

# Exploring privilege

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# Reactions

- Shame
- Denial
- Entitlement
- Deflection

# Assumptions

- We are interested in the health of all people in our community.
- Health disparities exist for First Nations, Inuit and Metis people
- These health disparities extend from colonization
- Colonial power structures persist on many levels
- Self-determination is necessary to pursue health equity for First Nations, Inuit and Metis people
- People with power resist sharing it

# Structures of dominance

- Race
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Social Class
- Sexual Orientation
- Ability
- Age
- Others.....

# White Privilege:

## Unpacking the Invisible Backpack

- “...an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious.”
- “...taught to think of our lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, also ideal, to that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow “them” to be more like “us”.

- I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford in which I would want to live.
- I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.

- I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
- When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization”, I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.

- Whether cheques, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
- I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
- I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial
- 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.

- 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
- I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
- 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.

- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.

- “Power from unearned privilege can look like strength when it is in fact permission to escape or to dominate.”

# The Harms of Privilege

- Blindness
- Silence
- Barrier to change

# Beyond Acknowledging

- “The truth is that acknowledging your privilege means a whole lot of nothing much if you don’t do anything to actively push back against it.”

# Silence: Harm Causing

- No bystanders
- Pastor Niemoller:

*First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Socialist*

*Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Trade Unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Jew.*

*Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.*

# Silence: Harm Causing

- *First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizens Councilor or the Ku Klux Klanner but the white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says, "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time; and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.*

# Beyond Acknowledging

## 1. Relinquish power

- Workforce reflective of population
  - Lived experience is expertise
- Nothing About Us, Without Us
  - Look to community for expertise, effective action, direction and control

## 2. Just Don't Go

## 3. Shut up (and listen)

- Proportional Podium

## 4. Be careful what identities you claim

# Anti-Racism as dental hygiene

- Vs. Appendectomy
- It requires daily attention, without which it recurs
- Spinach in your teeth

# Anti-Racism as patient safety

- Tone policing

# Take home

- Significant health disparities exist for the First Nations, Inuit and Metis people of Canada
- Power relationships reinforce the status quo because it benefits those of us with power.
- Awareness requires action
  - Individual, group, institutional, societal
- We are all in this together.

# Questions?

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