's actually socially unacceptable to ask someone if they converted. If someone converted, they're Jewish and that's enough with that. But even knowledgeable Jews will ask me indirectly whether I converted. And though I am a convert, I wonder about all the Jews of color that aren't. The common assumption is that a person of color can't have been born a Jew. But we need only look at the rich landscape of colorful Jewish faces to see that this assumption is untrue. Newsflash: not every Jew in the world is Ashkenazi, or white, or even from New York!

Unfortunately, the Jewish people are no strangers to racism--they are targets of it, and yet they still perpetrate it just as much as the next guy. Someone asked me: "How could a people who have suffered the Holocaust be so racist?" Because Jews have suffered centuries of anti-Semitism that has created an "us" versus "them" mentality that continues to poison interactions with non-Jews and Jews who don't fit into cookie cutter boxes for race and ethnicity. I've met a half-Asian, half-white girl whose Jewish affiliation became nonexistent after her Hebrew school classmates terrorized her with racially charged attacks. I had an Asian convert tell me that after all the racism he's endured, he remains tied to Judaism only for his son's sake.

My mother used to tell me that Black people were evil, Mexicans slept with their brothers and sisters and white people had it all. And maybe, it would have been easy to grow up to believe these things if I didn't have a Black best friend, a Mexican friend and a white husband. The way to combat stereotypes, racism, is to tear them down with the actual knowledge that comes from meeting and knowing people who are different (but not so different) from us. Segregation only leads to more segregation. So what?

I'm not a big fan of assimilation. But in some ways, I'm an assimilated Dominican woman. Cutting myself off from the rest of the world would have left me pretty lonely on that little island in the Caribbean. It's all about balance. Being a Modern Orthodox Jew to me is about being true to Judaism while living it up in the modern world, safeguarding my Judaism but also participating in the best the world outside has to offer. We can't be "a light unto the nations" unless we understand the world around us.

So as an Orthodox Jew of color, I'm all about EDUCATION! I educate whoever's in need: about what it means to be Orthodox, a Jew and a person of color all rolled into one. Sometimes, I educate whether or not the ill-informed are ready to listen. Maybe it's the

MODULE 4

APPENDIX C NATION DIVIDED: COPING WITH RACISM IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

POWER & PRIVILEGE

former teacher in me but I just can't allow people to walk around "all ignorant." And neither should you.

[Aliza Hausman](#) is a Latina Orthodox Jewish convert, freelance writer, educator and blogger. Currently working on a memoir, she lives in New York with her husband who is pursuing rabbinical ordination.

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to “look Jewish”? Who is hurt when we assume that there’s a narrow set of ways that a Jew can look?
- Has your Jewish identity been questioned because of your name, how you look, etc.? How did that feel?
- Why do you think it peaks people’s curiosity when someone who doesn’t look how they expect a Jew to look is in a Jewish space?
- Based on what this author shared, what are some strategies to make Jewish communities and institutions more welcoming for Jews of color?

MODULE 4

APPENDIX D LOCATING LOCAL POVERTY DATA

POWER & PRIVILEGE

Local poverty data is published by the U.S. Census Bureau. The **Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Interactive Data Tool** only provides state and county-level data but offers the best platform for comparing poverty data across multiple geographies, including comparing county rates to state and national rates. This tool also offers the clearest visual presentation of the data in table, map, and graph form.

The **American FactFinder** provides the most comprehensive data, including poverty rates, for many geographic types including towns and cities. Notably, this tool provides poverty rates for seniors and enables comparison of poverty rates across racial/ethnic groups and education levels, for a given geography. This tool produces very detailed data tables which are less visually appealing. If using this tool, you should locate and prepare data in a simpler format for presentation to the group. A comparison of multiple geographies requires use of the Advanced Search function.

Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)

The U.S. Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Interactive Data Tool provides six measures of income and poverty at the state and county level for all locations in the U.S. The six measures are:

- Poverty rate
 - » All Ages (State/County)
 - » Under age 18 (State/County)
 - » Ages 5-17 in Families (State/County)
 - » Ages 5-17 in Families (School District)
 - » Under Age 5 (State only)
- Median Household Income (State/County)

Use the “Filter by” categories on the left-hand sidebar to select your state and county. You can select multiple states and counties for comparison.

