

A Reflection Upon White Privilege

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To put this thought-piece into context, I am not an individual that typically speaks up about race, privilege, or social issues in general. I have grown up without thinking much about people who live in different communities and in different circumstances than I do, and, frankly, I consider myself to be relatively naive. However, over the past few years of my life, I began to peek outside of the comfortable bubble I live in and recognize the critical state of society.

Put honestly, I am the textbook definition of a privileged individual. I am a white male, I come from an affluent family, both of my parents went to college, my parents are married, English is my first language, I am a protestant, I am straight, and I am not disabled. Throughout my education, I learned from excellent teachers and benefited intellectually from being surrounded by students determined to learn and succeed in life. Because of my predisposed privilege as an individual, my future should be bright.

My life has been handed to me on a silver platter—but why? Why should my privilege, which has been determined collectively by my affluence, gender, race, sexuality, religion, and other characteristics, give me an unbalanced advantage over many others? The unfortunate answer, currently at least, is that that is the way our civilization operates. Antiquated, illogical ideologies of discrimination have been deeply engrained within the civilized world, and as a result we have a society in which few live comfortably while many others struggle.

It almost seems hypocritical that I say this, given that I am a part of the fraction of our population that benefits from the social construct of privilege. What is important, though, is that, despite our respective backgrounds, we all recognize the privilege we have. Though I and many others experience unbalanced privilege, we shouldn't feel the need to apologize. We must recognize this privilege so that we can align the playing-field for the less privileged. I am not saying everyone needs to band together and position themselves on the battlefield for social justice, but we must at least stand by as allies. We owe it to those who have, for centuries, been fighting for racial equality through countless civil movements to recognize the injustices acted upon them.

Here's one question I always struggled to answer: given the countless civil rights movements throughout history, why does racial inequality still exist? And upon reflection, I stumbled upon the disturbing truth that it was my fault. Not my fault, but, in actuality, yes, my fault. In the beginning of this piece, I revealed that I don't frequently speak about race nor do I know much about it. I could argue that this is because I don't know enough about race to speak up, or because I feel as though it is not my place to speak up, but the truth is this: I don't speak up because it is difficult.

Boarding school is difficult despite one's privilege. And so despite my immense privilege, I want to lessen that difficulty as much as possible. Race is difficult, and as a white male untouched by racial inequality, I had the option to remain silent, an option that I took without much thought. It is only now, during my leisurely days of senior spring, that I cannot denounce racism while simultaneously not take part in the racial equality movement. In order to be a true ally, I must speak up—so I have, and so I will.