

# TEACHING FOR EQUITY AND JUSTICE

## Facing History and Ourselves Session One

### Welcome Prizmah Schools!



**Staci Rosenthal**  
Program Associate, Jewish Education Team

**Steven Becton**  
Chief Equity & Inclusion Officer

# Our Mission



**FACING HISTORY AND  
OURSSELVES USES  
LESSONS OF HISTORY  
TO CHALLENGE  
TEACHERS AND  
THEIR STUDENTS  
TO STAND UP TO  
BIGOTRY AND HATE.**

# TEACHING FOR EQUITY & JUSTICE AT FACING HISTORY MEANS...

- Each student receives what they need to develop their full academic, social, and civic potential.
- This is achieved by disrupting deficit-focused narratives associated with students' racial and/ or cultural identities.
- In equity-focused learning environments, adults explore unconscious bias and work to mitigate the impact of historical racism on educational practices and policies.

**What does it mean to teach for equity and justice in the context of Jewish education?**

## TODAY'S GOALS

### EXPERIENCE

Facing History and Ourselves' framework and approach to teaching for equity and justice

### ENGAGE

In self-reflective community building activities designed to center identity & **cultivate equitable learning environments**

### UNDERSTAND

Individual identity reflection is essential for educators committed to teaching for equity and justice

### (Next Week) EXAMINE

The relationship between the historical roots of educational inequity and the legacies we experience in schooling today

## Step 1: Journal

“I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when talking about racial inequity because\_\_\_\_\_.”

## Step 2: Mentimeter

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# **“An Invitation to Brave Space” by Mickey ScottBey Jones**

Together we will **create brave space**  
*Because there is no such thing as a “safe space”*

We exist in the real world  
*We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.*

In this space  
*We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,*  
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,  
*We call each other to more truth and love*

We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.

*We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.*

We will not be perfect. This space will not be perfect.

*It will not always be what we wish it to be*  
But

*It will be our brave space together, and*  
We will work on it side by side



## Among our goals for this community is to create:

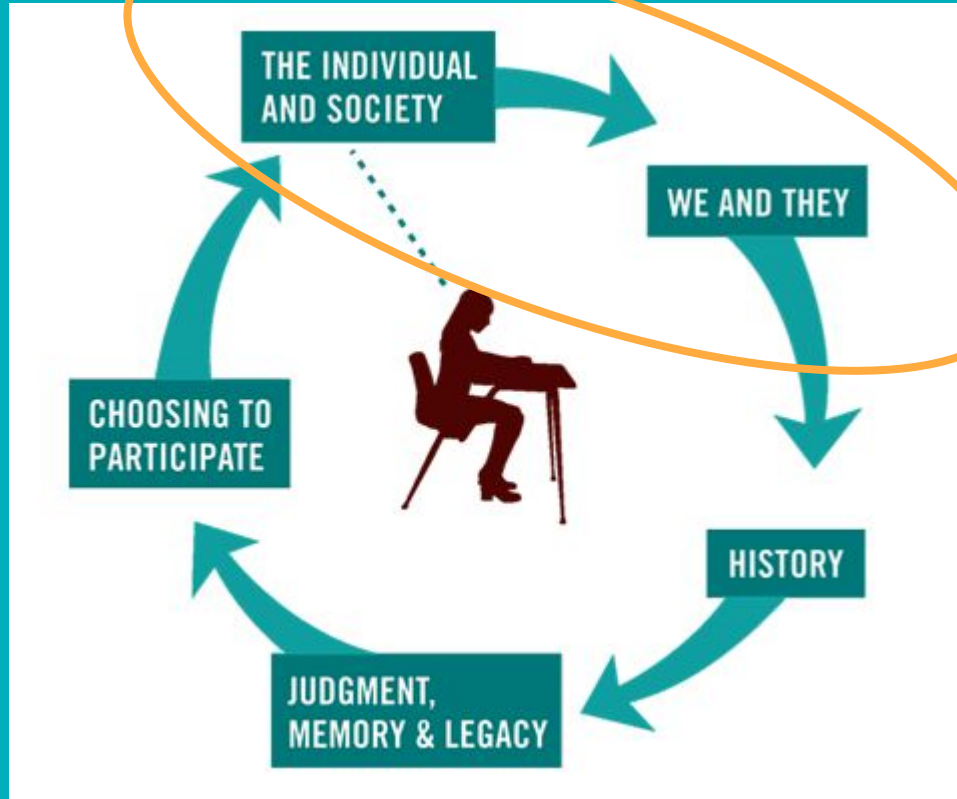
- an intentional community of learners that grows through interaction
- a constructive space to share, disagree, and work together
- a comfortable place to be uncomfortable

