



WHITE PRIVILEGE: REAL OR RACIST?

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CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS

- Race
- Privilege vs racism
- Privilege vs personality
- Power dominant society

WHY ARE WE UNCOMFORTABLE?

- To acknowledge privilege is to understand :
 - that meritocracy is a myth
 - that success is not attained based on one's talent or abilities alone
 - there are opportunities and advantages that are only available to certain people



WHAT IS WHITE PRIVILEGE AND HOW DID THEY GET IT?

SEEN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Kid 1: What is White privilege anyway?
- Kid 2: It's like some kids can have candy anytime they want. They don't even have to ask. They can just reach out and get as much as they want whenever they want. And the candy is always there just for them. Other kids have to ask for candy and then wait for somebody to say its okay to have some. But then, the people with the candy make them do their homework, clean their room, wash the dog, and wait until after dinner. Then maybe, they can have a little bit of candy.
- Kid 1: That sucks.

WHITE PRIVILEGE

- Societal privileges that benefit people with white or light skin and that are beyond what non-white or non-light skinned people are able to experience, have access to or benefit from.

WHITE PRIVILEGE

“... exists above the hypothetical line of social justice. One has more than one deserves merely because of the circumstance of their birth and other people’s positive projections onto one.”

--Peggy McIntosh

HOW WE GOT HERE

- Before colonization (around the 15th century):
 - Race indicated familial lineage
 - ...or a continental distribution of people (i.e., Greeks or Romans)
 - No consideration of separate races or people unified as a race
 - People categorized as Christian or heathen
 - Gender roles existed

HOW WE GOT HERE: NATIVE AMERICANS

- After colonization, Europeans encountered Native Americans:
 - People were described by appearance, traits, ways of life
 - Unfamiliar culture of family/community, worship, celebration...
 - Those outside of the European norm considered heathens, savages, beasts
 - Considered morally, spiritually and cognitively inferior

HOW WE GOT HERE: AFRICAN AMERICANS

- After colonization, African Americans key to maintaining property and land:
 - Kidnapped and used for free labor
 - Stripped of identity, familial connections, language and culture
 - Ideas of inferiority of dark skinned people promoted
 - Race used as tool of control and separation, particularly with poor whites and white indentured servants
 - Subjected to racial profiling
 - Target of hate groups and terrorist attacks

HOW WE GOT HERE: JAPANESE AMERICANS

- Intensified after Pearl Harbor (1941)
 - 1942 Executive Order authorized internment
 - Forced Japanese Americans from certain areas
 - Housed in concentration camps
 - Many were born and raised in the US
 - Over half were children

HOW WE GOT HERE: JEWISH AMERICANS

- Until the late 18th century
 - Anti-Semitism was socially acceptable, common and legal in many states
 - Non-Christians were barred from voting or running for office
 - Targeted by KKK and other hate groups

HOW WE GOT HERE: MUSLIMS

- Islamophobia heightened after 9/11, Iraq and Afghanistan wars
- Opinion of Muslims declined over the past decade
- Subject to racial profiling by law enforcement
- Target of hate groups and terrorist attacks

WHITE PRIVILEGE RECOGNIZED

- In 1930s, W.E.B. DuBois first wrote about the “psychological wage” that enabled poor whites to feel superior to poor blacks.
- During the Civil Rights era, activist began discussing the concept of “white-skin privilege.”
- 1988, Peggy McIntosh wrote “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Corresponded Through Work in Women’s Studies”
- 1989, McIntosh wrote “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.”

THE INVISIBLE KNAPSACK

“...unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious... like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.”

-- Peggy McIntosh



“Being white means never having to think about it.”

-- James Baldwin

WHO IS WHITE IN AMERICA?

- Racial identity is fluid based on current social and political thought
- Early census takers determined race (1790 - 1930)
- In the early 20th century:
 - Finnish were not considered white
 - Irish were not considered white
 - Jewish were not considered white
 - Latin/Hispanic not considered white

Instructions to 1930 Census Takers on Counting People by Race

PERSONAL DESCRIPTION

149. Column 11. Sex.—Write "M" for male and "F" for female, as indicated in the notes at the bottom of the schedule.

150. Column 12. Color or race.—Write "W" for white; "Neg" for Negro; "Mex" for Mexican; "In" for Indian; "Ch" for Chinese; "Jp" for Japanese; "Fil" for Filipino; "Hin" for Hindu; and "Kor" for Korean. For a person of any other race, write the race in full.

