

Privilege, power, and difference



Allan G. Johnson wrote a book called, ' Privilege, Power, and Difference'. He has written a very accessible introduction to the concept of privilege: the notion that certain members of society benefit from institutionalized assumptions and beliefs about what is normal. Conversely, attention is also given to various groups that are harmed by these same institutionalized assumptions. People of color, women, homosexuals, and those with disabilities are all included in his discussion.

Furthermore, important criticisms included in this book are not only a wonderful introduction to the concept of privilege, but it also delves into how and why various systems of privilege are perpetuated in our society. Johnson is adept at shifting the focus from an individual level, where feelings of defensiveness and guilt arise, to the societal level, where the systems of privilege truly operate and are maintained.

By looking at social systems and the way that individuals participate in them, he challenges his readers to act responsibly as agents of change, while suggesting that individual guilt or innocence is a debatable point when it comes to dealing with these systems of privilege. This is an important skill that Johnson wields, because American society traditionally celebrates the myth of the rugged individual. Johnson acknowledges and discusses this tendency of the U. S. citizen to think individualistically, and then redirects his discussion to the societal level, effectively re-framing the concept of individual guilt or innocence as a discussion of social systems and institutionalized biases.

Hence, because of the various arguments this book poses and the level of thinking it ignites, I highly recommend reading this book. Allan G. Johnson is a writer and public speaker who has worked on issues of privilege, oppression, and social inequality since receiving his Ph. D. in sociology from the University of Michigan in 1972. He began this work in the 1970s with a focus on men's violence against women.

After thirty years of teaching college students, he now devotes himself entirely to writing and public speaking. He has worked with more than two hundred schools and organizations in 36 states. His nonfiction books include 'The Forest and the Trees: Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise' (rev. ed. , 2008), 'The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology' (2nd ed. , 2000), 'The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy' (rev. ed. , 2005), and 'Privilege, Power, and Difference' (2nd ed. , 2005). His writing has been translated into several languages and excerpted in numerous anthologies. 'The First Thing and the Last' is his first published novel.

Johnson is available for presentations and workshops related to issues of social inequality, privilege, and oppression. In this work, his goal is to present controversial, often difficult issues with gentle and compassionate clarity, in ways that people not only understand, but can relate to on a personal level. He tries to offer a blend of life experience, humor, social reality, audience participation, and clear analysis that opens windows to new and productive ways of thinking and living in the world.

As a straight, white, nondisabled male, he is especially concerned with reaching members of dominant groups who may feel so uncomfortable with

issues of privilege that they will not even talk about them. Johnson is also available for public readings, discussion, and book signings related to his work as a novelist. Johnson published five books which are 'The First Thing and the Last', 'The Blackwell dictionary of sociology', 'The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy', 'Privilege, Power, and Difference', and 'The Forest and the Tress: Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise'. 'The First Thing and the Last' is his first published novel. 'The First Thing and the Last' is an inspiring, heartbreaking story of the resilience of the human spirit. Over a period of seven years, 'The First Thing and the Last' was rejected almost sixty times by commercial publishers, many of whom openly acknowledged their unwillingness to publish a novel that tells the truth about domestic violence, no matter how compelling the story or how well it is told.

Three senior editors took it to their editorial boards, but were turned down because of concerns about how to make a commercial success of a novel that realistically portrays domestic violence. One editor was overruled by the publisher who declared, "I don't know why a woman would stay with a man who beats her up." Another editor wrote, "I think Johnson's writing is remarkable and the story he tells is compulsively readable. I loved both Katherine and Lucy, and felt they were both brought completely and convincingly to life.

Everyone admired the quality of the writing, and everyone agreed this is a novel that deserves to be published. I genuinely hope you find someone who is brave enough to take it on." Also, Allan G. Johnson began his work on men's violence against women in 1977 as a Rape Crisis Service volunteer.

He has authored research, testified before legislative committees, consulted with national and state organizations, and served on the board of the Connecticut Coalition against Domestic Violence. The Blackwell dictionary of sociology' is a new edition of Allan G. Johnson's one-volume sociology dictionary which includes seventy-five new entries, as well as an expanded biographical section, extensive revisions and updates, and a more thorough cross-referencing. Written by a sociologist who is also an accomplished writer and teacher, it is aimed primarily at students, but will also be of use to professionals looking for an introduction to core concepts outside their area of expertise.

Its combination of clear prose, engaging examples, a single author's voice, and its minimal assumptions about the average reader's prior knowledge of sociology and its related fields, makes this a unique and valuable reference work. (from the publisher). ' The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy' is Allan G. Johnson's response to the pain and confusion that men and women experience by living with gender inequality, explains what patriarchy is and is not, how it works, and what gets in the way of understanding and doing something about it.

Johnson's simple yet powerful approach avoids the paralyzing trap of guilt, blame, anger, and defensive denial that often result from conversations about gender. He shows how we all participate in an oppressive system we did not create and how each of us can contribute towards its dissolution. He argues persuasively that something much better is possible and that our individual choices matter more than we can ever know.

'The Forest and the Tress: Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise' is talking about if sociology could teach everyone just one thing, what it would be. The Forest and the Trees' is one sociologist's response to the hypothetical – the core insight with the greatest potential to change how people see the world and themselves in relation to it. It is about what that insight is why it matters that we understand it, use it, and pass it on. It is about the future of a discipline whose influence and credibility will stand or fall on the ability to foster a clear and widespread understanding of what it means to think sociologically. During my research about Allan G.

