

# Free essay on white privilege in america

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## **White Privilege in America**

Despite it being an apparent long-standing marvel to individuals of color and as well white individuals, most people stereotypically and strongly oppose the issue of white privilege. Many a times, the situation becomes difficult when it involves individuals holding divergent views that are diametrically opposed to one party. Picture a situation where the individual or individuals in the discussion oppose even the most rudimentary elements of the discussion. At this moment, it is emphatically crucial to acknowledge that the theory of white privilege is indeed practical in the United States. Even at the best of circumstances, opposers of white privilege will always find a way of denying the existence of the white privilege aspect in the United States. For instance, citing the status of underprivileged whites, particularly those in the working class does not provide enough evidence to prove that even the whites are at times under privileged.

Sadly, the popular and outdated notion of the existence of equal opportunity for all individuals is one of the leading colorblind meritocracies that have continuously been used to argue against the existence of white privilege in America. Why was racial segregation and discrimination a problem in the first place? How about the issue of slavery that was deep-rooted in America? Would the master and servant be friends or would they continue maintaining lines that were drawn from past generations? In this paper, will argue in favor of the ‘ myth’ or ‘ theory’ of white privilege in America and will provide evidence wherever applicable.

The aspect of white privilege is one of the issues that have hampered the exercise of the notion of equal human rights for a long period. Admitting that white privilege exists, leave alone it being rampant in institutions, is to acknowledge the need of fighting oppression and discrimination. Currently, all aspects of life in the United States are permeated by some element of discrimination and this discriminatory element is extended to all other categories and/or communities of color. For instance, other than the privileges associated with white people, prejudices, and discrimination against other races are highly practiced in the United States. Christians against Muslims, Latin Americans against African Americans, and major ethnic minorities against minor minority groups.

Picture a situation within an organization comprising of American workers from all races and communities American Arabs, Latin-Americans, Native Americans, and African-Americans to name but a few. Having been taught that racism or any other related form of associated is supposed to grant certain advantages to a particular group, a white person is at liberty to make a range of different choices to put him/her at an advantage as compared to fellow non-white colleagues and acquaintances. It all begins with people from the same race being in similar company most of the time. As a result, particular lines of segregation will be drawn within the workplace. Equally, the situation might involve incidences where the white person chooses not to associate with individuals that he was trained to avoid mistrusting or even those individuals that were trained to mistrust the white person.

In modern America, areas of residence are also defined based on color. There are regions where it would be questionable to find an average black person living. Leading comedian and actor, Chris Rock, present a clear example in his 2008 stand-up comedy *Kill The Messenger*<sup>5</sup>. He admits that racism is a critical issue in the world and it will never die, for it will keep multiplying. He cites how racism has had a sizeable impact in his life by referring to his place of residence, Alpine, New Jersey. Properties in this region are worth millions of dollars, thanks to his abilities to pay! Sadly, there are only four black people in his neighborhood despite the presence of hundreds of houses. Interestingly, the four black people in his neighborhood are popular and established individuals-Chris Rock himself, Jay-Z, Eddie Murphy and Mary J Blige<sup>6</sup>.

This means that the region is reserved for individuals with enormous capabilities to pay for properties. However, that happens to be the case since the neighbor to Chris Rock is a dentist but not necessarily the best dentist in the world-just a regular dentist! At this instance, he compares white privileges to what it will take a black man to achieve similar privileges. Chris posits that a black person will have to fly literally in order to achieve what a white man can literally walk to achieve! Sarcastically, a regular black dentist will have to invent teeth in order to live or purchase property in Alpine, New Jersey. Simply put, it took miracles to enable Chris Rock to purchase that house - Oscar awards and other achievements to his name.

According to Tim Wise, a leading public speaker on the issue of white privilege, white privileges make individuals who possess it to fail to

acknowledge it and at the same time, deny them the opportunity to have an open mind as far as brown or black truth is concerned<sup>7</sup>. In his book, *White Like Me*, he cites discrimination as the number one factor responsible for bringing privileges to white Americans and while at the same time disadvantaging the blacks<sup>8</sup>. He further argues that since past generations have been brought believing that they superior when compared to others, it is more likely that they children and their grandchildren will pick up from where they left if not beginning at steps higher than them. The job market is also flooded with cases of discrimination and white privileges. Chances are present everywhere for the white person, from seeking loans, apartments, or in any situation that warrants a head start in order to get recognition.

As far as social and family issues are concerned, it is more likely to find different interpretations of issues that carry similar magnitudes. For instance, teen pregnancies among non-whites in American are often viewed as acts of irresponsibility, and proponents of decays within the society. However, if the situation involves a white teen, then it viewed from the challenges that affect families and hence, they should be approached as personal matters. A clear example happened with Bristol Palin who got pregnant at the age of seventeen<sup>9</sup>. People were urged to approach it as a personal matter that involved families and personal issues. As if that was not enough, the responsible boyfriend bragged about how he does what he did to Bristol Palin for fun and warned that nobody should mess with him lest he/she gets his/her ass kicked<sup>10</sup>.

