What is Privilege?

The Jyot Curriculum
What is Privilege?

Learning Objectives

- Define privilege
- Identify the spectrum of privilege within the group, in the Sikh American community, and in any community nationally
- Recognize personal privilege or lack thereof
- Describe power and powerlessness within various social identity groups

Materials Needed

- Laptop, projector, and screen
- Internet access to play video
- Speakers
- Easel with chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Scrap paper (to crumple and throw into a trash can)
- Trash can
- Tape to make lines on the floor

Prerequisite?

None

Facilitator’s Key

- Say out loud
- Video
- Conversation/Debrief

Skills to Learn

- Leadership
- Community Bridging
- Critical and Analytical Thinking
- Teamwork
- Self-development

Workshop Timeline

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<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Privilege Spectrum Activity</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
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<td>Introducing White Privilege Blindness</td>
<td>5 mins</td>
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<td>What is Privilege Power Shuffle Activity</td>
<td>25 mins</td>
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<td>TEDx Talk: The Power of Privilege (optional)</td>
<td>35 mins</td>
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<td><strong>Total Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>40 mins - 1 hour 15 mins</strong></td>
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Privilege Spectrum Activity 10 mins

➢ Give each student a piece of scrap paper to crumple up into a ball. Place a trash can in the front of the room. Move the students into at least 3 rows.

You all represent the country’s population. And everyone in the country has a chance to become wealthy and move into the upper class. To move into the upper class, all you must do is throw your wadded-up paper into the bin while sitting in your seat.

➢ Students in the back row should exclaim that they are at a disadvantage (which is the point of this game). The students toward the front will have a better chance at making it in than the students toward the back.

The closer you were to the recycling bin, the better your odds. This is what privilege looks like. Did you notice how the only ones who complained about fairness were in the back of the room? By contrast, people in the front of the room were less likely to be aware of the privilege they were born into.

Conclude: Your job, as Sikhs and as activists, is to use your privileges, may it be your background, your education, your language skills, being able to be here at this workshop, etc. to advocate for those who are in the back rows and do the best you can to achieve great things for your own families and self.

Introducing Privilege Blindness 5 mins

A critical part of being a true activist and ally for folks who are less privileged requires self-reflection on what your privileges are, and what you lack.

There is the story told about the wise old fish who was swimming through the water. As he swam along he encountered two young fish coming by. He turned to them and asked “How is the water?” and the young fish replied – “What water?” Many white people are like the young fish in the ocean; they don’t see their privilege, and it’s not necessarily intentional.

But we fall in the same category; even within the Punjabi-Sikh-American community, we need to recognize the spectrum of privileges and our personal privileges in this context, understanding that we may be more privileged within certain communities even if we are not privileged in the whole American society.
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What is Privilege Power Shuffle Activity

- Have participants try to define privilege. Brainstorm on the whiteboard or chart paper.
- Give them this definition after brainstorming: “an advantage or benefit enjoyed by an individual or group at the expense of others.”
- Have floor taped as many “yard lines” as you can, equidistant from each other.
- Have students line up horizontally on the middle yard line, holding hands.

Read the questions included at the end of this section (“If” Statement List).

- Direct students to take a step forward or backward as per each question (if you take a step forward, others don’t need to take a step back, and vice versa).
- They should try their best to hold hands, until they physically have to let go (should be after a few sentences).
- After the last statement, allow students to stand in their spots for 20-30 seconds in silence, noticing where each of them are.

Power Shuffle: If Statements

- If you are a U.S. citizen, take a step forward.
- If you were brought up working class, take a step backward.
- If you graduated from or are enrolled in college or university, take a step forward.
- If you are female, take a step backward.
- If you are not caucasian, take a step backward.
- If the breadwinner in your family was ever unemployed while you were a child, take a step backward.
- If you went to a sleepaway camp (gurmat camp, band camp, model UN, etc) growing up, take a step forward.
- If you are able-bodied, take a step forward.
- If you identify with the LGBTQA+ community, or are sometimes perceived to be, take a step backward.
- If you have travelled outside the U.S., take a step forward.
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➢ If you took an annual family vacation growing up, take a step forward.
➢ If you attended a private liberal arts college or Ivy League university, take a step forward.
➢ If you or members of your family have been on welfare, take a step backward.
➢ If you are a first-generation college student, step backward.
➢ If English was your first language, take a step forward.
➢ If you grew up in a two-parent household, take a step forward.
➢ If you are a turbaned-sikh, take a step backward.
➢ If you can easily enter any building or location without considering its accessibility, take a step forward.
➢ If you had your own bedroom growing up, take a step forward.
➢ If you were born in this country, take a step forward.
➢ If you can go out alone without fear of being followed, harassed, or in physical danger due to your gender, take a step forward.
➢ If when the police pull you over, you can be sure you haven’t been singled out because of your race, take a step forward.
➢ If you can easily find your religious faith and culture expressed and valued in popular culture and media, take a step forward.

Have everyone sit in a circle and collectively reflect on this activity.

TEDx Talk: The Power of Privilege (optional) 35 mins

➢ Screen TEDx talk by Tiffany Jana at TEDxRVAWomen:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0acvkHllZs

Encourage each student, including himself/herself, to share their thoughts in depth, offering personal experiences and viewpoints on Punjabi/Sikh community.

How can we use our privilege to give back and turn it into action?

➢ Conclude: Ask them to discuss privilege with their parents and to learn where their privilege comes from, how privilege has changed, how immigration has granted these youth privileges that their parents did not have, and reflect on how privileges can be obtained rightfully and how to help others, especially within our community, bridge these gaps.
Sources

Newseum Ed. “11 Resources for Teaching Social Movements Past and Present”
https://newseumed.org/idea/11-resources-for-teaching-social-movements-past-and-present/