Johnson, I found a lot of good reviews about his books. Most people and professors like his books and they highly recommend reading his books, especially those who are majoring in or have a deep interest in sociology. However, although most people like his books, I thought his books contained topics that border-lined risky when used in the classroom setting. If professors use his books for educational purposes, some white people who are close-minded might have difficulty relating to and reading about 'racism', 'privilege', and 'sexism'.

In my opinion, I thought his books are more aimed towards the white people as the readers in order to allow them to become more aware. However, there were also some criticisms of Johnson's work. Sometimes the level of hypersensitivity embraced by his books make the conversations, which should be encouraging, impossible by creating a completely twisted perspective that loses all meaning. Sometimes Johnson's arguments about males reveal women in such an obvious clear that male students feel bad even though they have a complete lack of knowledge about human history.

Additionally, they it causes them to think that the author seems vague.

Therefore, these kinds of people refuse to read Johnson's book and they will not learn anything if they do happen to read it. Also, I thought that the fact that such a man as this has been able to survive and, the worse, thrive and garner respect within sociological circles, simply proves the weakness of the field as a whole. If Johnson truly wants to make a positive difference, he really needs to start working harder on finding the real reasons behind self-evident ailments of society.

Individuals and systems are connected to each other through a dynamic relationship. If people use his books as a model of thinking about the world, it is easier to bring problems like racism, sexism, and privilege out into the open and talk about society. In particular, it is easier to see the problems in relation to people, and to see society in relation to them. For example, if people think that the world is just about individuals, then a white woman who is told she is 'involved' in racism is going to think people are telling her that she is a racist who harbors ill will towards people of color.

She is using an individualistic model of the world that limits her to interpreting words like 'racist' as personality flaws. Individualism divides the world up into different kinds of people – good people and bad, racists and non-racists, and the 'good guys' and sexist pigs. It encourages people to think of racism, sexism, and heterosexism as diseases that infect people and make them sick and society looks for a 'cure' that will turn diseased, flawed individuals into healthy, 'good' ones or at least isolate them so that they cannot infect others.

Therefore, if the society uses Johnson's books, it can help it to eventually change. In addition, I imagine that Johnson's books are helpful to inflexible people and it works that way with the good things that come out of people working together in all the systems that make up social life. It also works the same way with the bad things, with each bad thing adding to the problem instead of the solution. To perpetuate privilege and oppression, society does not have to do anything consciously to support it.

Merely the people's silence is crucial for ensuring its future, for the simple fact that no system of privilege can continue to exist without most people choosing to remain silent about it. If most heterosexuals spoke out about heterosexism, for example, or if most non-disabled people came out of their closet of silence and stood openly against privilege, it would be a critical first step toward revolutionary change. As long as people participate in social systems, people do not get to choose whether to be involved in the consequences they produce.

People are involved simply through the fact that people are here. As such, people can only choose how to be involved, whether to be a part of the problem or to be part of the solution. That is where people's power lies, and also their responsibility to society. If people do something meaningful for success, develop something, and leave their names in society people call them heroes. There are many heroes in our society from a fireman rushing into a burning building, the Good Samaritan who saves a complete stranger, or a soldier sacrificing his/her life to save others.

However, what about the everyday people who are just as heroic but do not get the press coverage or the fame? What about the parents who work hard so that their kids can do something they never had the opportunity to do such as going to college, or the teacher who goes that extra mile to connect with a student whom everybody else has given up on? Furthermore, there are talented and dedicated people working in laboratories on cures for cancer and other life-threatening conditions. Yet, people will never know their names.

What is being done today may lead, in a year or two, to the cure that saves people's beloved parents, partners, or children. People could die happy after making such a difference for so many people. The definition of 'unsung hero' is a person who makes a substantive yet unrecognized contribution; a person whose bravery is unknown or unacknowledged. Therefore, I think that people can easily run into these unsung heroes in their normal lives. Unsung heroes live with us and they do their best to fulfill heroic, selfless acts.

The ones that do not get press conferences called in their honor, but whose lives inspire everyone. Unsung heroes give hope and shine light for the weak and are incredible people who live heroic lives each and every day. The trouble about privilege and oppression are the pervasive and long-standing consequences for millions of people, which cannot be written off as the misguided doings of a small percentage of people with personality problems. For example, the people who get labeled as racists or homophobes are all following racist, heterosexist paths of least resistance that are built into the entire society.

To make a better society is the way with the good things that come out of people working together in all the systems that make up better social life. Therefore, I think that education and tolerance are the only solutions to any -ism. -isms like any discrimination stem from fear and ignorance. People need to feel comfortable. Anybody that does not fit our own version of familiar may be assigned the label of 'other' as a way of guarding against that difference. Also, people need to stop segregating people according to their race, religion, age, ability, sexuality, gender, age, ethnicity, and work towards integration.

There needs to be a step towards educating people in order to see the similarities and not the differences. The government needs to model this type of behavior to children, adults, societies, groups, politics, and laws. Education in whatever form that it takes, including travel, media, and family tradition spreads from one generation to the next. People can all learn to be tolerant of difference by being exposed to the different. With modern cheap travel and the global media, I am certain that people will eventually get to a stage of social inclusion of all people.