



White Privilege

Justice Café

September 2020 • Host Kit





WHITE PRIVILEGE

Opening Reflection

LEADER: [Pause for Brief Reflection]

We are bearing witness yet again to another surge of racial injustice sweeping through the US reminding Americans and the entire world that anti-Blackness is still a pervasive threat to the lives of millions of Black people worldwide. Since 2015, 1,252 Black people in the US have been killed by the police.¹ Experts from across multiple fields have cited both personal and systemic racism, white supremacy culture, and white privilege as the key contributing factors that have led to state sanctioned and racialized violence against unarmed Black women and men. Not only has systemic racism claimed countless victims, it has many beneficiaries as well. How can we break down white privilege and systemic racism? We must begin by doing the interior work. Let us now take a moment to reflect on the prophetic words of others on racial injustice.

1. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccartney/2020/05/28/police-shootings-black-americans-disproportionately-affected-infographic/#23759b6159f7>

Reader One: "It is far more the norm for these courses and programs to use racially coded language such as 'urban,' 'inner city,' and 'disadvantaged' but to rarely use 'white' or 'overadvantaged' or 'privileged.' This racially coded language reproduces racist images and perspectives while it simultaneously reproduces the comfortable illusion that race and its problems are what 'they' have, not us."

—Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*

Reader Two: "Privilege does not have to be negative, but we have to share our resources and take direction about how to use our privilege in ways that empower those who lack it."

—B. F. Skinner, American psychologist

Reader Three: "White privilege—the idea that whiteness, for white Americans, provides an imperishable benefit of the doubt and a flexible and perpetually renewable get-out-of-jail-free card—is often dismissed by critics and even spoken of by believers in it as an abstract and academic term with no basis of reality. But it doesn't exist without the cultural, social, political, and legal reinforcement that white people's feelings, thoughts, desires, and opinions matter more than the feelings, thoughts, desires, and opinions of non-white people (black people, specifically). It's not so much that blacks are thought to be subhuman—although that belief festers too. It's that the humanity of whites is the only humanity that matters. Their humanity is the standard all other humanities are judged by. This ceaseless homage toward whiteness also affects how physical pain and discomfort are assessed and treated." (p. 243)

—Damon Young, *What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Blacker: A Memoir in Essays*

Reader Four: "White privilege is an absence of the consequences of racism. An absence of structural discrimination, an absence of your race being viewed as a problem first and foremost."

—Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*

Reader Five: "Two hundred fifty years of slavery. Ninety years of Jim Crow. Sixty years of separate but equal. Thirty-five years of racist housing policy. Until We reckon with our compounding moral debts, America will never be whole."

—Ta- Nehisi Coates, *A Case for Reparations*





WHITE PRIVILEGE

IPJC Justice Café Etiquette

Create a space of trust and acceptance

Expect to be surprised and find new insights

Focus on what really matters

Link your experience to the global reality

Listen to understand and make connections

Make room for others to join the conversation

Respect each person's unique perspective

Share your own experience and truth

Take action for justice individually and collectively





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Ice Breaker Activity

INSTRUCTIONS: Share with screen share the following list with your group. Have participants give themselves a check for every statement that is true for them. Once each person has a chance to read each sentence and calculate their number, have each person share. Then form groups or pairs. Using the breakout feature of your online meeting platform.

LEADER: Read the list of activities asking yourself the question, "Can I do any of the following activities and be 100% sure I won't die?" For each statement that is true for you, give yourself a check. After you go through the list, count the checks. The bigger the number, the more racially privileged you are.

Can I do any of the following activities and be 100% sure I won't die?*

- Play outside in a park
- Go for a run
- Sell cigarettes
- Wear a ski mask when it's cold outside
- Go to the grocery store
- Forget to turn on your turn signal
- Sleep in your bed
- Make a purchase at a convenience store
- Walk in the street
- Drive home from dinner with your romantic partner
- Answer the door
- Babysit
- Have a broken tail light

Leader: Discuss the following with your small group or partner.

- What was your privilege total/tally? Were you surprised by your results?
- Before you do an activity, do you ever assess the amount of risk to your life or the lives of others?
- Was there an activity on this list that you might have taken for granted before?

*These are some of the activities in which the police have killed Black women, men, and children in the U.S.



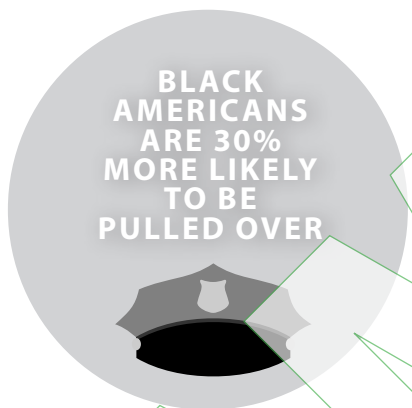


WHITE PRIVILEGE

A Closer Look

White privilege is the unearned societal privilege given to white people simply because of their skin. White privilege does not mean that your life can not or will not be difficult, it means your life is not more difficult because of the color of your skin.

White supremacy culture upholds the idea that white people are superior to Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color (BIPOC), by maintaining and upholding the societal status quo that has given white people advantage over BIPOC in nearly every facet of life—education, income, wealth and property attainment, and political advantage. White supremacy appears in subtle forms, but is nevertheless insidious and links to the system of white privilege.



Source: Brookings Institute, KFF

How does white privilege appear in our systems?

