

White-Ashkenazi Awareness Checklist: Examining Privilege

This checklist is a tool to create more awareness of the privileges hidden in the experience of white Ashkenazi Jews, and as a starting place to begin to discuss the ways we can make all Jews feel safe, welcome, and visible. We hope this checklist leads to more self-reflection and greater awareness. For many of us it is hard to imagine what the experience may be for a Jew of Color who enters into our community, and how it may differ from our own experiences. As white and/or Ashkenazi Jews there may be aspects of our experience in the Jewish community that we take for granted, which are not a universal experience for all people entering into our Jewish spaces. The entirety of the Jewish community experiences forms of anti-Semitism that impact us all negatively, however Jews who are perceived as white receive privileges in our society that are denied to Jews of Color. In order to create a fully welcoming community we need to be able to have a clear understanding of where those experiences differ for someone who is not seen as Ashkenazi, white, or of European descent.

All of the parts of this checklist were written by Jews of Color and based on their experiences. The original version of this Checklist was developed by Corinne Lightweaver, Sasha King, and members of the [Jewish Multiracial Network](#) (2006–2009).

Checklist

This checklist can also be read verbally with participants stepping forward, or into a circle.

- Place a check (✓) next to the statements that apply to you.
- Place a question mark (?) next to it if raises a question for you.
- Place an exclamation mark (!) to those that surprise you or resonate strongly.

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- At my synagogue, religious school, Jewish Community Center (JCC), or camp I can walk in not be seen as an outsider.
 - At my synagogue, religious school, JCC, or camp I can walk in and not be seen as exotic.
 - At my synagogue, religious school, JCC, or camp I can walk in with my family and not worry that they will be treated unkindly because of the color of their skin.
 - At my synagogue, religious school, JCC, or camp I can walk in and feel that my children are seen as Jews.
 - At my synagogue, religious school, JCC, or camp I can enjoy music that reflects the tunes, prayers, and cultural roots of my specific Jewish heritage.
 - I can easily find books, magazines, and educational materials with images of Jews who look like me.
 - I can easily find Jewish books and toys for my children with images of Jews that look like them.
 - I am not singled out to speak as a representative of an “exotic” Jewish subgroup.
 - When I go to Jewish bookstores or restaurants, I am not seen as an outsider.
 - I find experiences and images that I can relate to and faces look similar to my family in Jewish newspapers and magazines.
 - I do not worry about access to housing or apartments in predominately Jewish neighborhoods.

- My rabbi never questions that I am Jewish.
- When I tell other members of my synagogue, religious school, JCC, or camp that I feel marginalized, they are immediately and appropriately responsive.
- There are other children at the religious school/camp who look like my child.
- My child's authenticity as a Jew is never questioned by adults or children based on his/her skin color.
- People never say to me, "But you don't look Jewish," either seriously or because they thought it was funny.
- I do not worry about being seen or treated as a member of the janitorial staff at a synagogue, school, JCC, or camp or when attending a Jewish event.
- I am never asked "how" I am Jewish at dating events or on Jewish dating websites.
- I can arrange to be in the company of Jews of my heritage most of the time.
- When attempting to join a synagogue or Jewish organization, I am confident that my ethnic background will not be held against me.
- I know my racial or ethnic background will not be held against me if I attempt to join a minyan in prayer.
- I can ask synagogues and Jewish organizations to include images and cultural traditions from my background without being seen as a nuisance.
- I can enroll in a Jewish day school, or historically Jewish college and find Jewish students and professors with my racial or ethnic background.
- People of color do not question why I am Jewish.
- I know my ethnic background will not be a barrier in being called to read the Torah.
- I am not discriminated against in the Israeli *aliyah* (immigration) process as a Jew of my particular ethnicity.
- I have never had the police called on me or have been escorted out of a service by a police officer while simply praying because of my skin color.
- I have not been asked to leave a synagogue or a class, nor have I been barred from entering a synagogue, class, or Jewish event due to my skin color.