

# The Imperatives of Social Justice

“ואהבת לרעך כמוך” -- רבי יהודה אמר זה כלל בתורה



*“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Rabbi Akiva says:

This is the great principle of the Torah (Sifra, Kedoshim, 4:12)

*“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

## Three sages on Social Justice

- Rabbi Hillel (circa 40 BCE) (standing on one foot): What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation of this-go and study it!
- Baruch Spinoza (circa 1550 CE): God must be recognized as the Highest Good....everyone ought to love his neighbor and obey the commands of the supreme power.
- Isaiah Berlin (circa 1980 CE): Justice requires the removal of obstacles preventing people from achieving what they are capable of achieving.

## What must be done for social change to occur

Societies and social norms do not change on their own. Injustices that are embedded in society continue unless challenged. Change requires an active process. We must become aware of our own biases, both conscious and unconscious. This includes:

- Becoming aware of the racial and socioeconomic advantage we have accrued.
- Listening to those affected as they know what they need.
- Challenging institutional policies or practices that contribute to inequities

## Editor's note

This Handbook, The Imperatives of Social Justice, was prepared to inform members of The Jewish Center (TJC) of opportunities to do Social Justice, not just think about it. The ten topics were chosen to strike the heart of us all. Let the work continue "until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." [Dr. King cited the Prophet Amos 5:24 on August 28, 1963 at the March on Washington]

At least one TJC Social Action committee member served as a resource for each unit. They are listed at the end of each unit. The Chairs of the Social Action committee at the initiation of the project were Lew Gantwerk and Abigail Rose. The Editor is TJC member Robert Karp. [Robert.karp@downstate.edu]. Please feel free to contact me.

The topics chosen for this Handbook move us deeply: welcoming refugees, multifaith activities, sustainability, gun control, criminal justice reform, affordable shelter, LGBTQ+ rights, preventing hunger, addressing poverty, and confronting racism. Each unit provides 1) an overview, 2) what is being done locally, 3) what could be done and 4) specific actions to be taken. This last part is, by its nature, incomplete. As with Rabbi Tarfon, "We are not expected to complete the task, nor are we free to desist from it." [Pirke Avot 2:21]

At the end of each unit are an "Active Learning" module and a Lesson Plan. These provide the skills necessary for action including questions to engage the learner, scenarios to respond to that develop skills, and resources for addressing the issues. The Active Learning exercises and Lesson Plans contain similar materials that are used in different ways.

# Imperatives of Social Justice

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*"In our ceremonial Cherokee way of life, there was a teaching we were told was given directly from God:  
 ---"We are all to live in a way to teach that every human being on the earth is treated the same, included rather than left out."  
 Tatania, Tell Me Who You Are, (2019) pg 91.*

# The Imperatives of Social Justice

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## Active Learning

Each Active Learning module of “The Imperatives of Social Justice,” consists of three parts: 1) questions that engage users' attention, 2) scenarios and exercises that demonstrate how racism, poverty and other injustices affect individuals, and 3) additional resources based on personal experience. Mel Silberman is Professor of Psychology at Temple University and former TJC member, said, “Explanation and demonstration, by themselves, will never lead to real, lasting learning. Only learning that is active will do this.”

In creating the exercises, I kept in mind the phenomenon of “curriculum violence.” “Curriculum violence occurs when educators and curriculum writers have constructed a set of lessons that damage or otherwise adversely affect students intellectually and emotionally.” [SP Jones, 2020] An example given by Dr. Stephanie Jones is from a class where students “[who] failed to answer questions about slavery correctly, ...had their group’s “freedom card” revoked.” Great care must be taken to avert harm that could go well beyond a “micro-aggression.”

With that in mind, each of the Active Learning units contains dialogues representing a diversity of opinions. For example, in the unit on sustainability, I included the concerns of those who work in the fossil fuel industry. Investors can take their investments elsewhere and maintain wealth; technologists can readily transfer their skills elsewhere, but the needs of men and women who work on coal barges and oil rigs can do neither. Their needs must be addressed before or concurrently with the imperatives of sustainability being fulfilled. This model for discourse is maintained through the entirety of “The Imperatives of Social Justice.”

## Sources

\* Jones SP. “Ending Curriculum Violence” (in) *Teaching Tolerance*. 2020; 64 (Spring)  
<<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2020/ending-curriculum-violence>>

\* Silberman M. (1996) *Active Learning: 101 strategies to teach any subject*. New York. Allyn and Bacon.

## Lesson Plans

These are presented as the conclusion of each module. Some of the learning exercises are drawn from the modules themselves while others are new to these teaching sessions. Feel free to mix and match. As with all the Active Learning elements provided, Mel Silberman’s *Active learning: 101 strategies to teach any subject*, cited above has been a principal resource.

Each session begins with a goal, followed by three or four objectives, which can be achieved and measured in the time allotted. The use of objectives was promoted by Benjamin Bloom of the University of Chicago. His “Bloom’s taxonomy” giving lists of suitable objectives in six categories, “Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating and Creating,” are available at <https://teachonline.asu.edu/2016/05/integrating-technology-blooms-taxonomy/>.

Curriculum violence is a consistent concern for all of the presentations. Make no assumptions about participants’ life experiences, and give forethought on how these teaching sessions might be received. Each session begins with reminder to the participants, “This is sensitive material. Please tell me your concerns.”

### A note on copyright

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# 1. The Imperative of Welcoming Refugees

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*"Give me your tired, your poor,  
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

(Emma Lazarus, 1883)

## Dimensions of the Problem

- "Rebuilding refugee resettlement is both morally and strategically necessary. It allows the U.S. to lead by example, increasing the likelihood that other wealthy countries will also take in refugees, and reinvigorates diplomatic efforts and innovations to support refugees and around the world." (The International Refugee Committee)
- Almost 26 million refugees who fear persecution and other dangers within their nations of origin, have left their homes hoping to restart their lives elsewhere.
- Other countries will follow suit if the U.S. raises the number of refugees accepted.

## Local Needs and Actions

- There is a long tradition in Princeton of responding to refugees. Perhaps the most memorable is that of welcoming Albert Einstein who escaped from Nazi Germany.
- Most refugees don't bring the celebrity of an Einstein. Refugees are survivors. They are going to make it in America; they and their children will contribute to the growth and success of our society.

## What is Being Done

TJC Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Committee (TJC/IRRC) grew out of The Jewish Center's own Social Action committee.

- It now includes Methodist, Presbyterian, Quaker, Unitarian, and Evangelical churches as well as Muslim mosques.
- The Committee provides economic support for housing, job development, tutoring, English as a Second Language (ESL), and rides for medical care and work as needed.
- During the six years of its existence, the Committee has assisted thirteen families comprising forty-one individuals in their relocation to the Princeton area. They've come here from Afghanistan, Cameroon, El Salvador, Eritrea, Iraq, Pakistan, St. John, Syria, Tibet, and Turkey.

# The Imperative of Welcoming Refugees

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## What is Being Done (Con't)

- Currently four members of The Jewish Center are active on the Refugee Steering Committee and many more provide support in donations of time, goods and funds. Before the Pandemic, TJC/ IRRC was meeting on the 1st Thursday of the month from 12:00 to 1:00 PM at Municipal Hall 400 Witherspoon St.in the Community Room. These meeting will resume when it's safe to do so. All will be welcome to attend. Meanwhile, you can join our list-serv for regular brief updates. (Check out the website at [www.princetonrefugee.org](http://www.princetonrefugee.org).)

## Things to Do

- Members of the Refugee Resettlement Committee offer a variety of hands on, logistical help in welcoming new families. Examples would be helping to set up an apartment for the family, preparing a welcome meal, driving family members to appointments, showing them their way around town, tutoring ESL, etc. In addition, bicycles and cars are always needed.
- Donations to The Jewish Center Refugee Fund are always appreciated.

**Contributed by Louise Sandburg and Alison Politziner**

*"Looking up, he [Abraham] saw three men standing near him.*

*As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and bowed to the ground." (Genesis 18:2)*

*"You will not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, having been yourselves strangers in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:9)*

# The Imperative of Welcoming Refugees

## Active Learning

### Questions

- **Q1.** What percentage of people living in the United States today are refugees or descendants of refugees?
- **Q2.** How many and what percent of U.S. citizens arrived here as political refugees?
- **Q3.** Can you describe the differences between political and economic refugees?

### Scenarios and Activities

Using partners, small groups for discussion, and play acting:

- Consider how and why different immigrant groups of people arrived in America: European Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Consider the differences in experience for African Americans, Native Americans, and various political, religious, and economic refugees.
- Review the barriers immigrants faced when they came to the United States. What changed for them as they assimilated into American society?
- Consider the Jewish refugee experience from the arrival of twenty-three Sephardic Jews to New Amsterdam in 1654 to that of Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s.
- Enact the story of Abraham rushing from his tent to greet strangers [Genesis 18:11]. Ask, "What was the usual behavior at that time when strangers from a different tribe arrived unexpectedly?" Play it differently. What if Abraham were hostile? Would the passage end with an unnamed stranger [a divine messenger, perhaps] saying, "I will return to you...and Sara your wife will have a son?" [Genesis 18:1-14]

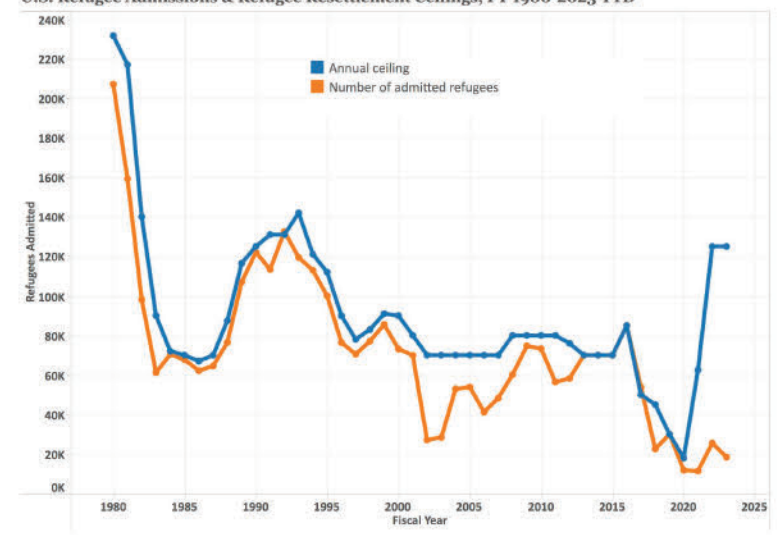
### Answers

**A1.** About 71% of Americans are descended from immigrants. Currently, approximately 45 million Americans, 13.7% of the population, are actual immigrants. African Americans are not to be described as immigrants. They were brought here against their will to be enslaved from 1619 onward. Native Americans had been here for many thousands of years before Europeans arrived.

**A2.** In 1984, 240,000 refugees were admitted to the US. That was reduced to below 60,000 in 2019 with the number plummeting to 18,000 in Fiscal Year 2020.

**A3.** Almost all immigrants are in some way refugees. People don't leave their family, friends, and community easily. Through most of our history, immigration was mostly voluntary. "Give me your tired, your poor, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless tempest tossed to me," wrote Emma Lazarus. In the modern era, the status of "refugee" differentiates people seeking to enter the United States by where they come from. For example, those leaving Cuba, the former Soviet Union and satellite countries were treated differently than those coming from parts of Africa, Central and South America and the Caribbean.

U.S. Refugee Admissions & Refugee Resettlement Ceilings, FY 1980-2023 YTD\*





# The Imperative of Welcoming Refugees

## Active Learning

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### Readings and Resources

- The History of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society [HIAS] gives a Jewish perspective on immigration. The experience of Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union and from Cuba was substantially different than other experiences of immigrants and refugees from Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America. [See HIAS.org]
- The Georgetown institute for Women, Peace and Security estimated recently that refugees' contributions to the economy is in the billions of dollars. See <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/refugees-have-billions-to-contribute-to-u-s-economy/>

### Overview

Ilan Stavans [Ed] *Immigration* [Library of Latino Civilization] addresses the full gamut of the immigrant experience.

Also, see Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* and Karen Brodtkin's *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* for an appreciation of how resistant the United States has been to bring in refugees. These texts also address the importance of "whiteness" in the immigration experience; the closer an immigrant came to an image of white and Protestant the warmer the welcome.

The appalling failure of the United States to admit Jews from Europe in during the Holocaust is a horrific example. A history has been provided by the US Holocaust museum <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/immigration-to-the-united-states-1933-41>

### Experiences

\* Edwidge Danticat is a Haitian American author. Her *Behind the Mountains* is a novel for young adults. She has written many short stories that serve well as an introduction to discussion.

\* Henry Roth's *Call it Sleep*, and Mike Gold's *Jews without Money* were among the most well-known writings of the early 20th century on the experience of Jewish immigrants in the United States. They are not the "Horatio Alger 'rags-to-riches' tales often presented as the Jewish immigrant experience.

## The Imperative of Welcoming Refugees

### Active Learning

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#### Readings and Resources (cont.)

##### Experiences

\* Maxine Hong Kingston was born in the United States to parents who had emigrated from China. Her essays in *Hawai'i One Summer* (1987) provide a starting point for discussion of Asian immigration to the United States. As with Henry Roth and Mike Gold, the essays decry assumptions that “the streets are paved with gold” for anyone with the energy and effort to pick it up.

\* Louise Erdrich is an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians author. It is important to contrast the indigenous experience with that of the immigrant. Her short stories have been collected by *The Atlantic* magazine  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/author/louise-erdrich/>

\* Ilan Stavans is a Mexican American editor, prolific author, and Professor at Amherst College. Singer's *Typewriter* and *Mine: Reflections on Jewish Culture* addresses contemporary Jewish immigrant experiences.

\* In Felicia Chavez, Jose Olivarez, and Willie Perdomo's (Eds) *Breakbeat Poets vol. 4: LatiNext*, the authors present a collection of poems, stories, and essays from a diversity of backgrounds across the United States.

**“And you shall show love to your fellow...”**

*Lev 19:18*

# The Imperative of Welcoming Refugees

## Lesson Plan


The **Goal:** In this session we will develop appreciation for the ways in which people, as individual and groups, have moved from their home to find new places in which to live and achieve. First, however, there has to be a welcoming.

The **Objectives:** On completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- **Identify** numbers of refugees leaving their countries of residence.
- **Summarize** reasons for relocation, from self-selected to forced.
- **Contrast** the immigrant experience with that of Native and African Americans
- **Explain** factors that have obstructed or enhanced the welcoming of refugees into the United States

**Introduction: [20 minutes]**

**Figure 1. Albert Einstein and Emma Lazarus poem on the Statue of Liberty**

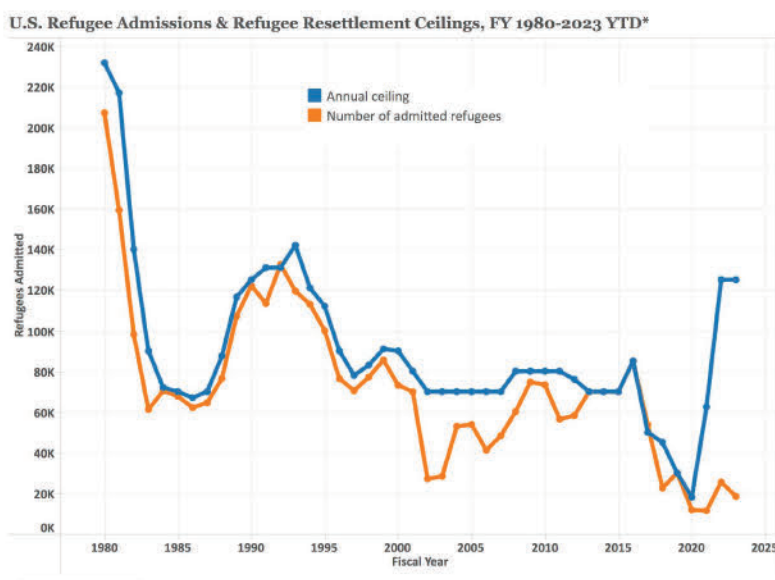
	<p style="text-align: center;">“Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Poem on the Statue of Liberty. Words by Emma Lazarus and music by Irving Berlin</p>
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*The arrival of Albert and his wife, Elsa Einstein, is emblematic of the Jewish experience and legacy in the United States.*

The Jewish refugee experience was repeated from the time of the exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722-721 BCE. An important example of Jews being welcomed after the expulsion from Spain in 1492 is that by the Ottoman Emperor, Sultan Bayezid II, leading to the Sephardic communities in the Mediterranean region. It is in our history to be welcomed. Now it is our turn to welcome.

Basic Information, circa 2022:

**Figure 2. Admission and resettlement of refugees in the United States**



*From 1980 to the present there has been a profound drop in the number of refugees permitted to enter the United States.*

- Almost 26 million refugees, who fear persecution and other dangers within their nations of origin, have left their homes hoping to restart their lives elsewhere. Specific concerns in the United States are programs for refugees that are under attack.
- While attempts are made to make a distinction between economic refugees, those escaping poverty, and political or religious refugees, those escaping persecution, for most refugees there is a mix of both those seeking a better future for economic reasons and those seeking a safe future because of persecution.
- Think through the experiences in your own families. What have you witnessed?

# The Imperative of Welcoming Refugees

## Lesson Plan

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- Consider the experiences of Native Americans, who were already here, and African-Americans, who were forcibly removed from their homes and brought here to be enslaved.
- There is a wide discrepancy between what the U.S. is doing for refugees and what is being done by other developed countries. These reflect economic fears of those without the security of higher levels of education, tenure or other forms of protection from job loss.

Consider how and why different immigrant groups left their countries of origins to arrive in the United States.

- Protestants, Catholics, and Jews from Europe.
- Political and economic refugees from Latin America, the Caribbean and elsewhere.

Consider the restrictions made to immigration affecting where immigrants came from.

- Discuss the McCarren Walter immigration Act of 1924 limiting immigration by quotas to the US population of 1890, prior to waves of immigrants arriving from southern Europe (Italians) and Russia (Jews)
- Remember the Evian Conference of 1938 when the Nazi persecutions were apparent as was the potential for genocide; no country of any size was willing to admit European Jewry .
- Consider contemporary differences post McCarren Walter for non-White immigrants, especially those of African ancestry.

**Group exercise [20 minutes]**

*Be sure to give a warning for “curriculum violence” as a history of refugee status of participants may not be apparent.*

- Enact the story of Abraham rushing from his tent to greet strangers [Genesis 18:11]. Ask, “what if Abraham were hostile?” Would the passage end with an unnamed stranger [a divine messenger, perhaps] saying, “I will return to you...and Sara your wife will have a son?” [Genesis 18:1-14]
- Then break into *hevruta*, paired or small study groups, of 3 or 4 to discuss “What was the usual behavior at that time when strangers from a different tribe arrived unexpectedly?”

**On Concluding** Summarize the barriers immigrants might have faced when they came to the United States. Consider that immigrants' experiences have been different according to the time of immigration, where they came from and education and occupations of the immigrants. What has changed for them as they assimilated into American society?

### Evaluation

**Ask the group** to identify the approximate numbers of refugees leaving countries of residence seeking to find safe haven, economic opportunity or both. Answers will vary according to time and perhaps by the definition of refugee.

**Individually ask participants** to record their own families' reasons for leaving wherever and arriving here. Be sure to include “They were here already” for those with Native American ancestry and “They were kidnapped and enslaved” for those of African ancestry.

Describe factors affecting their welcome to the United States.

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# The Imperative of Welcoming Refugees

## Lesson Plan

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### Evaluation (cont.)

Contrast the immigrant experiences of those of European ancestry with that of Native Americans, already here, and African Americans, kidnapped. Consider the experiences of more recent non-White immigrants from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

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### Resources

- Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, and Mike Gold's *Jews without Money* were among the most well-known books of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that described the Jewish immigrant experience in the United States. They are not the "Horatio Alger "Rags to Riches" tales often presented as the Jewish immigrant experience.
- Maxine Hong Kingston was born in the United States to parents who had emigrated from China. Her essays in *Hawai'i One Summer* (1987) provide a starting point to discuss Asian immigration to the United States. As with Henry Roth and Mike Gold, the essays disprove the belief that "The streets are paved with gold" for anyone with the energy and effort to pick obtain it.
- Louise Erdrich is a Lakota Sioux author. It is important to contrast the Indigenous experience with that of the immigrant. Her short stories have been collected by *The Atlantic* magazine <https://www.theatlantic.com/author/louise-erdrich/>
- The history of HIAS, originally the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, embodies the Talmudic requirement to be for oneself but not only for oneself and to act now! See their "Welcome the refugee, protect the stranger" at [www.hias.org](http://www.hias.org).
- Here is the Holy Cross Youth Orchestra Singing the words of Emma Lazarus "Give me your tired and poor" with melody by Irving Berlin <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2ESoRtfljs>.

**“ Like a native/ezrach from among  
you shall the stranger live . . . ”**

*Lev 19:34*

## 2. The Imperative of Multifaith Activities

### Dimensions of the Problem

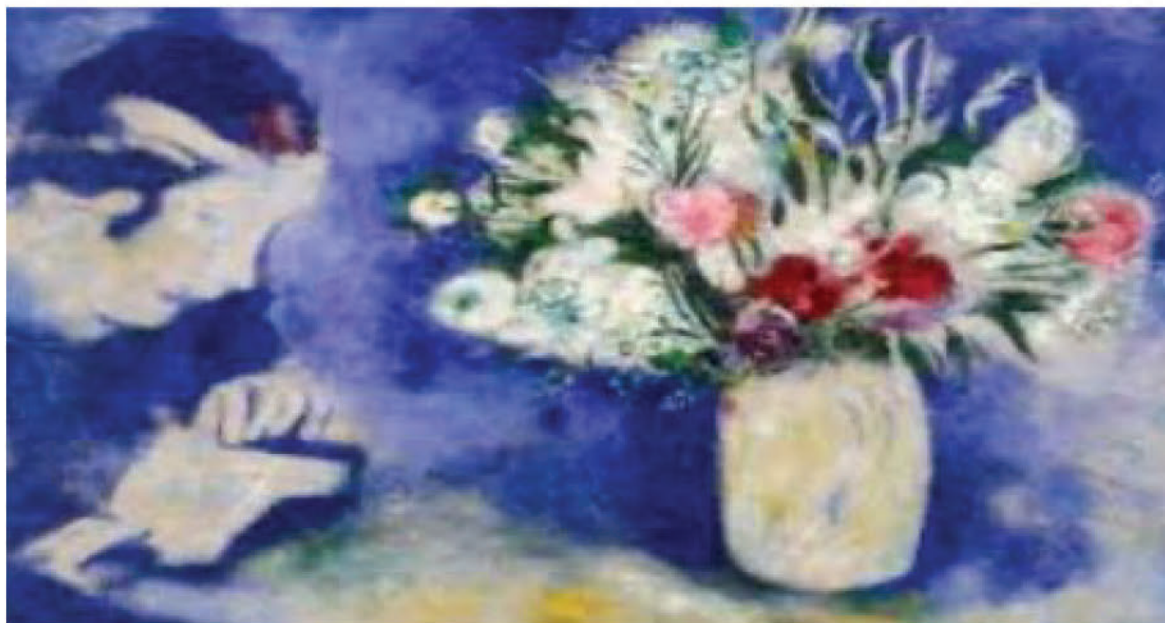
Our world is filled with divisiveness, often with hateful rhetoric. Divisions have become tribal with seeming fear of contamination when encountering ideas from the outside of our own circle of family, friends, and community. These can be countered with multifaith dialogues or just being together without an agenda. Each community has its “own” and its “other.” The principal actions of multifaith collaboration are:

- First, to respect differences.
- Second, to “give face to the other” (from Emanuel Levinas).

“Multifaith” is about being who you are whatever your faith tradition while working in partnership with mutual respect for people of all faiths. “Faith” here means a community of concern and not necessarily what is believed or not. The most powerful example of multifaith commitment to a cause is the great “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom” of 1963. Since then faith communities have come together in response to racism and anti-Semitism:

- The murder of 9 congregants at Mother Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC in 2015
- Far right actions at the “Unite the Right” rally Charlottesville, VA in 2017
- The murder of 11 congregants at the Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh, PA in 2018.

We Jews need to support multifaith activities. Anti-Semitism has reached a proportion not seen in the United States for over 75 years. We are both contributors to and beneficiaries of multifaith dialogues and activities.



