

# White Privilege: A Thing of the Past?

White privilege.

For years now, we've heard some folks sling that term around along with that verbal slap, "Check your privilege." But here's a question: Does white privilege exist in 2019? Or is it just a way of smearing whites?

First, a definition of white privilege. The online Cambridge Dictionary defines white privilege as "the fact of people with white skin having advantages in society that other people do not have."

Interesting, that use of the word fact. So let's look at a few facts.

First, non-Hispanic whites make up around 62 percent of the current population of the United States. The figure varies depending on your source of information.

Harvard University's student body is [42 percent](#) white.

In 2017, Asian households brought in [\\$13,000 more](#) than whites in median income.

Opioid deaths? Of the total 47,600 recorded in 2017, 37,113, or [78 percent](#), were white people.

In 2017, 47,173 Americans committed suicide. Of these, [77.97 percent](#) were white males.

The Henry J. Kaiser Foundation [reports](#) that in 2017 eight percent of whites lived in poverty as opposed to 20 percent of blacks. This disparity is unfortunate, but if you do the numbers, millions more whites than blacks live in poverty.

Enough of the number crunching. Like some who use the Bible to prove their points, number crunchers can roll out the cannons of statistics and fire away without really proving anything.

So let's look at individuals.

Let's pop into my local grocery store and say hello to that seventy-something cashier who always greets her customers with a smile. We could ask her if she has benefited from her white privilege.

Let's approach that twenty-something barista at my local coffee shop who works and goes to school full-time, studying for a degree in psychology. Does she think the color of her skin explains her accomplishments?

Let's head next to the auto repair shop where I recently took my car for its annual inspection. Does the middle-aged mechanic with the ponytail and the grease under his fingernails qualify for white privilege?

Let's ask that guy I've seen this past week on my way to town, the man holding the Stop/Slow sign for road repairs. He's easily in his sixties and sports a face that has clearly absorbed more than its share of sunshine and liquor. He's white. Is he privileged?

My children and their spouses bust their humps every day earning a living, raising their children, and trying to do the right thing. Should I ask them if they are the beneficiaries of white privilege?

Here I confess failing as a reporter. I am too embarrassed to approach any of these people, except my daughter, and ask if they see themselves as recipients of "white privilege." (When I put the question to my daughter, who was folding laundry, she laughed, and said, "Oh, yeah. Every day." You'd have to live in a house with seven children 13 and under to understand her response.) I just can't do it. The question would stick in

my throat.

Not so long ago, white privilege existed. It was real. I saw it first-hand. In 1955, when I was four years old, my family moved from Pennsylvania to a small town in North Carolina where blacks attended separate schools, were forbidden entrance into many restaurants and restrooms, and often lived lives of desperate poverty. My dad, the town's physician, did end the segregation in his office waiting room, and my mom regarded the N-word as the equivalent of the worst obscenity, but there was systemic white privilege.

Within twenty years, that segregation was gone with the wind.

But today? White privilege?

How does anyone get away with using such language? I don't really care who they are: college professor, politician, media celebrity. White privilege today appears to be a big, fat lie.

Of course, there are people who are privileged. They are the ones who have money, who can buy property and material goods, and live and travel in ways most of us can't dream of. I bear the wealthy no animosity, but their privilege has little to do with the color of their skin and much to do with their money.

Those who smear an entire part of the population with the label "white privilege" paint with far too broad a brush. Like others who lump human beings into groups based on skin pigmentation, and then judge and condemn them, these slogan-slashing finger-pointers are either brainwashed or bigoted.

In short, they are racists.

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