- Housing Discrimination
- Redlining and City Zoning
- Environmental Racism
- Redistricting and Gerrymandering
- White Flight and Suburban Sprawl
- No walkability in the neighborhoods of Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color (e.g. South Side of Chicago)
- Healthcare, Wage, and Education Gaps

Here are some way in which white supremacy culture and privilege might appear in our everyday encounters without us even noticing it

- Violating personal boundaries
- Disregarding or disrespecting sacred spaces. This is called spiritual appropriation (e.g. burning sage when you're not Indigenous)
- Persistent urge to control every situation
- Feeling of entitlement
- Individualism (white people often see themselves as people first, race second)




Source: Brookings Institute, KFF





WHITE PRIVILEGE

A Closer Look



THE WEALTH GAP
THE NET WORTH OF A TYPICAL WHITE FAMILY IS NEARLY 10X GREATER THAN THAT OF A BLACK FAMILY

Source: Brookings Institute, KFF

WAGE INEQUALITY BY RACE

Median weekly earnings of U.S. full-time workers
4th quarter 2019

ASIAN \$1,166

WHITE \$967

BLACK \$756

LATINO \$712

Source:

<https://inequality.org/facts/racial-inequality/#racial-income-inequality>



How do we **UNPACK** our privilege while in conversation with others?

LISTEN DEEPLY
DON'T BE SILENT
CALL PEOPLE INTO CONVERSATION, DON'T CALL OUT WITH ANGER
FIND A STOPPING POINT IF THE CONVERSATION IS NOT GOING ANYWHERE
SPEAK WITH "I" STATEMENTS & BE VULNERABLE
ASK QUESTIONS
BE IN COMMUNITY

Suggestions from **Matt McCarry**, *Bold Conversations*

backpack ill: vectorstock-Anastasia8

Peggy McIntosh, a researcher at the **Wellesley Centers for Women** describes white privilege being like, "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear and blank checks."

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

Neighborhoods and communities with higher populations of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are often in close proximity for dumping grounds, industrial pipelines, and fracking which can cause asthma and other respiratory disorders making BIPOC more likely to contract and die from COVID.

COVID is most likely to kill individuals who identify as

NATIVE/INDIGENOUS 5X MORE THAN WHITE

BLACK 5X MORE THAN WHITE

LATINO 4X THAN WHITE

Sources: https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/k7ev93/coronavirus-death-rates-environmental-racism
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html>





WHITE PRIVILEGE

Catholic Social Teaching

“My friends, we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.”

—Pope Francis, General Audience, June 3, 2020

“Racism is a moral problem that requires a moral remedy—a transformation of the human heart—that impels us to act. The power of this type of transformation will be a strong catalyst in eliminating those injustices that impinge on human dignity.”

—Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1935

“Racism is not a thing of the past or simply a throwaway political issue to be bandied about when convenient. It is a real and present danger that must be met head on. As members of the Church, we must stand for the more difficult right and just actions instead of the easy wrongs of indifference. We cannot turn a blind eye to these atrocities and yet still try to profess to respect every human life. We serve a God of love, mercy, and justice.”

—USCCB Statement, May 2020

“The structures of our society are subtly racist, for these structures reflect the values which society upholds. They are geared to the success of the majority and the failure of the minority. Members of both groups give unwitting approval by accepting things as they are. Perhaps no single individual is to blame. The sinfulness is often anonymous but nonetheless real. The sin is social in nature in that each of us, in varying degrees, is responsible. All of us in some measure are accomplices. As our recent pastoral letter on moral values states: “The absence of personal fault for an evil does not absolve one of all responsibility. We must seek to resist and undo injustices we have not ceased, least we become bystanders who tacitly endorse evil and so share in guilt in it.”

—*Brothers and Sisters to Us*,
US Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Letter, 1979





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Conversation Starter Questions

1. What was your earliest memory around skin color? Where were you? Who were you with? What event triggered that awareness? How did you feel?
2. How does white privilege (and all that stems from it) stand in the way of racial justice?
3. What can you and your community do to shift the belief(s) and behavior(s) into beliefs and behaviors that support racial justice?
4. How do structural racism, implicit bias, and white privilege impact how we think about justice?





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Closing Reflection

LEADER: We have spent this time together examining the many ways, often subtle, white privilege perpetuates racism. Let us now close time together with a prayer to perhaps challenge each of us to go forth into the world and dismantle personal and systemic racism in all its forms daily.

Lord, Make Me a Channel of Disturbance

Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.
Where there is apathy, let me provoke;
Where there is compliance, let me bring
questioning;
Where there is silence, may I be a voice.
Where there is too much comfort and too little
action, grant disruption;
Where there are doors closed and hearts locked,
Grant the willingness to listen.
When laws dictate and pain is overlooked...
When tradition speaks louder than need...
Grant that I may seek rather to do justice than to
talk about it;
Disturb us, O Lord.
To be with, as well as for, the alienated;
To love the unlovable as well as the lovely;
Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.

—Author unknown





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Action Ideas: White Privilege

1. Read a copy of Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack": <https://www.racialeguitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>. Send it to a friend who you think might benefit from it. Call up that friend and have a discussion about it.
2. Reflect on your field of study or work and then evaluate the principles, policies, laws, guidelines, etc., that have unintentional negative consequences for people of color or center on whiteness. Similarly, evaluate whether these principles, policies, etc. disproportionately benefit white people and think of ways to level the playing field. Meet with a member in leadership and discuss how your organization or institution can decentralize whiteness and amplify the voices of Black, Indigenous, and persons of color.
3. Advocate for and support criminal justice reform, demilitarization of police, and decriminalization of behaviors such as loitering and minor traffic violations, and ending stop-and-frisk.

