

# [White peggy mcintosh lists fifty ways by which](https://assignbuster.com/white-peggy-mcintosh-lists-fifty-ways-by-which/)

WhitePrivilege and Indicators of OppressionIn “ WhitePrivilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”, Peggy McIntosh lists fiftyways by which her status as a white woman in American society arbitrarilyserves to her advantage.

While all the items McIntosh includes in the articleare worth in-depth discussion and inspection, some seem to have greaterimplications than others. One such item is the thirty-eighth privilege listedby the author, who acknowledges the fact that she “ can think over manyoptions, social, political, imaginative or professional, without asking whethera person of her race would be accepted or allowed to do what she wants todo “(1). While what McIntosh describes seems like something all peopleshould be afforded, it is simply not so. People of color do have to navigatethe many barriers set in place when it comes to professional and socialadvancement, and this is something society does not recognize enough. It is widelyaccepted that, in American society, white people are generally afforded fullaccess to the many avenues of western life while minority groups face greatuncertainty.

This social custom reflects the principle of cultural imperialism, an indicator of oppression, which places the majority culture of a nation asthe norm and as something to be respected (Young 41-43). In this case, the white population is being rewarded with the prospect ofhaving an open future just for being part of the majority group. Because the generalbelief of the majority white community is that they have open opportunities, itmay be difficult for members of that group to understand that others do notenjoy the same feeling. Thus, and especially for those who refuse toacknowledge the truth in white privilege, it may be difficult for them toempathize and want to change things. While McIntosh’sthirty-eighth privilege doesn’t make a direct reference to violence, anotherindicator of oppression, history shows that members of minority groups tryingto rise above what society deemed their station have been met with physicalaggression from the beneficiaries of mainstream society. The word “ allowed” inthe author’s claim can indicate more than just being restricted by rule – it canalso mean restriction by force. The status quo set in place by the sense ofcultural imperialism felt by McIntosh and others has been deemed so sacred thatany violation of it and the part of the minority warrants attack or the threatof one. Exploitation is alsoat stake with McIntosh’s privilege.

The fact that minority groups have limitedpersonal and economic prospects implies that they are more likely to be subjectto the kind of low-skill, low-paying, “ menial labor” that Adams’s textdescribes (Five Faces of Oppression 37-38). Historically, thishas manifested itself through the common trend of white families using Hispanicand African-American people as maids and household workers. In this example, the minority group’s servitude and stagnant employment status “ transfersenergies from one group to another to produce unequal distributions” (38).

Inother words, their work benefits the lives of white family far more than theirown. Marginalization isalso implied with McIntosh’s statement. As white people are the norm, people ofcolor are the other. They exist on the margins of society, and thus the generalprinciple of free choice does not apply to them. Because they are restricted intheir prospects, they are also, as a result, restricted in where they live. Manypeople of color live in low-income neighborhoods, where again they are deniedaccess to the opportunities that could lead to advancement. The cycle continues, and the indicator of powerlessness comes into play as the oppressed groups feelmore and more confined to a life arbitrarily given them.