

SOME DAILY EFFECTS OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

We all should know that on this planet, there is only one race referred to as Homo Sapiens. The *Webster Dictionary* does not say that Homo Sapiens are white, black, short or tall, or of a religious group. We are just one. However, historical and climatic factors created different features based on the land of travel and location. Climate and genetic factors later created people with a variety of features.

As people with similar features gathered, cultures were formed and maintained. These groupings experienced disadvantages and advantages based on social, political, education, and economic power. For example, while American Indians were dominant at one point in time, they were overpowered by others. When the Irish came to America, they suffered from the hands of others; when the Polish came to America, they suffered at the hands of others with more power; and the examples go on and on.

In reality, there are more African Americans than Italians, than French, than Germans, or any other group with a similar history/culture. In reality, African Americans (soon to be Hispanics) are the largest individual cultural group in America. However, groups, largely European, have come together and are referred to as white Americans, the dominant group. As the dominant group, they have privileges that others who are not white have. Despite considerable evidence that supports this point of view, it is not generally accepted.

Today, there is disagreement as to the advantages that this dominant group has over others. For those who do not believe that the white group has privileges not enjoyed by others, namely the African American, they are invited to agree or disagree with the following. An article written by Peggy McIntosh entitled "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" written in 1989 is believed to be relevant today. Peggy provides the following examples of privileges enjoyed by white Americans that are not generally available to black Americans: she provided this document to help white Americans to better understand the differences in treatment of blacks and compared them.

- 1) If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
- 2) I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
- 3) I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well-assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- 4) When I am told about our national heritage or about civilization, I am shown that people of my color make it what it is.
- 5) I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- 6) If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
- 7) Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
- 8) I can swear or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.

- 9) I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
- 10) I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- 11) I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- 12) I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
- 13) I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
- 14) I can be pretty sure that if I ask to speak to the person in charge, I will be facing a person of my race.
- 15) If a traffic cop pulls me over I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
- 16) I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
- 17) If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask whether it has racial overtones.
- 18) If I am stopped by the police, I can be assured that it was not because of my race.
- 19) I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.

The above advantages can be argued; however, for those who are African American, few would disagree. We usually think of privilege as being a favored state, whether earned or conferred by birth or luck. Yet some of the above conditions work to systematically overpower African Americans.

The End.

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