## In order for us to create such a community, we will all do our best to:

- stay present
- listen with intention
- challenge ideas, not people
- share talking time
- avoid generalizations (Use “I” statements)
- affirm others
- be honest and thoughtful
- work through discomfort
- have a curious mindset
- be reflective



# CENTERING IDENTITY in EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

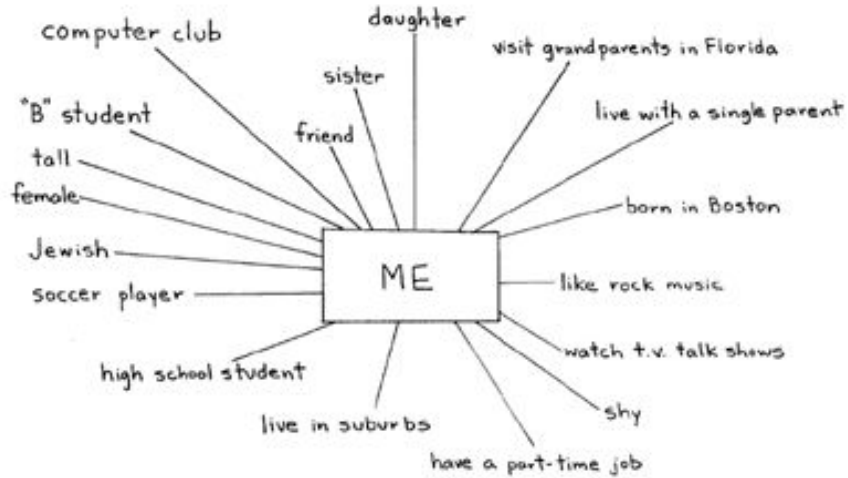


# CENTERING IDENTITY in EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

**“Teaching is first and foremost learning, and egocentric as it may sound, the teacher’s chief area of study is herself or himself. Only as I discover my own prejudices, face my own fears, give play to my own strengths, and compensate for my deficits rather than denying them can I help my students do the same. It is both the blessing and the curse of teaching that the learning never ends. Every day, I must confront what I am as a teacher and what I hope to be. To do less is to be less of a teacher.”**

