



White Privilege

Unpacking the
Invisible Knapsack,
by Peggy McIntosh

**Teaching Immigration
Across the Curriculum
Online Teacher Workshop**
Public Education Institute
at The Immigrant Learning Center,
Malden, MA



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- Read through Peggy McIntosh's personal reflections of the daily effects of white privilege on her life.
- Respond to the reflection questions at the end.
- As you read:
 - Do any of the statements surprise you?
 - Are you able to relate personally to each statement? If so, how?
 - Can you use this article to help you to understand some of the challenges that students and community members face on a daily basis?



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1. I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area, which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.

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5. I can turn on the television or look at the newspaper and see people of my race widely represented.
6. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
8. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.

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9. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
10. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of my financial reliability.
11. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.

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12. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
13. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
14. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.

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15. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
16. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
17. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.

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18. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
19. 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.
20. I can easily buy posters, post-cards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.

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21. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
22. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
23. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the place I have chosen.

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24. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my race will not work against me.
25. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.
26. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.

Reflection

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1. After reading through Peggy McIntosh's personal reflections of the daily effects of white privilege on her life, did any of the statements surprise you? If so, how?
2. When you read through the article, were you able to relate personally to each statement? If so, how?
3. Can you use this article to help you to understand some of the challenges that students and community members are faced with on a daily basis? If so, how?

Thank you

