

White privilege gives unnecessary advantages

By Klaria Holmes

opinions editor

Imagine you are running a race. You are standing at the starting block, but as soon as the gun fires for everyone to start running, something holds you back.

You are stuck at the back of the line while everyone else gets to run. Consequently, you finish last. That is exactly what white privilege feels like to a person of color.

White privilege, as defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary, is “the fact of people with white skin having advantages in society that other people do not have.”

White privilege isn't used to discredit any struggles white people go through for their accomplishments. It does not mean that all white people are racist, or all white people use this to their advantage; it just calls out the fact that white people are apt to receive more benefits than their darker neighbors.

About three years ago, Jeremy Dowsett of alittlemoresauce.com wrote an article about white privilege, comparing it to riding a bike in the midst of traffic. While this example seems obscure, odd, and belittling to the situation at hand, he explained further and stated that the analogy helped him understand the concept of white privilege and listen to others' arguments for white privilege without immediately getting angry and defensive.

Dowsett lives in Lansing, Mich., where he willingly chooses to ride his bike as his main mode of transportation. When he rides in the road, people yell that he should be riding on the sidewalk, even when he has the right to ride his bike in the road with the other cars. Regardless of the fact Dowsett isn't breaking the law by riding his bike in the road, people still treat him unfairly.

Dowsett states that for people of color, living in America is metaphorically like riding a bike in traffic. As a person of color, you have every right to be here, but that doesn't dispute the fact that the road was made for cars (in this case, non-minorities), and it wasn't economically or conveniently built for those who aren't driving a car.

White privilege rears its ugly head in all aspects of society, but mainly in issues like the war on drugs, mass incarceration, education, and the wage gap.

A 2015 study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research on equal employment showed that if two of the exact same resumes were submitted, one with a 'black' sounding name and the other with a 'white' sounding name, the white person was hired at double the rate of

the black person. In the exact same study, they also concluded that white men with a criminal history were more likely to be hired than a black man with no criminal record.

America is such a diverse place. We should work to make it equal for everyone. Everyone should have the option to go out and find a job without having to worry about being discriminated against because of their skin tone or gender, and our current society isn't allowing this to happen.

Decades of research and statistics have proven that people of color are twice as likely to receive longer prison sentences for identical crime committed by their white counterparts.

This aligns with research done by the Florida Legislature last December that stated that black men were sentenced to 20% more prison time than white defendants.

Just like the old adage: if you do the crime, you do the time. There's no adage stating that certain groups of people should do half, or a quarter of the time. Convictions should be the same throughout.

The wage gap is the highest it has ever been in 35 years, according to a study done by the U.S. Census Bureau. Black men earned 73% of white men's hourly earnings in 2015, the same pay they received in 1980. For Hispanic men, pay disparity has decreased from 71% of white men's earnings in 1980 to 69% in 2015. The statistics then break down the hourly wage for each race and gender, with hispanic men earning \$14/hr, black men earning \$15/hr, and white men earning \$21/hr. White men continue to out-earn all women, regardless of race. In 2015 alone, Hispanic women earned the lowest hourly average at \$12, compared to the \$13 black women earned,

\$17 for white women.

While most studies equate the wage gap to the lack of minorities receiving a college education, the numbers don't add up. The same study showed figures for minorities receiving degrees going up, and the wage gap keeps increasing between minorities and whites.

Regardless of race or gender, wages should be consistent across the board. If you're hired to work the same job as your white male coworker, you should be paid the exact same, especially if you're working just as hard.

The war on drugs has and always will be a war against minorities, the statistics and information are readily available to prove this.

According to a study done by the National Drug Survey on Drug Abuse and Health, even though marijuana use is roughly equal amongst black, whites, and hispanics, black men are more than three times likely to get arrested for possession, while hispanic women and men are 69% more likely to get imprisoned than white men and women.

One in every 106 white males aged 18 or older is incarcerated on drug charges, while one in every 36 Hispanic men, and one in every 15 black males, are incarcerated.

White privilege enables every student to be taught white history, but black history is only taught during February or as elective classes.

White privilege is being able to turn through a magazine or watch tv and see people of your race widely represented, or not having to worry about learning a whitewashed version of your history and culture.

White privilege doesn't mean that white people in America don't deserve what they've worked hard for and earned. The term specifically refers to those who do nothing yet still reap benefits that they only received because of the color of their skin.

White privilege doesn't have to be a bad thing. As a white American citizen, you have a leg up on minorities in terms of being listened to, and validated. Use your voice, not in a way that silences or overshadows the work being done by minorities, but in a way that helps the fight. America has come far in her efforts to give everyone equal opportunity, but we still have far to go. We need everyone's help.

We can no longer afford to stand idly by and watch while some profit off of the discrimination of others. The time to sweep these hard conversations under the rug is over, we need to address the problems holding us back from becoming the best we can be.



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