

White Privilege

RACE AND AMERICAN SOCIETY

Defining Racism

- Let's first define racism:
- Racism= Racial Prejudice (white people and people of color have this)
Plus
- Systemic, Institutional Power (white people have this)

What Is White Privilege?

- “White privilege has nothing to do with whether or not we’re ‘good’ people.
...Privileges are bestowed on us solely because of our race by the institutions with which we interact, not because we deserve them as individuals.”

- Francis Kendall, 2006

How White Privilege Works

- Peggy McIntosh talks about white privilege as if it were an invisible knapsack on a white person's back. Inside the sack are all sorts of unearned and conferred privileges that are aiding us, often without our knowledge and awareness. What we don't realize is how much that knapsack weighs us down and keeps us from our full humanness.

Peggy McIntosh

"White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"

Defining Privilege

- “...privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do.”

Peggy McIntosh “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women’s Studies”

Examples of White Privilege

- If people take me more seriously when I speak than they would a person of color saying the same things in the same way, then I'm benefiting from white privilege.
- I can plan for a day of work without once having to think that my skin color is going to be a factor in how I'm treated, or what I might encounter.
- When I go to the store, I can be assured that they will have personal care items for people like me.
- If I should get pulled over by the police, there is a strong possibility that the police officer will be of my race and as a result, not make assumptions about me.

White Privilege in Everyday Life

- Whites are less likely than blacks to be arrested; once arrested, they are less likely to be convicted and, once convicted, they are less likely to go to prison, regardless of the crime or circumstances.
- Whites constitute 90% of those who use illegal drugs, but less than half of those in prison on drug-use charges are white.
- John McCain is just a candidate for President, while Hillary Clinton is a female candidate for President and Barrack Obama is a black, male candidate for President

White Privilege in Everyday Life

- Whites can choose whether to be conscious of their racial identity or to ignore it and regard themselves as simply human beings.
- Whites can assume that when they go shopping, they'll be treated as serious customers, not as potential shoplifters or people without the money to make a purchase.

White Privilege in Everyday Life

- Whites have greater access to quality education and health care.
- Whites don't have to deal with an endless and exhausting stream of attention to their race. They can simply take their race for granted as unremarkable to the extent of experiencing themselves as not even having a race.

Group Reflection Questions

- In your eyes, what is the cost/impact of white privilege to you?
- What do you need to know or better understand about white privilege?
- How might you actively engage in dismantling white privilege?

Four Recommendations

Amy Edgington “Moving Beyond White Guilt”

- ***Getting information*** acknowledges that we don't know, but that we're willing to keep learning by reading and staying in the work of understanding the concepts produced by scholars and noted authorities who teach, write, and openly share their continuing awareness and expertise on the subject of prejudice and bias.

Four Recommendations

Amy Edgington “Moving Beyond White Guilt

- ***Doing something*** acknowledges that white supremacy is built largely on the complicity and inaction of white people. The same thing can be said about sexism, heterosexism and so on. While it's easy to view racism and other forms of bias as being too large to take on, it is only through a connected and continuous effort that the walls that separate us from each other will come down.

Four Recommendations

Amy Edgington “Moving Beyond White Guilt

- ***Listening*** seems like a simple concept, but there’s always more to it. Amy Edgington says, “When a person of color says, that’s racist, it’s time to take a deep breath and close my mouth, sit down and listen.” None of us who are engaged in eliminating prejudice and bias intend to be racist, or commit discriminatory acts that would indicate that we are perpetrators of the very things that we’re working against. When inadvertently committing an act of oppression, Amy Edgington suggests, “I try not to expect instant forgiveness or restoration of trust. I must follow through on any commitment I make to change.”

Four Recommendations

Amy Edgington “Moving Beyond White Guilt

- ***Talking*** sounds like an easy principle to understand, but it is often the concept that we most often avoid. We must constantly seek converts who are willing to join the fight against cynical fear, mean-spiritedness, narrowness and indifference. Amy Edgington says it best, when she writes, “If I cannot change your mind, I will put my body in your path. We should measure our commitment to fighting racism not by how many people of color we count as friends (or lovers), but by how many white people we are willing to speak to about racism.”