Marc Chagall, “Between Heaven and Earth”

*The righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come. (Sanhedrin 105a)*

*This is the gate of the Lord. The just will enter. (Psalm 118: 20)*

*“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” (Dr. King)*

## The Imperative of Multifaith Activities

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### Local Activities

The central player for multifaith activity is the Princeton Clergy Association (PCA). Currently 25 local congregations have clergy who participate regularly as well as when a need arises. The PCA's activities include many of the concerns raised in this text such as shelter, refugee rights, and food insecurity. The PCA follows the theology of St. James: "By my deeds I will show you my faith" (2:18). Sponsorship and support includes the Martin Luther King Day gathering at different congregations. TJC is affiliated with other multifaith organizations. The PCA is the first responder to crises of public concern. Since then faith communities have come together in response to incidents of racism and anti-Semitism, such as:

- Not In Our Town Princeton (NIOT) is a multi-racial, multi-faith group that educates and advocates for racial justice. TJC has been a member and sent representatives to the NIOT board since 1999.
- The Coalition for Peace Action (CPA) is the first responder to crises of public concern. Our own Rabbi Feldman z"l had been an active member of both the PCA and CPA. He led discussions with the PCA on the Israel-Palestine conflict that enabled effective dialogue.
- The Central New Jersey Interfaith Stitchers for Peace. This began with congregants from Nassau Presbyterian Church, The Islamic Society of Central Jersey, and The Jewish Center. Other congregations and individuals have joined; all are welcome.
- Sisterhood of Salaam-Shalom, centered in East Brunswick, brings Jews and Muslims together for the sake of being together. Again, treating one another with respect precedes dialogue.
- The Jewish Center hosted a three-part presentation by Iman Mendes of the West Windsor mosque on the essential elements of Islam. It was well attended by congregants, members of Iman Mendes' mosque, and other Muslims .
- Rabbi Feldman, Rev. Davis of Nassau Presbyterian Church, and Iman Chebli of the Islamic Society of Center Jersey did a presentation at each congregation where they explained their faiths.
- The Wednesday evening dinner and clothes distribution at the United Methodist Church has been sponsored by the various faith communities.

**Contributed by Judy Leopold**



# The Imperative of Multifaith Activities

## Active Learning

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### Questions

- Q1. Give the basic tenet of the Torah and the Abrahamic traditions in 4 Hebrew or 7 English words.
- Q2. Give the basic tenet of the non-Abrahamic religions' traditions in 4 Hebrew or 7 English words.
- Q3. Give the basic tenet of secular humanist traditions in 4 Hebrew or 7 English words.

*See below for answers*

### Exercises and Scenarios

*Keep the possibility of curriculum bias in mind. Some or many engaged with these scenarios and activities may have had family, friends, or themselves caught up in the circumstances described.*

1. Rabbi Heschel gave his reason for engaging in religious pluralism, what we are calling “multifaith” activities, in the title of his paper “No religion is an island.” (Union Seminary Quarterly Review, 1966 (2) Jan.; 117-136.)

Choice A. I am a person with deep faith in G-d and am fulfilling an obligation to engage in dialogue with persons who have similar commitments with different understandings. [belief inspired]

Choice B. I am committed to engagement but am undecided about the role of a deity and want to learn from others. [belief neutral]

Choice 3. My need for multifaith dialogue is not because of beliefs. Rather, it is a necessity to live in a world with a diversity of faiths. [belief suppressed]

Which of these choices represents your own position, not which is best? Have a round table discussion. Follow the “Listen, Reflect, Respond” model. Try switching your choice and see how the dialogue changes.

2. There is a dispute about the importance of faith: “Salvation comes from faith alone.” [St. Paul to the Galatians 2:16] and “By my actions I will show you my faith.” [St. James 2:18] Biblical scholars, however, say that these are complementary rather than competing visions. Read further into Galatians [6:1-9] to find, “One must bear the burdens of all...”

Create a dialogue for these 2 views, again following the “Listen, Reflect, Respond” model. Substitute “observance” for “faith” in the two quotes to place the dispute within similar Jewish concerns. Read the passage from Isaiah [58:6] “This is the fast I desire. To unlock the fetters of wickedness and untie the cords of the yoke to let the oppressed go free; to break off every yoke” recited on Yom Kippur.

3. Pascal's wager. “If I believe and there is a God, I will receive an infinite reward, but I don't believe there is an infinite loss and damnation. Nothing is lost with faith if there is no God nor is anything lost by not having faith.” Try the Jewish version as captured by St. James, who, like his brother, Rabbi Jesus, was an observant Jew. [Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z]”I has a commentary on this.

[see [https://patentlyjewish.com/free-will-to-believe-in-g\\_d-atheists-revenge/](https://patentlyjewish.com/free-will-to-believe-in-g_d-atheists-revenge/)]

# The Imperative of Multifaith Activities

## Active Learning

### Exercises and Scenarios (Cont.)

	There is a God!	Oops, not
I lived my life based on “v'ahavta y'rekha komokha – love your neighbor as yourself.”		
I lived my life based on “What's in it for me?”		

4. No discussion of pluralism/multifaith work in Judaism is complete without reference to Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z”l, Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth. His text, *The Dignity of Difference*, is essential reading in appreciating the importance of a pluralistic religious community. His appearance at Princeton University is on video. <https://jmp.princeton.edu/events/religious-faith-intellectual-life-and-human-good>. Rabbi Sacks wrote, “All religious traditions require an amendment, “We are not in sole possession of the truth.” In Islam, there is the concept of ta'aruf, which means **getting to know** “the other.” This takes us back to Emanuel Levinas who's concept of l'autre - a refusal to consider another person, “the other.” As with the prior exercises, discuss among **yourselves first and then** bring in a Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist, secular humanist scholar to continue the discussion.

### Answers

For all three: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” – תאהב את רעך כמוך (t’ahava et rayekha kamokha)] Rabbi Akiva says: This is the great principle of the Torah (*Sifra, Kedoshim*, 4:12).

**A1.** Rabbi Jesus said “You shall love God.... and your neighbor as yourself” [Matthew 22:37-40] captured the Jewish tradition that he lived, [36 times in the Torah] and was set as the foundation for Islam by the **Prophet Muhammed** [Aal ‘Imran 3:64]

**A2.** These are the same or run parallel in the non-Abrahamic faiths. For example, Confucius (circa 600 BCE) said, “Do not do what is hateful to you to your neighbor” about 560 years before Rabbi Hillel the Elder in 40 BCE.

**A3.** This includes those who separate the origins of the command from its theological origins as per Immanuel Kant’s Categorical Imperative of Natural Law. Baruch Spinoza said, The He/ She/ It/ What? We call “God” **obligates** us [we have no choice] to obey the laws of nature and **commands** us [we make that choice] to love our neighbor as ourselves.”

# The Imperative of Multifaith Activities

## Active Learning

### Answers (Cont.)

An answer to Scenario 3. There are others!

	There is a God	Oops, not
I lived my life based on “Ve’ahavta le’reyakha kamokha – love your neighbor as yourself.”	“The gates of heaven are open to the righteous of nations” and “You have left a meaningful legacy.”	Sorry about that; no heaven but you still have the legacy.
I lived my life based on “what's in it for me?”	No heaven; no legacy.	...and a wasted life.

### Resources/Source Material

The basics: The Tanakh (“Old” Testament), The Gospels and writings (“New” Testament) and the Qur’an (“Newest” Testament) for Abrahamic traditions.

Alan Brill. (2010) *Judaism and Other Religions; Models of Understanding*. He is a Professor of Religion at Seton Hall University [<https://www.shu.edu/profiles/alanbrill.cfm> ] Comparative religion continues to be curricular requirement of church-affiliated colleges and universities.

Diana Eck of the Harvard Divinity School published *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* in 1993 and revised it in 2003 (Beacon Press). It is a remarkably sensitive look at how different people and communities approach the divine. Here is a review <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/view/838/encountering-god>.

Karen Armstrong seems to be a dozen people writing under a single name. She is a former nun on the faculty of the Leo Baeck Rabbinical College of the English Reform movement. Wikipedia gives a listing of her writings all of which emphasize the commonality of compassion in religious traditions. *History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (2006) is readily available. She now calls herself a “freelance monotheist.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen\\_Armstrong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_Armstrong)

Mualla Selçuk, is a professor at the Divinity School of Ankara University in Turkey. “Religious Education in a Diverse Society: Ta’aruf and Co-Existence” is a Moslem call for understanding across theological dividing lines. See <https://litigator/en/religious-education-in-a-diverse-society-taaruf-and-co-existence/>

## The Imperative of Multifaith Activities

# Active Learning

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### Resources/Source Material (cont.)

Jonathan Sacks z"l [ was one of the greatest of contemporary scholars of Modern Orthodox Jewish tradition. Have you been invited to do a *d'var* Torah on a parsha? Never done one before? Rabbi Sacks online will provide 3 to 5 different *divrei* for any Parsha in the Torah. Be sure to give credit! See his 2001 book, *The Dignity of Difference*. "We must do more than search for values common to all faiths; we must also reframe the way we see our differences."

A compelling document for Christians trying to make sense of their Jewish origins is John Gager's *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford University Press, 2002). He is Princeton University's Danforth Professor of Religion, Emeritus. Christianity's "Replacement/ Rejection" theology, he writes, was never true to St. Paul's teaching. Rather, faith was the gentile's way to join in the Jewish path to righteousness and salvation. RambaN. Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman of the 13th century, espoused a similar view in his famous Disputation at Aragon.

**“ You shall not mistreat/toneh a stranger for you were strangers . . . ”**

*Exod 22:21*

# The Imperative of Multifaith Activities

## Lesson Plan


### Introduction ( 10 minutes)

The **Goal** for this presentation is to develop an appreciation for ways in which differences and similarities in religious traditions can be bring people together rather than divide them.

The **Objectives:** On completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- **Recognize** Jewish traditions that insist on respect for everyone
- **Demonstrate** ways to state differences, again, with respect
- **Discuss** applications of “giving face to the Other,” from Emmanuel Levinas

### Presentation

	<p>The righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come. (Sanhedrin 105a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the gate of the Lord. The just will enter it. (Psalm 118: 20)</li> <li>• Act against those transgress against justice.... if a person is patient and forgives, this is one of the greatest things. (Surah 42:42-43)</li> <li>• Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr)</li> </ul>
<p><i>Marc Chagall. Between heaven and earth</i></p>	

An unfortunate common image of religion, however defined, is that it is divisive, working to keep people apart. Every tradition is “chosen,” each in its own way, allowing for diversity, what Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (z’l) called “The Dignity of Difference.” Sets of beliefs that are held in common are built on a foundation of *v’ahavta yire’acha kamocho*, You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18), described by Rabbi Akiva as the “Great principle of the Torah.”

- “He who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.(John 4:20)
- “Humanity is but a single brotherhood, so make peace with your brother. (Quran 49:10)

### Three statements of uniqueness from Abrahamic scripture are described:

For Judaism: The concept of “Chosenness” means

- a unique obligation, a responsibility to heal the world. The story of Balaam gives an outsider's view of “Chosenness.” (See Numbers 22 to 24.)

For Christianity: the Gospel of John 3:16.

- “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.”

For Islam: The totality of faith with five obligations of which the first,

- a Profession of Faith (shahada) is primary. “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God” is central to Islam.
- The four others are prayer (salat), alms (zakat), fasting (sawm), and if possible, pilgrimage (hajj).

About Emanuel Levinas. He was a French Jewish philosopher who went through harrowing experiences surviving the *Shoah* and developed his philosophy from this experience. “The encounter of the Other through the face reveals a certain poverty which forbids a reduction to Sameness and, simultaneously, installs a responsibility for the Other in the Self.” Underlying this is a stripping away of all presentations or assumptions about others with an openness to truly listen and see them.

### Exercise (20 minutes)

*Be sure to give a warning for “curriculum violence” as the faith of participants and their families may not be apparent.*

Apply the distinctions between “Chosenness” and of “Otherness” for the tradition for which the session is held.

Hold a 20-minute discussion with a single question, “How can we hold to our distinctions and at the same time recognize the face of the Other?” The first 10 minutes are in hevruta of 2 to 4 persons. The second 10-minutes are for discussion with the group as a whole.

# The Imperative of Multifaith Activities

## Lesson Plan

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Basic readings have been cited in the Active Learning section under Resources/Source Material. Ask participants to read passages of their choosing from the Torah, Prophets, Gospels and Qur'an. Afterwards, the group creates a narrative in which the essential message specific to the particular faith can be maintained without interfering with the essential respect for those of other faith traditions or none. This can be done in small groups of 3 or 4 or as an entirety if the group is small.

Judaism: How might Jews understand visions of "Chosenness?"

- Rabbi Jill Jacobs distinguishes between Chosenness and Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan's "distinctiveness." An in-depth review from sources is provided by Rabbi Gilbert Rosenthal of the Conservative movement. His title "Some are chosen, all are loved" is a fair description of Orthodox and Haredi Judaism as well.
- From the Sage Rava, in the Talmud, the gates of heaven are open to the righteous of all nations. (BT Shabbat 31a)

Christianity: How do Christians view salvation?

- "Salvation comes through faith alone," says St. Paul in his Letter to the Galatians (2:15) By the end of his Letter, however, one finds the path to salvation is also for righteousness, a theme of the Second Vatican Council of 1962 to 1965. As it states, "The Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews."

Islam: How might Muslims view those of other faiths?

- In the Qur'an, there is a demand for a complete faith, which has been used to condemn those less faithful, e.g., those of other faiths or who maintain no faith.
- However, going to the words of the Prophet Muhammed, "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). (Surah al-Hujurat 49: 13)

Gather at the end of the discussion to summarize elements of the objectives: to show respect for all, to appreciate differences and to "give face to the Other."

### Resources

There are three objectives, **Recognize** foundations of adherence, **Demonstrate** ways to state differences, and **Discuss** "giving face to the Other."

- "Love your neighbor in different religious traditions" is available at <https://www.maryspence.org/stories/love-your-neighbor-a-common-theme-in-major-religions/>.
- Rabbi Gilbert S. Rosenthal. Some are chosen, all are loved. Available at [https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research\\_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/rosenthal.htm](https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/rosenthal.htm)
- Rabbi Jill Jacobs. Chosenness. Available at <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/traditional-views-of-jewish-chosenness/>
- Kael Moffat. The Other and Otherness: An Intro to Emmanuel Levinas. Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaPNYQ\\_qdII](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaPNYQ_qdII)
- Vatican Council Summary at Wikipedia. Available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_Vatican\\_Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Vatican_Council)
- Munif Nordin, Nor Fariza Mohd. "Promoting Interreligious understanding through the Holy Quran." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2014; 155: 181-188. Give an element from a tradition different from your own with which you disagree Explain why to a person who holds to that belief.

# The Imperative of Multifaith Activities

## Lesson Plan

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### Evaluation

How have you or would you apply the Levinas concept of “giving face to the Other?”

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**“ You shall not afflict any widow or orphan . . . ”**

*Exod 22:22*

**“ You know the soul of the stranger,  
for you were strangers . . . ”**

*Exod 23:2*



# 3. The Imperative of Sustainability

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*See my works, how fine they are...Think upon this and do not corrupt and destroy my world, for if you destroy it, there is no one to restore it after you. (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:28)*

*[S]hould you ask, 'What are we to eat in the seventh year, if we may neither sow nor gather in our crops?' God responds, 'I will ordain my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it shall yield a crop sufficient for three years.' (Leviticus 25:20-21)*

## Dimensions of the Problem

The weight of it all is overwhelming. Sea levels are rising, jeopardizing coastal regions, while weather patterns are changing, threatening our homes, health, and food supply.

### Local Issues

How is climate change impacting New Jersey? New Jersey's climate is changing. During the last century, New Jersey has experienced rising temperatures, increased rainfall, more frequent extreme weather events, and rising sea levels.

### What is Being Done Locally

- New Jersey has established an aggressive and necessary goal, calling for an 80% emissions reduction by 2050 (from the 2006 baseline).
- To meet the 2050 goal, the state will focus on reducing its carbon pollution, expanding its clean energy infrastructure, and building resilient communities.
- Similarly, the Princeton Climate Action Plan (CAP) is a community plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and become more climate resilient.

## Relevant Elements of Jewish Law (Halacha)

- Baal Tashchit (Deuteronomy 20:19-20) prohibits destruction of food-producing trees in times of war.
- The Sh'mita of the 7th year and Jubilee of the 50th year. These are required to protect agricultural over-production from despoiling the land. They also deny collection of debt to undo the social inequality that follows an unrestricted free market economy.
- The Shalom Center (<https://theshalomcenter.org>) provides excellent environmental guidance with an appreciation for Jewish tradition.

# The Imperative of Sustainability



## Things to Do

- **Energy:** Our homes are our refuge for warmth and safety, but they are also one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. By working to increase energy efficiency in our homes and buildings, we can lower both our footprint and our monthly utility bills. Use LED bulbs and ENERGY STAR appliances, weatherize your home, or perform a building energy audit. Consider also if you have the option to bring in solar and other renewable energy.
- **Transportation:** There are many options to get around town in style while reducing your carbon footprint. Take steps to end vehicle idling and maximize opportunities to bike, walk or ride public transit. Consider making the switch to an electric vehicle (EVs), bike, or scooter. Help increase the availability of public chargers, by working with TJC and other buildings.
- **Lawn:** Our lawns can be part of the solution, by capturing and storing greenhouse gas emissions and serving as critical eco-system connectors for birds and wildlife. So, plant more trees, install rain barrels, bring in more native plants, and convert a portion of the lawn to a flowering meadow.
- **Consumption:** What we buy matters. Recycling and composting are important, but the majority of carbon emissions are generated before we even purchase an item. Make events low-waste, refuse costly single-use disposables, shop used items, and give the gift of experiences. Work with TJC and other buildings to establish a green purchasing policy.
- **Waste & Consumption:** We're getting buried in trash. The average household in New Jersey generates over 4,500 pounds of waste per year — yikes! Take steps to consume less, and then look for avenues to recycle the right way or compost your waste.
- **Check Sustainable Princeton's website** for ideas on how you can take action. Anyone can start at [www.sustainableprinceton.org/take-action/](http://www.sustainableprinceton.org/take-action/), while student-centered advice is also available at [www.sustainableprinceton.org/students/](http://www.sustainableprinceton.org/students/).
- **Get the facts about climate change.** Check out [www.climatecentral.org](http://www.climatecentral.org) to research worldwide trends in weather and climate or visit [climate.rutgers.edu/stateclim\\_v1/nclimdiv/](http://climate.rutgers.edu/stateclim_v1/nclimdiv/) to see historical weather data for New Jersey.

Contributed by Jenny Ludmer and Alexandra Bar-Cohen

# The Imperative of Sustainability

## Active Learning

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*“YHVH, Elohim, took the human and set him in Gan Eden, to work it and watch it.” [Gen 2:15]*

### Questions

- Q1. How many degrees [F] has the earth's temperature risen in the past 50 years?
- Q2. What is electrification and how does that help us lower our greenhouse gas emissions?
- Q3. What transportation choices can you make to best reduce your climate impact?
- Q4. Is recycling the best way to be sustainable?

### Scenarios

1. List all the ways you can diminish your fossil fuel use. Spend a week doing what you can to reduce that use. Keep an hourly log recording success and what you could do better. Even better, do it with friends and compare your results.
2. What action could you take permanently? Maybe you could switch to an electric car or bike, insulate your house, or go vegetarian. Pick one and perform a cost-benefit analysis.
3. Do an assessment of fossil fuel use by one institution of which you are a member. For example, the Jewish Center or your school may have already completed a Building Energy Audit. Consider areas where energy can be saved and suggest improvements to the organization. And, tackle the biggest problem of all; engaging those in the employ of the fossil fuel industry with little or no alternative way to earn a living wage for self and family. Tony Horwitz in his *Spying on the South [2019]* followed in Frederick Law Olmstead's footsteps during his three trips through the South in the 1850. [pages 39-61] Olmstead was observing the divide over slavery for the New York Times. As part of his trip, Horwitz rode a barge, one of 15 with a total load of 150 tons of coal along the Ohio River. The coal was for electric generating stations from Wheeling to Huntington West Virginia. He traveled with a male crew except for a woman cook. They earned between \$40,000 and 50,000 a year for working 3 weeks a month on the boats. This is a setting similarly replicated in every fossil fuel workplace across the nation. The question is, **“What do you have to offer these men and women and their families to replace these living wages?”**
4. Imagine a discussion between a college-educated professional with one of the fossil fuel workers. Would an educational effort on the dangers of fossil fuel be effective? It would not! The essential element in presenting the importance of a sustainability economy is showing how it will provide a better likelihood and quality of life than one based on fossil fuel. The models for this could be debate, one on one conversations and role plays. Of these, living the role of the coal barge employees, their spouse or children will carry the message of inclusion most effectively. Go to the following URL from the National Resource Defense Council that provides some answers to why sustainability provides a better future for the workers as well as the management and investors.  
<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/lara-ettenson/us-clean-energy-jobs-surpass-fossil-fuel-employment>.

What has been missing is an immediacy suggesting that the changes must be in place before making the argument. Working men and women must see the opportunity for advancement and not just receive a promise. Please consider that as educated professionals and similarly educated persons there is an interchange of talents that provide an economic mobility. This is not available to less educated workers in parts of the country where industry has evaporated/ disappeared/ globalized/ or driven away by technology.

# The Imperative of Sustainability

## Active Learning

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### Answers

A1. The Earth's temperature has risen 2.9°F since 1970, the year of the Earth Day.

A2. Electrification is the process of switching the power source of items from fossil fuels to electricity. For example, switching from a traditional gas-powered lawn mower to a battery-powered model is a form of electrification. Even though fossil fuels still provide some of the electrical power we consume, New Jersey is rapidly cleaning the electrical grid and adding new renewable energy sources.

A3. There are many options to get around town in style while reducing your carbon footprint. Walk, bike, or ride a scooter. Carpool to activities, take public transportation, or switch to an electric vehicle. When you are in a gas-powered vehicle, stop idling. All these activities lower your footprint and save you the most money, too. Pedal-assist electric bikes are amazing for old folks and young ones too!

A4. Recycling and composting are important, but most greenhouse gas emissions are generated before we even purchase an item. Remember the three Rs: "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" and consider refusing single-use items, shopping used, making events low-waste, giving experience gifts, and repairing items rather than replacing.

### Resources

#### Two classics are:

- Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There* from 1949. Leopold was a classic exponent of the natural environment. His writing is lyrical.

- Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* from 1962. Carson, was prophet whose warnings of impending doom were similar to the Biblical prophet Jonah's to the Ninevites. They listened, repented, and were saved by a recanting of their ways. Will we do the same?

#### Contemporary concerns are shown in:

1. "Benefits of Renewable Energy Use" from the Union of Concerned Scientists [2017] This overview tells us the advantages to be had economically as well as environmentally from an economy of sustainability <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/benefits-renewable-energy-use>
2. National Resource Defense Council. "U.S. Clean Energy Jobs Surpass Fossil Fuel Employment" at <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/lara-ettenson/us-clean-energy-jobs-surpass-fossil-fuel-employment>
3. Sustainable Princeton's website provides ideas on how you can take action. These are at [www.sustainableprinceton.org/take-action/](http://www.sustainableprinceton.org/take-action/)
4. Student-centered advice is also available at [www.sustainableprinceton.org/students/](http://www.sustainableprinceton.org/students/).
5. Check out [www.climatecentral.org](http://www.climatecentral.org) for research worldwide trends in weather and climate or visit [climate.rutgers.edu/stateclim\\_v1/nclimdiv/](http://climate.rutgers.edu/stateclim_v1/nclimdiv/) to see historical weather data for New Jersey.
6. Read excerpts from the response of Chief Sealth, Suquamish and Duwamish chief, in the Seattle area to an offer from the United States to buy the tribe's land, circa 1857. [www.https://www.childrenoftheearth.org/chief\\_seattle.html](http://www.https://www.childrenoftheearth.org/chief_seattle.html)

# The Imperative of Sustainability

## Active Learning

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### Resources (Cont.)

Read the response from Chief Sealth, of the Seattle Native tribe to an offer from the United States to buy the tribe's land, circa 1857. <[www:https://www.childrenoftheearth.org/chief\\_seattle.htm](http://www.childrenoftheearth.org/chief_seattle.htm)>

"How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?"

"Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, and every humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man. So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us..."

"So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to accept, I will rank one condition: The white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers..."

"What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected..."

"You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground they spit upon themselves..."

"This we know. The earth does not belong to man. man belongs to the earth."

"This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family, All things are connected..."

"Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

"If we agree, it will be to secure the reservation you have promised. There, perhaps, we may live out our brief days as we wish. When the last red man has vanished from the earth, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, these shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people. For they love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So, if we sell our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it as we have cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it. And preserve it for your children..."

# The Imperative of Sustainability

## Lesson Plan

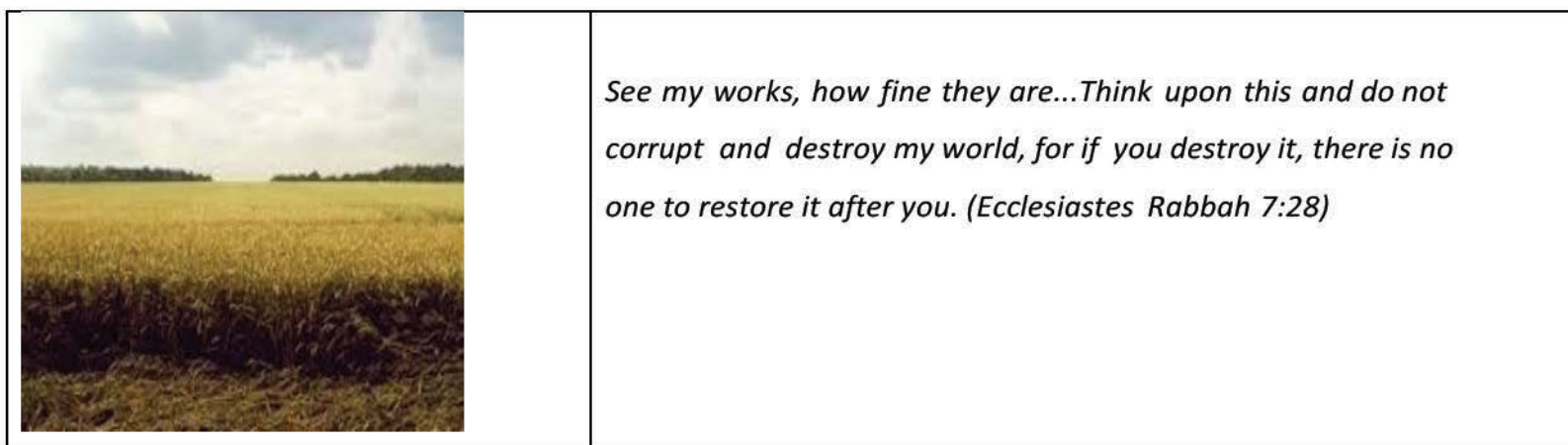
**The Goal:** To develop an appreciation for the importance of sustainability, first a sensibility then action to ensure continued flourishing of the land, clean air to breathe and water to drink. Without these, an accumulation of what is considered wealth is a shallow accomplishment.

