

Summer Term Thought for the Week #7

What is White Privilege?

Hello year 10. Welcome back. I hope this week's message finds you safe and well. I want to develop our discussion surrounding racism by concept cracking white privilege. **Stay safe, Mr B.**

What is
white
privilege?

The core advice remains the same: Remember habits takes 21 days to make and an average of 66 days to break:

- Keep/Create a working routine and stick to it – use your timetable as a guide to your work/setup a separate space for working to make a mental distinction between work and 'play'.
 - Sleep well, eat well and exercise daily – get out and exercise (you'll feel better).
- Make sure you are completing all the work that you can to the best of your ability – ask your teachers for help (use the systems in place for you via Teams/Google Classroom or email)

Concept Cracking Privilege: I hope you have managed to read last week's piece on the killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement. I have encouraged you to watch the documentary '13th' on Netflix about the 13th amendment to the American Constitution and the US prison system. Throughout this discussion you will no doubt have come across the term 'White Privilege'. It is a confusing idea and can leave you a little baffled. We sometimes find it hard to talk about issues of race and racism because it can feel like uneasy ground. I hope to help clarify some ideas and develop your understanding this week.

I don't feel privileged! When we hear the word privilege we can often think about money, this or that person is privileged and so are rich, or having an easy life without difficulties. This is not what we mean in the context of White Privilege. Privilege is defined as **a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group.** I am privileged. I have inherent advantages that are not given to me but I simply have because I am a white, middle-class, middle-aged, heterosexual married man that is able bodied. All of these individual demographics afford me some form of inherent advantage. Let me try to explain further through an example. I do not have to worry about what people think of me or whether I might be arrested or beaten by a vigilante mob when I hold my wife's hand in public. If I was homosexual this would be different depending on the country. I would start a few steps back from the start line of 'everyone is equal' in this case as I have more hurdles to cross before I get to the net-zero equal line. As a man, I don't have the same worries about my personal safety as a woman does. I don't have to worry about unwanted sexual advances, leering eyes and sexually aggressive comments made against me as I go about my daily life. I am privileged not to experience these events, but many women suffer this and much worse through the course of their daily lives. So, it seems some of these advantages come from legal systems, others from societal views. I am truly privileged in all areas of my life. It can therefore become difficult for me to understand others that are starting in a different place in life.

If you don't think that male privilege exists,

CONGRATULATIONS!

You're enjoying the benefits of it.

NOT SCIENTIST, BUT...

White privilege (or white skin privilege)

refers to the set of societal privileges that white people are argued to benefit from beyond those commonly experienced by people of color in the same social, political, or economic spaces (nation, community, workplace, income, etc.).



So what is White Privilege? White privilege is the same as discussed above but with an emphasis on race. It is not that white people don't have tough lives or difficulties because they do. It is that non-white people have the same difficulties as their white counterparts WHILST trying to navigate a society structured against them, either through institutions like the police, social housing, the law, prison systems or societal prejudices in general – in particular with the scourge of white supremacism or nationalism. It is a collection of disadvantages that society has encumbered upon non-whites because of their skin colour. When phrased like that you can see why people are justified in their righteous indignation – regardless of skin colour.

This is why the debate is about equal justice, equal treatment and equal recognition from state officials for black people is so potent in the US at present. People of all colour want change – it is not a black thing, it is a human thing. They want everyone to start on the same start line in life not however many steps behind because of the colour of their skin.

Should I feel guilty about any of my 'privileges'? Categorically no. Why make this about you and your privileges? You should feel morally aggrieved that you have inherent advantages that another person doesn't necessarily have just because of the colour of your skin. Be aware of your inherent advantages and demand equal treatment for others that don't have them. We can widen this further too. I don't feel guilty about the privileges I have but I have only recently become acutely aware of them. What this means in practical terms is what we discussed last week: **'We need to hear the concerns of our fellow citizens of the planet and respond in practice. Standing up against racism isn't just disagreeing with it in principle, it is about acting in the world. The reason why racism continues to spread, and hatred continues to infect the hearts of the ignorant, is the potential space that is provided in the silence left when we do not speak out or act.'** But this also applies to all forms of structural injustices or societal prejudices. I am minded of the Trans* cause at this point. I don't have an uphill struggle to be seen as 'male' but I would face prejudice and discrimination if I chose to live as a woman and to be given the same rights or status as other women in our society.

