

White denial-strong response



In the article, "(Proto)Typical White Denial: Reflections on Racism and Uncomfortable Realities", written by Tim Wise he informs his readers that the article is not his first about white denial. He also reminds his readers that when talking about white denial, someone is bound to get offended. Wise received an email from a man claiming that Wise's article was racist against whites and that Wise stating that whites are in denial would be like him making the broad generalization that all blacks are criminals.

Wise informs his readers that a generalization based on stereotypes in racism and if the generalization is based on actual proven facts, it is not. Wise proves his point within his article by showing his readers the facts. He gives his readers the surveys and experience that either he has found on his own or that he has found in doing research on the subject. As Wise wraps up his article he explains that until whites that until whites can prove in these tests and surveys that they are not automatically putting blacks in one category and hispanics into another, whites are in fact in denial about being judgmental towards other races.

For instance, after reading Wise's article it brought back a specific memory I do not particularly enjoy. It was when I realized that some people hold themselves higher than others. In this case, she was better because she was white, I was better because I was white, and someone who had a dark skin tone was a criminal. White privilege was very apparent. I was in the eighth grade and my best friend Codee Ricks was half black and half white; which meant absolutely nothing to either one of us. One morning after a sleepover we decided to walk over to the gas station across the street from my house to get some donuts.

We had gone there before plenty of times but this time was much different. There was a new person working, she was a fairly young white woman, we walked in and smiled, she half smiled and from the moment we walked in watched Codee like a hawk. I did not understand what was going on, I was pretty oblivious until the woman told me to come up to the counter for a second. In Wise's article he reports of a study he did on his own where he asked different types of questions, " When asked to envision a criminal,[...] almost all white participants[...]respond that their first image was that of someone who was black or Latino/a. (Wise 96) After I walked up to her counter she acted like she was showing me some kind of deal when she whispered, " Watch your friend, I do not want her stealing anything. " It was right there that she expressed white privilege to me. She showed how she believed she was better for being white, as well as I. I did not say a word to the lady behind the counter, I was shocked someone could be so ignorant. I told Codee the story as we walked back to my house; I had never seen my friend so sad. White privilege is very vivid in the study, and in the story.

In the story the woman at the counter assumed I was not going to steal and that my friend, who was of color would, she was holding whites to a higher standard when I had done nothing to prove or earn that assumption and neither had Codee. In the same study of Wise's mentioned earlier, most whites, " and even large numbers of participants of color" held whites up to a higher standard by assuming that the criminals were of color. In the same study another question asked reaffirmed white privilege, " if I ask people to envision an 'all-American boy or girl', or even worse, God, they invariably admit to envisioning white images"(Wise 96).

At the gas station the clerk pictured a criminal being black and pictured a young girl of innocence as white. This is similar to what people automatically think when they think of the all-American boy or girl or Santa Claus.

Incidents like the picturing of someone as a certain color, is what causes white privilege, and white privilege often leads to white denial. Whites automatically have some sort of unearned power that leads to them feeling as though they are superior to those of different races. Although they normally do not recognize it.

For instance, I have a roommate from Kansas City, she's upper middle class, gets whatever she wants and judges whoever she can whenever she can. Just the other day I was sitting in my room talking about Dillard's and how I like to go and visit my mom and occasionally shop. My roommate interrupted me with, " I do not really like Dillard's. " When I asked her why she stated, " Well, where I come from that's where the, well I am not racist or anything but the blacks and mexicans normally shop. " When I asked her why that mattered she said, " Well, normally, they do not make very much money. At that point I left the room. This was not the only occasion I had heard " I am not racist or anything but... " leaving me to the conclusion that white denial, as well as white privilege are related. In the case of Codee the lady made a generalization about Codee's race in the fact that she felt Codee was going to steal. While my roommate believes that those of color other than white are poor. My roommate holds whites above other races by making the assumption that those of color make less money than those who are not.

Although I agree that whites are in denial, Wise himself made a broad generalization about whites, similar to the clerk and my roommate. Later

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within Wises' article he writes of the events during Hurricane Katrina which, "suggested that black folks were raping and killing people en masse" and goes on to complicate things by stating, "Needless to say, were a hurricane to take out Nantucket, or destroy the summer homes of the white and wealthy[...], and were the media to broadcast rumors to the effect that rich white folks were raping and killing people [... no one would believe them without evidence"(Wise 97) I do not agree with "no one", the reason that I do not agree is because I know for a fact that there would be a lot of people of all sorts of colors, even white, that would believe it, "no one" is a large statement to make. As well as it is an assumption; he does not provide any other sort of factual evidence when he makes this statement. I know that there are plenty of people who would believe it, like my one roommate, but that is one out of four. Not four out of four, which leads me to believe that there are more good people out there than "no one".

There are a lot of good people in the world, people who do not look at the color someone is. Like my friend Codee, who even after that incident happened to her does not hold a thing against upper class white people or white people in general. I know that I do not think of color being a "difference", I do not think that I should be more privileged than Codee or anyone else for that matter. If I were to see that upper class whites were raping and killing, I would think it would be just as horrible if I could even remember the rumors about the people in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

There are plenty of people in the world who do not think in terms of "poor=black" or "rich=white". When there are stories of serial rapists here in Manhattan, I do not automatically think or picture the rapist as someone of

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color, I actually picture a creepy older white man; which would be me stereotyping and proving that judgment in general happens about someones own race, or a different race; as Wise and I have both shown. I do not think that it is fair for Wise to state, " no one would believe them without evidence"(Wise 97). As I stated above, " no one" is just too broad of a term.

Although there should not be anyone out in the world making broad assumptions about a certain race, everyone unfortunately does. Until proven, most people in the world will not believe the the fictional, and often times even the non-fictional. Making it difficult for white denial, and white privilege to completely disappear. Throughout Wises' article he makes valid points, shows his readers that is a problem by not only proving it with evidence, but also by showing us in the article that he himself makes judgments about certain types of people.

Before reading this article I would not have recognized when people, including myself were judging people solely on there appearance. Not just skin tone but down to the way a person presents themselves. Looking at personal experience with Codee and my roommate, I believe that there will always be some form of white privilege and white denial. If more people were to read Wises' articles and others similar to his, there would be some hope that it would go away some more.