—Author Unknown

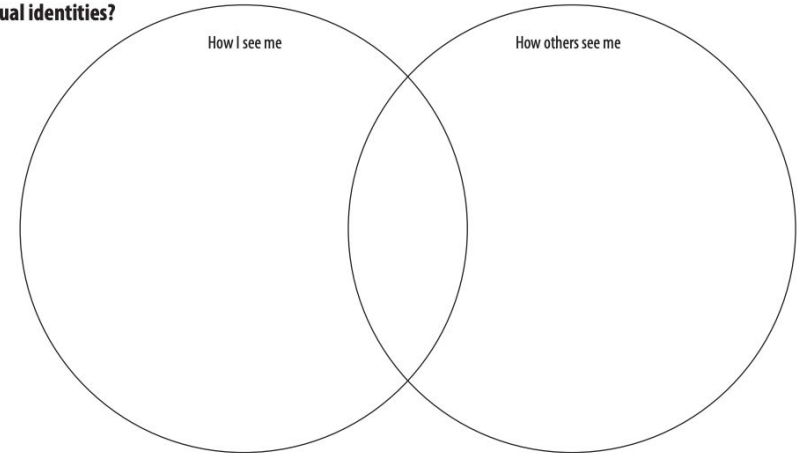
# Identity Charts



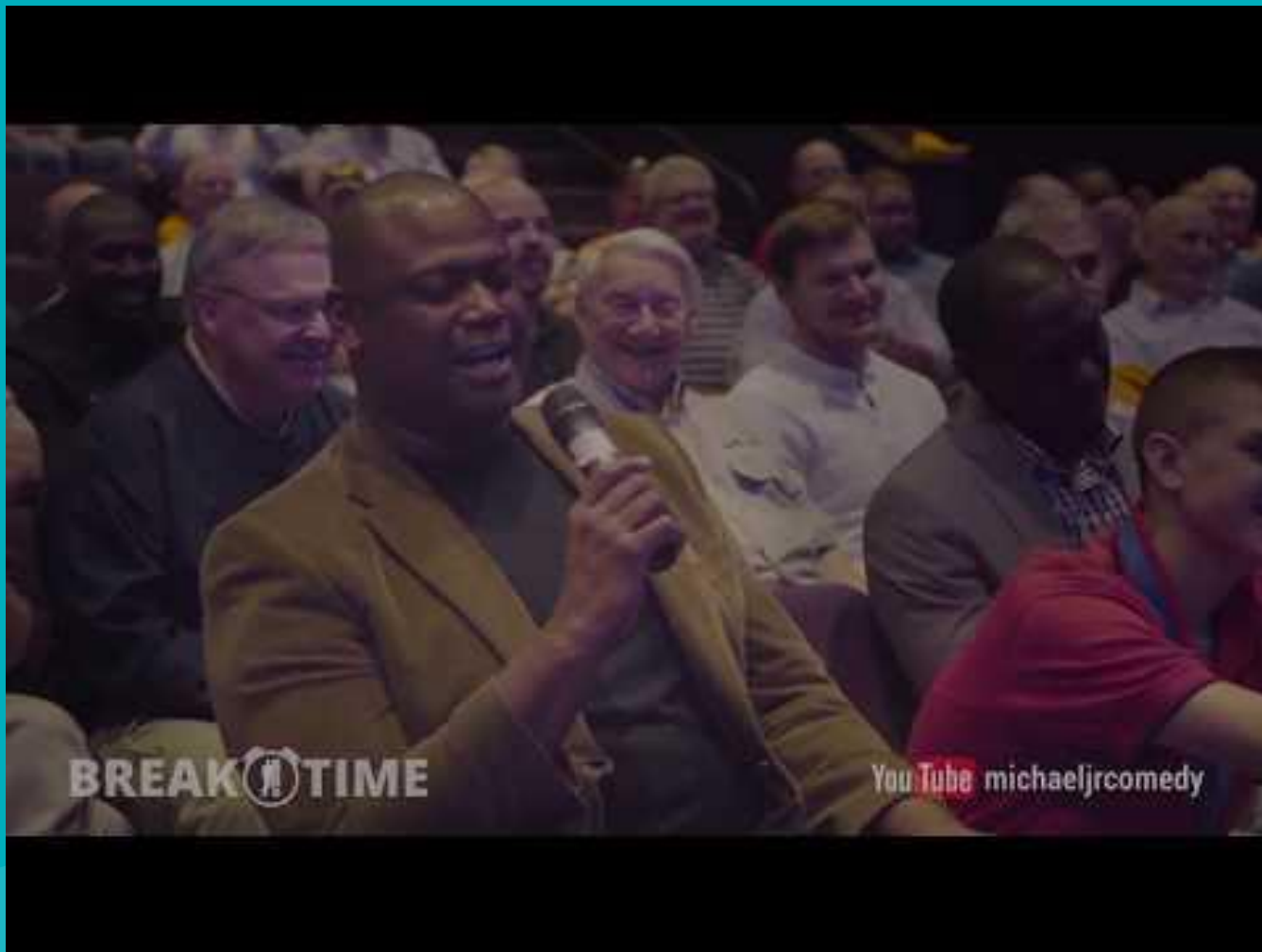
## Inside/Outside Identity Chart

Lesson 2: The Impact of Identity

What factors make up our individual identities?



## Considering Our Why



# What Is Your Why for Equity? (Breakout Groups)

1. How were your **upbringing** and formative years of schooling? Did you experience any issues of **discrimination, oppression**, or inequity? Did you **witness** others? How were you affected?
2. Why did you get into the education field? What equity issue were you hoping to **address**? What were your **dreams**?
3. What is your **vision** for education? What do you hope your Jewish students would understand about equity in their communities?
4. How does your identity relate to your vision for an **equitable and just society**? What role does your school play in achieving this vision?

