

# The privilege of being white: an auto-ethnography

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One of the most distinct and powerful aspects of the American society is diversity. It is constituted by different people of various races, ethnicity, origin, color, beliefs and even languages. America leads in this global phenomenon as it features itself as the home of the free, the land of cosmopolitanism and universality.

Immigrants in the US such as Latin, African and Asian Americans have become an integral part of American society. And as part of the American culture, unique individual identities of immigrants are encouraged to be asserted and accepted for assimilation and continued growth of the American culture.

Behind that so called American dream that many immigrants yearn for is the issue of racism that continues to pervade American society. Racial discrimination has metamorphosed in new forms and channels in the modern age. It has been institutionalized and cunningly integrated within the fabric of society as both institutional and cultural phenomenon. (Kivisto and Rundblad)

The established forms of racial inequalities before remains very much existent but manifests itself in institutional mechanisms today which provided a new dimension of racial segregation in the form of privileges and racial stigma.

An ordinary everyday

Upon getting this assignment, I quickly started a conscious reflection of my regular activities and made a critical analysis of my social environment in order to recognize the so called privilege that white people enjoys in

society. The first thing that come up in my mind on my way home is that in a society dominated by whites, the white people is a norm.

Thus, non-whites are regarded as different or non customary. In the most peculiar yet common way, I can easily socialize with or get into a company of white people most of the time. On the other hand, I would have some hesitations in approaching or getting along with non whites. At this point, I realize that there seems an unconscious prejudice within me that I can relate better with white people because I am one of them and subconscious assumption that they see me as a reflection of themselves as well because I am white.

On the other hand, my hesitations to approach non white people may have also stemmed from some kind of bias that non whites are hostile or unwelcoming. In worst scenarios especially towards non-whites in the streets, there seemed an automatic supposition on my part that they are gang members and are potentially dangerous.

I believethat these subconscious feelings are reinforced and sustained by the popular media particularly how non whites have been negatively affected by stereotypical portrayals and the how whites are given privilege. (Branscombe and Doosje)

The motion picture is one of the many media through which systematic racial, cultural, and historical discrimination and stratification in society is depicted as a reality in society. The movie, “ Boyz in the Hood” for instance, tells of the struggles and perils of a young black man living in the ghetto

were joining a gang is a survival kit and that violence in the neighborhood is a way of life.

The controversial film “ Do The Right Thing” in 1989, on the other hand accounts a series of events that described the racial tension in a predominantly black neighborhood that resulted to violent conflict in the end. The movie, “ higher learning” on the other hand, tells of the discrimination that extends in academic institutions that led to the murder of students as well. The constant portrayal of non whites as gang members made me think that most blacks and Latinos are gang members and are therefore potentially treacherous and threatening.