**The Objectives:** On completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Identify what makes sustainability a necessity.
- Present the potential for sustainability in everyday life.
- Illustrate ways that employment in climate polluting industries can be replaced with work in climate-friendly ones.

**Introduction: [20 minutes]**

Figure 1. An edict from the Torah

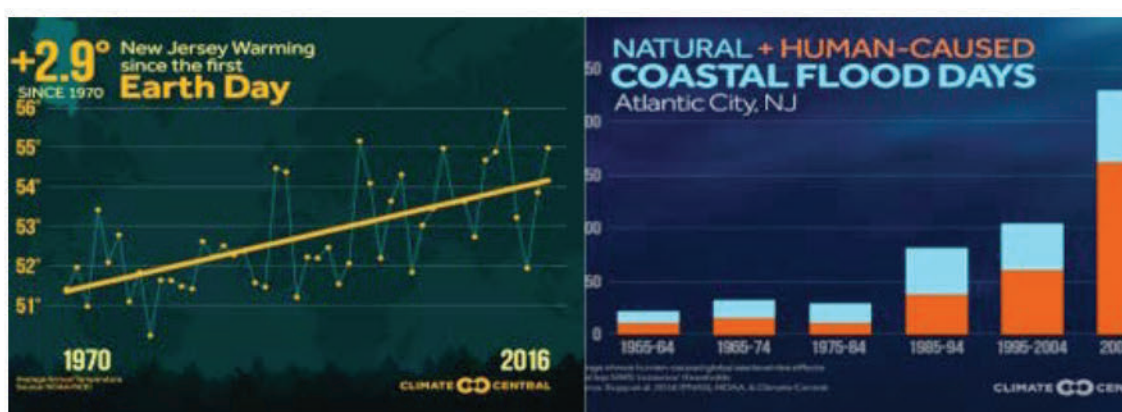


*“Should you ask, ‘What are we to eat in the seventh year, if we may neither sow nor gather in our crops?’ YHVH responds, ‘I will ordain my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it shall yield a crop sufficient for three years.’” (Leviticus 25:20-21)*

Climate change dangers are overwhelming.

- Sea levels are rising, jeopardizing coastal regions,
- Weather patterns are changing, threatening our homes, health, and food supply.
- At first this was called “global warming,” as a consistent pattern over the entire world.
- Better term is “climate change.” It describes the disruption of cycles of weather and the effect on agriculture, food supplies and everyday life.
- The resulting changes in food supply have decreased the availability of nutritious food. The affluent may grumble about this and make changes in their diet. The poor will be ill-nourished and at times, starve. [See TJC module #8, Confronting Food Insecurity.]
- About 24,662,000 people, or 8.6% of the total U.S. population, live in census block groups that border the open ocean coast.
- The figure below shows climate change effects on flooding, from both changes in weather patterns and elevations in sea level

Figure 2. Effects of climate change in New Jersey over a 50-year period



*Those who have been to the Jersey shore after Super Storm Sandy have seen the ways that beaches were wiped out. Those who walk, run, or bike on the Delaware and Raritan Canal path have seen the devastation of the sequential hurricanes of 2021, Henri and Ida.*

# The Imperative of Sustainability

## Lesson Plan

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- Other parts of the world are subject to far greater consequences, the low-lying country of Bangladesh for example [see <https://www.concernusa.org/story/bangladesh-underwater-humanitarian-crisis/>] and the soon to be covered island nation of Vanuatu.

### What is being done

Beginning with personal efforts:

- TJC Imperatives module #3, Sustainability, provides a list abbreviated here.
- Energy: Use LED bulbs and ENERGY STAR appliances, weatherize your home, or perform a building energy audit.
- Transportation: Take steps to end vehicle idling and maximize opportunities to bike, walk, or ride public transit.
- Lawn: Plant more trees and native plants, install rain barrels, and convert a portion of the lawn to a flowering meadow.
- Consumption: Make events low-waste, refuse costly single-use disposables, shop for used items, and give the gift of experiences.
- Consumption & Waste: Consume less, and then look for avenues to recycle the right way or compost your waste.

Considering employment, it is necessary to address the needs of those doing the actual work in fossil fuel industries. Educated professionals will use their skills elsewhere, and investors will move their investments.

- Other employment options are not easily available for those who work in the mine, fields, barges, or pipelines.
- The long-range advantages of “green” energy have been shown; however, salaries and benefits provided for labor are, at present, substantially less. Providing opportunity and a sense of self-worth for those who work in sustainability industries is required.

### **Exercise [20 minutes]**

*Be sure to give a warning for “curriculum violence” as participants may themselves be engaged in activities that counter the principles of sustainability.*

In advance, two participants will prepare for a discussion/debate on the challenge of climate change. The issue here is not that there is disagreement. Rather it is how that disagreement is expressed.

One of the discussants is a professor of literature at a university and the other is an on-site manager on a gas pipeline. Each will have 3 minutes to present the dangers of climate change (the professor) and the necessity of the work (the manager) to support a family. Each will take 2 extra minutes to respond to the other’s concerns. The remaining 10 minutes will be used to construct possible responses to the issues of employment with both income and dignity. What should be done? What can be done immediately? ....in a year? .... In 5 years? Provide some answers as to why sustainability provides a better future for the workers as well as for management and investors.

Each group will present their conclusions. The three students assigned to be challengers will assess how well the groups did in fulfilling the three objectives: Identify, present, and illustrate ways to achieve a more sustainable environment.

# The Imperative of Sustainability

## Lesson Plan

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### Evaluation

Identify what makes sustainability a necessity.

Give three consequences of failure of sustainability

1) \_\_\_\_\_, 2) \_\_\_\_\_, 3) \_\_\_\_\_

Give a personal experience with one of these

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Present one potential for sustainability drawn from personal experience. \_\_\_\_\_

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Illustrate a change where sustainability is achieved while employment opportunities are enhanced

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# The Imperative of Sustainability

## Lesson Plan

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### Resources

- A substantial commentary on sustainability is available at <<https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-renewable-energy-jobs-can-uptift-fossil-fuel-communities-and-remake-climate-politics/>>
- For coastal flooding see <[http://asfpm-library.s3.amazonaws.com/General/JCR Est US Pop 100y CFHA 2010.pdf](http://asfpm-library.s3.amazonaws.com/General/JCR_Est_US_Pop_100y_CFHA_2010.pdf)>
- Danger to islands is available at <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/may/16/one-day-disappear-tuvalu-sinking-islands-rising-seas-climate-change>>
- "Benefits of Renewable Energy Use" from the Union of Concerned Scientists [2017]. Available at <<https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/benefits-renewable-energy-use>>
- National Resource Defense Council. " U. S. Clean Energy Jobs Surpass Fossil Fuel Employment" Available at <<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/lara-ettenson/us-clean-energy-jobs-surpass-fossil-fuel-employment>>

**“ And you shall not oppress/tilchatz a stranger,  
for you were strangers. . . ”**

*Exod 23:9*

**“ Love your neighbor and the stranger,  
for you were strangers. . . ”**

*Lev 19:9*

**“ You shall leave them [the gleanings]  
for the poor and the stranger . . . ”**

*Lev 19:10*

**“ You shall not oppress your neighbor/fellow . . . ”**

*Lev 19:13*

## 4. The Imperative of Gun Control

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*"[Of] the dangers inherent in improperly stored and handled firearms? We are taught, 'When you build a new house, you shall make a guard rail for your roof, so that you shall not cause blood [to be spilled] in your house, that the one who falls should fall from it [the roof]'*

(Deuteronomy 22:8), "What Does Judaism Say About Gun Control?" on Chabad.org.

### Dimensions of the Problem

The United States Constitution guarantees the states the right to have "a well-regulated militia." As read broadly by the Supreme Court, this gives private citizens a "right to bear arms [that] shall not be infringed." There are, however, many unresolved concerns:

- How much governmental supervision shall be permitted has varied over the years.
- The current policy from the Supreme Court case of *District of Columbia v. Heller* gives permission to but does not mandate how the states should regulate purchase and ownership.
- Restrictions can be made to protect citizens from one another.
- The right to self-defense is protected; however, in some states the right of pursuit has been permitted outside of law enforcement.
- Examples of racism here are abundant; remember Trayvon Martin, Ahmaud Arbery and many others.
- Some states maintain strict rules for gun use. New Jersey does; others do not.
- Every regulation imposed will be challenged by the National Rifle Association (NRA).

### Local

Because gun regulation is the purview of the states, gun violence in New Jersey is affected by the relatively free purchase of weapons in the neighboring Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

- Gun possession for use in crime, gang violence, and terrorism are affected by the state-by-state rules for regulation.
- Guns for the 2019 shootings in a Jersey City kosher supermarket were from Virginia.

## The Imperative of Gun Control

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### Local (Con't)

**New Jersey has some of the toughest laws regulating gun ownership in the nation:**

- No assault (military) weapons may be sold.
- No one can purchase a “bump stock,” which is a mechanism for converting a single shot rifle into a rapid fire “machine” gun.
- Court orders will remove gun purchase rights from individuals against whom an order of protection has been placed.
- Pending regulations include mandating safe storage and fingerprint controls on guns.

The data on the effects of these laws affecting gun control and violence, however, do not show effectiveness. This is because of the many loopholes in the law, as noted above.

**Here are five steps to take:**

- Ban sale of weapons of war.
- Stop the flow of guns.
- Strengthen background checks.
- Regulate sale and ownership of guns as we do for automobiles and trucks.
- Protect children! Separate weapons and ammunition with fingerprint controls.

*“One should not sell [criminals] either weapons or accessories of weapons, nor should one grind any weapon for them, nor may one sell them either stocks or neck-chains or ropes, or iron chains.”*

[Talmud, Avodah Zarah 15b]

### To Do List

- Be politically smart. Use language that shows respect for legitimate gun use
- Help hunters, marksmen and others to restore the NRA to its original purpose as the protectors of the environment. See “Outside Online.”
- Support legislators who promote gun safety and are targeted by the NRA. Find your legislator in NJ at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/members/legsearch.asp>.
- Support the Coalition for Peace Action in Princeton, Everytown for Gun Safety, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense, and The Brady Campaign.
- Email [SpareAMinuteADay@gmail.com](mailto:SpareAMinuteADay@gmail.com) for periodic suggestions of things you can do.
- Join with other TJC congregants to promote gun safety.

**Contributed by Sally Steinberg-Brent**

# The Imperative of Gun Control

## Active Learning

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### Questions

- Q1. Where does the United States rank for number of deaths per capita from gun violence in comparison to other industrial democracies?
- Q2. How many of these gun deaths in the United States are a) a result of homicide? b) are a result of suicide? c) are of children?
- Q3. How many guns are there in the United States compared to the population?
- Q4. Can gun manufacturers be prosecuted (for criminal acts) or sued (for civil violations) for actions occurring with gun use?

See below for answers

### Exercises and Scenarios

*Keep the possibility of curriculum bias in mind. Some or many engaged with these scenarios and activities may have had family, friends, or themselves caught up in the circumstances described.*

1. Invite a hunter with some executive or legislative responsibility from a district or community where many hunters live, or a representative of a hunters' group to present to the group. Questions to be asked include:

- \* What do you appreciate about hunting?
- \* How do hunters advocate for conservation policies?
- \* What role can hunters play in establishing effective gun control?
- \* What limits would a hunter place on the size of the weapon and actions (e.g., single shot versus multiple shot)?

With permission, record and post the session; the group will formulate a plan to join with hunters as advocates

2. With respect to preventing suicide and child safety, develop strategies to protect vulnerable children and adults from the danger inherent in gun availability and presence. Assign pairs to research current methods broadly used or worthy developing. Follow up with a poster on gun safety.

3. There have been several occurrences of mass shootings and many others where individuals have been targeted. Some young people are so angry that they are willing to injure and kill others and in the mass shootings be killed themselves. How can we make children feel safe? Think of ways to recognize when students become alienated. Police presence in school is a difficult topic. Having police in school is seen by many students, faculty, and staff as creating a prison rather than an educational atmosphere. One must also consider racial biases that make Black students feel less, rather than more secure. Assign two participants responsibility to debate whether police should be in schools and if so, what form should their presence take? Have the discussants flip a coin to determine whether they support or oppose a police presence. Address questions including, if there is a police officer present, should the officer wear a uniform, a badge or an ID listing his or her position without badge or uniform?

# The Imperative of Gun Control

## Active Learning

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### Answers

A1. In 2020, nearly 20,000 Americans lost their lives to guns, the highest toll in more than two decades, and the trend looks likely to continue through 2021.

A2. The United States ranks “number one in firearms per capita. The United States has almost 4,000 children deaths by fire arms a year, which is the highest homicide-by-firearm rate of the world’s among developed nations.”

A3. “ In 2017, 109 people died from gun violence every day; there were 39,773 deaths in total with a) 14,542 by homicide, b) 23,854 by suicide, and c) in 2016 there were 3,473 deaths of children by firearms.” [see <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-gun-policy-global-comparisons>]

A4. Currently, “The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act” shields the gun industry from nearly all civil liability for the dangers their products pose. Progress was being made with constant pressure on legislators to protect victims of gun violence; however, “in 2005, after intense lobbying from the gun industry, Congress enacted and President Bush signed a law that gives gun manufacturers and sellers unprecedented nationwide immunity from lawsuits. “ [See <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/other-laws-policies/gun-industry-immunity>]

### Resources

An Overview is provided by the Giffords Law Center. “Changing Policies & Challenging Injustice,” <https://lawcenter.giffords.org>. The Center was founded by former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and her husband Captain, now Senator, Marc Kelley after her attempted assassination.

### Experiences

- Madison Armstrong and Jennifer Carlson, *Speaking of Trauma: the Race Talk, the Gun Violence Talk, and the Racialization of Gun Trauma*. Palgrave Communications. 2019, vol. 5, issue 1-11. The authors “detail `the Race Talk” (in relation to the Trayvon Martin case) and “the Gun Violence Talk” (in relation to the Parkland case), which differentially construct children’s vulnerability, the social phenomena that render them vulnerable, and the appropriate solutions for addressing that vulnerability.
- The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: “Gun Violence and Youth.” This US government publication gives a chilling account of the impact of violence on youth with special attention to suicide among Native Americans.
- Teens Against Gun Violence: *True stories of gun violence*. Three adolescents give testimony. Two experienced violence in their own lives. The third writes of how the fear of others has affected her. The essays conclude, “We all believe in the right of sportsmen, hunters and law-abiding citizens to own firearms. We just want our legislators to pass legislation that will help eradicate gun violence by those who do not respect our laws.” [Available at <https://www.cwla.org/the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-children-families-communities/>]
- Hilton Als. “My Mother’s Dreams for Her Son, and All Black Children”. June 21, 2020. Mr. Als is the drama critic for the New Yorker; he writes of the African American experiences in the aftermath about the murder of Breonna Taylor and many others and before the murder of George Floyd.
- “Children and guns, a hearing before Congress.” [Available at [https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ Digitization/149879NCJRS.pdf](https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/149879NCJRS.pdf)]

# The Imperative of Gun Control

## Lesson Plan

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The **Goal** of the session is to address the consequences of failure to balance standards for purchase of weapons with the Constitutional right to bear arms.

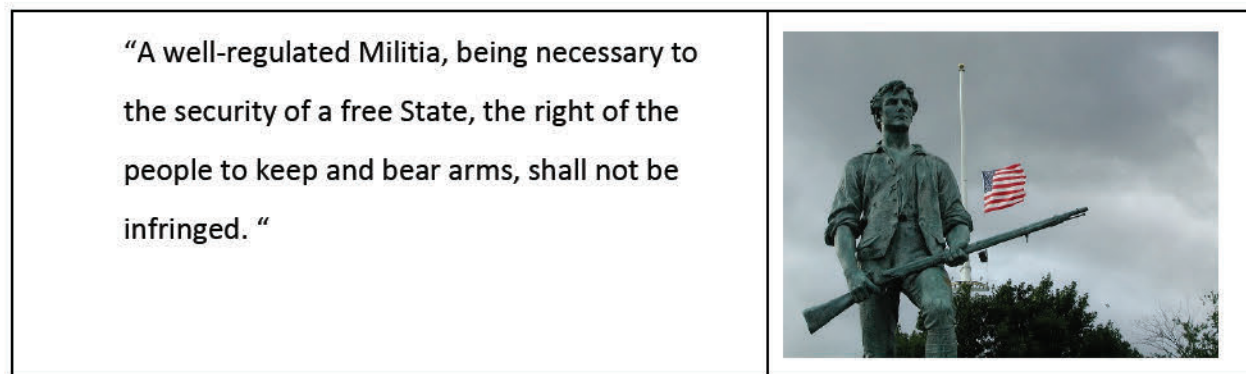
The **Objectives**: On completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- **Restate** the Second Amendment
- **Demonstrate** knowledge of lives lost to gun violence.
- **Identify** responses to illicit gun use, harm to children, and suicide.

**Introduction: [20 minutes]**

The United States Constitution's Second Amendment guarantee of the right to bear arm requires explanation.

Figure 1. The Second Amendment to the Constitution:



*As read broadly by the Supreme Court, the law must balance “a well-regulated militia” with the rights of private citizens to protect themselves.*

Many concerns are left unresolved in making that balance--how these rights for individuals to bear arms affect the citizenry as a whole.

The right to bear arms Levels of governmental supervision permitted has varied over time.

- Current policy is based on District of Columbia vs. Heller. It gives the states permission to regulate ownership, but it does not specify how it should be done.
- While restrictions can be made to protect citizens from one another, this too varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.
- Some states, such as New Jersey, maintain strict rules for gun use. Others do not.
- Regulations imposed have been challenged by the National Rifle Association (NRA).
- In some states, a “right of pursuit” has been permitted outside of law enforcement. This is often used as defense for violent responses in conflict.
- With “Right of pursuit” and “Stand your ground” laws in effect, violence is inevitable and unpunished.
- Trayvon Martin was murdered by George Zimmerman for no other reason than being a young Black man walking through an essentially all White suburban development. Zimmerman was charged with manslaughter but not convicted.
- Only with video documentation was it possible to convict the perpetrators of the murderers of Ahmaud Arbery.

# The Imperative of Gun Control

## Lesson Plan

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### Lives lost

At present, about 20,000 people a year in the United States die because of gun violence. As described by the Council on Foreign Relations,

- "We rank "number one in firearms per capita. The United States has almost 4,000 children's deaths by fire arms a year, which is the highest homicide-by-firearm rate of the world among developed nations."
- "In 2017, 109 people died from gun violence every day; there were 39,773 deaths in total with 14,542 by homicide, 23,854 by suicide, and, in 2016, there were 3,473 deaths of children by firearms."

### Actions to prevent gun violence

An underlying obstruction to achieving balance for the Second Amendment requirements was the take-over of the National Rifle Association, originally a support group for hunters and marksman, by a highly charged political movement. This was fed by an overt politicization of gun ownership. Therefore, it is necessary to:

- Support legislators who promote gun safety.
- Help hunters, marksmen and others restore the NRA to its original purpose as protectors of the environment.
- Support the Coalition for Peace Action in Princeton, Everytown for Gun Safety, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense, The Brady Campaign and similar organizations.

Of note, New Jersey has some of the toughest laws regulating gun ownership in the nation:

- No assault (military} weapons may be sold.
- No one can purchase a "bump stock," which is a mechanism for converting a single shot rifle into a rapid fire "machine" gun.
- Court orders will remove gun purchase rights from individuals against whom an order of protection has been placed.
- Pending regulations include mandating safe storage and fingerprint controls on guns. This is essential to protect children.

### **Exercise [20 minutes]**

*Be sure to give a warning for "curriculum violence" as participants may have themselves, families or friends been affected by gun violence as victims or perpetrators.*

Begin with a group restatement of the second Amendment then focus on responses to illicit gun use, harm to children, and suicide. Form pairs for discussion where each pair pick one issue of concern to them and provides one response. Resources will be provided in advance.

**“ You shall not stand upon/over  
your fellow's blood . . . ”**

*Lev 19:16*



# The Imperative of Gun Control

## Lesson Plan

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### Evaluation

For the group

Have the participants restate the Second Amendment and provide a critique of appropriate and inappropriate uses.

For individual participants

- You were asked to identify one issue of importance.

What was it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• How would you address your concern with this issue? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**“ You shall love/show love to your fellow  
as yourself/kamokha . . . ”**

*Lev 19:18*

# The Imperative of Gun Control

## Lesson Plan

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### Resources:

An overview is provided in the Imperatives handbook module #4. A Gun Control Topic Overview is available at

<https://www.gale.com/open-access/gun-control>

#### 1. Role of the NRA in preventing effective gun control

- From the BBC. US gun control: "What is the NRA and why is it so powerful?" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-35261394>

#### 2. Racial and economic biases in gun violence,

- From the Brady Institute. Available at <https://www.bradyunited.org/issue/gun-violence-is-a-racial-justice-issue>
- Alexander M, Alexander L. "Fear." In *The 1619 Project*. Hannah-Jones M. Editor. New York. The New York Times. 2021

#### 3. Illicit gun use,

- From the United Nations. Available at <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/firearms/module-4/key-issues/sources-of-illicit-firearms.html>
- From PBS, "How criminals get guns." Available at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/guns/procon/guns.html>

#### 4. Preventing unintentional injury and death from firearms

- From the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence. Available at <https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/unintentional-shootings/>

#### 5. Preventing injury to children from guns

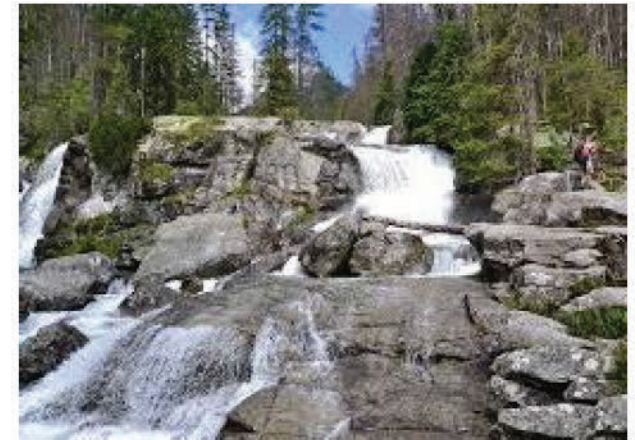
- A statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Available at <https://publications.aap.org/journal-blogs/blog/3134>
- "In 2017, 109 people died from gun violence every day; there were 39,773 deaths in total with 14,542 by homicide, 23,854 by suicide, and in 2016, there were 3,473 deaths of children by firearms." ["What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S," Available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/02/03/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>]

**“ A sojourner with you in your land,  
you shall not mistreat/tonu him . . . ”**

*Lev 19:33*

# 5. The Imperative of Criminal Justice Reform

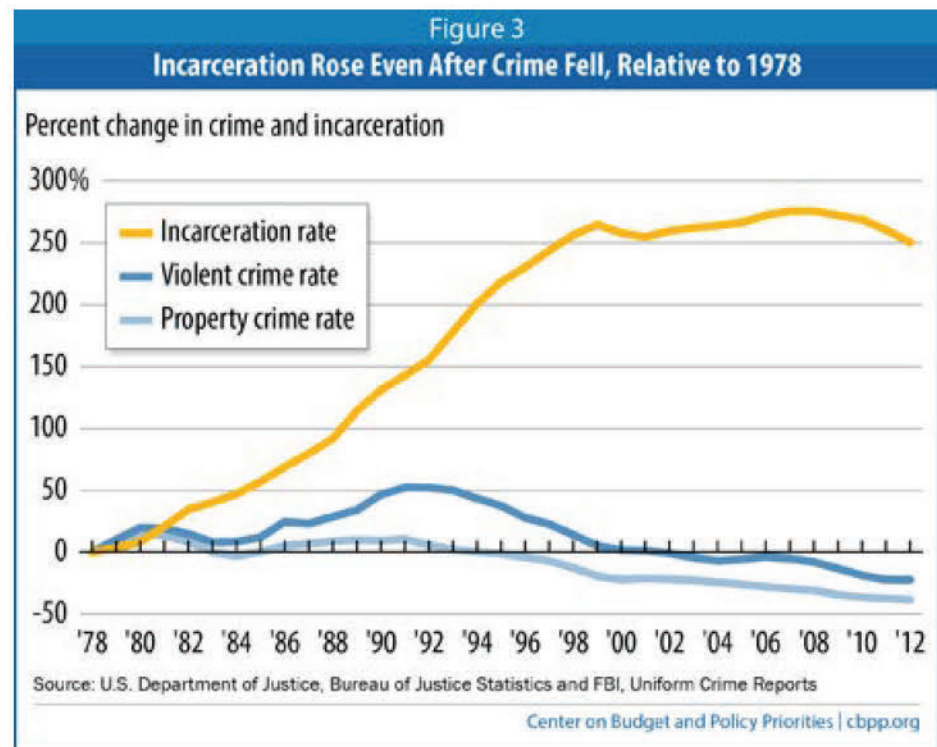
*“Shabbat candles burn bright and create warmth. They burn down and are gone. Two rocks struck together give sparks, burn bright and create warmth. Throw the rocks in a stream, and after 100 years their capability to create sparks remains. Thus, we welcome back those who have been separated.”* Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer [The Baal Shem Tov, Master of the Good Name” Circa 1720]



## Dimensions of the Problem

- At present, the United States has the world’s highest incarceration rate. With 4.5% of the world's population, the U.S. holds 19% of the world's incarcerated population.
- African Americans make up less than 15% of New Jersey's population but more than 60% of the state's prison population.
- An African American child in New Jersey is 21 times more likely to be locked up than a white child, even though they commit most offenses at similar rates.
- The role of incarceration has never been resolved. Is it 1) punishment, 2) deterrence, 3) rehabilitation, or 4) protection of society?