White privileges are also evident in all aspects of the American society, from institutions to the media. White people are rest assured that whenever they switch on their TV sets or peruse the pages their newspapers, it is undoubted that will find individuals from their race being widely represented. Speaking of civilization or national heritage, it is highly likely that the all achievements will be associated with white people. Equally, children from the white people are instilled with or made to understand their white privileges from an earlier stage in their lives. For instance, curricular materials are provided in their institutions of learning to enable them testify the superiority of their race. Black children are instilled with values that remind them they “ can be” whatever they want to be in future whereas white children know they “ will be” what they want to be in future. In all this instances, it is evident that white privileges offer more credibility to white people irrespective of their positions in situations involving racism.

Regarding projects that touch on sensitive issues affecting minorities or groups without white privileges, white people, particularly those in authority, are capable of making decisions as whether to ignore or support such programs without having to care about the negative consequences that might result from supporting such programs<sup>11</sup>. Arguments with individuals of color can also be won without much difficulty because white privileges are often enough to place an individual from the other race at a disadvantaged position thereby jeopardizing his chances of winning the argument. A surety also exists that the white person is more likely to find an individual who will be willing to support his part of the argument, and if need be provide

professional support. This represents the set of challenges that black people in America have to undergo in their daily lives.

White privileges can be largely associated with past situations and injustices that were leveled against the people of color. Non-white individuals were subjected to all sorts of discrimination from political, social, and economic sections of the society. Thereby, denying the existence or prevalence of white privileges will be a matter of uttermost irrelevance. The act of denying the existence of white privileges, in itself is a manifestation of denying other groups an opportunity of understanding reality even though they might not suffer any form of social consequences because of acknowledging the existence of the situation. Arguably, the white person pays no price for dismissing claims associated with racial discrimination given the lack of powers associated with non-whites. The whites are in control of virtually all forms of authority such as legal institutions, educational institutions, or political institutions. If a white person insists that there exists a problem in a particular situation, then it is taken as it is and the reverse is true.

Individuals of color can also feel the effects of white privileges for their choices of failing to believe in that white reality indeed exists. Such individuals of color have been subjected to situations of un-ending progress, being caught in a situation where they think that advancement in their career fields is based on merit as opposed to whom you know. Sadly, most of them have ended victims of professionalism, marginalized and even accused of playing along with the aspect of race card.

Other situations where white privileges are brought out clearly involve the management of public institutions. A clear example is the case where the president of a leading university overspends university money in excess of what is legally allowed in his expense account on unnecessary but luxuries items. No person is at the liberty to point out that whatever he/she is doing warrants a replacement with say a non-white president. However, if a similar situation happens in the case where a black president is caught mismanaging university funds, it would perhaps form the ideal time where the same university should elect a white president. The case is similar when white individuals in authority messes with their jobs, embezzles funds, or engages in scandals spanning millions of dollars. It less likely to find a finger of accusation being pointed against them for cases of absolute dishonesty or incompetence. Persons in authority also conspire to protect or cover up scandals or scums without necessarily to fear that their reputations will be damaged<sup>12</sup>. When compared to a situation of a black or non-white being involved in similar scandals, not only will he/she suffer the consequences but also individuals from his/her community will be quick in distancing themselves from issues to do with his participation in the act under scrutiny. This shows the power and extent of white privileges within the American society.

Regarding elections and voting rights, white privileges have dominated life in America such that the so-called founding fathers developed the constitution in a manner that it protected the privileges and rights of the white person<sup>13</sup>. During the formative years of the American Constitution, only landowners were given the privilege of voting. This marked the beginning of privileges



among the American people. Arguably, the act of being born white guarantees an individual certain rights and privileges when compared to their counterparts from inferior races. This has led some white individuals to fail to realize the effects presented by the white privileges leading to increased cases of denying the existence of white privileges. The unearned advantages associated with white privileges enable white people to exert a dominating advantage over the minority groups. The privileges also come with added opportunities to individuals from the white groups whether they recognize the advantages or not. Majority of white people fail to acknowledge the existence of white privileges because earned privileges are indescribable and hence, they possess them without their knowledge. Additionally, it represents invaluable things that can never be lost in whatever circumstances whatsoever.

At this stage of the discussion, it is apparent that the aspect of white privileges is evident within the American society. Honestly, the American society is ruled based on white privileges and white supremacies even though the aspect of white privileges is a complex social phenomenon in itself. In such a white supremacist culture, virtually all white people have earned privileges irrespective of their positions on racism. One sure thing is that white privileges bring different advantages depending on particular contexts whether personal or institutional. Despite it being an apparent long-standing marvel to individuals of color and as well white individuals, most people stereotypically and strongly oppose the issue of white privilege. The popular and outdated notion of the existence of equal opportunity for all individuals is one of the leading colorblind meritocracies that have

continuously been used to argue against the existence of white privilege in America. Undeniably, the aspect of white privileges is revealed in more instances within different aspects in the American society. The fight against slavery might have been won successfully but that the war on racism is still a big issue in the world, and with particular reference in America. With the prevalence of white privileges, and racism will never die, but it will keep multiplying.

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