



LET'S TALK equality

Talking about Privilege is a Privilege by Ryan R.

Privilege, a word that seems to make most people nervous, is something that will be talked about forever. I go to a great private college; I have a nice truck, a great family, etc. But I didn't realize these were the most obvious privileges I had and I was over looking the more subtle ones that I definitely take for granted everyday. Although talking about privilege is uncomfortable for some people, it is something that needs to be done in order for people to understand their own personal privilege.

When we first started talking about privilege in-my college English class I was excited to hear what other people thought about their own privilege. Going to a private school, I saw a lot of neglectful talk about privilege. For example, on twitter last year one of my friends posted a picture of the new black iPhone. Everyone commented his or her jealousy. This is where it gets interesting, the person with this brand spanking new phone replies to all these people and says "Yes, but I wanted the white one." I looked at my phone for about five minutes and said to myself "Are you kidding me?" Not only is this person not seeing their privilege they are telling everyone that they are not seeing their privilege. I was beyond shocked and it made me think about my privilege and I felt a lot better and thought I understood my personal privilege. However, this changed when I stepped foot into Writing and Inquiry.

Living where I live, by farms and orange groves, you learn what it means to live off the land, you squeeze your own orange juice and milk your own cows for milk. I never thought of this as a privilege because most of my friends just go to the grocery store and pick up some milk or orange juice. But, I think this is a privilege because I get fresh milk and orange juice for free. I also drive a new truck, have a nice house, a great family, and so forth. Although I knew these were privileges, I never thought about some things that were mentioned as a privilege in class. I always looked at the big picture and didn't think about the little things like running water, a roof over my head, food to eat whenever I want. These are some of the biggest privileges of all because this is what keeps each of us healthy and able to enjoy our other privileges, so they kind of go hand in hand. For instance, if you have a house you have running water, if you have running water you are healthy. So, the privileges open up new privileges that some of us forget are there.

When my professor asked the class, "What privilege would you be most reluctant to lose?" I was immediately going to say having my family together all the time. But then she said something even bigger than that. "For some of you, would it be your white skin?" and I thought to myself, "Wow, that is bigger than anything I would have thought of". So I decided at that moment that I would touch on that in my paper, so here goes. Losing my white skin, I think life would be totally different for me. It is the biggest privilege that I was born with. I think if I lost it I would have to work a lot harder to impress people, not let racial comments get the best of me, and prove to the world that people of color can do just as much as a

white man can do. We have a black president, which half of our country never would have thought of seeing in a million years. Barack Obama not only made history with becoming president but also proved to all the people of color out there that nothing stands in their way and they can accomplish anything. Although this may be true, my white skin would be the toughest privilege to lose because I was born with it and I have lived almost 20 years with it so having to start over would not go so well for me. I had several friends at my high school that just took the racial comments thrown at them and I don't know if I would have the strength to do that. For me, a white man, life was easy in high school; no one bullied me because of my skin or anything like that. But it does bother me that I could be the exact same as someone, same clothes personality, same house, same truck, everything. But, if that person had brown skin they would get bullied and the white Ryan would walk free.

Check your privilege. I hope this paper sheds a little bit of light on some of the things we overlook everyday. From running water, to a beautiful college we all attend. When you wake up in your comfy bed every morning just remember your privileges.

Let's Talk Equality is an initiative by a group of University of Tampa professors to engage students in conversations about privilege, bias and social justice. For more information, visit www.letstalkequality.com or on Twitter @ltequality.