



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at URJ Camp Newman

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With Josh Burg and Matt Ghan

Note: this outline was created with the help of a small cohort (9 individuals) of community partners beyond the authors of this text. While the names of these partners have not been included in writing, we want to recognize their time and experiences and thank them for the love, compassion, and thoughtfulness during our conversations. Rachel and Sierra, with the help of Matt and Josh, hosted two focus groups, which included people from a wide range of backgrounds, to learn from members of our community who had participated in URJ Camp Newman's programs within the last 3-5 years either as campers and/or staff.

Foundational Text:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם מִשְׁנֵה הַבְּרִיּוֹת

Blessed are you, Creator of all, who makes creatures different.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, m'shaneh habriyot.

Enduring Understandings:

1. Our culture and systems are built on a foundation of white supremacy, which perpetuates within our institution's ideas of racial inequity, ableism, heteropatriarchy by the inherent nature of our institutions being built upon this foundation.
2. Systemic change work towards a more equitable society and institutions is a long-term process that must be done in partnership with organizations and individuals from within and beyond.
3. We are obligated, as Jews, to engage in this difficult and holy work.
4. *Rising tides lift all boats*: Our capacity or lack thereof to support BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and campers with disabilities impacts our ability to support campers and families of all backgrounds.
5. Calls to action for change by community members internal and external come from a profound love, and appreciation for the impact our organization has had in their lives and a recognition that what we offer is important for all people, of all backgrounds.

Community Beliefs & Assumptions:

The following list of beliefs & assumptions were identified by the individuals who participated in our focus groups as characteristics of camp which motivate and inspire our DEI work:

- We believe camp is a powerful and sustained Jewish affinity space.
- We believe staff-camper interactions are integral to camp culture, therefore we need to teach staff to be active in the development of a positive DEI mindset among their campers.
- We believe camp will need help from all of its various partners to move forward in DEI work--faculty, clergy, etc.
- We have incorrectly *assumed* our campers are from strong Ashkenazi Jewish nuclear families.

- We have incorrectly *assumed* our campers are from similar educational and financial backgrounds, this includes but is not limited to parents with college education, capacity to pay for camp out of pocket and/or with the help of congregational support, Jewish day school or congregational religious school, etc.
- We have incorrectly *assumed* unified political beliefs and identity, as well as a stake in “Justice” work, which assumes foundational understandings of topics within the realm of politics and justice.
- We acknowledge that Camp has existed for a very long time and therefore there is a history that comes with and may be prohibitive to doing transformative DEI work.

Goals:

1. Seek out and hire a long term partner organization to work one-on-one with URJ Camp Newman to encourage, support, and provide the necessary foundations for transformative change.
 - See below for potential key characteristics of a partner organization.
 - Change management is an important element of the task which we are attempting to undertake, long term partnership will ensure that the organization, it's community, and staff are held accountable for instituting change.
2. Make the necessary policy, structural, and programmatic changes, and have the required conversations to authentically support, reflect, and incorporate the identities of BIPOC, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ campers and families.
 - Areas we know necessitate change and reflection:
 - *Programming*- this may include but is not limited to how we intentionally approach Jewish liturgy and ritual and educational programming around topics of race/racism, homophobia, ableism, and other forms of oppression that permeate throughout camp culture.
 - *Staffing*- how we hire managerial, leadership, and seasonal staff; diversity of seasonal staff; treatment of facilities and maintenance staff both full time and seasonal; supervision, and accountability of staff members.
 - *Training*- requirements of intentional and formalized staff training for full time and seasonal staff vis-á-vis diversity, equity, and inclusion; provide tangible skill building about how to facilitate conversations behind closed doors with campers about topics of DEI; Understanding white supremacist culture and how we uphold it in our everyday interactions and behaviors (i.e: interpersonal relationships between staff members, and staff members with their campers)
 - *Policy*- If and how we emphasize, verbalize and publish support resources and policies that affirm the identities of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and campers with disabilities, families, and staff; explore restorative and transformative justice approaches to discipline
 - *Marketing & Recruitment*- ensuring that marketing and camper recruitment materials, presentations, and tactics reflect the diversity of our community, as well as our stances, policies, and approaches to equity in

our community which create space for BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and campers with disabilities and families at camp.

Characteristics of a partner organization:

- Partner organization(s) should have general knowledge or capacity to understand the Jewish non-profit world and institutional understanding of working within a larger umbrella organization.
- Partner organization(s) should be aware of URJ Camp Newman's current challenges-- site rebuild, finances, staffing changes, etc.
- Partner organization(s) should have an understanding of and capacity to work with multi-level year-round and seasonal leadership.
- Partner organization(s) should emphasize broader communal participation (i.e: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee)
- Partner organization(s) should have programmatic capabilities (i.e: to run staff training for full time and seasonal staff, not simply facilitate meetings and do audits of policy and programs)
- Partner organization(s) will be transparent and open about the timeline of doing this work.
- Partner organization(s) will provide a framework of accountability for the implementation of and continued reflection upon necessary changes towards the organizational goals.

Community recommendations for organizational partners:

- *Be'chol Lashon*: <https://globaljews.org>
- *Joyous Justice*: <https://joyousjustice.com>
- *Jews of Color Field Building Initiative*: <https://jewsofcolorinitiative.org/>
- *Consultant Tamar Ghidalia*: <https://www.tamarghidalia.com/about>
- *Consultant Yolanda Savage-Narva*: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/yolanda-savage-narva-88122211/>
- *Consultant Suzanne Feinspan*: <http://www.suzannefeinspanconsulting.com/>

People to talk to about specific training and experiences they've offered for organizations:

- *Urban Adamah*: Brought in a facilitator to teach staff about sensory processing and sensitivity, the facilitator may have been from Jewish Children's and Family Services
- *Leora Wolf-Prusan & Melissa Merin*: Trauma-Informed Teaching: Pedagogy for Harm & Healing
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- *Dara Henning*- Transformative Justice expert/professional