

SHo 2009

Hunger Banquet

Goals

A hunger banquet is a dramatization of the inequality of the inequality and poverty in our world today. Cereal is served in a manner representative of how equivalent percentages of the world eat; while some are served elegant and delicious cereals, others receive plain food in such quantities that leave them wanting for more.

Set Up

High class, Have nice tables set with center pieces like a nice restaurant. Give three kinds of sugar cereals and milk.

Middle class, Sit at plain benches give cheerios and milk.

Lower class, they just get raisin bran and they don't have anywhere to sit they just either have to stand or sit on the floor out of the way.

Activity

As people enter, they are randomly assigned roles- 15% to the high income group, 30% to the middle income group and 55% to the lowest income group. .

Read Introduction.

Have the descriptions of the economic group on the table [see attached].

Introduction

Welcome to our Hunger Banquet. We are here today because 1 billion of the 2.2 billion children on this planet are living in poverty, severely deprived of adequate food, drinking water, decent sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.

The purpose of this Banquet is to raise awareness about the condition of people living in poverty. 1.2 billion people live on less than \$1 a day, and 2.8 billion people live on less than \$2 a day. We hope that by attending this hunger banquet we can together take steps to help alleviate the problem.

As each of you entered the room today, you were randomly assigned a role to play, as either part of the high, middle or low income segments of the worlds population. Look around you. What you see is an accurate portrayal of the inequities in the world. It is important to remember that the people are born into the circumstances randomly, just are you were randomly assigned a group.

This hunger banquet will focus on the unequal distribution of food, but for those living in poverty, it is a far more comprehensive experience. According to the working definition of children in poverty given in the UNICEF publication *The State of the Worlds Children*

2005, Children living in poverty experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society. Just as we cannot recreate all of the consequences of poverty, we cannot recreate all of its causes. What we can do tonight is gain a better understanding of what poverty and hunger look like in our world today.

Adapted from The UNICEF Campus Initiative

High Income Group

You represent the 15% of the world's population that have a per capita income of \$9,368 or more. You are lucky enough to live comfortably with many luxuries that other people simply cannot afford. You have plenty of food to eat every day and can maintain a well-balanced and nutritious diet. You have access to health care, adequate sanitation and clean water. You can afford to be educated and many of you will not only receive primary education but will go on to advanced degrees and careers. You have the time and money for leisure activities and vacation. You live the good life because you can afford everything you need and you have the security to enjoy it, with \$9,386 a year.

Middle Income Group

You represent the 30% of the world's population that have a per capita income of \$766-\$9,385. While you have some access to the necessities in life, you are constantly aware that you are teetering on the edge. Today

you can afford enough food to eat, to send your children to school at least for a few years and to go to the doctor if you need. Tomorrow? Everything could change in the blink of an eye. A big storm, a drought, a serious illness could put you over the edge and drastically affect your ability to survive. You dream that one day your children will do better, but the best you can do is to go to your less than minimum wage job and hope the bottom doesn't drop out from under you. You live on less than \$9365 a year, but more than \$766.

Low Income Group

You represent the 55% of the world's population that have a per capita income of \$765 or less. That means you make less than \$2 a day. Just securing the bare necessities for life is a daily battle- one that is often lost. You frequently go hungry, sometimes without food for days. Even when you do have food, it is simple and usually does not provide you with the nutrients or calories that your body requires. Your shelter, if any, is makeshift and probably doesn't protect you from the elements. School is a luxury you can't afford because you and your children must work to support the family. And because health care is also out of reach, many of you die young, often from preventable causes. You don't bother believing that one day your children will do better; you simply pray that they will reach their 5th birthday. You live on less than \$765 a year.

Wrap Up

Do these questions as a large group, or split into mixed groups...Some from each economic class.

1. Looking around during dinner, how did you feel?
2. Do you think the high income group should or are obligated to help the poor?

[incorporate: *It is not your duty to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it*— *Pirke Avot*]

3. Do you think people are poor because they don't work hard and are lazy?

[How does this compare to the "American dream"?)

4. What can we do to ensure resources are distributed fairly?

[there is enough food in the world.]

5. Can you think of any Jewish responses to hunger, traditional or modern? Brainstorm before reading:

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger; I am Adonai your G-d. Leviticus 19:9-10

Therefore only one person was created to teach you that whosoever kills a single soul the Bible considers to have killed a complete world. And whosoever sustains and saves a single soul, it is as if that person sustained a whole world. Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

This is the bread of affliction our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat; let all who are in need come share our Passover. Passover Haggadah