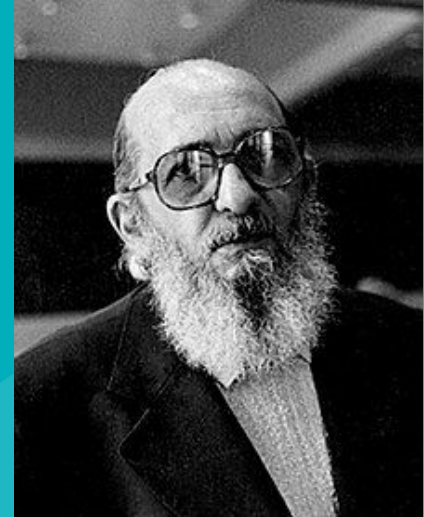
# Let's Discuss!

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**CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS** *is the ability to perceive social, political, and economic oppression and to take action against the oppressive elements of society.*

The concept of **CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS** was developed by Paulo Freire primarily in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Portuguese 1968 & English 1970)



**Paulo Freire**  
(1921-1997)

“Author Beverly Tatum talks about how people who live in Los Angeles became **smog-breathers**. They don’t do anything to become smog-breathers. They aren’t conscious of being smog-breathers. They just go about their everyday lives as they breathe in the smog. She then added that if we live in America, we are **racism-breathers**, and it doesn’t matter what color we are. We don’t try to be. We usually aren’t conscious of the racism we have breathed. We just go about our regular lives breathing the smog we live in.”

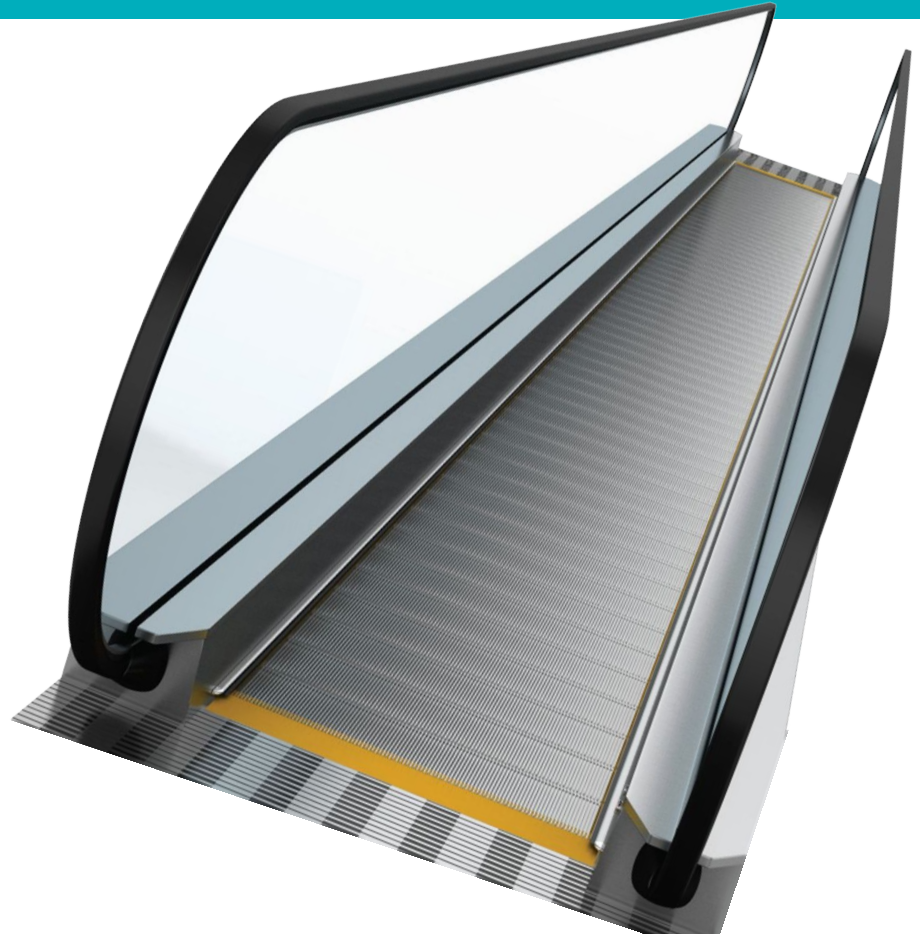


—Lisa Delpit, *Multiplication is for White People: Raising Expectations for Other People’s Children*



# WE ARE ALL ON A **MOVING SIDEWALK**...

What happens when if we do nothing?