An intentional spike in criminalizing use of “crack cocaine” led to a dissociation between criminal activities and incarceration. Drug use is ubiquitous in New Jersey; however, a black man is 30 times more likely to be incarcerated than a white man. African Americans are four times more likely than whites to be arrested for identical activities. Incarceration predominated among African Americans where “crack” rather than “powdered” cocaine was used.



## Local Needs and Actions

The federal “First Step” legislation has enabled early release and reentry to society; however, released prisoners are not full citizens. There may be restrictions on their rights to vote, hold office, obtain employment or get a mortgage to own an apartment or house.

- New Jersey is in the process of instituting bail reform, so the accused are no longer held in jail.
- New Jersey has “banned the box,” showing a criminal conviction, but job applications require a listing of former employment. A time in prison becomes obvious.

# The Imperative of Criminal Justice Reform

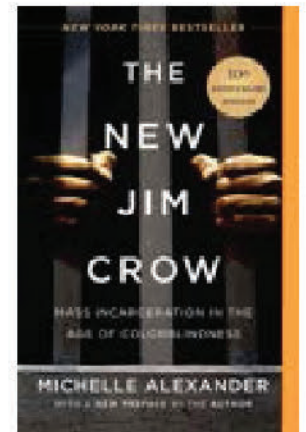
## Local Needs and Actions (Cont'd)

- Racial discrimination for employment has increased since the box was banned. Potential employers avoid interviewing those with African American sounding name.
- A limitation of solitary confinement has been instituted, though the question remains, what justification is there for using such barbaric punishment for anyone?

A 5th role for prisons: The incarcerated are fodder for an economy  
*The "school to prison pipeline" is a channel for taking children from failed schools into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many of these children have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect, and would benefit from additional educational and counseling services. Instead, they are isolated, punished, and pushed out."*

*From the American Civil Liberties Union.*

Available at <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/school-prison-pipeline>



## Things to Do

- Do not allow fired violent and bigoted police to be rehired elsewhere in New Jersey.
- Change the probation and parole systems to enhance reentry.
- Promote social acceptance of formerly incarcerated.
- Insure that released prisoners have their benefits restored.
- Hold up legalization of cannabis sale until release and pardon have been instituted.
- Insist that those incarcerated for cannabis sale have the right to sell it legally.
- Close "correctional" institutions for youth and and create community-based programs.
- Use "restorative justice" approaches in dealing with offenders.
- Visit prisoners; participate in educational programs. Contact Rabbi Dovid Dubov. <https://www.princetonchabad.org/>
- Examine the No More Prisons project. Contact the NJ Institute for Social Justice <<https://www.njisj.org/>>
- Join the Social Action Committee of the TJC to work with the Clergy Association and the Coalition for Peace Action. <https://www.peacecoalition.org/>
- Join the Campaign to End the New Jim Crow Greater Trenton Chapter. <http://www.endnewjimcrownj.org/>
- Participate in The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice campaign to transform the youth justice system. [https://www.njisj.org/150\\_years\\_is\\_enough](https://www.njisj.org/150_years_is_enough)
- Examine "No More Prisons for Children" from Save The Kids <https://savethekidsgroup.org/tag/no-more-prisons/>

Contributed by Wilma Solomon

# The Imperative of Criminal Justice Reform

## Active Learning

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### Questions

What were the incarceration rates for the United States in:

Q1. 1970?

Q2. 2018?

Q3. What are Black/ White/ Other proportions now?

*See below for answers.*

### Exercises and Scenarios

*Keep the possibility of curriculum bias in mind. Some or many engaged with these scenarios and activities may have had family, friends, or themselves caught up in the circumstances described.*

1. Drug use is ubiquitous in New Jersey; no group uses drugs more than any other. Why then is it that African Americans are 37 times more likely to be arrested for drug possession?

Let those who are identified as White imagine what it would be like if every action for a day, a week, or a month were observed and then judged by someone outside one's own community of origin.

2. An adolescent has been stealing from stores. Discuss models of restorative justice where the young person has an opportunity to make things right and gain from the experience. [See <http://restorativejustice.org/#sthash.u26LDknR.dpbs>]
3. Consider the role of prison chaplaincy. How might engagement with Jewish Christian, Moslem, other chaplains help a prisoner engage with society when they return? [https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article\\_cdo/aid/2513281/jewish/Prison-and-Reform-A-Torah-View.htm](https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/2513281/jewish/Prison-and-Reform-A-Torah-View.htm)

### Answers

A1 and 2. The graph on the following page is from

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarceration\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States#/media/File:U.S.\\_incarceration\\_rates\\_1925\\_onwards.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incarceration_in_the_United_States#/media/File:U.S._incarceration_rates_1925_onwards.png).

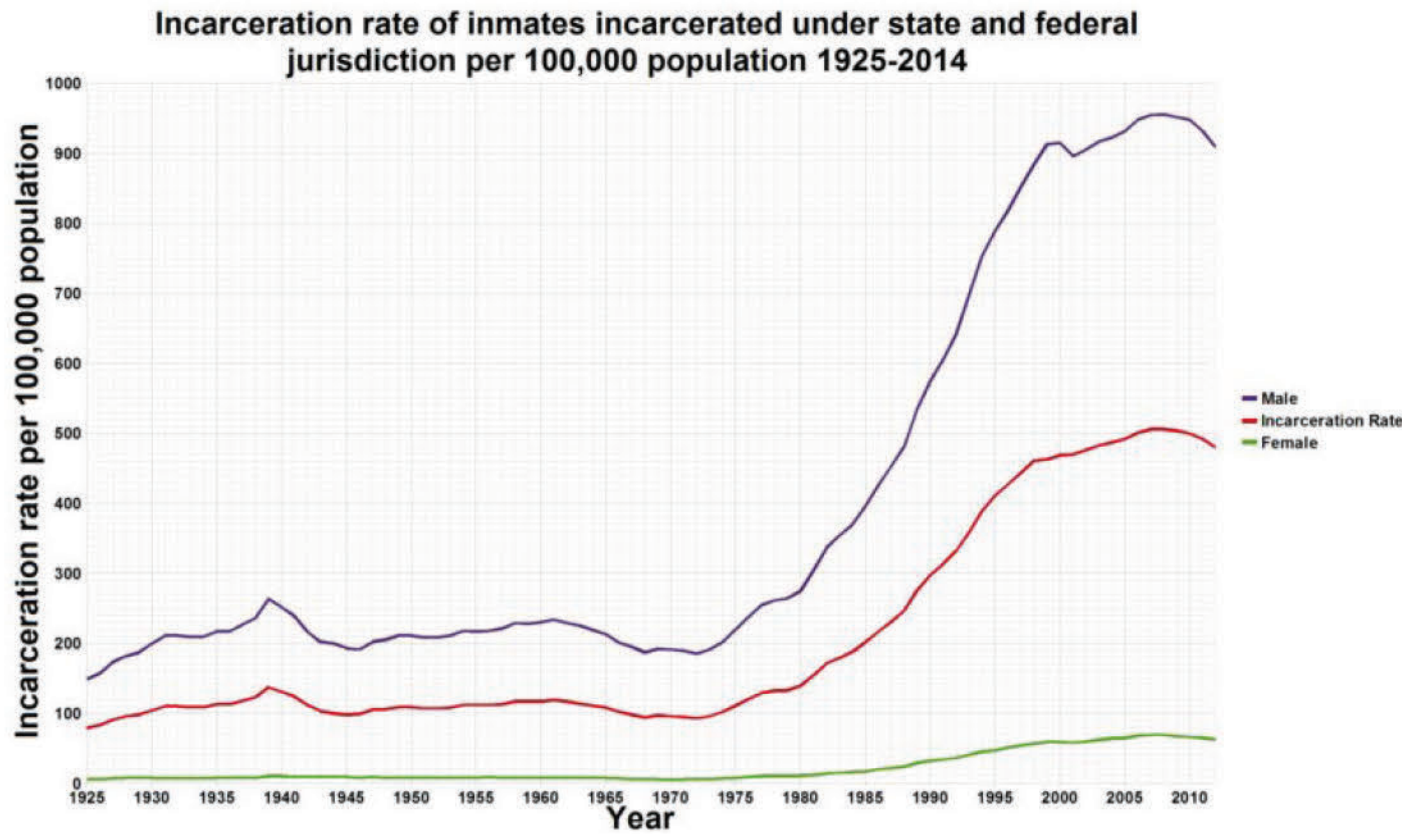
It shows the relative stability of incarceration rates for the 50 years from 1930 to 1980. We now have an incarceration rate five times greater than in 1980.

The rise in incarceration rates out of proportion to criminality followed the reaction to our challenge to the racial caste system in the 1950s and 60s. The earlier rates were about 200 per 100,000 populations with a rise to a peak of 950 per 100,000 in 2005. It is currently 655 persons per 100,000 population, the highest among all nations in the world.

# The Imperative of Criminal Justice Reform

## Active Learning

### Answers (cont.)



Likelihood of a White person being incarcerated per 100,000  
(Relative of likelihood to white)

A3. Here are the current U.S. incarceration numbers and incarceration rates by Race/ethnicity

Total number and percentage population	2,100,000 incarcerated, roughly 1 in 150 people (0.67%)
Likelihood of being incarcerated per 100,000 (White)	458 (1.0 %)
Likelihood of a black person being incarcerated per 100,000	2308 (5.0%)
Likelihood of a Native American person being incarcerated per 100,000	1291 (2.8%)
Likelihood of a Latinx person being incarcerated per 100,000	831 (1.8%)

### Resources

#### General

- Michelle Alexander (2001) *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press. Ms. Alexander traces the rise of incarceration as a response to ubiquitous rise in drug use in the United States taken-as-a-whole. African Americans were, she shows, picked out to be victims of draconian drug laws and the raw material for a “prison-industrial complex.”

# The Imperative of Criminal Justice Reform

## Active Learning

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### Resources (cont.)

- James Forman Jr (2017) *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. Mr. Foreman's narrative expands and complements the work of Ms. Alexander. He points out the need for effective policy work in predominately African American communities to prevent the police from becoming an occupying army.
- Brian Stevenson's (2014) *Just Mercy* is available in its original book form, a young adult version, an acclaimed film, and a documentary. It recounts the story of an unjustly accused African American man in Alabama who is sentenced to death. In the telling, Mr. Stevenson brings in the issue of who is sentenced to death and who is not as well as overly harsh sentencing of juvenile offenders and the mentally ill. He is the founder of the Equal Justice institute in Montgomery, Alabama.
- Douglas A. Blackmon (2008) *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Doubleday. As part of his expose, Mr. Blackmon shows how the criminal justice system was used to supply the South with the free labor of African Americans convicted of crimes, like vagrancy, specifically created to intimidate them.
- Center for Justice and Reconciliation. Restorative justice. <http://restorativejustice.org/#sthash.IC8ZIMzU.dpbs> Restorative justice repairs the harm caused by crime by having victims, offenders and community members meet to decide how to do that.
- Dovid Margolin. "Looking for alternatives to incarceration; finding the Divine spark in prisoners." [https://www.chabad.org/news/article\\_cdo/aid/4427408/jewish/Criminal-Justice-Summit-at-Columbia-Inspired-by-the-Rebber-Teachings.htm](https://www.chabad.org/news/article_cdo/aid/4427408/jewish/Criminal-Justice-Summit-at-Columbia-Inspired-by-the-Rebber-Teachings.htm). The Jewish community has, for the most part, been content to leave work with Jewish prisoners to a paid and volunteer chaplaincy. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, "The Rebbe" of the Lubavitch Chasidim, promoted visiting Jewish prisoners. The Lubavitch has promoted a First Step project for prison reform. This is a model for social transformation. One must work with affected individuals as well as with the system, taken as a whole.

### Experiences

- Albert Woodfox (2019) *Solitary: Unbroken by Four Decades in Solitary Confinement*. My Story of Transformation and Hope. New York: Grove Press. <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/02/699663270/albert-woodfox-on-serving-more-than-40-years-in-solitary-confinement>. Mr. Woodfox, a member of the Black Panthers, contends, and others agree, that he was innocent of the crime for which he was convicted.
- Jed Rakoff. "Will the death penalty ever die?" *New York Review of Books* 64:10, June 8, 2017. Judge Rakoff's brother, Jan was murdered. As angry as he was in the moments after hearing of Jan's murder, this experience among others brought the Judge to the conclusion that the death penalty can never be permitted because of the inevitable error of executing an innocent person, which cannot be rectified. Editor's note: Jan was my friend and classmate at Philadelphia's Central High School. Judge Rakoff's most recent book is *Why the innocent plead guilty and go to jail while the guilty go free*.
- Juvenile justice information exchange. "Two Teens Reflect on the Experience of Incarceration." <https://jjie.org/2013/10/11/two-teens-write-about-their-incarcerations/> The overarching questions are why are African American children disproportionately sent to prison and why are children sent to prison at all?

## The Imperative of Criminal Justice Reform

### Active Learning

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#### Resources (cont.)

- Joan Kelley. "Experiences in a Juvenile Justice System" provides a scholar overview as a commentary on three teen-agers experience with incarceration. <http://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/publications/se/6105/610505.html>.
- David Arenberg reflects on being Jewish in state prison. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2009/david-arenberg-reflects-being-jewish-state-prison>. This essay reveals the rigidly held racial and ethnic hierarchies in the prison system. In this setting, David was a half-caste white who ate with the whites but only after the other classes of whites ate before him.
- The "school to prison pipeline" is a channel for taking children from failed schools into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many of these children have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect, and would benefit from additional educational and counseling services. Instead, they are isolated, punished, and pushed out." [From the American Civil Liberties Union. Available at <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/school-prison-pipeline>

**“ Like a native from among you will  
the stranger who sojourns . . . ”**

*Lev 19:34*

**“ The One does justice for the  
orphan and the widow . . . ”**

*Dt 10:18*



# The Imperative of Criminal Justice Reform

## Lesson Plan

The **Goal** of this presentation is to address the consequences of system that over the course of 50 years has lost all symmetry between criminal activity and incarceration. A heavy hand of racism is on the scales of justice.

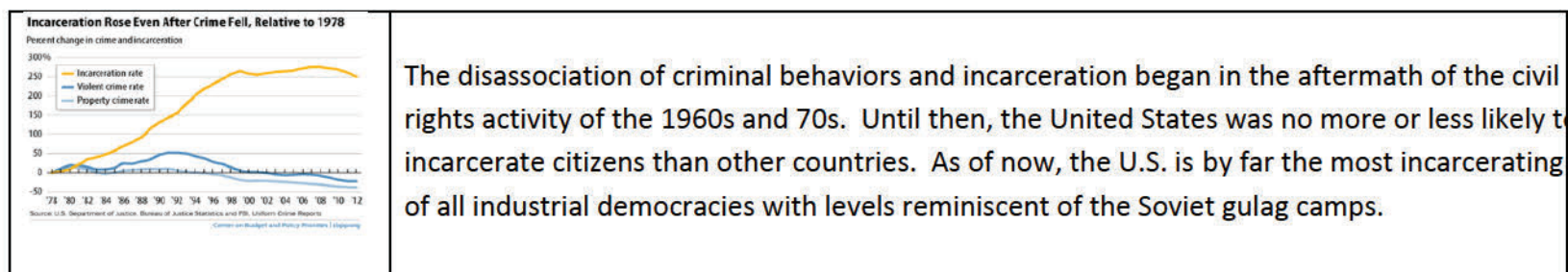
The **Objectives**: On completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- **Identify** patterns of criminality and incarceration over the past 50 years
- **Critique** the differences in incarceration by race/ethnicity.
- **Construct** processes for reform of incarceration and providing restorative justice

### Introduction ( 20 minutes)

To establish the “Dimensions of the Problem,” use Module # 5, which gives a complete listing. Begin with a graph showing the disassociation of criminal activities and incarcerations.

Figure 1. The disassociation of criminality and incarceration over the past 50 years



*At present, the United States has the world's highest incarceration rate. With 4.5% of the world's population, the U.S. holds 19% of the world's incarcerated population.*

- The likelihood of a person being incarcerated per 100,000 population in the United States  
White = 458; Black = 2,308; Native American = 1,291; Hispanic = 831
- In New Jersey, African Americans make up less than 15% of the population but more than 60% of the state's prison population.
- An African American child in New Jersey is 21 times more likely to be locked up than a White child, even though they commit most offenses at similar rates.
- An intentional spike in criminalizing use of “crack cocaine” led to a dissociation between criminal activities and incarceration.
- While drug use is ubiquitous in New Jersey; there are no racial or ethnic differences in drug use. However, a black man is 30 times more likely to be incarcerated than a White man. A distinction was made between “crack cocaine” as generally used in Black populations, compared with “powdered cocaine” which was used primarily in the White population.
- Perhaps more importantly, African American individuals and communities, as compared with White communities, have been subject to surveillance causing use to be seen rather than missed.

The role of incarceration in the United States has never been resolved.

Is it 1) punishment, 2) deterrence, 3) rehabilitation, or 4) protection of society?

# The Imperative of Criminal Justice Reform

## Lesson Plan

Figure 2. A parable from *The Baal Shem Tov*, the first of the Chassidic Rabbis

“Shabbat candles burn bright and create warmth. They burn down and are gone. Two rocks struck together give sparks, burn bright and create warmth. Throw the rocks in a stream, and after 100 years their capability to create sparks remains. Thus, we welcome back those who have been separated.”  
Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer [*The Baal Shem Tov*, Master of the Good Name” Circa 1720]



*In Jewish tradition, rehabilitation is the ideal. The process of acknowledgement, apology, and providing restitution are described in Bamidbar (Numbers) 5:5-7.*

Jewish tradition requires justice to be both “commensurate” and “restorative.”

- The comment from Leviticus 24:19, “eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” is allegorical and not literal. It is commensurate, the punishment for a criminal act must align with the consequence of a criminal act, “the punishment must fit the crime.” It refers to the value of what was taken or list a concern for that leads to restorative justice.
- Restorative justice, as described in Bamidbar 5:6-7 is “They are to confess the sin that they have done And (each one) is to make restitution for one’s incurred-guilt 6. A man or woman -when they do any sin (committed by) humans by breaking faith, yes, faith with YHVH, and that person realizes his guilt in its capital amount adding its fifth to it and is to give it to the one toward whom one incurred guilt.”

Progress (perhaps):

- At present In New Jersey those accused of a criminal act are held in jail unless they can provide a sum of money to be held (“bail”). A process of instituting bail reform will, if passed, prevent the accused from being held in jail unless they are a danger to others.
- There has been a system in place where a person seeking employment would have to put a check mark in a box showing whether they have been convicted of a criminal offense. This became an impediment to rehabilitation in that having employment is necessary to prevent recidivism. New Jersey has “banned the box,” showing a criminal conviction.
- While a limitation on solitary confinement has been instituted, the question remains, what justification is there for using such barbaric punishment for anyone?

Exercises (Pick one or have two groups use both)

*Be sure to give a warning for “curriculum violence” as participants, their families or friends may have been caught up in the criminal justice system.*

1. As described, drug use is ubiquitous in New Jersey; no group uses drugs more than any other. Yet, African Americans are 37 times more likely to be arrested for drug possession. Much of the difference can be ascribed to surveillance. Prior to the presentation, students will spend a 24-hour period keeping track of what it would be like to have every action watched by a policing mechanism. Keep a log of feelings especially after an action like going into a store. Have the group spend 10 to 15 minutes talking about their responses. Then have a group discussion on the four elements of incarceration. The goal is to have a criminal justice system that is equitable, effective, and based on restorative justice.
2. An adolescent has been stealing from stores. First in pairs and then in the whole group discuss models of restorative justice as might be applied from the commandment from Numbers where the young person has an opportunity in the world as we know it now to make things right and gain from the experience.

**In conclusion,** Give an introduction. “You have been asked about restorative justice in two circumstances. Present your conclusions.”

# The Imperative of Criminal Justice Reform

## Lesson Plan

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### Evaluation:

On a review form student will

Draw an approximation of changes in criminal behavior and incarceration over the past 50 years. Include comments on racial disparities.

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Share the impact of surveillance on these rates of incarceration from your own experiences. How has your own race/ ethnicity affected this observation? \_\_\_\_\_

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Consider reconstructing incarceration or promoting restorative justice. What do you want to do for one or the other?

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# The Imperative of Criminal Justice Reform

## Lesson Plan

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### Resources

- Background on restorative justice see <http://restorativejustice.org/#sthash.u2ILDknR.dpbs>
- Follow the Equal Justice Initiative founded by Brian Stevenson for all that is happening with criminal justice. See [https://eji.org/about/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw3lqSBhCoARIsAMBkTb2TGsJpymJsGVOExWYhAB3tF7OLWg2CFMPEHQyviAhseFJIDmBUcy4aAiDhEALw\\_wcB](https://eji.org/about/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw3lqSBhCoARIsAMBkTb2TGsJpymJsGVOExWYhAB3tF7OLWg2CFMPEHQyviAhseFJIDmBUcy4aAiDhEALw_wcB)
- Brian Stevenson's chapter "Punishment" in *The 1619 Project* gives an overview of the African American experience that is both concise and comprehensive. As he points out, as with so many issues of public well being, there is an income and racial gradient with those who are poor and Black most affected.

**“ Love the stranger by giving him  
bread and clothing/lekhem v'simla . . . ”**

*Dt 10:18*

**“ Love the stranger, for you were  
strangers in the land of Egypt . . . ”**

*Dt 10:19*

# 6. The Imperative of Affordable Housing

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## Dimensions of the Problem

The crisis of affording a home, a “Shelter from the Storm,” is global, national, and most acute in affluent communities like our own. As such, our towns require policies that make decent housing available and affordable. There are two issues of concern.

- The crisis is more acute where there is a tension between the character of the town and the need to provide housing.
- Similarly, there is a tension between how much can be accomplished through the operation of a free market and how much government intervention is required.

In addition, much of the affordability crisis is based on racism.

- Nationally, the 2016 median wealth for Black families was \$20,700 as compared with \$171,000 for White families; such differences in wealth by racial identities result largely from “redlining,” i.e., the government-promoted policy of preventing African Americans from obtaining mortgages for homes, which underlies achieving wealth.

## Local Issues

It is the law in New Jersey that local communities provide affordable rental units and build homes for lower income residents under the Mt. Laurel agreements. Considering the consequences of racism, for New Jersey the median wealth for a White family is now \$309,000; for a Black family it is \$5,900 with about 30% of African American families having “negative wealth,” e.g., being in debt and without credit.

- A local need is to keep families currently living in Princeton from becoming homeless.
- This homelessness is often triggered by an event that, with savings or modest wealth, could be dealt with (e.g., a medical emergency, car repair, marital separation, or job loss). Such an event can begin a downward spiral leading to the inability to afford housing or the loss of credit rating.

*You have been a refuge for the poor; a refuge for the needy in distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat...And [you shall] provide the poor wanderer with shelter.” (Isaiah 25:4 & 58:6-7)*



# The Imperative of Affordable Housing

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## Local Issues (Con't)

- Many of those who serve the community (e.g., municipal employees, teachers, fire, police, hospital, essential, elder, and childcare workers) can no longer afford to live here. Likewise, many of the businesses in Princeton employ people who cannot afford to live here.
- A concern of many Princeton residents is that Princeton could become a “gated community,” where wealth creates unseen gates. Princeton has a long tradition of mixed income and ethnicity housing, and to continue this in the future requires addressing the challenge of wealth inequality in housing.

