

Seder Plate Symbols

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Source: Jews United for Justice



Maror – The bitter herb reminds us of the bitterness inside all of us. Living in a racially discriminatory society means that racism infects our thoughts and actions, even if we don't want it to. We must call attention to the prejudiced ideas we all carry inside us in order to actively resist and uproot them.

Egg – The egg in its shell reminds us that we can choose how we identify ourselves, but we can't always choose how the world sees us—we're vulnerable to other people's assumptions about who we are inside (and out). When others assume things about us that don't jibe with our concept of ourselves, or when people cannot see an identify we hold close to our hearts, we feel dehumanized. Tonight we commit to celebrating everyone as they wish to identify.

Haroset – The haroset mixture reminds us of the interconnectedness, intersectionality, of all social forces. Racism exists alongside and within sexism, classism, anti-Semitism, disability oppression, homophobia, and transphobia. We all may be privileged and also experience oppression. Haroset also reminds us of the sweetness of our diversity.

Beet / Shank bone – The blood that flows through us all. We celebrate our similarities while honoring the rich cultures and traditions of our many differences. Many ethnic communities are imagined, incorrectly, as homogenous cultures. For those of us who are white and Jewish, we remind ourselves that Jews come in all hues, from all corners of the world. For those of us who are Black, we know that Blackness is rooted in many different nationalities, ethnicities, and histories. We must celebrate our individuality, our cultures, and our commonalities. As the Black feminist writer and activist Audre Lourde said, "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."

Karpas – The green vegetable reminds us to help each other along as we learn and grow. Sometimes our friends and loved ones say or do things that are hurtful, even if they mean well. What if telling someone that they've said something racist was as easy as telling someone that they have parsley in their teeth? Let's affirm our commitment to being more aware of what we and our loved ones say, and to being less afraid to lovingly tell each other when our words or actions have fallen short.

Matzah – A traditional seder table features three piece of matzah, the "bread of affliction." Tonight we use matzah to call attention to three types of racism, each of which must be broken and overturned.

- **Personal racism** – When people not targeted by racism have prejudiced thoughts or act out bigotry,
 - stereotypes, disrespect, demands to assimilate, or discrimination toward people who don't share their race or ethnicity
- **Internalized racism** – When people targeted by racism internalize negative ideas about their own abilities and intrinsic worth - characterized by low self-esteem, struggles to assimilate, resignation, and hopelessness
- **Systemic or institutional racism** – When the laws, customs, or structures of society operate to exclude or limit substantial numbers of

members of racial or ethnic groups from significant participation in major social institutions