



White Privilege**

Greenville UU Fellowship. Greenville, South Carolina

Covenant Group Session Plan, December 2016. Revised, June 2020, March 2024.

****Note: This session asks participants to do some preparation work, see the request below.**

Welcome, Chalice Lighting: *Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world.*

Personal Check In: Briefly share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

Opening Words: White privilege refers to societal privilege that benefits white people over non-white people in some societies, particularly if they are otherwise under the same social, political, or economic circumstances. ~Wikipedia

"White privilege" is a system of racial preferences that are automatically awarded to people who identify as White or of European ancestry, while, at the same time, there is a system of systematic disadvantages for People of Color and other people marginalized by race or ethnicity. ~UUA website

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. Share your observations as you did the preparation for this session. Where did you experience, notice or contribute to white privilege in your daily routines? What surprised you?
2. What is your general response to the idea of "privilege" or "White privilege"? What about this topic do you struggle with the most? Why?
3. What kinds of feelings come up for you when you discuss this topic? How might you address those feelings moving forward? What resistance or discomfort do you feel when reflecting on or discussing white privilege?
4. How do you see White privilege manifest in congregational life in our community at GUUF? Please frame your responses from your personal experience, using an "I" statement. e.g. "I can be assured that I will hear music from my cultural tradition."
5. In what ways have you found to say something or do something about racism?

Readings- see below

Sitting in Silence

Sharing -This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share one or more responses to the session questions.

This is a good time to take a brief break.

Open Discussion -This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.

Closing reading:

The good news is that racist and antiracist are not fixed identities. We can be a racist one minute and an antiracist the next. What we say about race, what we do about race, in each moment, determines what -- not who -- we are." ~Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*

Announcements/Plans

Check out: As we close today, how are you feeling now?

Extinguish the Chalice *We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.*

Readings

Justice. We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive. We covenant to dismantle racism and all forms of systemic oppression. ~from Article II Purpose and Covenant Proposal, UUA, <https://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/committees/article-ii-study-commission/final-proposed-revision-article-ii>

I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless backpack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.

~Peggy McIntosh, American feminist, and anti-racism activist

Here is a radical idea that I would like you to understand: white silence is violence. It actively protects the system. It says I am okay with the way things are because they do not negatively affect me and because I enjoy the benefits I receive with white privilege.

~Layla F. Saad, *Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor*

If I am a White person in America:

- I can turn on my television or watch a movie and see many images of people of my race in a wide variety of roles, including many positive and heroic ones.
- I can apply for a home mortgage or a loan and know that I will not be turned down because of my race.
- I can engage a realtor to buy or rent a home and know that no properties will be withheld from my consideration because of my race.
- I am surrounded by images that suggest that God and other Biblical figures are White like me.
- I will learn in school that the history of our country is largely the history of my people written from the perspective of people of my race.
- I can walk into virtually any pharmacy or similar retail store and find cosmetics and hair care products appropriate for my skin and hair.
- I am unlikely ever to be asked to speak for my race.
- It is unlikely that I will ever be in a situation where I am the only person of my race.
- I can browse in a store without being followed or arousing suspicion because of my race.
- I will never be stopped, frisked, arrested, or abused by police solely because a person of my race is a suspect in a crime in the area.
- I can be hired for a job and not have co-workers assume I was hired because of racial preference/ affirmative action.

~ Adapted from a piece originally published in *Weaving the Fabric of Diversity* (Boston: UUA, 1996).

When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else's oppression, we'll find our opportunities to make real change. ~Ijeoma Oluo, *So You Want to Talk about Race*

Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man can't ride you unless your back is bent.

~Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

An America that looks away is ignoring not just the sins of the past but the sins of the present and the certain sins of the future. ~Ta-Nehisi Coates

I learned that racism, like most systems of oppression, isn't about bad people doing terrible things to people who are different from them but instead is a way of maintaining power for certain groups at the expense of others. ~Alicia Garza, American civil rights activist, and writer known for co-founding the Black Lives Matter movement

****Preparation for this Covenant Circle session:**

As you go about your normal routines, take mental notes of how you see "White privilege" at work. You will most likely notice White privilege in places where the majority of people have white/light skin.

If you have White/light skin privilege, make note of the White privilege that characterizes your daily routines.

If your experience is through the lens of a racially or ethnically marginalized group, make note of how White privilege operates and its impact in your life. Also consider how, if at all, you contribute to the "system of White privilege."

Other resources: (added June 2020)

UUA Racial Justice link:

<https://www.uua.org/racial-justice>

Resource list from 2016

Examining Whiteness: An Anti-Racism Curriculum- Reading Materials for Individuals. (UUA)

<http://www.uua.org/multiculturalism/curricula/whiteness/students>

For Students: Examining Whiteness: An Anti-Racism Curriculum

<https://www.uua.org/racial-justice/curricula/whiteness/students>

*This session is partially based on the program titled: **Building the World We Dream About**, written by Mark A. Hicks, Ed.D.

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/btwwda>

White Privilege, Unpacking the Invisible Backpack by Peggy McIntosh.

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>

Curriculum for White Americans to Educate Themselves on Race and Racism—from Ferguson to Charleston

<http://citizenshipandsocialjustice.com/2015/07/10/curriculum-for-white-americans-to-educate-themselves-on-race-and-racism/>