## What Is Being Done

Princeton was among the last municipalities in New Jersey to enter into an agreement to meet affordability standards in rental units and affordable housing under the Mt. Laurel agreement. As of this date, the town has not revoked zoning ordinances requiring single occupancy dwellings on large tracts; however, the Town Council is in the process of addressing these issues. Responses must be integrated with other responses to the needs of lower income families such as transportation and ancillary costs.

The Housing Initiative of Princeton (HIP) is a nonprofit that addresses homelessness. HIP provides up to two years in an apartment with social work services to address issues causing homelessness. It addresses issues of establishing a credit rating and entry into permanent housing.

Princeton Community Housing (PCH) provides high quality, affordable rental apartments. Clients are very low- to moderate-income residents of diverse backgrounds and ages. Currently PCH maintains almost 500 affordable rental homes. An additional 1,700 households are on the waiting list for affordable housing in Princeton.

## Things to Do

- Raise funds for Housing Initiatives of Princeton, or contribute or volunteer your time at Princeton Community Housing.
- Join with organizations in Princeton, Trenton, and surrounding communities to sponsor a symposium at TJC addressing local homelessness and impact on families with children.
- Donate to the Social Action Committee of the Jewish Center.

**Contributed by Sara Just**

# The Imperative of Affordable Housing

## Active Learning

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### Questions

- Q1. How many individuals and families are unhoused in the United States?
- Q2. Has the number of people without housing in the United States increased over the past 20 years or so? If so, by how much?
- Q3. Has the number of children without homes in the United States increased over the past 20 years or so? If so, by how much?

*See below for Answers*

### Exercises and Scenarios

*Keep the possibility of curriculum bias in mind. Some engaged with these scenarios and activities may have had family, friends, or themselves caught up in the circumstances described.*

- Zoning.** Zoning Laws are common in all urban and suburban communities. They are designed to protect the community's extant character. Organize a panel that 1) lists the positive need for zoning. Then 2), add what might happen when zoning protects some people in the community and works against the interests of those outside the community, the "others." How might zoning lead to exclusion by race or by income and result in homelessness? Do this in pairs. Then discuss zoning in the whole group.
- Redlining.** From 1934 to the present, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Authority [FHA] have lent a trillion dollars for low down payment, low mortgage rate loans to families to enhance home ownership. Think of the positives (were members of your own family or those of friends able to achieve otherwise unaffordable home ownership?) negatives (were families excluded from eligibility for these and the GI Bill sponsored mortgages?), and homelessness (what provisions were made for families or individuals with income below the eligibility criteria?).

Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law* shows how the phenomenon of "redlining" affects home ownership and the accumulation of wealth. In granting mortgages, the FHA directed, not just permitted, banks and mortgage companies to exclude African Americans from acquiring homes in areas designated for whites. Areas where mortgages were not granted were colored red; areas considered "best" for investment were colored green on maps. Source: <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/redlining/> See also Louis Lee Woods "Almost 'No Negro/Veteran could get a loan.'" on how Black GI veterans of WW2 were excluded from the GI Bill's provisions for home ownership.

Have a role play where one person is a banker and another is an applicant for a mortgage in Princeton, NJ. NOTE: A "race-based" role play here would cross over to curriculum violence without careful pre-role play considerations.

- Develop an educational program for a family with children addressing educational needs of a homeless child. Make a plan for a symposium at The Jewish Center with an emphasis on homelessness in Mercer County and impact on families with children. Consider how you would approach other religious and non-religious groups in the planning and implementation.

### Answers

A1. In January 2018, 552,830 people were counted as unhoused in the United States. Of those, 194,467 (35 percent) were unsheltered, and 358,363 (65 percent) were sheltered. The overall homeless population on a single night represents 0.2 percent of the U.S. population, or 17 people per 10,000 in the population. <https://www.pschohousing.org/news/2019-state-homelessness-america-report-released>

## The Imperative of Affordable Housing

# Active Learning

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### Answers (cont.)

A2. According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, in 2017, the number of people experiencing homelessness in unsheltered locations increased for a second straight year by 9% between 2016 and 2017.

A3. A staggering 2.5 million children are now unhoused each year in America. This historic high represents one in every 30 children in the United States

### Resources

Matthew Desmond is a Princeton University Professor. His 2016 book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the America City*, (New York: Crown) chronicles the downward spiral of poverty, racism, public policies that end with homelessness. [Think of the origins of word “suburban.”]

The Guardian. “Homelessness: How I became homeless: three people's stories” are personal narratives, each showing a downward spiral. In two of them, the person became drug addicted. Often drug abuse is given as a cause for homelessness. This is just as often an example of “reverse causality,” where what is assumed to be the cause is actually the consequence.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/aug/15/how-i-became-homeless-three-peoples-stories>

Chris Julin. *Students on the move: The growing crisis of homeless kids*. American Public Media.

<https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2019/08/14/the-growing-crisis-of-homeless-kids>. This is a video and report by and from children who have experienced homelessness. “They sleep in cars, motels and relatives' houses, and they're more likely to drop out of school and spend their lives in poverty...The U.S. has more of these children than ever before.”

National Alliance to End Homelessness. “Homelessness and Racial Disparities.”

<https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/inequality/> “By far the most striking disproportionality can be found among African Americans, who make up 40 percent of the homeless population despite only representing 13 percent of the general population.”

Woods LL, Jr. “Almost 'No Negro/Veteran could get a loan:' African Americans, The G.I. Bill, and the NAACP campaign against racial segregation, 1917-1960.” *The Journal of African American History*. 2013; 98(3):392-417

Tillson A. “Race, Risk and Real Estate: The Federal Housing Administration and Black homeownership in the Post World War II Home Ownership State,” *DePaul Journal for Social Justice* 2014; 25(8): 2014.

<https://via.library.depaul.edu/jsj/vol8/iss1/3>. Accessed January 18, 2021

Rothstein R. *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America*. New York: Liveright; 2017

**“ Shavuot and Sukkot [you shall ]  
celebrate with the stranger . . . ”**

*Dt 16:11*



# The Imperative of Affordable Housing

## Lesson Plan


The **Goal** of this session is to address the need to provide affordable shelter and prevent homelessness.

The **Objectives**: On complete of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- **Identify** the extent of the problem.
- **List** categories of those at high risk for homelessness.
- **Discuss** public policies that exacerbate homelessness.
- **Illustrate** ways that both governmental and non-governmental organizations have provided affordable high-quality housing/shelter.

### Introduction [20 minutes]

The Jewish Center is part of several community organizations seeking remedies. There is much work to be done.

<p>From the Prophet Isaiah: “You have been a refuge for the poor; a refuge for the needy in distress [24:4] You shall provide the poor wanderer with shelter. [58:6] Every Israelite and non-Israelite like is entitled to two meals and a place to sleep. [Joseph Caro’s Code of Jewish Law, circa 1550]</p>	<p>Affordable housing provided by Princeton Community Housing</p> 
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### Extent of the problem of homelessness

- In 2018, over a half million people, about 2% of the population of the United States, were counted as unhoused in the United States.
- Of those, 35% were without shelter and 65% had transient or substandard shelter.
- According to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the number of people experiencing homelessness in unsheltered locations increased for a second straight year by 9% between 2016 and 2017.
- Approximately 2.5 million children are now unhoused each year in America. This historic high represents one in every 30 children in the United States.

### Who is at-risk for homelessness?

- The inability to afford a home with access to work and essential resources extends across a wide swath of lower and includes middle income individuals and families as well.
- Those affected range from workers seeking to live in proximity to their employment to families with children that live in housing that is substandard.
- Special hardship is experienced by those with mental and physical disabilities.
- Having a home is a necessity for effective treatment for many of the homeless who have been identified as having mental illness.

**“ And remember you were a slave . . . ”**

*Dt 16:11*

# The Imperative of Affordable Housing

## Lesson Plan

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### What public policies exacerbate homelessness?

The crisis of affording a “shelter from the storm” is global, national, and local, most acute in affluent communities like our own.

- The housing crisis reflects a consequence of zoning policies emphasizing single family homes on quarter-acre or more lots.
- In addition, much of the affordability crisis is based on racial biases past (restrictive covenants and redlining) and present (income differentials by race).
- The crisis is most acute where there is a tension between the character of the town and the need to provide housing.
- As such, many of those who serve the community (e.g., municipal employees, teachers, fire, police, hospital, essential, elder care and childcare workers) can no longer afford to live where they work.

### What can be done

Princeton must address the challenge of affordability to continue its long tradition of mixed income neighborhoods. What has happened in Princeton is representative of what has happened and continues almost everywhere.

- Housing voucher systems are present but underfunded and limited by a variety of rules and regulations that make application difficult. For example, do the income limits in affordable housing keep families from pursuing higher income work?
- In 1973, an African American woman in Mt. Laurel, NJ, Ethel Lawrence, brought suit against the town for refusal to allow lower cost housing there. The courts and the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH), over the course of 50 years, have enforced Mt. Laurel court rulings requiring towns to make provide affordable housing.

### **Exercises**

*Be sure to give a warning for “curriculum violence” as participants may themselves be or have been or have families or friends living in inadequate housing or homeless.*

Zoning laws are common in all urban and suburban communities. They are designed to protect the community’s existing character. Again, racial biases codified by redlining accentuated the limits of income and race/ethnicity. Affordability is an unmet need for employees in Princeton.

One participant will prepare a 15-minute presentation listing 1) the positive need for zoning, 2) how zoning has been used to exclude lower income often non-White families from inclusion in neighborhoods. Use another 5 to 10 minutes to consider 3) how affordability could be addressed. 4) Identify an organization or non-profit that can help.

**“ [Celebrate with] the stranger and the widow and the orphan . . . ”**

***Dt 16:11***

# The Imperative of Affordable Housing

## Lesson Plan

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### Evaluation

Participants.

Give an example of how racial biases and income level have affected homelessness in your community.

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Give an example of how your own race/ ethnicity and income level have affected your own housing.

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### Resources

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount\\_Laurel\\_doctrine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Laurel_doctrine)
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/08/raj-chettys-american-dream/592804/>
- <https://www.psychiatrytimes.com/view/never-ending-loop-homelessness-psychiatric-disorder-and-mortality>

**“ And you shall remember that you  
were a slave in Egypt ... ”** *Dt 16:12*

# 7. The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights



*"Everyone is welcome in the synagogue no matter your sexual orientation...No matter who you are, you are welcome here." -Rabbi Adam Feldman z"l*

## Dimensions of the Problem

- Until 1973, the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-1) labeled same gender attractions as an illness. The deletion of a DSM code was a part of a shift in societal willingness to accept (L)esbian, (G)ay, (B)isexual, (T)ransgender, (Q)ueer and others (LGBTQ+) as part of a healthy public.
- There is, however, a long way to go. Acceptance is not universal.
- Anxiety, depression and suicide rates are quite high, especially for transgender youth.
- There is a need for national non-discrimination legislation to enforce LGBTQ+ rights.
- In many states, transgender rights are being taken away.

## Local Issues and Action

New Jersey is among the leading states protecting LGBTQ+ rights with laws and enforcement. However, much remains to be for done.

### **In Princeton:**

The Bayard Rustin Center is an activist home for LGBTQ+ issues in Princeton and surrounding communities.

- It is an education clearing house providing a home away from home for youth and adults and support for families with guidance in maintaining support for LGBTQ+ members.
- It collaborates with the other institutions and organizations on a variety of social justice issues.
- The Arts Council of Princeton has supported a Pride week.

## The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

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### Local Issues and Action (Con't)

- McCarter Theatre of Princeton has Pride nights and has sponsored programs in LGBTQ+ rights.
- TJC has a Gay Pride flag in its window, as do many other congregations in the Princeton area.

### Three essentials in the lives of LGBTQ+ youth

- Parental acceptance.
- A place where they can share experiences and receive support.
- A place where differences are acknowledged, accepted, and celebrated.

וַיְבָרֵךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמֹוֹ

Ha'Shem created humankind...in the image of Ha'Shem [b'tselem elohim].  
(Genesis 1:27)

It's essential for religious communities to offer support for LGBTQ+ children and their families.

### Things to Do

- Maintain a constant awareness of respect and acceptance for all.
- Support legislation to provide for equal rights for marriage, adoption, housing, and employment.
- Challenge assumptions, positive and negative, about LGBTQ+ individuals by inviting discussion rather than confrontation. "Let's talk about that" works; "You're a bigot" does not.

### Specifically

- Check the Bayard Rustin Center's website (<https://www.rustincenter.org>) for activities.
- Volunteer to plan a program for TJC, community organization, or school.
- Get personal support and be "an Ally" through the Bayard Rustin Center or The Jewish Center Rabbi and staff.

Contributed by Robert Karp

**“ Rejoice [with] your children and servants, widow, orphan and stranger . . . ”**

*Dt 16:14*

# The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

## Active Learning

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### Questions

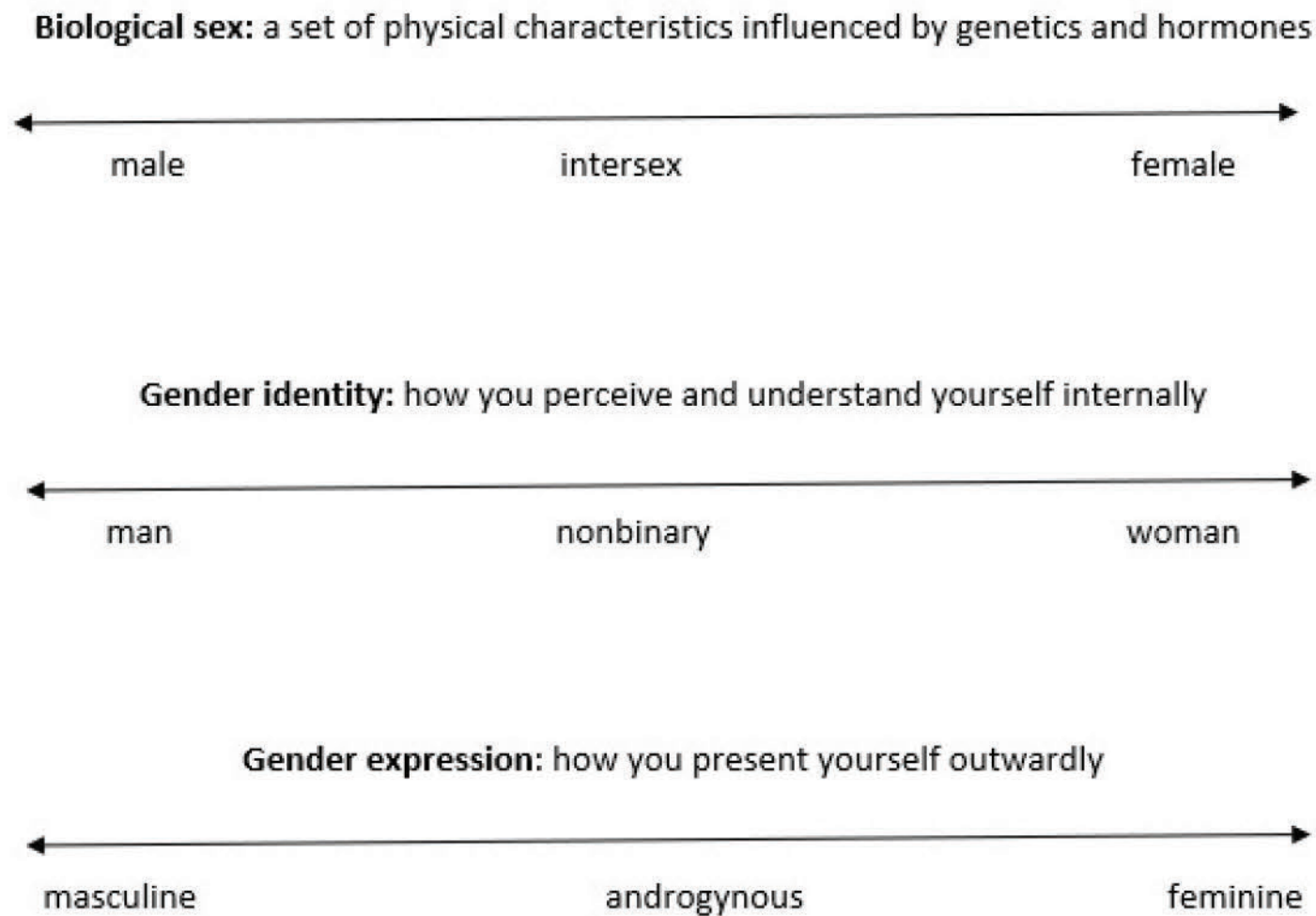
1. What are biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, and how are they different from each other?
2. Are any of those categories permanent or binary?
3. Can you name three issues that LGBTQ+ people face in the Jewish community?

### Exercises

*Keep the possibility of curriculum bias in mind. Some or many engaging with these scenarios and activities may have had family, friends, or be affected by the circumstances themselves.*

#### 1. Personal reflection

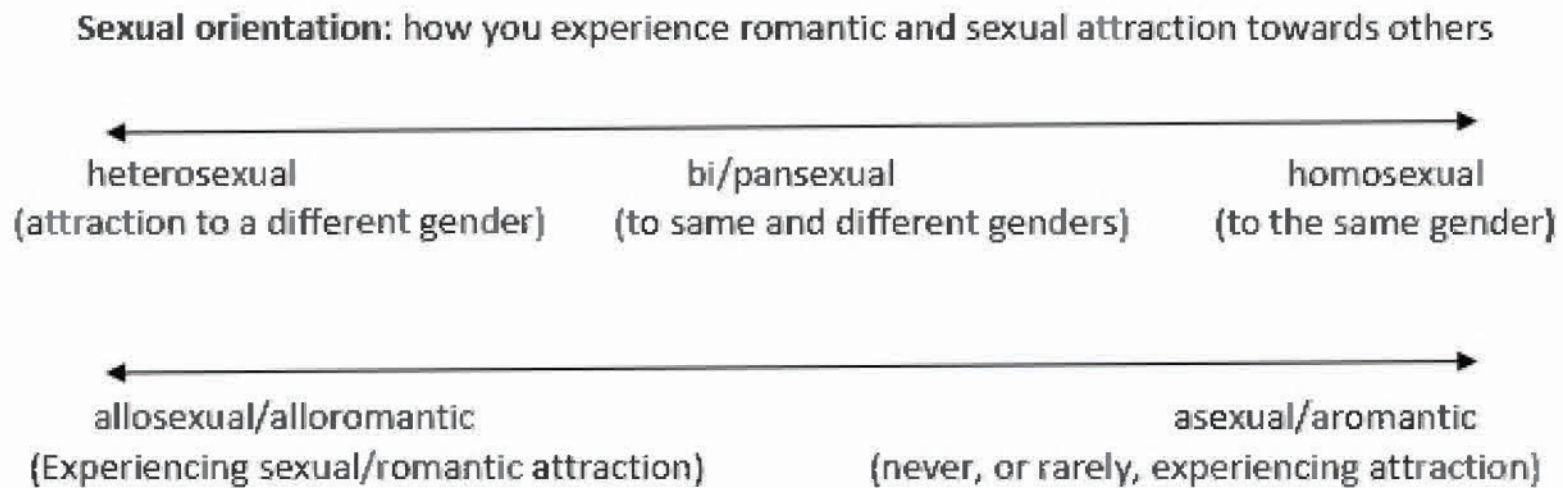
Where do you think you fall, at this moment in time, on each of these spectrums? How have these identities affected your life experience? How have your responses to these questions changed during our life? Take a few moments of individual reflection. This is only for your consideration.



# The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

## Active Learning

### Exercises (cont.)



### 2. Challenging Gender Essentialism:

Gender essentialism is the belief that social gender categories must remain distinct and unchanged because gendered traits (such as personality and sexual orientation) are inherently tied to biological sex categories. In actuality, a person's biological sex does not determine their character traits, personality, appearance, experiences of sexual and romantic attraction, or social roles. It's important to challenge gender essentialism both for the sake of gender equality and for the sake of LGBTQ+ rights.

Discuss as a group:

1. What do masculinity and femininity mean to you?
2. Which expressions of gender identity do you think of as "essential" male and female traits? Make a list. Do any of these characteristics belong exclusively to people of one gender?
3. Where do you think gender stereotypes come from?
4. How might gender stereotypes and gender essentialism cause harm to LGBTQ+ people, to women, and to society more broadly?

### 3. History of LGBTQ+ acceptance in American Judaism

In the last few decades, thanks to the work of brave and committed activists, there has been a major shift towards social acceptance and legal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals in the United States. This shift has been mirrored in the American Jewish community. In both cases, however, along with enormous progress, there has also been strong resistance. Advancing justice for the LGBTQ+ community requires us to challenge long-held beliefs about gender, sexuality, power, and morality, which are often deeply interwoven with religious tradition and can therefore be difficult to change.

Here are some snapshots of the changing conversation around same-sex marriage in Reform and Conservative Judaism. Read through the following sources together, keeping in mind that these sources may be difficult and painful for many students to encounter. Discussion questions follow.



# The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

## Active Learning

### Exercises (cont.)

#### Ancient Sources:

**1. Leviticus 18:22 (Torah)**

וְאֵת זָכָר לֹא תִשְׁכַּב מִשְׁכַּבֵּי אִשָּׁה תוֹעֵבָה הוּא:

Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abhorrence.

**2. Berakhot 19b (Talmud - rabbinic commentary, compiled around 600 CE)**

תא שמע גדול כבוד הבריות שדוחה [את] לא תעשה שבתורה

Come and hear: Great is human dignity, as it overrides a prohibition in the Torah.

#### Modern Sources:

**3. Consider the 1985 responsum of the Reform movement on "Homosexual Marriage."**

When asked to address the question, "May a rabbi officiate at the "marriage" of two homosexuals?", the rabbinic authorities of the Reform movement responded very negatively, concluding:

"None of the elements of kiddushin (sanctification) normally associated with marriage can be invoked for this relationship. A rabbi cannot, therefore, participate in the "marriage" of two homosexuals."

[<https://www.ccarnet.org/ccar-responso/carr-297-298/>]

**4. The Conservative movement issued a similar responsum in 1992:**

"In sum, then, it is the clear obligation of responsible halakhists to reaffirm precedent with all vigor...In the opinion of this author, the clarity of the halakhic position on homosexual behavior is not open to any real doubt. The biblical and rabbinic sources do not really lend themselves to permissive interpretations."

[<http://www.zrlex.com/pubs/Conservative-Judaism-101.pdf> ]

# The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

## Active Learning

### Exercises (cont.)

5. **The Reform movement permitted rabbis to officiate at same-sex weddings beginning in 2000, and it affirmed “Same-Sex Marriage as Kiddushin” in 2014:**

“When we stand under the chuppah, we celebrate a joining together of two individuals in a relationship of equality and of love, one that promises emotional as well as sexual fulfillment, one which allows them to build a home that expresses Jewish values. This, in its essence, is what we mean when we call our marriages by the name kiddushin. If gay and lesbian couples, no less than their heterosexual counterparts can aspire to that kind of relationship, it would seem that kiddushin or “marriage,” as we Reform Jews understand those terms, are fit names for it.”

[<https://www.ccarnet.org/ccar-responsa/same-sex-marriage-kiddushin/>]

6. **The Conservative movement in 2006 also ruled to permit same-sex marriage. The Conservative movement still does not officially consider same-sex marriages to be “kiddushin,” and the movement’s rabbinic authorities continued to prohibit certain forms of sexual activity. Nonetheless, they wrote:**

“For homosexuals who are incapable of maintaining a heterosexual relationship, the rabbinic prohibitions that have been associated with other gay and lesbian intimate acts are superseded based upon the Talmudic principle of kvod habriot, our obligation to preserve the human dignity of all people.”

In practice, at least as seen at The Jewish Center of Princeton, the only restriction placed on same-sex couples is the same as for all couples getting married there: both partners must be Jews, either by birth or by choice, for the rabbi to perform the ceremony.

[[https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/20052010/dorff\\_vins\\_reisner\\_dignity.pdf](https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/20052010/dorff_vins_reisner_dignity.pdf)]

7. **A summary of the current state of LGBTQ+ issues in Orthodox Judaism can be found here:**  
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/orthodox-judaism-and-lgbtq-issues/>

### Discussion questions

- Describe the process by which the Reform and Conservative Movements have changed their official stances on same-sex marriage.
- How do you think that personal experiences with family, friends, and congregants might have changed first the rabbis’ attitudes and then their behavior?
- How do the modern sources relate to the ancient ones?
- Based on the modern sources, what can you infer about progress that remains to be made within the Reform and Conservative Movements? (Consider, for example: What does source 6 imply about bisexuality?)
- How are conversations around LGBTQ+ issues playing out in Orthodox communities?
- How and why does our tradition teach us that human dignity supersedes even the law of the Torah?
- Where else might we apply this concept?

# The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

## Active Learning

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### Exercises (cont.)

#### 4. Pronoun practice, aka “Gender Ulpan!”

We often assume we know how to refer to people based on how we perceive their gender expression, but many people present differently from how they identify. Also, many nonbinary people use the singular “they” pronoun as a gender-neutral alternative to “he” or “she.”

It’s important to develop awareness around when you’re using different sets of pronouns, so that if someone asks you to refer to them with different pronouns, you can quickly and easily start using language that respects their identity and makes them feel comfortable and seen.