151. Negroes.—A person of mixed white and Negro blood should be returned as a Negro, no matter how small the percentage of Negro blood. Both black and mulatto persons are to be returned as Negroes, without distinction. A person of mixed Indian and Negro blood should be returned a Negro, unless the Indian blood predominates and the status as an Indian is generally accepted in the community.

152. Indians.—A person of mixed white and Indian blood should be returned as Indian, except where the percentage of Indian blood is very small, or where he is regarded as a white person by those in the community where he lives. (See par. 151 for mixed Indian and Negro.)

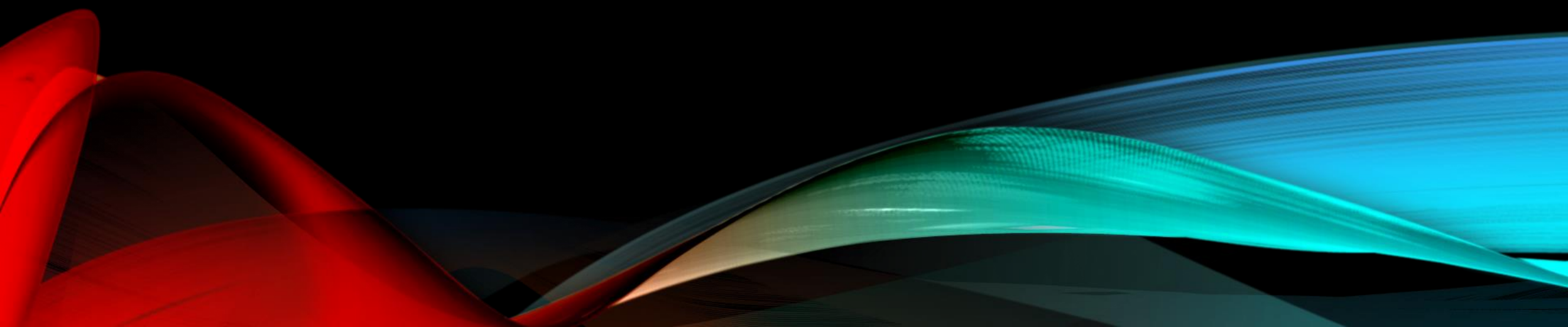
153. For a person reported as Indian in column 12, report is to be made in column 19 as to whether "full blood" or "mixed blood," and in column 20 the name of the tribe is to be reported. For Indians, columns 19 and 20 are thus to be used to indicate the degree of Indian blood and the tribe, instead of the birth-place of father and mother.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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WHO HAS PRIVILEGE ?

In America



TAKE A LOOK

- Dominant Group
 - Holds power or has access to power
 - Have access to wealth or necessary resources to acquire and retain
 - Create society's norms and baseline
 - Able to control education and access to education
- Target Group
 - Limited or less access to power
 - Categorized as subordinate
 - Differential treatment

THE MYTH OF MERITOCRACY

- The American Dream: if you work hard, you will accomplish your goals. You can be or attain anything in this land of opportunity.
- You will earn what is equivalent to your motivation, ability and effort.
- Progress is based on talent and ability rather than class privilege, social standing or wealth.



EXERCISE!!!

WHITE PRIVILEGE

- White is the racial norm
- Traits and characteristics are projected by others
- Not necessarily racist
- Not always aware of privilege
- Merely acknowledging privilege is not enough to end it

RESOURCES

- “How Studying Privilege Systems Can Strengthen Compassion,” Peggy McIntosh, TEDTalk 2015
- “Understanding Oppression and Privilege,” muskie.usm.maine.edu
- A Brief History of Racism in the US, Samana Siddiqui, 2005
- “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” Peggy McIntosh, 1988
- “Through the Decades,” www.census.gov
- “The Origins of Privilege,” Joshua Rothman, The New Yorker, 2014