# COLOR-BLINDNESS

Beverly Daniel Tatum: “Many teachers aspire to be *color-blind* when interacting with their students. To notice the racial and ethnic differences among their students feels wrong to them, a sign perhaps of bigotry or prejudicial thinking. But from the child’s point of view (and that of his or her parents), not noticing may mean that the educator is overlooking an important dimension of the young person’s experience in the world and, even more specifically, in that classroom...A color-blind approach often means that the educator has not considered the meaning of racial/ethnic identity to the child.

However, when dealing especially with adolescents, identity questions are very important to keep in mind. As children enter adolescence, they begin to explore the questions of identity, asking, “Who am I? Who can I be?” in ways they have not done before. For youth of color in particular, “Who am I?” includes thinking about Who am I ethnically and/or racially? What does it mean to be black or Latino or Asian? Why are young people of color thinking about themselves in terms of race or ethnicity? Because the rest of the world is viewing them that way.”

[Color Blind or Color Conscious? American Association of Superintendents \(AASA\)](#)

# WHITE SUPREMACY

From "[The Language of White Supremacy](#)" by Vann R. Newkirk II in The Atlantic:

"To quote scholar Frances Lee Ansley (taken here from [a passage from](#) David Gillborn, also, a critical-race-theory scholar):

'By "white supremacy" I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.'

Many people hear the words *white supremacy* and think *That doesn't apply to me*, that they don't hold the belief but rather that they believe that all of us are equal and that they don't modify their treatment of people based on the color of their skin. What this book, which is a deep-diving self-reflection tool, will help you to realize, however, is that that isn't true. White supremacy is an ideology, a paradigm, an institutional system, and a worldview that you have been born into by virtue of your white privilege. I am not talking about the physical color of your skin being inherently bad or something to feel shame about. I am talking about the historic and modern legislating, societal conditioning, and systemic institutionalizing of the construction of whiteness as inherently superior to people of other races. Yes, outwardly racist systems of oppression like chattel slavery, apartheid, and racial discrimination in employment have been made illegal. But the subtle and overt discrimination, marginalization, abuse, and killing of Black, Indigenous and People of Color in white-dominated communities continues even today because white supremacy continues to be the dominant paradigm under which societies operate....If you are willing to dare to look white supremacy right in the eye and see yourself reflected back, you are going to become better equipped to dismantle it within yourself and within your communities.

*[Me and White Supremacy](#)* by, Layla F. Saad (p.13-14)

# MYTH of MERITOCRACY

A [newly published study](#) in the peer-reviewed journal *Child Development* that finds traditionally marginalized youth who grew up believing in the American ideal that hard work and perseverance naturally lead to success show a decline in self-esteem and an increase in risky behaviors during their middle-school years. The research is considered the first evidence linking preteens' emotional and behavioral outcomes to their belief in meritocracy, the [widely held assertion](#) that individual merit is always rewarded.

“If you’re in an advantaged position in society, believing the system is fair and that everyone could just get ahead if they just tried hard enough doesn’t create any conflict for you ... [you] can feel good about how [you] made it,” said Erin Godfrey, the study’s lead author and an assistant professor of applied psychology at New York University’s Steinhardt School. But for those marginalized by the system—economically, racially, and ethnically—believing the system is fair puts them in conflict with themselves and can have negative consequences.

“*If the system is fair, why am I seeing that everybody who has brown skin is in this kind of job?* You’re having to think about that ... like you’re not as good, or your social group isn’t as good,” Godfrey said.

[Why the Myth of Meritocracy Hurts Kids of Color](#)

# Transition to Critically Conscious Educator Reflections Padlet

## Directions:

- Click on the images of the slides with excerpts that will help to unpack the following terms:
  - Color Blindness
  - White Supremacy
  - Myth of Meritocracy
- Respond to the journal prompts associated with each term

## Critical Consciousness

the ability to recognize and analyze systems of inequality and the commitment to take action against these systems

## Antiracist

someone who is expressing an antiracist idea or supporting an antiracist policy with their actions. (Kendi)

## In Sanhedrin 39b, the Talmud quotes the Mishna:

“And this serves to tell of the greatness of the Holy One, Blessed be He, as when a person stamps several coins with one seal, they are all similar to each other. But the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, stamped all people with the seal of Adam the first man, as all of them are his offspring, **and not one of them is similar to another**. Therefore, since all humanity descends from one person, each and every person is obligated to say: **The world was created for me**, as one person can be the source of all humanity, and recognize the significance of his actions.”

# Questions, Next Steps & Wrap Up