Working together in a chevruta, pick a character from the list below, and try to fill in the gaps in this story with that character’s pronouns. (If you’re not sure how to do this, read through the answer key out loud together first.) Check your answers using the key below. Try again using a different character’s pronouns. Read the different versions of the story out loud until you feel comfortable using each character’s pronouns.

1. Lior – they/them/their/theirs/themself
2. Noah – she/her/her/hers/herself
3. Ariel – he/him/his/his/himself

B’ Mitzvah

[Lior/Noah/Ariel] was so excited to read Torah for \_\_\_\_\_ [b’/bat/bar] mitzvah ceremony. \_\_\_\_\_ stayed up all night practicing \_\_\_\_\_ Torah portion. In the morning, \_\_\_\_\_ [were/was] really nervous, so \_\_\_\_\_ put on \_\_\_\_\_ favorite rainbow kippah to give \_\_\_\_\_ confidence. \_\_\_\_\_ read beautifully from the Torah, and everyone told \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_ should be really proud of \_\_\_\_\_ ! Now, \_\_\_\_\_ [have/has] decided that \_\_\_\_\_ [are/is] going to help \_\_\_\_\_ younger brother study for his Bar Mitzvah next year!

Key:

Lior was so excited to read Torah for their b’ mitzvah ceremony. **They** stayed up all night practicing **their** Torah portion. In the morning, **they** were really nervous, so **they** put on **their** favorite rainbow kippah to give **them** confidence. **They** read beautifully from the Torah, and everyone told **them** that they should be really proud of **themselves!** Now, they have decided that they are going to help **their** younger brother study for his Bar Mitzvah next year!

Noah was so excited to read Torah for **her** bat mitzvah ceremony. **She** stayed up all night practicing **her** Torah portion. In the morning, **she** was really nervous, so **she** put on **her** favorite rainbow kippah to give **her** confidence. **She** read beautifully from the Torah, and everyone told **her** that she should be really proud of **herself!** Now, **she** has decided that **she** is going to help **her** younger brother study for his Bar Mitzvah next year!

Ariel was so excited to read Torah for **his** bar mitzvah ceremony. **He** stayed up all night practicing **his** Torah portion. In the morning, **he** was really nervous, so **he** put on **his** favorite rainbow kippah to give **him** confidence. **He** read beautifully from the Torah, and everyone told **him** that he should be really proud of **himself!** Now, **he** has decided that **he** is going to help **his** younger brother study for his Bar Mitzvah next year!

# The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

## Active Learning

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### Answers

1. **Biological sex** is a category based on physical traits. Internal traits, such as chromosomes and hormones, have an influence on visible and external traits, such as facial hair, muscle mass, breasts, and genitalia.

Gender identity is how a person understands and perceives their own gender.

Gender expression is how a person presents their gender to the world.

Sexual orientation is how a person experiences romantic and/or sexual feelings for other people.

2. **No**: none of these categories are permanent or binary! They are all spectrums with lots of room for variation and fluidity. Even biological sex, which is often assumed to be the most fixed and binary identity, exists on a spectrum. Many biological sex characteristics change throughout a person's lifetime and can be further altered through hormonal or surgical treatment.

3. Possible answers:

- The mechitza (division of prayer spaces into a men's section and a women's section) in some communities
- Gendered language in rituals, such as Bar and Bat Mitzvah and wedding ceremonies
- Gendered language used for G-d
- Gender-segregated facilities, such as synagogue restrooms and summer camp bunks
- Barriers to adoption for LGBTQ+ families
- Barriers to conversion for LGBTQ+ individuals
- Barriers to the ordination (in Orthodox Judaism) and hiring and advancement (in all denominations) of LGBTQ+ clergy

### Resources

#### Online resources:

- Gender Diversity in Jewish Texts: a collection of ancient and modern Jewish texts that discuss gender diversity (also includes a lesson guide and an excellent glossary) . <https://www.keshetonline.org/resources/gender-diversity-in-jewish-sacred-texts/>

- "An Unrecognizable Jewish Future: A Queer Talmudic Take," an ELI Talk by the founder of SVARA: Rabbi Benay Lappe's ELI Talk on what queerness and Judaism have in common. <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/standing-again-at-sinai-judith-plaskow/1127639985>

- TransTorah: a collection of resources for transgender Jews (as well as resources to help Jewish communities become more trans-affirming). <http://transtorah.org/>

- A Guide for the Gender Neutral B-Mitzvah, <https://www.keshetonline.org/resources/a-guide-for-the-gender-neutral-b-mitzvah/>

- Responsum on the ordination of gay and lesbian rabbis in the Reform Movement, <https://www.ccarnet.org/ccar-resolutions/acceptance-openly-gay-and-lesbian-rabbinic-student/>

# The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

## Active Learning

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### Resources (cont.)

#### Books:

- A Rainbow Thread: An Anthology of Queer Jewish Texts from the First Century to 1969, by Noam Sienna, <https://bookshop.org/books/a-rainbow-thread-an-anthology-of-queer-jewish-texts-from-the-first-century-to-1969/9780990515562>
- Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism From a Feminist Perspective, by Judith Plaskow, <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/standing-again-at-sinai-judith-plaskow/1127639985>
- The Soul of a Stranger: Reading God and Torah from a Transgender Perspective, by Joy Ladin, <https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/S/bo43635881.html>
- Becoming Eve: My Journey from Ultra-Orthodox Rabbi to Transgender Woman, by Abby Chava Stein, <https://bookshop.org/books/becoming-eve-my-journey-from-ultra-orthodox-rabbi-to-transgender-woman/9781580059169>
- Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible, <https://nyupress.org/9780814720127/torah-queeries/>
- Balancing on the Mechitza: Transgender in Jewish Community, edited by Noach Tzmura, <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/44439/balancing-on-the-mechitza-by-edited-by-noach-dzmura/>
- Siddur Sha'ar Zahav, <https://shaarzahav.org/our-siddur/>
- Lesbian Rabbis: The First Generation, by Rebecca Alpert, Sue Levi Elwell, Shirley Idelson, <https://bookshop.org/books/lesbian-rabbis-the-first-generation/9780813529165>

#### Organizations

- SVARA: A Traditionally Radical Yeshiva, <https://svara.org/>
- Keshet (an organization supporting LGBTQ+ inclusion in Jewish life, focusing on youth), <https://www.keshetonline.org/>
- JQY (an organization supporting LGBTQ+ Orthodox, Chasidic, and Sephardic youth), <https://www.jqyouth.org/>

#### Princeton resources:

- The Bayard Rustin Center for Social Justice is an LGBTQ+ community space and advocacy organization in Princeton, NJ, <https://www.rustincenter.org/>
  - o To learn about Bayard Rustin, the Center's namesake, we recommend this documentary: Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin, <https://www.amazon.com/Brother-Outsider-Life-Bayard-Rustin/dp/B003LR5BBC>

Created by Chaim Spaulding

# The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

## Lesson Plan

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The Goal is to transmit values consistent with the essential principal stated in Genesis 1:27. "God created humankind *b'tzelem Elohim* [in the image of God], an essential principle of the Torah and subsequent writings.

**Objectives** On conclusion of this presentation participants will be able to

- Define characteristics of gender attractions and gender identity affecting everyone.
- Summarize ways that those in various LGBTQ+ communities have been subject to social and, at times, legal obstructions to full equality
- Generate ways that could enhance LGBTQ+ rights in one's own locale.

### Introduction (20 minutes)

The most important tasks for synagogues, churches, mosques, and other religious and secular organizations is to prepare parents to accept their child's gender identities and attractions with love. The institutions themselves must

- \* promote parental acceptance
- \* provide a place where experiences can be shared, and
- \* be there to acknowledge, accept, and celebrate differences.

Categories used to describe the LGBTQ+ communities vary based on sexual attractions and gender identities. Identities may not conform to birth label given according to anatomic characteristics. Moreover, everyone has had a variety of gender identities and attractions; while these often come to a resolution in young adulthood, the past is always contained in the present. This can raise fears that can turn into hostility, a self-hatred. Charles Blow's memoir, *Fire shut up in my bones*, is remarkable for the depth

### What the letters stand for

L = Lesbian, women attracted to women;

G = Gay, men attracted to men though often used as a generic term for same gender attractions;

B = Bisexual, sexually attracted to more than one sex or gender;

T = Transgender, a gender identity differing from one assigned at birth;

Q = Queer, generic term used to capture all whose attractions and identities do not conform to hetero-normativity;

+ = all other considerations not specified. Used as a generic so as to not limit scope of sensitivities as they vary.

### Obstruction and acceptance

In the last few decades, thanks to the work of brave and committed activists, there has been a major shift towards social acceptance and legal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals in the United States. This shift has been mirrored in the American Jewish community. However, in both general and specific ways, there has also been strong resistance along with progress. Advancing justice for the LGBTQ+ community requires challenging long-held beliefs about gender, sexuality, power, and morality. These beliefs are often deeply interwoven with religious tradition and can therefore be difficult to change.

An issue for Jewish communities has been an unwillingness to permit members of the LGBTQ+ community to enter the clergy as rabbis and cantors. This has differed for the various traditions within Judaism. Three steps taken in "liberal" Jewish communities have been

- demonstrating the gain to the community by ordaining LGBTQ+ clergy
- demonstrating the loss to the community by not ordaining LGBTQ+ clergy
- While Orthodox Jewish communities have turned a blind eye to the universality of non-linear gender attractions and identities and use "sin language" based on Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Reform congregations no longer read these passages in the yearly cycle of readings. Conservative congregations do read these passages, using these texts as an historical reference illustrating attitudes once held. The "hate the sin" while loving the sinner" is a perspective that undermines rather than builds the wellbeing of children and adults whose sensibilities don't match a hetero-normative construct. It ruins counter to *b'tzelem Elohim*.

# The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

## Lesson Plan

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### Exercise (25 minutes)

*Be sure to give a warning for “curriculum violence” as participants may be themselves, or have families or friends who are part of the LGBTQ+ community.*

### Discuss as a group: (15 minutes)

1. What do the terms “masculinity” and “femininity” mean to you?
2. How do gender stereotypes cause harm to LGBTQ+ people, to women, to men, and to society more broadly?
3. List three specific steps that can be taken to provide 1) support for parents and children, 2) a place of welcome, and 3) an appreciation for the insights and accomplishments of the LGBTQ+ community.

### Hevruta study (10 minutes)

Think of one way that could enhance LGBTQ+ rights where you are: at home, school, or another organization of which you are a part.

**On conclusion** have the suggestions for a project brought to the group. Can you pick one for implementation?

### Evaluation

Pick one of these for comments:

- Respect for tradition by working through the *halakha*
- Demonstrating the loss to the community by not ordaining LGBTQ+ clergy
- Demonstrating the gain to the community by ordaining LGBTQ+ clergy

Give a short comment of your perspective \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Give the one suggestion for an LGBTQ+ rights project or program made that seems most doable for you.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**“ You shall not oppress a hired  
worker who is poor and in need . . . ”**

*Dt 24:14*

# The Imperative of LGBTQ+ Rights

## Lesson Plan

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### Resources

- Acceptance of gay rabbinical students and clergy by the Reform movement. <https://www.ccarnet.org/ccar-resolutions/acceptance-openly-gay-and-lesbian-rabbinic-student/>
- John McWhorter. "Up in arms over a pronoun." Oct. 5, 2021. <https://www.nytimecom/2021/10/05/opinion/gender-pronoun-they.html>
- Gender Spectrum's *The language of gender*. Without an appreciation of terms used one is almost certain to fall into implicit biases. Available at <https://genderspectrum.org/articles/language-of-gender>.
- Edmund White. *A boy's own story* is an early first person narrative not disguised as a fictional account. He refused to be "in the closet."
- Rebecca Alpert, Sue Levi Elwell, Shirley Idelson's *Lesbian rabbis: The first generation* is an exploration of their own and other gay rabbis' experiences.
- Nancy Kates, Bennett Singer *Brother outsider: The life of Bayard Rustin*, a seminal figure in the Civil Rights movement. His public acknowledgement was diminished because he was gay. Bayard Rustin was also a pacifist and Democratic Socialist his entire life. Princeton's LGBTQ+ support center is named in his honor.
- Charles Blow. *Fire shut up in my bones*. New York. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 2014.

**“ ...or from your stranger that is  
in your land, in your gates . . . ”**

*Dt 24:14*



# 8. The Imperative of Confronting Food Insecurity

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## Dimensions of the Problem

Access to food is a human right. Food Insecurity (FI) is only the “warning bell” signaling the underlying concern that there are severe nutrition deficiencies. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines Food Insecurity as “a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life...[T]hough hunger and food insecurity are closely related, they are distinct concepts.”

- Thirteen percent of families in the United States have experienced FI in the past year.
- For families with children living in poverty, however, 40% have experienced FI.
- Living in or at the edge of poverty predicts life-long psychological, educational, and economic effects even later in life.
- Steps taken to avert hunger, such as substituting potatoes for fresh vegetables, are likely to produce obesity and iron and folic acid deficiencies affecting intellectual development. There are “food deserts” in the U.S., meaning that there are sections of cities and rural communities without larger markets selling affordable, perishable, nutritious foods.

### In Princeton:

- Approximately 12% (~500) of the ~3,500 Princeton Public School students receive free or reduced-price lunch. The school food service provides many students with breakfast.
- Counselors and support personnel at Princeton High School keep food supplies on hand to make sure that students are not hungry while in school.

### In West Windsor-Plainsboro:

In the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District there are about 500 students that are in the national school lunch program receiving free or reduced-price lunches; of those there are 150 students in grades K to 6 enrolled in a weekend food program.



*Ruth Gleaning in the Field*

*“And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave the for the poor and the stranger: I Hashem am your God. (Leviticus 23:22)*

## The Imperative of Confronting Food Insecurity

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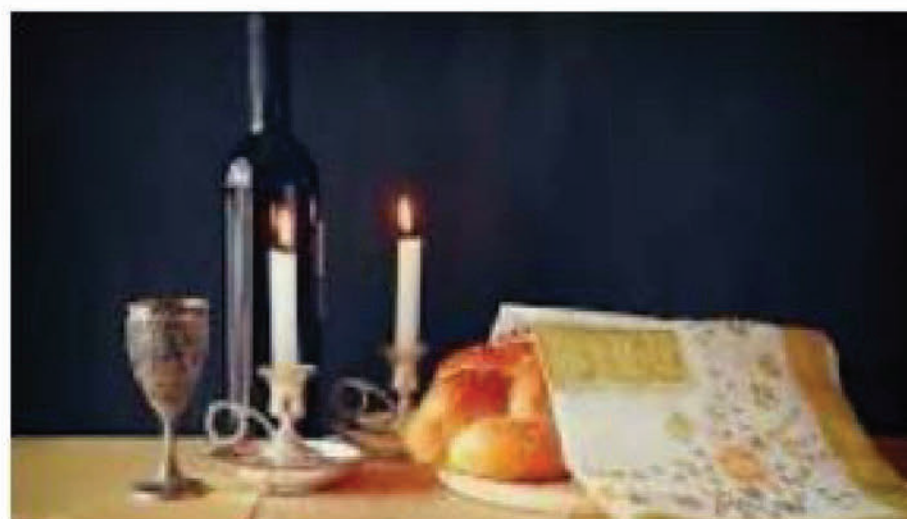
### What is Being Done

- The State of New Jersey funds food banks and pantries; Mercer Street Friends (MSF) in Trenton is Mercer County's funded food resource. A common problem for food suppliers is providing fresh fruits and vegetables that are the most nutritious, most expensive, and most perishable food items.
- Send Hunger Packing in Princeton (SHUPP) and the West Windsor-Plainsboro School District provide weekend food for children in schools during the academic year and summer.
- On Fridays, Princeton's SHUPP provides school children food filled backpacks for the weekend; West Windsor-Plainsboro has the same program for students K-6.
- There is a Little Free Pantry open 24 hours a day located at the West Windsor Arts Council. There are no restrictions or financial requirements for use. Located at 925 Alexander Road, WW. "Take what you need, leave what you can."

### Things to Do

- Volunteer at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK), United Methodist Church, and First Baptist Church in Princeton or other places that serve meals and provide food.
- Educate others, including politicians, about the problem of food insecurity.
- See these websites for contributions to those agencies providing support: Jewish Children and Family Service (JCFS) (<https://www.jfconline.org/>) (the JCFS has a mobile foodpantry), Mr. Rogers' Neighbors at Mt. Pisgah Church ([www.mrrogersneighbors.com](http://www.mrrogersneighbors.com)), Mercer St. Friends (<https://mercerstreetfriends.org/food-bank/>), West Windsor-Plainsboro Send Hunger Packing and Little Free Pantry ([www.shupwwp.org](http://www.shupwwp.org)), Send Hunger Packing Princeton (<https://shupprinceton.org>), Arm-in-Arm (<https://arminarm.org>), and TASK (<http://www.trentonsoupkitchen.org>).

*"Every Israelite is entitled to two meals and a place to sleep. And, for the sake of peace, so are the non-Israelites."* (Joseph Caro, *Shulchan Aruch*, Code of Jewish Law, c. 1550)



Contributed by Ross Wishnick and Melissa Hager

# The Imperative of Food Insecurity

## Active Learning

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### Questions

- Q1. What percentage of children in the United States experienced FI in 2020?
- Q2. What percentage of children in the following categories are obese—poorest, near poor, just above poverty and doing well?
- Q3. What percentage of families live in “food deserts,” where there are no supermarkets? What elements of racism are reflected in these data?
- Q4. How are rural families affected by the two phenomena of FI and food deserts?

*See below for answers*

### Exercises and Scenarios

1. Hold an “Oxfam banquet.” As the event begins, have participants draw slips from a hat. One slip reads “Enjoy a glorious full meal with everything you could want to eat.” A second slip reads, “Have a good family meal.” A third slip reads, “You are eligible for minimum sustenance [perhaps a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with a bag of chips and an apple].” A fourth possibility could be “Have some bread, butter and a need to beg for food.” Make your own adaptations. See <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/take-action/events/oxfam-hunger-banquet/>
2. Choose a week to live on the 12 cents/100kcal cost of the USDA Thrifty Food Plan (TFP). This is about \$6.00 a day. Keep a food log showing what foods you ate and how much they cost. Estimates are okay. The Center for Disease Control guide from USDA for the TFP is from 2006; however, the foods suggested remain the same. [[https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/usda\\_food\\_plans\\_cost\\_of\\_food/TFP2006Report.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/usda_food_plans_cost_of_food/TFP2006Report.pdf)]  
For the first day or two, count your food costs. For the next two days, limit your food costs to that amount of money. Set your choices of food without regard to whether you are going to work or school or not. You will have to prepare your own food to carry with you to work or school. Opponents of programs for food supplementation assure that “It can be done on a TFP or LCFP budget.” It cannot as the purchase of any foods requiring someone else to prepare them will drive the cost beyond what the TFP or Low-Cost FP’s allows. Compare your experience with others who are following the plan.
3. To show how food programs work, imagine that 1/3 of your food costs was paid for by a federal supplementary program. These programs are WIC (Women Infants Children) for pregnant women and children under five years of age and supplemental school feeding. Now you have \$9 to spend. Get together with others to discuss the difference in diet quality when receiving supplementary food or funds to purchase food. The Active Learning module on confronting Poverty has more information on the ways in which poverty affects foods selection.
4. Use Google maps to chart the food resources of Princeton and surrounding communities. This would include markets labeled by size and availability of fresh fruit and produce, taverns, restaurants, and cafes. Check the relative prices for commonly purchased items. Draw an annotated map to show food resources. Have you lived somewhere else? Have a summer place? Do again for another location. This is a basic exercise suggested by Derrick Jelliffe in his classic monograph from the World Health Organization, “Assessment of the Nutritional Status of the Community” of 1966.

### Answers

1. Thirteen percent of all children and 40% of poor children in the United States experienced FI in 2017. About 3% of children experience a second level of FI having to get food from friends or family or where the parents restrict their food. About 1% experience actual hunger.

# The Imperative of Food Insecurity

## Active Learning

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### Answers (cont.)

2. Children living in families with incomes well below the poverty levels are not that likely to be obese, about 12%. The highest levels, about 22% are in the near poverty levels. Families with incomes above 4 times the poverty level are also unlikely to have obese children again about 12%. These children are also unlikely to have nutrient deficiencies, unlike the very poor.
3. Of all U.S. households, 2.3 million (2.2 percent) live more than a mile from a supermarket and do not have access to a vehicle. An additional 3.2 percent live between a half-mile to a mile from a supermarket with no vehicle access. 23.5 million people live in low-income areas more than one mile from a supermarket. Low-income census tracts have half as many supermarkets as wealthy tracts. 8 percent of African Americans live in a census tract with a supermarket, compared to 31 percent of whites. Low-income zip codes have 30 percent more convenience stores, which tend to lack healthy items, than middle-income zip codes.
4. Residents in 20 percent of rural counties live more than 10 miles from a supermarket. For every additional supermarket in a census tract, produce consumption increases for 32 percent of African Americans and 11 percent of whites. From <<https://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/desert%20stats.pdf>>

### Resources

#### General

For food security in the United States, search <Key Statistics and Graphics for the United States from the USDA>.

#### Experience

##### Gabe Rivlin

[www.upworthy.com/do-you-know-what-food-insecurity-looks-like-this-woman-s-story-might-change-your-mind](http://www.upworthy.com/do-you-know-what-food-insecurity-looks-like-this-woman-s-story-might-change-your-mind)

"Real Stories of Hunger in America" | Feeding America. <[www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-America](http://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-America-real-stories)> real-stories:>. These tell you how Americans facing hunger and how the Feeding America network of food banks is making a difference.

Impact of food costs that exceed the ability of families to afford nutritious food. (These include the editor as author)

- 
- Carlson A, Frazão E. "Food costs, diet quality and energy balance in the United States," *Physiol Behav.* 2014 Jul;134:20-31.
  - Darmon N, Drewnowski A. "Contribution of food prices and diet cost to socioeconomic disparities in diet quality and health: a systematic review and analysis." *Nutrition Reviews.* 2015 Oct;73(10):643-60.
  - Karp RJ, Cheng C, Meyers AF. "The appearance of discretionary income: influence on the prevalence of under- and over-nutrition." *Int J Equity Health.* 2005 Jun 28;4:10.:
  - Karp RJ, Wong G, Orsi M. "Demonstrating Nutrient Cost Gradients: A Brooklyn Case Study." In *J Vit and Nutrition.* 2014;84(5-6):244-51.

# The Imperative of Confronting Food Insecurity

## Lesson Plan

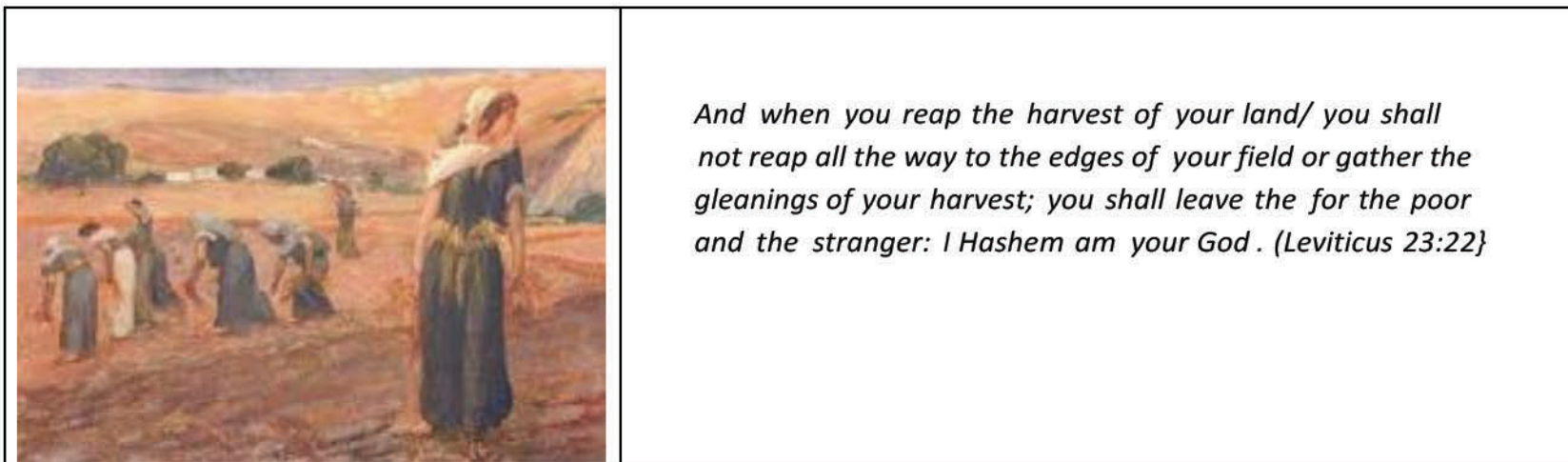
The **Goal** is to address access to food as a human right. Food Insecurity is only a "warning bell" signaling a concern that there are severe nutrition deficiencies.

The **Objectives**: On completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- **Define and contrast** Food Insecurity (FI), malnutrition and hunger.
- **Provide** statistics on extent of problem.
- **Quote** the Code of Jewish Law on the right of all for food and shelter.
- **Describe** three solutions for FI.

