

## **UTOPIA PARK**

**Goal:** To give people an opportunity to experience discrimination based upon class.

**Set-up:** The room must be pre-set to the attached arrangement. Note that the upper-class space (Village “C”) must be at least twice the size of the space for the poor (Village “A”). The middle-class village (Village “B”) should be moderately smaller than the upper-class space. There is a designated space for the City Offices where citizens can pick up their building permits, as well as a designated space for the Police Department and jail. Mark the boundaries of each village using masking tape on the floor.

**Supplies:** Markers, construction paper, poster board, scissors, tape. Building permits, citations.

**Assignment:** Each group is to build their village in 3-D from scratch

1. You must have a building permit to build.
2. You may not build more than one building at a time.
3. Waterways (channeling creeks, ponds, fountains, etc.) must also be authorized by the Mayor, who represents the City Council.
4. Violations of the building code will be checked by the Building Inspector. Those found guilty of violating the policy will be sent to jail for a period of no shorter than five minutes and no longer than ten minutes.

**Villages:** You will have three villages with an equal number of people in each group. The villages are divided into Wealthy (Village “C”), Middle (Village “B”) and Poor (Village “A”) class. The poor will appear to have a smaller space because the same number of people as the wealthy is being crammed into ½ the space. Building “supplies” are distributed in the same fashion.

### **ROLES**

1. **Mayor** – your task is to issue building permits for each village. The village may not build unless they obtain a permit. It is up to you to decide how many permits a village may be issued at any given time. You will need a piece of paper and a pen. Your job is to number each permit and keep track of them. Each village needs a permit to build and to secure water rights.

When issuing Building Permits, please abide by the following regulations:

- Village C – may have unlimited number of permits. Issue without discrimination.
- Village B – use some judgment here. Limit them to six to eight buildings
- Village A – must be limited to six buildings or less. Issue the first permit without much suspicion, but after that, deny permits from time to time.

2. **Secretary** – read role of “Mayor” above. Your role is to provide people access to the Mayor. Please follow the following guidelines:
  - Village C - Be *very* pleasant and treat them with great care. Never keep them waiting. Offer them immediate access to the Mayor even when others have been waiting. Pretend to offer coffee or refreshments to Village C.
  - Village B - Be courteous most of the time, but keep them waiting from time to time. Don't be overly nasty or suspicious.
  - Village A – the first time, be courteous. Make them wait in line, but don't deny access to the mayor. After that, say things like, “I'm sorry, the Mayor is in a meeting right now. There is nothing I can do until he returns.” (Say this even if the mayor is doing nothing!) If they get disorderly, call the police.
3. **Building Inspector** – Walk around and check to make sure that where there is building going on, the village has a legitimate permit. Don't let villagers know there is a quota system:
  - Village C – Treat them like kings, tell them how beautiful the village is looking. Never ask to see a permit.
  - Village B – Ask to see a permit from time to time, but be very casual.
  - Village A – be overly vigilant; you might want to lie one time and say, “This isn't a legitimate permit!!” – then tear it up and make them go back for another one.
4. **Police Officer** – your job is to keep the peace. Make sure the roads are clear for people to pass unobstructed. Citizens must be within their villages at all times. They may not be seated on the lines. If they are, or if they are sent to you due to “disorderly conduct,” issue the following penalties:
  - Village C – make sure they are all happy, if a problem arises, stress that there must have been a misunderstanding and work with them to correct it. If this requires seeing the building inspector, make sure that they get right in. If someone is in front of them in line, make sure they are able to step in front. The City Officials will cooperate.
  - Village B – keep them within the boundaries: be very kind at first, but as time passes, get a little more abrupt. You may have to arrest one or two of them before the day is over (1/2 hour).
  - Village A – make sure they are within the city limits at all times: Treat them rough at first, then increasingly more cruelly. Issue stiff penalties and some injustice.
5. **Bailiff** – your role is to enforce jail sentences. You will spend most of your time “guarding” the jail and keeping track of jail time, but you may be called upon to assist the police from time to time.

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## **INTRODUCTION TO EXERCISE** (read by mayor)

Welcome to Utopia Park! We're so happy to find you within our city limits, and we hope you will be happy here. We're hoping you will make yourselves at home, building whatever you need in order to establish a peaceful community in which all of you will be happy: children, parents, elderly, and guests. I want to introduce you to some important people who will try to make your time here pleasant. I am the mayor and this is my secretary. This is the police officer and this is the bailiff. This is the building inspector.

## **ASSIGNMENT**

You have a half hour to build your village. We require a building permit for every building. Permits can be obtained through the City Offices which are clearly indicated within the city limits. We issue only one permit at a time – you must complete building on that project before you are given a permit to begin a second project. Violations of the building code will be checked by the Building Inspector. Those found guilty of violating the policy will be sent to jail for a period of no shorter than five minutes and no longer than ten minutes.

As water is a scarce commodity here in Utopia, you must also obtain a permit for access to water rights. This includes not only plumbing, but fountains, artificial ponds, creeks, etc. You will notice that the City has not developed this property, so you should feel welcome to include in your city plan arrangements for parks, schools, golf courses, or whatever else you feel would be to the benefit of your community. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the City offices or the Police Department. Again, thank you for deciding upon Utopia Park!

**After this exercise, break into small groups for 10 minute discussion.** Groups can either be comprised of a mix of people from each village, or small groups can be assembled according to village. Questions to consider:

- How would you describe your village's experience (briefly)?
- What were your interactions with city officials like? Were you treated fairly? Give examples.
- What about your experience did you have control of? How did this make you/ your village feel?

**Then, come back to the large group for a 20 minute discussion/report back from the small groups.**

- Report back about the process –both your initial experience and the reflection process.
- What did you learn from this experience about what it might feel like to be poor in the United States?

**UTOPIA PARK**  
**Room Set-Up**

Village "C"	Village "A"	Jail
	Village "B"	
City Offices	Police Department	

# Building Permit

To begin construction of:

\_\_\_\_\_

granted to:

\_\_\_\_\_

on this 15<sup>th</sup> day of March in the year 2005

by: \_\_\_\_\_

*Mayor of Utopia*

PERMIT #

\_\_\_\_\_

# Building Permit

To begin construction of:

\_\_\_\_\_

granted to:

\_\_\_\_\_

on this 15<sup>th</sup> day of March in the year 2005

by: \_\_\_\_\_

*Mayor of Utopia*

PERMIT #

\_\_\_\_\_

# Infrastructure Permit

To begin construction of the following Waterway:

\_\_\_\_\_

granted to:

\_\_\_\_\_

on this 15<sup>th</sup> day of March in the year 2005

by: \_\_\_\_\_

*Mayor of Utopia*

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\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

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