



מכון ונציה לשונות ורב תרבותיות

Venezia Institute for Diversity and Multiculturalism

Israel

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Foreword

In his play “Huis Clos” (No Exit), Jean-Paul Sartre presents three characters, sinners who have lately died, and who believe that they are bound for Hell. However, the room in which they are confined does not look like Hell – no sulphur, no flames or slaughterer’s knife. At the end of the play, one character says: “If this is really Hell... I’d never have believed it... You remember the sulphur, the fire, the skewers? What a joke! They don’t need skewers. Hell is other people!”

Modern society in the third millennium is an immigrant, pluralistic one, it is replete with patterns and stereotypical ways of thinking towards minority groups and people who are perceived to be "different".

The professional literature and the course of our lives present the difficulty of accepting and coping with otherness. However, many researchers are of the opinion that it is just this encounter with otherness that is the route to development and fulfillment, both personal and social; and that, in this way, it is possible to create a society that respects the diversities endemic to it. This is because we can use the other as a mirror through which we learn both about ourselves and about that other. The encounter with otherness can rescue us from stereotyped ideas and allow us to view reality as it is – multifaceted, dynamic, and constantly in flux.

Would it be possible to modify the encounter with otherness from an experience of suffering to one of humanity? Can we create a dialogue with the other? Could we free ourselves of preconceived notions? Experience empathy? Respect other in the fullest sense of the word?

What would be the educational/ professional milieu in which we could create, for pedagogues and pupils alike, a space that could encompass a broad spectrum of personalities, feelings and needs, conflicts and coping, together with awareness of the legitimacy of each and every one of us, and the right to a free existence, each in our own unique identity and culture?

Education

Diversity and Multiculturalism as Daily Practice

The educational environment is replete with stereotypical messages. They exist partly because of the absence of children that represent different cultures and identities (Ethiopians, Arabs, Mid-Easterners, Handicapped, homosexuals etc.) in the books we read to kindergarten and school-age children, as if they are not part of society; they are hidden in the arrangements of play areas (division into "boys' toys and games" and "girls' toys and games"); they are inherent in the figures that serve as role models in animated films shown to children; and they are especially evident in television programs and commercials that we, and children, watch. (See the original project proposal for a more extensive treatment of this issue).

To create a society that is able to acknowledge and accept others, that allows and encourages contact with others by means of humanity, it is vital to begin the process at a very early age. We are born without stereotypes, free of the prejudices that, as adults, we have absorbed throughout our lives; whereas children are influenced by their surroundings, especially by the figures of authority that they encounter – parents, relatives, teachers, as well as their environment, stories they are told, the media, and all the rest. Thus, in order to encourage the process of change, we must begin not with the children but with the voices of authority.

Business

Social Accountability in the Business World

Any organizational reality is relevant to the employees' emotional life: the consideration and interpersonal communications between a manager and worker, communications among employees, who the organization works for, terms of employment, consideration and respect to needs derived of gender, religion, faith, culture, handicaps, etc., as well as messages conveyed to customers through marketing and advertising tools. Do the marketing and advertising contents consider and respect the various identities, cultures and needs presented by the different customers?

The Institute offers workshops, lectures and consulting processes to organizations and businesses interested in adopting the approach of social accountability as a daily practice in business proceedings.

Accepting others is not only a moral, human and social must, it is also a proven economic need.

What if Barbie were Bob?

Prejudices for and against, and stereotyping of different and other individuals are an integral element in our thinking and behavior. On the one hand, they make our lives easier since they provide us “information” about the unknown. On the other hand, however, they lead to social, verbal and physical conflict.

The lecture focuses on the following points:

- ◆ How do the social mechanisms that generate prejudices and stereotypes work?
- ◆ How are they manifested in the various areas of our life: written and electronic media, advertising, textbooks, business conduct, interpersonal communications, language and more.
- ◆ How are prejudices and stereotypes positioned in our daily thinking and behavior?
- ◆ How do they impact our personal and professional performance?
- ◆ How can one create an environment that respects, exposes and provides a place for different identities in a unique organization and in society at large.

Group size: Unlimited.

Dedicated lectures can be requested to fit the unique needs of the target audience.

Workshops

The workshop issues shall be formulated after a conversation with the client and upon studying the target audience.

Workshops can be conducted on a one-time basis or as an ongoing process.

- ◆ One time workshop: Two workdays, approximately 14 hours.
- ◆ Ongoing workshop: Two-day sessions, once a month, throughout the year.
- ◆ Group size: Up to 16 participants.
- ◆ Long term study and training days, available.

About the Lecturers / Moderators:

Nilly Venezia: B.A (England) and M.A (New York) degrees in education and multiculturalism, graduate of the Tel Aviv University training program for group facilitators. Established the Venezia Institute for Diversity and Multiculturalism in 1998 and currently lectures and conducts group sessions on the multicultural approach as a daily practice for educators, social and business organizations in Israel and Europe. Recently published the book: "the Mirrors' Maze – on Multicultural Education in Israel. The book was published in Hebrew and English. www.venezia-institute.org.il

Alisa Rosen: M.A degree from Lesley College Israel-Boston. Attended the following programs: Psychoanalytical psychotherapy – Tel Aviv University, Graduates of the Tel Aviv University training program for group facilitators and Graduates the program of group Analysis in the Israeli Institute of Group Analysis.

Alisa Rosen owns a private clinic for individual psychotherapy and group analysis. Senior instructor for professionals and organizations. Lectures to and moderates for groups in professional conferences in Israel and around the world.

Tools of work in lectures / workshops and in the field:

Unique tools that have been created by the professional experts in the institute:

- ◆ **Short documentary films** about children from different identities.
- ◆ **Children's book:** In cooperation with the Anna Frank Museum in Amsterdam we created the children's book "My Story". The book contains ten stories of children with differing identities. All of the stories are real, about real, kindergarten-age children, who belong to different identity groups in society. The stories are created through a unique process, in which a writer and photographer (from the same identity group as the child) meet with the child and his/her family, and construct the story from the child's daily experiences and contains emotional dilemma which is a common denominator to all children.
- ◆ **Theatre play:** The children's Ze-Zu addresses social issues, and enables children to observe and connect to the various methods used in the meeting with the different one and the other.