**Introduction ( 20 minutes)**

**Figure 1. The gleaners as imagined .**



*The story of Ruth, ancestor of King David and of Jesus, has captivated artists and authors over the past 2,500 years. A mitzvah is almost always a commandment and not an act of charity.*

### The Code of Jewish law

"Every Israelite is entitled to two meals and a place to sleep. And, for the sake of peace, so are the non-Israelites." (Joseph Caro, *Shulchan Aruch, Code of Jewish Law*, c. 1550)

### Definitions

- Food Insecurity is a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.
- Hunger, an intense desire to eat, is a phenomenon based on immediate need at times with a psychological overlay.
- Malnutrition has four categories based on over- and undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and an imbalance of nutrients in diseases such as diabetes. Of note, undernourished children are not necessarily hungry, as hunger diminishes with starvation. They are, however, almost invariably food insecure.

### Some statistics

- About 14% of all families are unable at some time in the month to afford nutritious food
- For families with children living in poverty, however, 40% have experienced FI.
- In about 5% of these families, parents must limit what they eat or find places for their children to eat.
- And then there are the homeless, about 200,000 people, who by definition are food insecure.
- Approximately 12% (~500) of the ~3,500 Princeton Public School students receive free or reduced-price lunch. The school food service provides many students with breakfast
- Counselors and support personnel at Princeton High School keep food supplies on hand to make sure that students are not hungry while in school.

# The Imperative of Confronting Food Insecurity

## Lesson Plan

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### Concerns

- At the lowest level, food is distributed through food pantries and the soup kitchens.
- At a higher level, food is provided to children in school and other settings. Most often an application is required. This infers the stigma of acknowledging poverty.
- At a higher level, food programs are available for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) as a nutritious food prescription that is filled in food markets.
- The necessity of application and limits on resources diminish effectiveness.
- In France, resources are distributed in a booklet given to all pregnant women and to newborns.
- At the highest level, there are programs to assure that incomes are sufficient to purchase nutritious food.
  
- There are also concerns for “food deserts,” places in both urban and rural communities where there are no markets nearby.
- Moreover, as food costs rise or incomes fall food selection narrows to those foods providing most energy at lowest cost with a diminution of nutrient content in the diet. If these conditions persist, malnutrition will ensue.

### **Exercise (20 minutes)**

*Be sure to give a warning for “curriculum violence” as elements of food insecurity may be in the lives of participants and their families not be apparent .*

The week before the presentation distribute slips marked, “Affluent = \$20,” “Well to do = \$10,” “Worker = \$5,” and “Food Insecure \$0.”

Only have three Affluent and three Food Insecure slips

### Menu

- \$20 buys a 5-course meal with appetizers, entree, wine, selections of meat and vegetables, and dessert.
- \$10 buys a 3-course meal with entree, beer, salad, and dessert
- \$5 buys a sandwich, a beer, and some chips

Hold an application process at the conclusion of the presentation. The three Food Insecure participants can apply for a \$5 meal slip; however, only two are provided. The three Affluent will meet and decide which two of the Food Insecure get these, and before the meal the third will have to ask for some food from the others.

None of this will actually happen for the meal! Order pizza and beverages for all the participants who will discuss outcome and review definitions of FI, malnutrition and hunger. Discuss the depth of the problem of FI, review the *Code of Jewish Law* quote and say what it means to them. Have you ever had to limit your intake of nutritious food so as to get enough to eat, the Engels’ Law?

# The Imperative of Confronting Food Insecurity

## Lesson Plan

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### Evaluation

Anonymously report personal experience

1 = never; 2 = occasionally; 3 = for a time, 4 = ever-present

Food Insecurity = [\_\_\_\_]; Hunger = [\_\_\_\_]; Malnutrition = [\_\_\_\_]

Comment on your own or on an observed element of FI, hunger or malnutrition.

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Have you ever experienced or observed having to select a high calorie food because of cost? Describe.

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**“ You shall not bend/distort justice  
[ for ] an orphan or stranger . . . ”**

*Dt 24:17*

# The Imperative of Confronting Food Insecurity

## Lesson Plan

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### Resources

Information on the impact of food costs that exceed the ability of families to afford nutritious food.

- Carlson A, Frazão E. "Food costs, diet quality and energy balance in the United States." *Physiol Behav.* 2014 Jul;134:20-31.
- Darmon N, Drewnowski A. "Contribution of food prices and diet cost to socioeconomic disparities in diet quality and health: a systematic review and analysis." *Nutrition Reviews.* 2015 Oct;73(10):643-60.
- Karp RJ, Cheng C, Meyers AF. "The appearance of discretionary income: influence on the prevalence of under- and over-nutrition." *Int J Equity Health.* 2005 Jun 28;4:10-14.
- Karp RJ, Wong G, Orsi M. "Demonstrating nutrient cost gradients: A Brooklyn case study." In *J Vit and Nutrition.* 2014;84(5-6):244-51.

**“ Remember that you were  
slaves in Egypt . . . ”**

*Dt 24:18*

**“ The gleanings will be for the stranger,  
for the orphan, and for the widow . . . ”**

*Dt 24:19*



**“ . . . the land of Canaan. . . . wherein they were strangers . . . ”**

*Exod 6:4*

**“ I am a stranger and an alien residing among you . . . ”**

*Gen 23:4*

**“ Rejoice with the Levite and the stranger that is among you . . . ”**

*Dt 26:11*

**“ Give a tenth of your produce to the stranger, orphan, and widow . . . ”**

*Dt 26:12*

# 9. The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

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*"I command you: open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land/' {Dt.15:11} both known and unknown and thus to all who dwell on this earth (al kol yoshvay tayvel)."*

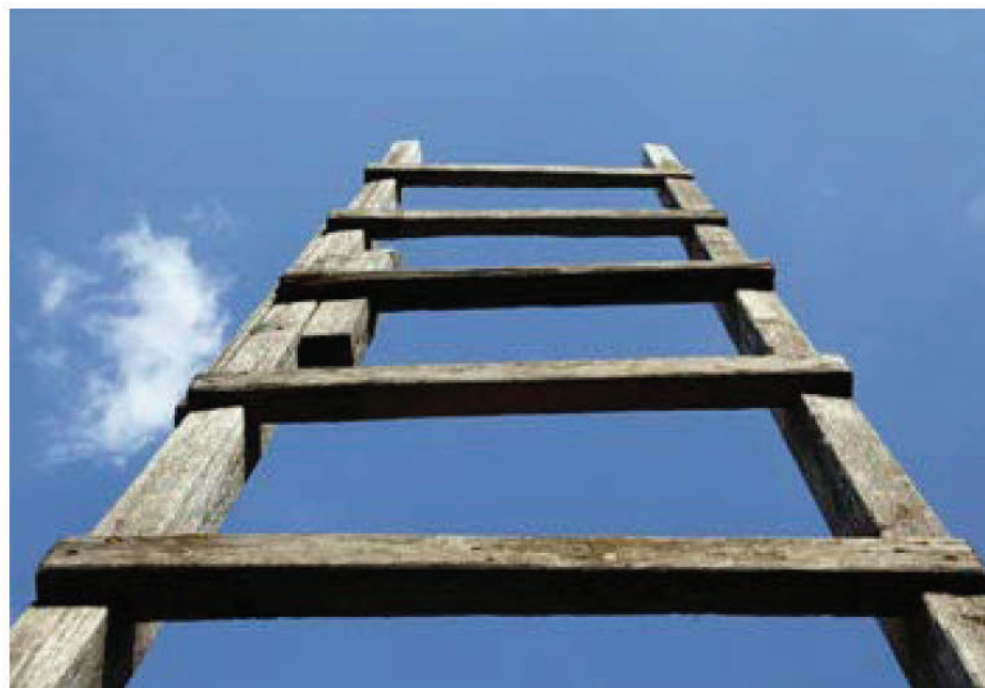
Don Isaac Abravanel, circa 1490.

## Dimensions of the Problem

The 15th century rabbi, physician and philosopher, Moses ben Maimon (Rambam), known as "Maimonides" to the world, listed 8 ascending steps for charity ("Rambam's Ladder").

The highest form of charity is "by loan or gift to enable someone to no longer to need charity."

The primary cause for the consequences of poverty is poverty itself and not the various associated factors that cause people to be poor. Permitting widespread impoverishment based on the few who do well is "survivor justification." The consequences of poverty are compounded by an overlay of racial and ethnic prejudices, unfeeling responses to "others" in society. Suggestions draw from a mix of secular and religious sources:



- The highest level in Rambam's ladder is "to help sustain a person before they become impoverished by offering a substantial gift in a dignified manner, or by extending a suitable loan, or by helping them find employment or establish themselves in business so as to make it unnecessary for them to become dependent on others."
- The higher levels are adequate gifts, given graciously and anonymously. However, to give of *oneself* at the 2nd level, small amounts of money or effort given "graciously and in person though not adequate," chips away the separation felt by those in need who often think, "No one cares."
- From Confucius, "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach him to fish and he eats for a lifetime." One must, however, consider whether the waterways have been polluted by unrestricted economic efforts giving wealth to some and a fouled environment to others.

## The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

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### Three elements necessary to escape poverty are:

- Have the education and training necessary to work. The specific unmet need is early childhood education. Graduates of Head Start entering school with a readiness to learn and read by 4th grade, graduate, as adults enter the workforce and are unlikely to enter the criminal justice system. Support early childhood education.
- Have a job with a living wage. Currently it requires 80 hours of work at the minimum wage to bring a family to the 1.8 times poverty level to obtain the necessities of life.
- Have the essentials of health care, housing and nutrition.

**“ You shall open wide your hand  
to your brother, to the needy  
and the poor in your land . . . ”**

*Dt 15:11*

**“ The stranger in your gates  
must rest on Shabbat . . . ”**

*Exod 20:7*

# The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

## Local Needs and Actions

Let us follow the model of all other industrial democracies. Use the wealth produced by a free market economy to maintain the general well-being, not just those with wealth.

- Insure the necessities of everyday life to all when "costs have exceeded the ability of those who provide those necessities to have them." [Catholic Bishops, 1986.]
- Provide sufficiently to support those in need, symbolically "the widow, the orphan and sojourner in [our] midst." [Dt 24:17/27:19 & all through Isaiah]
- Address racism, the "original sin" of our society.

## Where we are today and where we are going

At present we are the most unequal of all industrial democracies. Using a variety of "Gini Indices," named for an Italian economist, a nation where all wealth is held by a single individual would have a Gini Coefficient of "100," while perfect equality would be a Gini "0."

### Gini Coefficients' for five countries

Country	Median wealth per adult	Gini Coefficient	Universal health care and type
Austria	71,075	30.2	Yes, multi system
Canada	151,258	33.3	Yes, single payer
Israel	92,426	38.6	Yes, multi system
Japan	119,999	32.9	Yes, salaried health providers
United States	93,271	41.5	No

See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_wealth\\_per\\_adult](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_wealth_per_adult)

## The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

### The Intersection of Racism & Poverty

The crises of racism and income poverty in the United States are thoroughly entwined. One cannot attempt to address one without considering the impact of the other. Moreover, addressing them as complementary rather than as zero-sum gives great advantage to affected individuals, communities, and society taken-as-a-whole.

In 1997, William Julius Wilson said, "[It is necessary] to lay the basis for some sort of meaningful interracial coalition down the road to develop a public rhetoric that captures the things that we have in common because right now the rhetoric emphasizes things that divide us." And, in 2008, Derrick Bell wrote, "The interest of Blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when they converge with the interest of whites."



*Dr. King speaks on behalf of striking sanitation workers in Memphis*

The ultimate goal, economic justice for all, is hardly revolutionary. Rather, from the similarly titled US Catholic Bishops letter, wealth generated by a free market economy can and should provide workers with a living wage. This will ensure that essential goods and services be affordable for those who produce and provide them.

For more on this topic, see: United States Catholic Bishops' *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (1986), W.E.B. Du Bois' *The souls of Black folks* (1903), Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres' *Derrick Bell: the scholar remembered* (2007), and Henry Louis Gates' interview of William Julius Wilson (1997).

**Contributed by Robert Karp**

**“ The land is Mine and you are strangers/gerim with Me . . . ”**

*Lev 25:23*

# The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

## Active Learning

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### Questions

Q1. What is the average or mean yearly household **income** [earnings] in the U.S. [2018 data]?

a. For everyone? b. For White households? c. For Black households? d. For Latinx households?

About \$40k..... \$60K ..... \$80k ..... \$100k.

Q2. What is the average or mean **wealth** [sum of assets] for households in the United States?

a. For everyone? b. For White households? c. For Black households? d. For Latinx households?

About: \$20k..... \$120k .....\$180k.

Q3. What percentage of families live with household incomes below the poverty level (PL)?

a. For everyone? b. For White households? c. For Black households? d. For Latinx households?

About: 10%..... 20% .....30%

Q4. With respect to total number of households with incomes below the PL, which of the following is true?

a. More are White than Black; b. More are Black than White; c. They are about equal.

Q5. Where does the United States rank in comparison with other industrialized democracies for

a) average income, b) life expectancies and infant mortality and c) resources available to the population?

### Exercises and Scenarios

The Poverty Level (PL) for a family of two adults and two children is \$27,500 per year (2020).

How many hours would adults in a family have to work in a week to earn the PL? Do that on your own or take the PL [\$27,500] and divide by 50 (allotting a 2-week vacation) to get a weekly wage of \$550. To reach \$550 per week at \$10 per hour would require 55 hours a week of work. At \$15 per hour would require  $[\$550/15]$  38 hours per week.

The Department of Health and Human Services has recognized that an income at the PL is not adequate to sustain a family. The federal government provides benefits for incomes up to 1.8 PL, which for this family of four would be \$49,500, per year, \$990 per week. This is not achievable at \$10 per hour. At \$15 per hour and two people working the 66 hours needed is possible.

Discuss in pairs and then in the group the dynamic of a couple trying to live with PL income while parenting.

# The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

## Active Learning

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3. The phenomenon of “Food Insecurity (FI), an inability to purchase foods desired, see module, #8, was identified in the mid-1990s by Christine Olsen, a nutritionist at Cornell University in rural mid-New York State. Dr. Olsen identified three occurrences any one of which would throw the family into FI. These are the truck broke down, the roof leaked, or the boiler broke. Describe what would happen to food purchases if one or more of these or similar occurrences were experienced in your family.

One occurrence \_\_\_\_\_

Two occurrences \_\_\_\_\_

Three occurrences \_\_\_\_\_

What would have to happen for your family to become Food Insecure?

4. The Preventing Hunger and Food insecurity unit has an Active Learning on the Oxfam Banquet, which could also be used for this poverty unit.

### Answers

**A1. What is the average or mean yearly household income [earnings] in the U.S. [2018 data]?**

All = \$61.3k; White= \$81.3k; Black= \$40.2k; Latinx = \$50k . See <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2020/demo/p60-270.html>

**A2. What is the average or mean wealth [sum of assets] for households in the United States?**

All= \$98k; White= \$178k; Black= \$19k; Latinx = \$21k See <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/02/27/examining-the-black-white-wealth-gap/>

There is a \$15 billion difference in funding available for predominately African American school districts and schools in White communities, since school funding depends primarily on property values.

**A3. What percentage of families live with household incomes below the poverty level (PL)? a. For everyone? b. For White households? c. For Black households? d. For Latinx households?**

All = 11.8%; 3b: White 8.1%; 3c: Black 20.8%; 3d: Latinx 18.6% See <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2019/demo/p60266.html>

**A4. With respect to total number of households with incomes below the PL, which of the following is true?**

More White households have income below the PL than Black. Here are the data:



## The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

### Active Learning

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Population in millions	Below poverty in millions	Percent below poverty	
Non-Hispanic Whites (NHWs)=195	16.7	8.1	Highest number and lowest percentage
Blacks - 42.7	8.8	20.8	Lowest number and highest percentage
Latinx = 59.9	10.5	18.6	
Total of US = 344	38.1	11.8	

From these data, one can see that those identified as "non-Hispanic White" have the lowest percentage of families living in poverty and the highest number. By percentage, Black families are more likely to have incomes below the poverty level than White families; however, more White families are affected by poverty than Black families.

A5a. For income, the US ranks #6, just ahead of Canada

A5b. For life expectancy, the US ranks #35, just ahead of Cuba. For infant mortality, we rank 33 among 36 industrial democracies. All of these data, when separated by race/ ethnicity show a White population near the top and a non-white population essentially living in a low-ranking industrial democracy. We are a "Fifth World" country with great wealth and great impoverishment existing side-by-side.

A5c For resources provided the poor, we are the only industrial democracy that does not have a system for health care for all citizens. Limitations on other necessities - education, nutrition, and housing - follow the same pattern as health care. The effect on life expectancy and infant mortality is a consequence. A newborn's ZIP code predicts life expectancy and infancy mortality.

In 1980, life expectancy at birth in the U.S. was similar to that of comparable countries. Circa 2020, the U.S. has the lowest life expectancy at birth of all industrial democracies. These data are affected by class and racial divisions that do not affect data from the other countries. See

<https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/u-s-life-expectancy-compare-countries/#item-start>. See also, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race\\_and\\_health\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_and_health_in_the_United_States).

# The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

## Active Learning

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### Resources

#### Historical

Michael Harrington's *The other America* (1962) attracted the attention of John F. and Robert Kennedy and was the impetus for the "War on Poverty." Harrington was a disciple of Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement as well as of Eugene Victor Debs and Norman Thomas of the Socialist Party who promoted democratic socialism in the United States.

Michael Katz. *The undeserving poor; How the War on Poverty became the war against welfare.* (1986). This ironically titled book shows how the War on Poverty was crushed. He gives two reasons. The first is the role of the Protestant ethic in determining public policy. From John Calvin's assertion "Wealth implies Grace" follows (falsely) that poverty reflects a lack of grace from which comes a vision of the "undeserving poor." A second observation is that of pure greed. Nothing can interfere with the transfer of wealth from working people and the needy to the wealthy. A third observation is a racial caste system where access to resources of all sorts is denied persons of color attempting to step out of defined places in a race-based hierarchy.

#### Overview

- Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo's *Poor economics: A radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty* led to a Nobel Prize in Economics in 2019. Their opinions are based on careful observation rather than off site theorization. Simple assumptions about income transfers, for example, are challenges. They eschew ideology considering how to alleviate poverty.
- Amartya Sen won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1998. An important element of his work is his description of the destabilizing effects of poverty. Unequal societies cannot remain so without repressing multiple layers of society leading eventually to a breakdown of cohesion. With respect to defining poverty, Sen wrote, "You cannot draw a poverty line and then apply it across the board to everyone the same way, without taking into account [both] personal characteristics and [life] circumstances."
- Isabelle Wilkerson's recent book *Caste: The origins of it all* (2020) lays out the impact of a race-based caste system on the oppressed "caste" and also the dominant one. In her book, Ms. Wilkerson avoids using "race" and "racism" to describe life in the United States for African Americans. A "caste" is a predetermined categorization of a groups systemically placed at a disadvantage without regards to individual qualities or achievement. She uses the conditions of the Dalits in a caste system in India and Jews in Nazi Germany for comparisons.
- Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law* and the impact of "redlining" is discussed in the Active Learning for Confronting Racism
- One might expect a listing here of the life experiences of those who rose from poverty in which the subjects succeeded. Often, they are presented as exceptions to the common experience of poverty and thus as justification. Survival of injustice cannot be used as an excuse for injustice.

# The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

## Lesson Plan

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The **Goal** is to develop an encompassing understanding of poverty considering definitions, variations, and consequences. The intertwining of poverty and racial biases is of special concern.

The **Objectives**: On completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- **Define** poverty using the World Health Organization and Olshansky definitions
- **Present** approximate numbers and percentages of children and families living in poverty in the United States by age, race, and ethnicity
- **Identify** differences in wellbeing between deficits in wealth and those of income
- **Recognize** the emotional as well as economic burdens of living in poverty

### Introduction

The World Health Organization and the United Nations describe poverty as income inadequate to sustain life and health. This description, taken alone, is not usable for the provision of benefits. Definition is required. In 1964, Molly Orshansky, a dietician with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, suggested a "Poverty Level (PL)" definition of three times the cost of the Low Cost Food Program adjusted for family size and constellation. An adjustment suggested by the Medical Research Council in the 1990s was to consider the cost of living in a specific locale for what is required to sustain life and health in the United States. At present, an income of 1.8 times the PL is used for provision of federal benefits. In 2023, the poverty level of a two parent, two children family is approximately \$27,000 per year. Here are the breakdowns of numbers, percentages and racial and ethnic differences. From the Census Bureau for 2021:

- The official poverty rate for all was **11.6 percent**, with 37.9 million people in poverty.
- The child poverty rate (for people under age 18) was 16.9%.
- The poverty rate for those ages 65 and over was 10.3%, 2.3 percentage points lower than the all age rate.

### **Poverty rates**

- **For all: 11.6%, (37.9 million people)**
- **For under age 18: 16.9%**
- **for 65 and over: 10.3%,**

For the racial and ethnic breakdown, the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported in 2018 that 32% of Black families had yearly incomes below the poverty level as opposed to 11.0% of White families and 36% of Hispanic ones.

### **Median income by race/ethnicity**

- **32% of Black families had yearly incomes below the Poverty Level *as compared to* 11.0% of White families and 36% of Hispanic ones.**

Lack of wealth in a poor family is of far greater consequence than lack of income. Income poverty is a serious but possibly transient phenomenon. Wealth, the net difference between what is saved, what is owned, and what is owed is long lasting and exists in family networks. A deficit in income or the need to meet an obligation or address an emergency expense can be met when there is wealth in the extended family. Without wealth, families will not achieve an economic or social security.

Here are the wealth data from the Census Bureau

### **Median accumulated wealth by race/ethnicity**

- **White families = \$139,000**
- **Black families = \$12,780**
- **Hispanic families = \$19,990**

# The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

## Lesson Plan

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Here is why so great a difference exists. The single most important way families accumulate wealth is through homeownership. For example, 1934 New Deal legislation that allowed low income families to purchase homes with affordable down payments and repayment rates enabled White families to own homes, for example, in one of the Levittowns of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania for about \$40,000 in today's dollar value, which was about twice the adjusted common yearly salary. These homes now sell for about \$400,000 (8 times mean yearly worker's salary), a net gain of \$360,000 as well as an *unaffordability* for today's low income working family. The "redlining" policies of the Federal Housing Authority prevented the provision of mortgages to non-White families. Racially discriminatory covenants which allowed homeowners NOT to sell to non-whites, were not outlawed until the 1968 Fair Housing Act. These policies trapped African Americans in a cycle of economic poverty. The cumulative effects of these discriminatory practices have been an overwhelming concentration of wealth among White Americans and poverty among Black Americans, as well as the accentuation of income disproportions that resulted in higher poverty rates for non-White families compared with White ones.

### Exercises

*Be sure to give a warning for "curriculum violence" as elements of poverty may not be apparent in the lives of participants and their families.*

**Income Poverty:** For 10 minutes in pairs address the problem that first drew the attention of Christine Olson a dietician at Cornell University who observed what she called "Food Insecurity (FI)" in poorer families living in central New York States. One of three occurrences threw them into FI: the boiler broke, the roof leaked, or the truck broke down. It is meal time when the impact is first noticed, when foods the 8- and 10-year-old children are expecting aren't there. Hold an imaginary conversation within the family describing their feelings. Discuss the emotional impact. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, called SNAP and remembered as "Food Stamps," would enable a return to previous food choices. You have always seen that as "welfare" and are resistant. Again, discuss the emotional impact. [*Editor's note: I was on Food Stamps for my 3<sup>d</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year of medical school. It made an enormous difference in my diet.*]

**Wealth Poverty:** 10 minutes as a group address the emotional impact of having to ask members of your family for \$2,000 to meet an urgent payment. Consider three possibilities: 1) There are family members with sufficient wealth to easily give you the \$2,000. 2) There are family members who will have to forgo their own plans for a vacation or something similar to give you the \$2,000. 3) The third possibility is that there is no one to help you.

In some settings one could propose the following scenario. The mother in the wealth-poor family is 38-years-old. She has two children. She realizes that she is pregnant and though she and husband are concerned about being able to afford another child, they decide to continue the pregnancy. Testing at 10 weeks pregnancy shows that the fetus has trisomy 23, "Down Syndrome." That changes their minds. However, they are in Birmingham AL where an abortion is illegal for what is called "trait choice." It would cost \$2,000 for a round trip to Newark NJ where abortion would be available. Now consider the emotional impact of wealth poverty on this family.

# The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

## Lesson Plan

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### Evaluation

Define poverty with a comment on the adjustment that was made to the definition.

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What are the approximate numbers of poor families, poor children and poor adults in the US? Give approximate differences by race and ethnicity.

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Give an experience of your own or one that you have read about or observed showing the importance of wealth.

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Similarly, give experiences of your own, read about or observed of the emotional burden of poverty.

