

## Rank and Privilege

### Rank

"A conscious of unconscious, social, or personal ability or power [and privileges] arising from culture, community support, personal psychology and/or spiritual power. Whether you earned or inherited your rank, it organizes much of your communication behavior..."

We all have multiple ranks, some with more privileges than others.

- ▶ **Social Rank:** is the power you have (or lack) because of your race, gender, age, economic standing, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, education, health, or language. Social rank may be global or may depend on context.
- ▶ **Structural Rank:** is the power that belongs to your position in an established hierarchy. The corporation president outranks her secretary, who outranks the cleaning staff.
- ▶ **Psychological Rank:** is personal power you acquire through your life experience. It includes how we weather our childhood traumas and families. A person who feels okay about herself has higher psychological rank than someone who feels depressed, lonely, or suffers a lot.
- ▶ **Spiritual Rank:** is a sense of power that comes from feeling connected to something divine or transcendent. Many community leaders support their authority through spiritual and psychological rank despite low social or economic rank.

### Privilege

*What privileges are connected with your identity?* Take time and be specific. If you do not know, ask someone from another group to tell you about your privileges.

Do you have travel/immigration privileges? Do you enjoy a sense of belonging to a small community or to the majority? Do you have intellectual, social or financial power? What privileges are connected with being able-bodied and well? What are the privileges of your gender? Think about your earning capacity, your education, how your family is treated, your age. Do others defer to your experience?

What do you own that is desirable to other people? What privileges are connect to your choice of partner? With your first language? With your education? Are you a good public speaker? A confident leader?

What are your personal methods for working out tensions and problems? If you succeed, you have a great deal of psychological rank.

*Adapted from Arnold Mindell, P.hD., Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity • Lao Tse Press, Portland, Oregon USA (1995)*

*Types of rank from facilitator handouts, Process Oriented Psychology WorldWork, Washington, D.C. USA, 1999*