

White Privilege Checklist

Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, describes 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 knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks" (McIntosh, 1989).

The following are examples of ways white individuals have privilege because they are white. Please read the list and place a check next to the privileges that apply to you or that you have encountered. At the end, try to list at least two more ways you have privilege based on your race.

- 1. I can arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- 2. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- 3. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
- 4. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
- 5. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- 6. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the food I grew up with, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.
- 7. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial responsibility.
- 8. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing, or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.
- 9. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
- 10. I can take a job or enroll in a college with an affirmative action policy without having my co-workers or peers assume I got it because of my race.
- 11. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
- 12. I can choose public accommodation with out fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated.
- 13. I am never asked to speak for all of the people of my racial group.
- 14. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk with the "person in charge" I will be facing a person of my race.
- 15. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
- 16. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
- 17. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.
- 18. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- 19. I can walk into a classroom and know I will not be the only member of my race.
- 20. I can enroll in a class at college and be sure that the majority of my professors will be of my race.

Racial privilege is only one forms of privilege. What are other examples of privilege? (e.g., privilege based on gender, sexual orientation, class, and religion). Can you think of ways one might have privilege based on these factors? (e.g., that you do not have to worry about being verbally or physically harassed because of your sexual orientation; or you can be sure that your religious holiday will be acknowledged and represented in store displays, classroom discussions, etc.). Please list these forms of privilege.