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# The Imperative of Addressing Poverty

## Lesson Plan

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### Resources

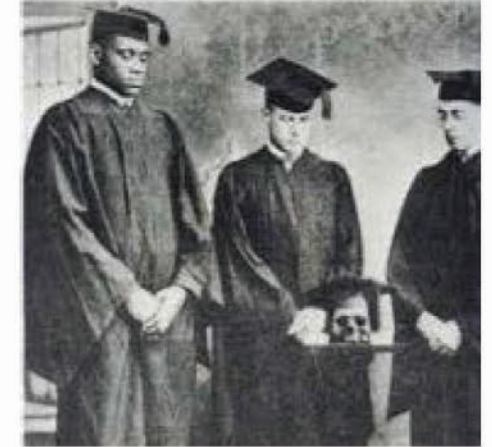
In mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Friedrich Engels recognized that when income fell or food costs rose food selection narrowed to those foods that provide the most energy at lowest cost. When these conditions persist, micronutrients diminish in the diet and over time malnutrition ensues as has occurred in the United States. The four levels of income are shown below.

- "Necessities" for below 1.8 PL,
  - "Discretionary" for up to 3XPL,
  - "Savings" for up to 4 or 5XPL,
  - "Investments" for over 4 or 5XPL.
- 
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. How Many Kids in the United States Are Living in Poverty?  
Available at <https://www.aecf.org/blog/children-living-in-poverty-in-america>
  - Karp R J. "Redlining and Lead Poisoning: Causes and Consequences". *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*. 2023;XXX(X):431-46.
  - United States Census Bureau. Gaps in wealth of Americans by household types. Available at <http://census.gov/library/stories/2019/08/gaps-in-wealth-americans-by-household-type.html>
  - Wilson WJ. "Power of Place: Remarks from William Julius Wilson," (April 6, 2021) – The Wilson Institute at Harlem Children's Zone Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abGIE4F0FCc.27>,
  - Wood LL Jr. "'Almost 'no Negro veteran....could get a loan:' African-Americans, The G.I. Bill and the NAACP campaign against racial segregation." *The Journal of African American History*. 2013;98(3): 392-417.

# 10. The Imperative of Confronting Racism

## Dimensions of the Problem

- The current national climate of intolerance has seen denigrating statements and violence perpetrated against racial and ethnic groups including African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx, and Muslim Americans.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had the greatest negative medical and financial impacts on marginalized groups, especially African American and Latinx folks.
- The outcomes of racism, the ongoing racial discrepancies in health, wealth, poverty rate, education, home ownership, incarceration, etc., are often more stark in New Jersey than in the United States as a whole.
- The history of racism in America, specifically racism against African and Native Americans, must be understood in order to address income poverty effectively. As W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in 1903, "The White man, as well as the Negro, is bound and barred by the color-line."



*Paul Robeson (1898 -1976)  
Princeton's native son,  
outstanding scholar, athlete,  
actor, singer, activist. The  
photo is of his 1919 graduation  
from Rutgers where he was a  
Phi Beta Kappa honor student.*

*"As a Rabbi in Berlin during the Hitler era I learned...that bigotry and hatred are not the most urgent problem. The most urgent, the most disgraceful, the most shameful and the most tragic problem is silence." - Rabbi Joachim Prinz at the 1963 March on Washington*

## Local Issues and Actions

- Princeton's African American community predates the American Revolution, when it consisted of both enslaved and free Black people. In the face of segregation, the African American residents of the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood developed their own vibrant religious, educational, commercial, and social establishments and institutions. The 1948 New Jersey constitution outlawed segregation in public institutions. Nevertheless, to a large extent Princeton remains residentially segregated.
- The 1990s saw an influx of immigrants primarily from the Caribbean, Central America (in particular Guatemala), and Mexico. Many settled in the Witherspoon-Jackson neighborhood. Revaluation of properties in 2010 prior to the town's consolidation saw a sudden rise in real estate taxes in the neighborhood, resulting in a number of residents losing their homes.
- The integration of the elementary schools in 1948 under the "Princeton Plan," without adequate training of White teachers to understand their own biases, actually led to a loss of attention to African American students, who were used to their own dedicated teachers in the "Witherspoon School for Colored Students," and a decline in standardized test scores and college attendance. Many of the students were not scheduled in the "Academic Track" to prepare them for college. Over the years, attempts were made to address an "achievement gap" between the performance of African American students and White (and now Asian) students through groups such as the Board of Education (BOE) Minority Education Committee (no longer in existence), BOE Equity Committee, and an Equity Audit. The Audit Report's recommendations include developing culturally responsive teaching and recruiting and maintaining a more diverse staff.

## The Imperative of Confronting Racism

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### Things to Do

- Become aware of our own biases and how they may be expressed (microaggressions) even unintentionally. Begin the introspective work necessary to address those biases, a lifelong practice.
- Educate ourselves about race and racism, filling in the gaps in our education about African American history, Native American history, and histories of other marginalized groups in America. Participate in events and workshops focused on race. Locally, Not in Our Town Princeton holds monthly Continuing Conversations on Race and White Privilege at the Princeton Public Library and maintains a website ([notprinceton.org](http://notprinceton.org)) where events, trainings, articles, etc. are posted.
- Some of us will need to interrogate the “whiteness” of our lives. Have we developed friendships with People of Color? If not, why? In our White friendships and family relationships, do we make a point of talking about race and racism, even with very young children, and speaking up when someone in our circle says or does something racially offensive?
- What actions do we take to advocate for laws and policies to establish racial equity? Do we use our influence where we work and in the organizations to which we belong to examine their policies and practices and make changes where necessary to move toward racial equity? Also, support organizations for Jews of Color like Jews in all Hues, Jewish Multiracial Network, Jews of Color Initiative, Be’chol Lashon.
- Be a change maker, sharing your new found insights and knowledge with others. For instance, enroll in the Examining Racism workshop that introduces participants to basic concepts about race & racism. Find follow up activities to keep learning and doing inner work.
- Look at the White Jewish privilege checklist of the Jewish Multiracial Network. Check all the statements that apply to you. At the end, if you identify as white, try to list at least two more ways you have privilege in the Jewish community.
- Jews of Color comprise 10-12% of Jews in the United States. Check out the “Because Jews come in many colors” poster from the Jewish Multiracial Network at the foot of the stairwell to the Youth Lounge.

**Contributed by Linda Oppenheim**

*Both sides of my ancestry hold a lot of pain at being “othered” and being oppressed. I want every Jewish community to have an educational platform to contextualize discussions around race. This includes summits, days of learning, and educational campaigns around racial equity, awareness, and sensitivity. Through history and knowledge of the past, we can create a stronger, healthier bridge for the future. - Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein (Rabbi Rothstein's multiracial family has been active in the Jewish Multiracial Network)*



# The Imperative of Confronting Racism

## Active Learning

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### Questions

1. What terms are applied to racial identity, either applied by oneself or to oneself. There are four “I’s” and one “S.”
2. Can you distinguish “being White” from “Whiteness” and “White supremacy?”
3. What is the breakdown by race or perhaps ethnicity of the Jewish population in the United States?
4. What was the Lenape population in what is now New Jersey before White settlement? Are there Lenape and other Native Americans living in NJ today?

### Exercises

*Keep the possibility of curriculum bias in mind. Some or many engaged with these scenarios and activities may have had family, friends, or themselves caught up in the circumstances described.*

1. Use a “social autobiography” to help you see your life in comparison to others’--advantages versus disadvantages, privileges versus adversities, available resources in your neighborhood. Create a narrative from your earliest memory. What were your educational opportunities? Were they fulfilled, that is, could you receive what you wanted or needed? Were there groceries and other stores selling the necessities of everyday life available for working families? Were there gardens and parks? Was there a traffic burden or danger crossing the street? How did you perceive the police? Who was in authority in your community, town or city and in your schools? Did they look like you? On completion, create a map of your neighborhood showing your resources. What surprised you?

To process, divide the entire group into small groups of 3 or 4. Have each person introduce themselves with what surprised them or what they became aware of by doing this exercise. Discuss for 15 minutes, and then return to the large group. A member of each small group will present one element of importance that came out of their discussion in the large group.

2. Consider the “American Dream” and “American Exceptionalism.” Quickly without over-thinking, write what these phrases mean to you in 15 words. In another 15 words write what “The American Dream” meant to your parents and if possible, to your grandparents. Now consider the Pledge of Allegiance which ends “with Liberty and Justice for all.” Are there groups in the United States that have been excluded from “for all?” If so, how?

Another discussion could be of the poem by Emma Lazarus on the Statue of Liberty. Lazarus was a descendant of Sephardic families that arrived here before the United States was formed. Read the whole poem aloud or sing to a melody written by Irving Berlin, who was a “tired and poor” refugee himself. It ends “Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door.” She wrote the poem in 1883. The promise of a “second founding” after the Civil War was broken. The defeated South was in the process of establishing a “Lost Cause” mythology and Jim Crow laws and practices. Knowing this and all that followed might shape your reading of the poem. How? Consider the discrimination against immigrants and their subsequent exclusion if they were not White, from northwest Europe, and mostly Protestants.

3. On entry to Princeton NJ, is a welcome sign with the words “Settled 1683.” Imagine that you are a member of the Lenape tribe.
  - a. Report on what you are thinking.
  - b. Write a request that the inscription be changed. What might the sign say?Convene a meeting of a “city council” of your own group to discuss the proposal for a change. Play various roles, then debrief. Also, of note, while few in number, there are Jewish Native Americans. The first Native Justice on the Washington State Supreme Court tells her story at <https://www.jta.org/2020/02/05/culture/native-amestablishing-victory-american-jewish-justice-raquel-montoya-lewis-tells-us-how-she-made-history>

# The Imperative of Confronting Racism

## Active Learning

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### Answers

1. "Race" is a social construct or categorization establishing a hierarchy of privilege and power. "Racism" is a set of activities related to the hierarchies of race.

Here are the 4 "Is" and one "S" defining race in multiple dimensions

a. **Ideology** is the process by which racism is reinforced by biases, language, symbols, and legal frameworks." (See Karen Fields and Barbara Fields' 2012 *Racecraft: The soul of inequality in America*. New York. Verso Books.)

b. **Interpersonal** are the relationships based on the ideology of race and racism .

c. **Internalized**, which includes elements of racism that have been incorporated in the identity of members of groups subjected to racism

d. **Institutional**, which includes policies and practices of organizations that promote racism in the society

e. **Structural** racism where the extant biases of racism are codified. The "redlining" of neighborhoods formed ghettos in cities that were maintained by federal policies carefully enunciated to limit access by "Negros," to use the term of the day, to affordable housing in "White" neighborhoods. It is important to connect the five "I's" with structural racism because the structures are built on the racial perceptions of the population and support all aspects of racism. The structures were never imposed on an unwilling White populous.

2. "Being White" is a person seen as being of European ancestry. This has been modified over the centuries by a continuous redefinition of "Whiteness" described in the literature provided below. "Whiteness" refers to the implicit biases and unearned advantages that derive from being seen as being White. "White Supremacy" is the avowed racism that, by intention, justifies privilege for those who are seen as being White. In the Resource section, see Noel Ignatiev on the Irish and Karen Brodwin on the Jews; these books describe how the Irish and the Jews went from nonwhite to white. The third book by Nell Irwin Painter gives a broad overview of the topic. All are excellent.

3. The self-identification of Jews in the United States from the Pew report of 2020 are White – 92%, Black – 2%, Asian – 2%, Latinx (Hispanic) 4%. There were Native Americans and Pacific Islanders, principally from Hawaii listed as "<1%." Half of the self-defined Asian and Black Jews responding to the Pew survey described themselves as "multiracial."

4. The current estimate for the pre-colonial Lenape people living in New Jersey is 20,000. They were supported by a mix of agriculture and hunting. Their convening points were on rivers including in present day Newark, Trenton and Camden [See <http://riseupnewark.com/chapters/chapter-1/native-americans/>]. There are three indigenous tribal groups currently recognized by the State of New Jersey: the Nanticoke Lenape in the south, the Powhatan Lenape in the region of Rancocas State Park, and the Ramapough in the northwest "Ramapo" mountains.

# The Imperative of Confronting Racism

## Active Learning

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### Resources

- W.E.B. DuBois. (1903) *Souls of Black Folks*. This is an essential source for what it meant and what it means to be Black in the United States. Of special note is his history of the Reconstruction period post-Civil War and the Redemption Period that followed reinstating slavery by another name
- Jean Toomer (1924) *Cane*. Jean Toomer was an author during what has been called “The Harlem Renaissance” of the 1920. *Cane* is a set of stories and poems
- Walter White (1948) *A man called White*. This autobiography contains a chilling scene where he infiltrated a Klan meeting. They knew that someone there was a “passing Negro,” and White had to escape.
- Mat Johnson. (2008) Podcast of Fresh Air with Terry Gross interviewing Mat Johnson in which he illustrates what a Black man does when stopped by the police. <https://www.wnyc.org/story/writer-mat-johnson-on-loving-day-and-life-as-a-black-boy-who-looks-white/>
- Layla Saad (2020) *Me and White Supremacy*. Sequence of 28 racism concepts and prompts for an individual to use to gain racial self-awareness.
- “Albert E. Hinds Memorial Walking Tour: African American Life in Princeton” hosted by the Historical Society of Princeton. Digital version developed and narrated by local historian and Not in Our Town Princeton board member Shirley Satterfield <https://www.princetonhistory.org/tour/>
- Kathryn Watterson (2017) *I Hear My People Singing: Voices of African American Princeton*. Interviews of African American residents by Princeton University students guided by Professor Watterson.

### Three primers on “whiteness”:

- \* Noel Ignatiev (1995) *How the Irish Became White* was the first of the contemporary writings on “Whiteness.” It described the arbitrariness of race assignment where “members of the “White club” get to decide who will enter.
- \* Karen Brodtkin (1998) *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* followed with an assessment of how the Jewish experience was similar to, but also differed from, that of the Irish. Again, it’s members of the White club getting to decide who will enter.
- Nell Irvin Painter (2010) *The History of White People* is a scholarly overview of “whiteness” from one of the United States’ preeminent scholars of African American history.

### *A piece of our history, circa 1860*

An important debate occurred within the Jewish communities of the United States in 1860. Secession of Southern states was impending. Protestant clergy in the South and elsewhere issued pleas for sermons that would encourage holding the country together; the pleas came with an implicit message, “Do not challenge slave-holding.” In response, Morris Raphall, Rabbi of the New York City Congregation B’nai Jeshurun, published “A Bible view of slavery,” which made three points. First, slavery was permitted in pre-Abrahamic times. Second, slavery was also permitted post-Abrahamic times with important restrictions, and third, slavery in the South does not meet the Abrahamic standard, but were it to do so, it would be legitimate. [see <http://www.jewish-history.com/civilwar/raphall.html>]

This drew a fiery response from David Einhorn, Rabbi of Baltimore’s Har Sinai congregation, and others. Einhorn had come to the United States from Austria to be the congregation’s first Reform rabbi. He had left the autocracy of central Europe to arrive in the Baltimore harbor to find enslaved Black people in chains. This drew his fury.

# The Imperative of Confronting Racism

## Active Learning

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### Resources (Cont.)

Einhorn began preaching abolitionist sermons and publishing a journal "Sinai" for the German speaking Jews in the United States. It included continual denunciations of slavery. In response to Raphall's sermon, Einhorn preached, "The War against Amalek," the historic enemy of the Jewish people. It included this passage, "Would the God who freed the Children of Israel from bondage under Pharaoh permit an infant to be torn from its mother's breast to be sold into slavery?" Rabbi Einhorn had avoided the wrath of slave holding Whites in Maryland until this sermon was published. He escaped in a wagon full of vegetables to Philadelphia to become Rabbi of Kneseth Israel Congregation. [see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Einhorn\\_\(rabbi\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Einhorn_(rabbi))]

The Biblical passages from Exodus and the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah were an inspiration for the enslaved Africans to escape their own bondage. For African American Christians, the Tanach provides the Exodus narrative and from Isaiah the passage "This is the fast I desire: To unlock the fetters of wickedness, and untie the cords of the yoke to let the oppressed go free; to break off every yoke." [58:6]. These verses from Isaiah are chanted on the morning of Yom Kippur making them the most heard passage in our liturgy. Rabbi Raphall's commentary misinterprets the Hebrew "eved" as "slave" in the context of chattel slavery rather than as servant. The Torah restrictions protected the rights of labor in that era. [David Blight's biography *Frederick Douglass* goes into great detail on this observation.]

Created by Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein

**“ Support a brother as you  
would a stranger. . . . ”**

*Lev 25:23*

**“ Judge/tzedek whether between a  
brother or a stranger . . . ”**

*Dt 1:16*

# The Imperative of Confronting Racism

## Lesson Plan

The **Goal:** We will address the necessity of confronting racism within the Jewish community that has corrupted the intent of *b'tzelem Elohim*. We are all made in the Image of God.

The **Objectives:** On completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- **Illustrate** the need to “speak up” when confronted with racial bias
- **Identify** breakdown by race/ethnicity of the Jewish population in the United States, and
- **Give examples** of how an institution can become racially inclusive.

### Introduction ( 20 minutes)

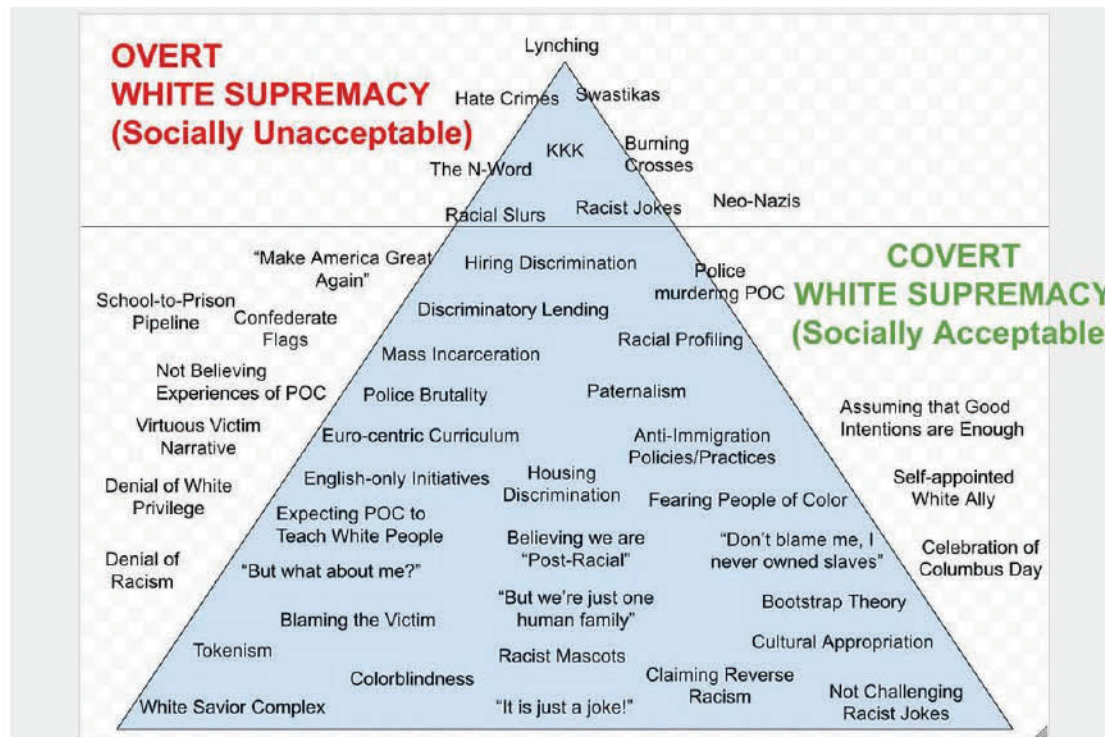
*Be sure to give a warning for “curriculum violence” as racial and ethnic identities may not be apparent.*

**Rabbi Joachim Prinz** in the speech just before Dr. King’s “I have a Dream” speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in August, 1963 drew from his experience as a rabbi in Berlin in the early Nazi years. **“The most urgent, the most disgraceful, the most shameful and the most tragic problem,” he said, “is silence.”**

### Confronting racism

For the most part, in the communities in which we live, the racial biases observed and experienced are “micro” rather than “macro-“aggressions. The figure below shows a pyramid of bigotry with the overt at the top and microaggressions at the base. It is likely that White Jews have engaged in microaggressions without realizing the offense.

**Figure 1**



# The Imperative of Confronting Racism

## Lesson Plan

### Breakdown by race/ ethnicity of Jews in the United States

The Jewish Multiracial Network was formed in the 1990s by a small group comprised mostly of White adoptive parents and some interracial couples with children. Here is a poster produced by the "JMN."

Figure 2. This is what Jews Look like.



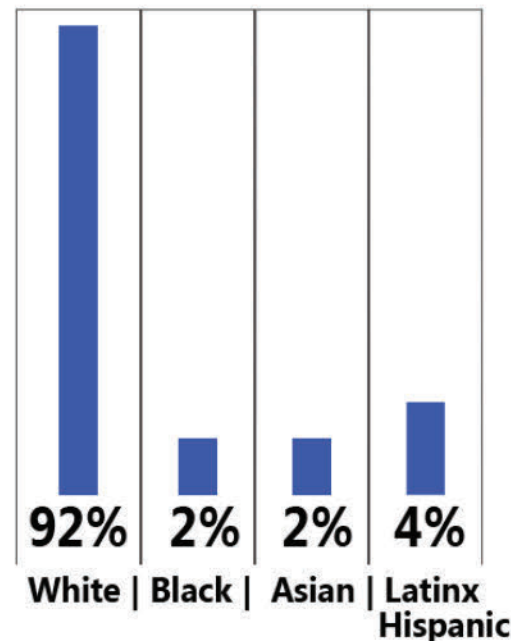
# The Imperative of Confronting Racism

## Lesson Plan

**Figure 3**

Self-identification of Jews in the U. S. from the Pew report shows:

White – 92%; Black – 2%; Asian – 2%; Latinx (Hispanic) 4%.



**Pick one of the following exercises**

*Be sure to give a warning for “curriculum violence” as the racial and ethnic ancestry of participants and their families may not be apparent.*

1. (20 minutes) Ask participants to fill out the Jewish Multiracial Network (JMN) Ashkenazi Privilege Checklist and point out that the situations described illustrate why we must attend to these issues in our Jewish and other communities. Available at <https://urj.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/ashkenaziawarenesschecklist.pdf> Some of the items are particular to the Jewish world, though if one changed the word “synagogue” to “church” much of the same would hold. Ask three participants to report on one statement that had a particularly strong effect on them. Discuss in the group.
2. (10 minutes) In hevruta of 2 or 3 people, consider phrases in the Declaration of Independence (“All men are created equal”), the Constitution (“We the people”), and the Pledge of allegiance (“with liberty and justice for all”).

1. Which groups have been included in these phrases and which have been excluded?
2. What can you do to make the promise of equity become a reality?

For the group (another 10 minutes). What can we do to affect institutional practices? Come up with one action.

**“Tithe with the stranger, orphan, widow within your gates . . .”**

*Dt 14:28*

# The Imperative of Confronting Racism

## Lesson Plan

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### Evaluation

Imagine that someone Jewish uses the Yiddish/ German equivalent of the "N-word" in your presence.

Give your ten word response here: \_\_\_\_\_

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What are the approximate percentages of Jews of Color in your own Jewish community? \_\_\_\_\_

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As is likely, please explain if less than what might be expected by the Pew report \_\_\_\_\_

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What did the group come up with that might make your Jewish institution more welcoming of racial and ethnic diversity?

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## Acknowledgements

A hearty "thank you" to Social Action Committee contributors Alexandra Bar-Cohen, Melissa Hager, Sara Just, Judy Leopold, Jenny Ludmer, Linda Oppenheim, Alison Politziner, Louise Sandburg, Wilma Solomon, Sally Steinberg-Brent, Ross Wishnick, consultants Rev. Bob Moore and Jon Katz (multifaith activities), Ed Fenton (shelter), Carol Watchler of the Bayard Rustin Center, Dan Kaufman and Simon Herz (LGBTQ+), Shirley Satterfield, historian of Princeton's African American community (Confronting Racism, and to Winona Guo and Priya Vulchi for *Tell Me Who You Are*. Dr. Shoshana Silberman served as a consultant for the active learning. We thank Ben Wallach, Yona Roberts Golding, and Clara Sue Beym for their design and composition. Rabbi Adam Feldman (z"l modeled listening; his memory was an inspiration.

Robert J. Karp, Editor

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### We conclude with a reminder of our commitments for social action.

A passage from Isaiah Chapter 58 is read on Yom Kippur

6. הלא זה, צום אִבְחָרָה.

*This is the fast I desire: To unlock the fetters of wickedness and untie the cords of the yoke to let the oppressed go free; to break off every yoke*

7. הלא פרס לרָעֵב לחֶמֶךָ.

*It is to share your bread with the hungry, and to take the wretched poor into your home; when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to ignore your own kin*

A last word from Rashi, Reb Shlomo ben Yitzchak, circa 1100, on Leviticus 25:35 "Now when your brother sinks down [in poverty] and his hand falters before you, then shall you strengthen him as [though] a sojourner and a resident-settler, and he is to live beside you." (Everett Fox Torah translation) Rashi tells us, "Do not wait until he has gone down and fallen, because it will be difficult to raise him up." Support the sojourner and resident-settler while they still stand. What we do for the sojourner or the resident-settler will surely be done for us."



The Prophet Isaiah by Raphael (circa 1500)

**“Cursed is the one who bends justice of  
the stranger, orphan, or widow . . . ”**

*Dt 17:19*