You may view any of the six measures by clicking on the desired measure under “Poverty Rates or Income” in the left-hand sidebar.

There are three tabs at the top of the data tool:

- Map: Categorizes the poverty rates in each county into one of six ranges. Enables visual comparison of poverty rates across counties and states.
- Table: Provides raw numbers and precise percentage rates for each county. In order to compare to state and national data, make sure the boxes next to “Include US Total” and “Include State Total” are checked in the left-hand sidebar.
- Trends: Using a line graph, depicts changes in the selected poverty measure over 18 years.

American FactFinder

The U.S. Census Bureau American FactFinder provides a variety of data from the American Community Survey for a range of geographies including states, counties, cities, towns, or zip codes.

To search for poverty data:

- Start by entering a town/city name, zip code, or other geographic term into the search box under “Community Facts” and click “Go.”

MODULE 4

APPENDIX D LOCATING LOCAL POVERTY DATA

POWER & PRIVILEGE

- Click on the “Poverty” bar on the left side menu.
- In the box in the center of the screen click on the first data table link under “American Community Survey”, titled “Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months (Age, Sex, Race, Education, Employment,...)”
- Review data in the table provided to determine which data is most appropriate to share with your group.

MODULE 4

APPENDIX E TEXT STUDY ON POVERTY AND LUCK

POWER & PRIVILEGE

Background:

The Talmud is an important collection of Jewish legal discussion, biblical commentary, and stories redacted around 500 CE.

Birkat HaMazon is a set of blessings that are traditionally said after eating, according to Jewish law.

Texts:

אמר רבא: חיי, בני ומזוני, לא בזכותא תליא מילתא, אלא במזלא תליא מילתא. דהא רבה ורב חסדא תרווייהו רבן צדיקי הוו, מר מצלי ואתי מיטרא, ומר מצלי ואתי מיטרא. רב חסדא חיה תשעין ותרתיין שנין - רבה חיה ארבעין, בי רב חסדא - שיתין הלולי, בי רבה - שיתין תיכלי. בי רב חסדא - סמידא לכלבי ולא מתבעי, בי רב נהמא דשערי לאינשי, ולא משתכח

Rava said: Life, children, and food do not depend on merit; rather, they depend on luck. For Rabbah and Rav Hisda were two righteous rabbis - one would pray and rain would come, and the other would pray and rain would come. [Yet] Rav Hisda lived 92 years and Rabbah lived [only] 40 years. In the house of Rav Hisda there were 60 marriages; in the house of Rabbah, 60 deaths. In the house of Rav Hisda, there was pure wheat bread for dogs, and they did not want. In the house of Rabbah, there was even a lack of [poor quality] barley bread for people. - Babylonian Talmud, Moed Katan, 28a

Excerpt from Birkat HaMazon (Blessing at the end of the meal):

זָעַנְי קִידְצָ יִתְיַאֲרֵ אֱלֹהֵי יִתְנַקֵּז סְגוּ יִתְיַיֵּה רַעְנָ
סָחַל שְׁקִבְמִ וְעָרְזוּ
סוּלְשָׁב וּמַעַ תָּא דְרַבִּי יְהוֹנָתָן וּמַעַל זַע יְהוֹ

I was a child and now I'm old
And I never saw a righteous person who was forgotten
And he asked for bread
God give Your people strength
God bless Your people with peace

Discussion Questions:

- What is happening in each text?
- What is the relationship between merit and poverty, in your mind? What about skills or talents and poverty?
- Do you agree with Rava (that life, children, and food do not depend on merit)?
- What is luck?
- In what ways are we lucky? What is the relationship between luck and skills or talents?
- Are there people who have skills or talents but still find themselves living in poverty? Why is that?
- Has it also been your experience that “you have never seen a righteous person who was forgotten”? What do you think that line is supposed to mean? Do you agree with it?